# DRAFT – work in progress

## MUSLIM PUPILS' EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS AND ASPIRATIONS

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### Introduction

This paper examines the educational achievements and aspirations of Muslim pupils in Scotland and England. It draws on the findings of a 3-year project examining educational experiences and achievements of Muslim pupils in Scotland and England funded by the Alwaleed Centre at University of Edinburgh. The paper starts with an account of the methodology and education systems in Scotland and England; this is followed by an examination of administrative data of educational achievements by ethnicity and religion. We then present the findings from our study before concluding with the key points.

### Methodology

The qualitative data consisted of family case studies based on semi-structured interviews with parents and their children. We also reviewed relevant academic and policy literature as well as analysing publicly available administrative data on academic achievement and labour market outcomes by ethnic groups.

*Family case studies*

Thirty eight family case studies were conducted in total, 13 in England and 25 in Scotland. The case studies were based on semi-structured interviews and observations made at the time of the interview and recorded in field notes. The sample was opportunistic and used a range of methods to contact Muslim families in a number of geographical areas in England and Scotland. These were deliberately chosen to reflect labour market diversity and patterns of settlement. In England, the family case studies were drawn from Central London, a city in the East of England and an area of industrial decline in the North West. In Scotland, interviewees lived in cities in the east and west of the country. Some participants were contacted through mosques, schools and universities and others were contacted via other interviewees. National backgrounds were diverse, with interviewees reporting ten different countries of origin. All of the adults who participated self-identified as Muslim, and overall, a total of 98 interviews were conducted between June 2010 and May 2012.

The largest group of Muslims in the UK are of Pakistani origin, and this was also the case for the majority of our interviewees. Most of the interviews with parents took place in their home. A small number took place in a café or similar location (8) and nine were conducted in an office (either of the researcher or the participant). The interviews with the children also mostly took place in the participant's home, although seven were in a café and one in the mother's workplace. Just under half of the parents were first generation immigrants and some had lived in the UK for a long time. A slightly smaller number were second generation immigrants, 6 were refugees or had protected status and 5 were temporary residents, generally students, not intending to stay in the UK. A number of interviewees were contacted through a support organisation for refugees. Five sets of parents in the research came to Scotland seeking asylum and were later granted refugee status and then Indefinite Leave to Remain by UK Government. One further interviewee was granted Indefinite Leave to Remain through the Iraq: Locally Engaged Staff Assistance Scheme.

In general, the adults we interviewed, most of whom were under 50, were highly qualified only around a quarter of the adults who were interviewed did not have a degree or equivalent. This does not reflect the level of qualifications amongst all Pakistani and Bangladeshi adults in the UK (Hills, et al, 2010), although adults aged 24 – 35 have much higher qualifications than older age groups. It is worth noting that many of our Pakistani participants mentioned that their parents were not educated to degree level and some described their parents as working class. This might suggest a certain degree of educational and social mobility among Pakistanis living in the UK.

**Table 1: Number of interviews and backgrounds of participants**

| National[1] background | No. of interviews with parent(s) | No. of interviews with children/ young people | 1st gen. immigrant[2] | 2nd gen. immigrant[2] | Refugee/ Protected status[2] | 'Temporary' residents[2] | No. of parents with degree equivalent qualifications[3] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pakistan | 21 | **33** | 11 | 10 | | | 14 |
| Bangladesh | 5 | **7** | 2 | 3 | | | 3 |
| India | 4 | **1** | 2 | 2 | | | 3 |
| Malaysia | 3 | **3** | | | | 3 | 3 |
| Iran | 1 | **1** | | | | 1 | 1 |
| UK | 2 | **4** | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 2 |
| Turkey | 1 | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| Iraq | 6 | **8** | | | 6 | | 5 |
| Somalia | 1 | | | | 1 | | 1 |
| Afghanistan | 1 | | | | 1 | | 1 |
| **Scotland** | **30** | **41** | | | | | **21** |
| **England** | **15** | **16** | | | | | **13** |
| **Total** | **45** | **57** | **15** | **15** | **8** | **5** | **34** |

1. In a small number of cases parent(s) had grown up in a different country; for those of Indian and Pakistani origin this was usually Kenya
2. Refers to parent interviewed, in many families one partner was 2nd generation immigrant and the other was 1st generation. Immigration status was not known for 3 interviewees.
3. Refers to parents and includes degrees gained in other countries; a small number of parents had post-graduate degrees

In order to ensure confidentiality, all participants were given pseudonyms as were the schools and locations.

**Education systems in England and Scotland**

The education systems in England and Scotland have always differed as they grew out of local church provision in each country and developed their own systems based on different legislation. In Scotland, the majority (around 86%) of schools are non-denominational but stem from the old Church of Scotland (Presbyterian) schools. Virtually all denominational schools are Roman Catholic and there are no Muslim faith schools. The independent (fee-paying) sector caters for around 5% of the total pupil population. Normally children go to the school in their catchment area. Placing requests for attendance at an alternative school can be made and they are normally granted if the school is not oversubscribed (in 2008-09, more than 80% of placing requests were granted, Scottish Government, 2010). Virtually all state funded schools in Scotland are managed by the local authority.

In England there is considerably more variation in school type and governance. School governing bodies have significant management responsibilities, and academies and free schools are funded by and responsible to the Secretary of State for education rather than the local authority. In the primary sector, 60% are non-denominational community schools, 37% are either voluntary aided or voluntary controlled and the majority of these are Church of England or Roman Catholic faith schools (6,029). Only six are Muslim faith schools. Foundation and Academy schools are mostly non-denominational but there are a small number of mainly Church of England schools. In the secondary sector community schools only account for 46% of maintained schools, 19% are voluntary aided or voluntary controlled and most of these are Christian faith schools (489). Five are Muslim schools. Foundation schools account for 25% of the schools and Academies/City Technology Colleges for 11% (DfE, 2011a). A small number of secondary schools within the maintained sector are classed as grammar schools and these are selective schools that compete with other schools for the most able pupils. These schools do not exist in Scotland. Around 7% of all pupils in England attend independent schools. In principle, parents can choose the school they want their child to attend but in practice this is constrained by availability and access.

There are currently considerable changes in the English school system. The main school policy change made by Conservative/Liberal Democrat Coalition government that came into power in 2010 was to encourage local authority schools to become academies. More than 50% of secondary schools in London are now academies. Free Schools were also introduced, but so far there are only about 150 of such

institutions. The latter are described as non-profit making, independent, state funded schools (DfE website, 2012). They respond directly to the Secretary of State for Education and are, according to Hatcher: 'outside local authority control; funded directly by the government; free from the national curriculum; their own admissions authorities; and not bound by national union agreements' (Hatcher, 2011: 485). Although these schools are described as in charge of their own admissions, they are not, according to the Department for Education website, allowed to select according to ability (www.education.gov.uk).

**Muslim pupils' patterns of educational achievement**

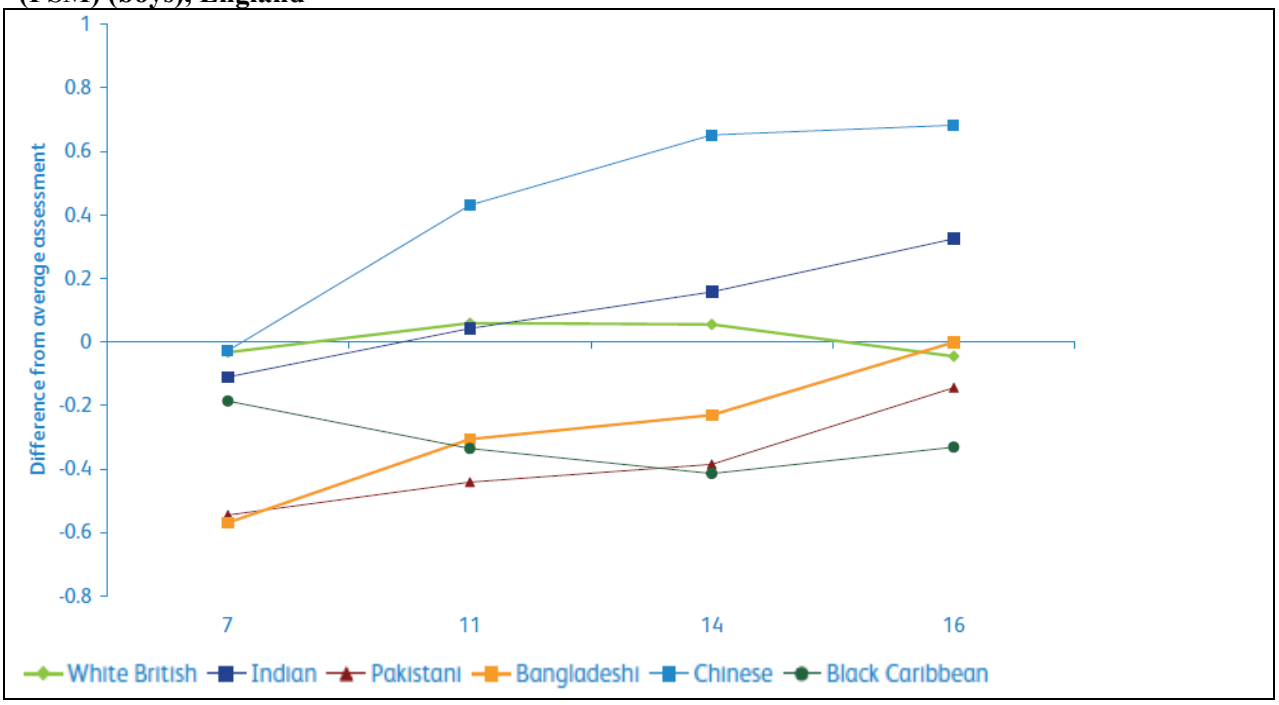
*England*

There is limited statistical data available which examines school achievements according to religion. We therefore use ethnicity as a 'proxy' for religion for pupils of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin as most self-identify as Muslims (Strand, 2007). The school and examinations systems differ in England and Scotland so we present administrative data on achievement separately for the two countries. Earlier analysis conducted for the National Equality Panel by Burgess, Wilson and Worth (see Hills et al, 2010) showed that, whilst Muslim pupils of Pakistani/Bangladeshi origin had low levels of achievement on entry to school, they caught up with average test results between the ages of 7 and 17. For all groups, the strongest factor associated with educational outcome is parents' social class background (Hills et al., 2010). Free school meal entitlement is a strong indicator of material disadvantage and is often used as a proxy measure of social class. It is interesting to note that the improvement in Muslim pupils' educational attainment relative to the average was particularly marked for pupils who were not entitled to free school meals, and particularly for girls within this group. The performance of Pakistani girls who were not entitled to free school meals was exactly the same as the average attainment level of white British girls at age 16, and the performance of Bangladeshi girls exceeded that of their White British counterparts (see figures 1 and 2). The performance of all pupils (irrespective of ethnicity) who receive free school meals is below average at age 16, apart from Chinese pupils and Indian and Bangladeshi girls.

However, in spite of catching up relative to average test scores, the achievement at Key Stage 4 for Pakistani and Bangladeshi boys, but not girls were below the median in England as can be seen in figures 3 and 4. The achievement of Bangladeshi girls was above that of White British girls but the achievement of Pakistani girls were below this group. More recent data on achievement at Key Stage 4 as measured by the achievement of GCES provide a slightly different picture. These data show that all Bangladeshi pupils have better achievement than White British pupils at key stage 4 and the gap between Pakistani pupils and White British does not appear to be as great as it was in 2008 (figure 5). It is important to note that the data in figures 3 and 4 includes the spread of achievement within each group and this is missing from figure 5. It is likely that the higher average achievement of Bangladeshi pupils is accompanied by increasing variance. In addition, the numbers within each ethnic group vary, with White British pupils representing by far the largest group.

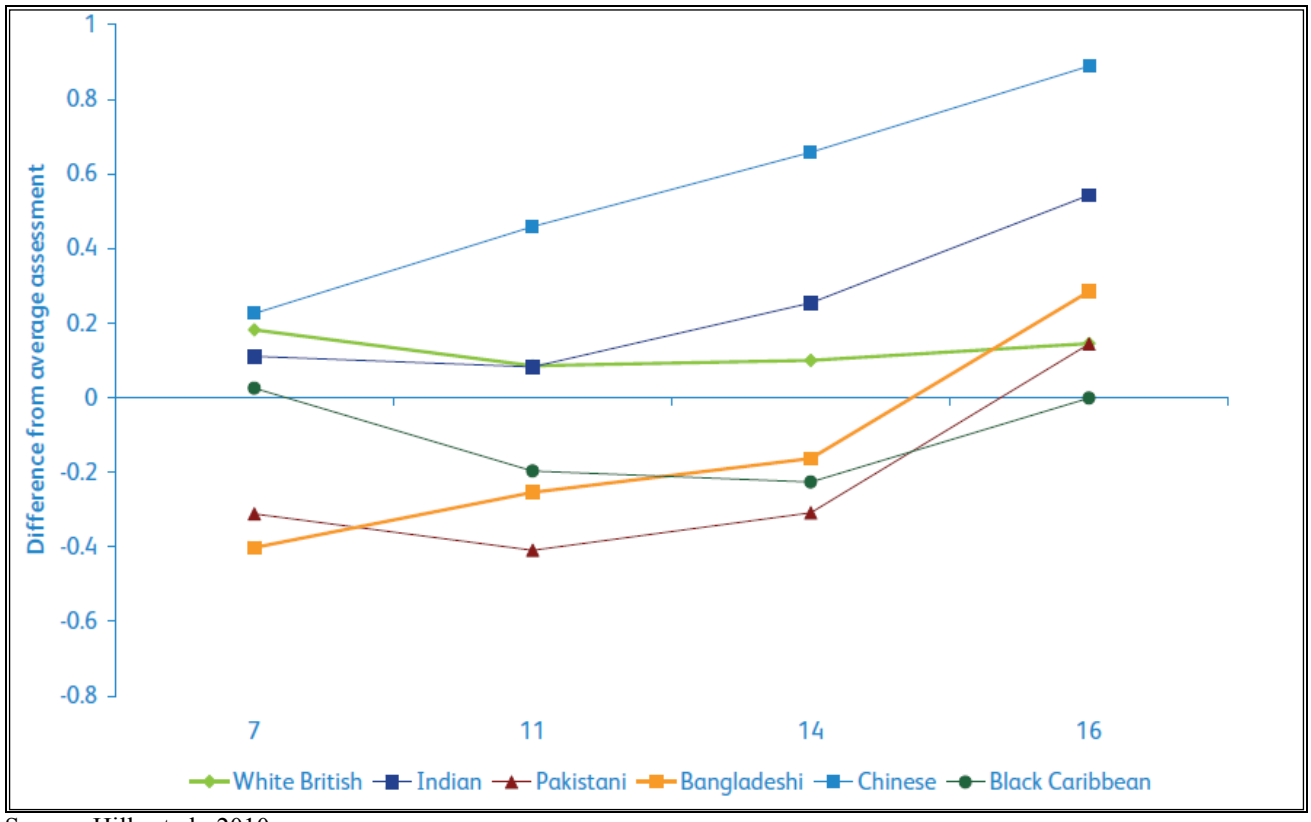
Figure 6 shows that by the age of 19, a higher proportion of Pakistani and Bangladeshi young people have a level 3 qualification (AS, A levels or NVQ 3) than White British youth. However, they are more likely to have achieved this at the age of 19 than at the age of 17. Figure 7 shows participation in higher education by religion. Fifty three per cent of Muslims are in higher education by age 19 and a further 4% have applied to start in 2010 or 2011. Data on ethnicity (table 2) show that nearly half the population of Pakistani (49%) and Bangladeshi (47%) 19 year olds are in higher education compared to White students with only 38% in higher education. They also show that about the same proportion of White and Bangladeshi/Pakistani students are in Russell group institutions, whilst students of Indian origin are more likely to attend such institutions. Afro-Caribbean students appear to be under-represented in Russell group institutions compared with other groups. The issues relating to these data will be discussed further in the summary of achievement in both countries.

**Figure 1: Differences from average assessments, age 7-16; Children not on free school meals (FSM) (boys), England**



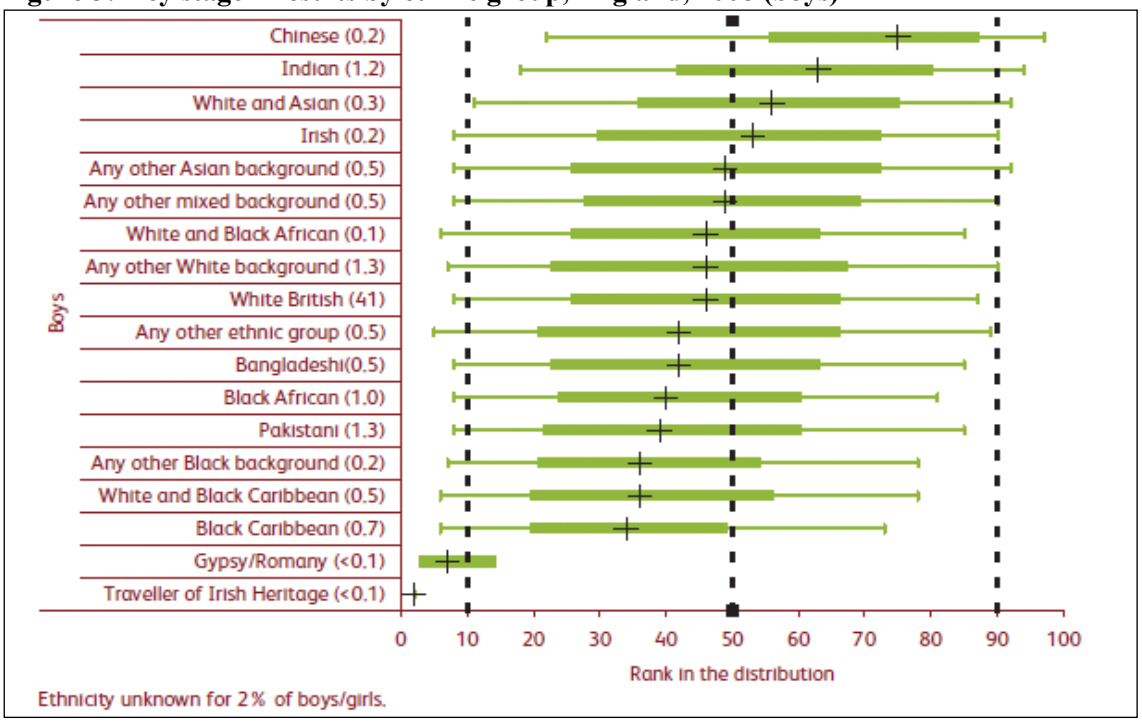

Source: Hills et al., 2010

**Figure 2: Differences from average assessments, age 7-16; Children not on free school meals (FSM) (girls), England**



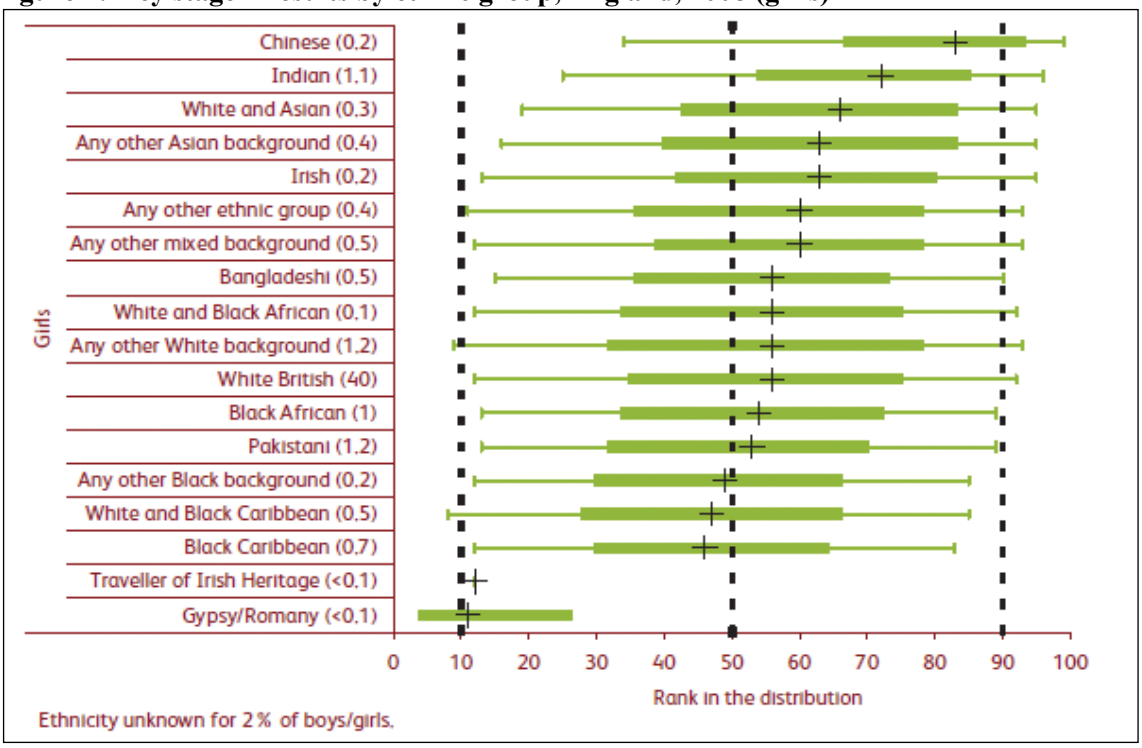

Source: Hills et al., 2010

**Figure 3: Key stage 4 results by ethnic group, England, 2008 (boys)**



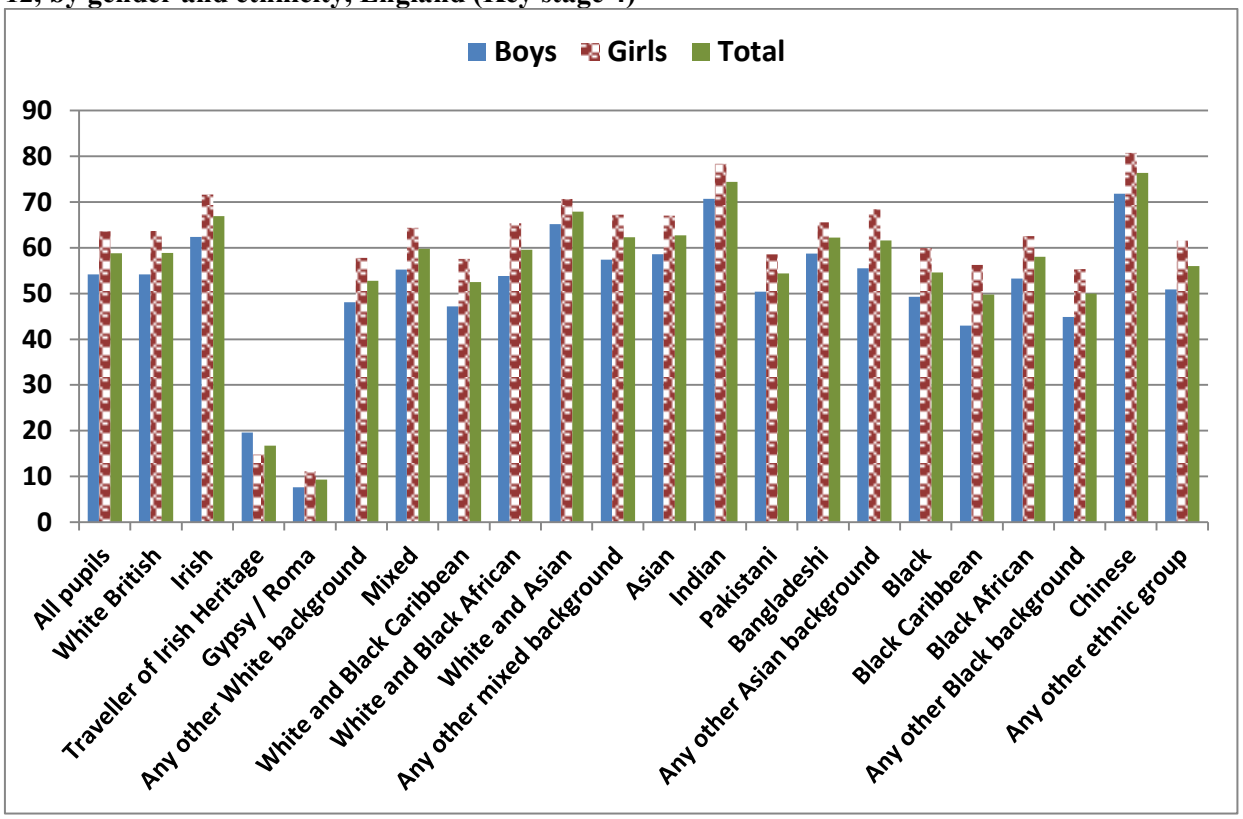

Source: Hills et al., 2010

**Figure 4: Key stage 4 results by ethnic group, England, 2008 (girls)**



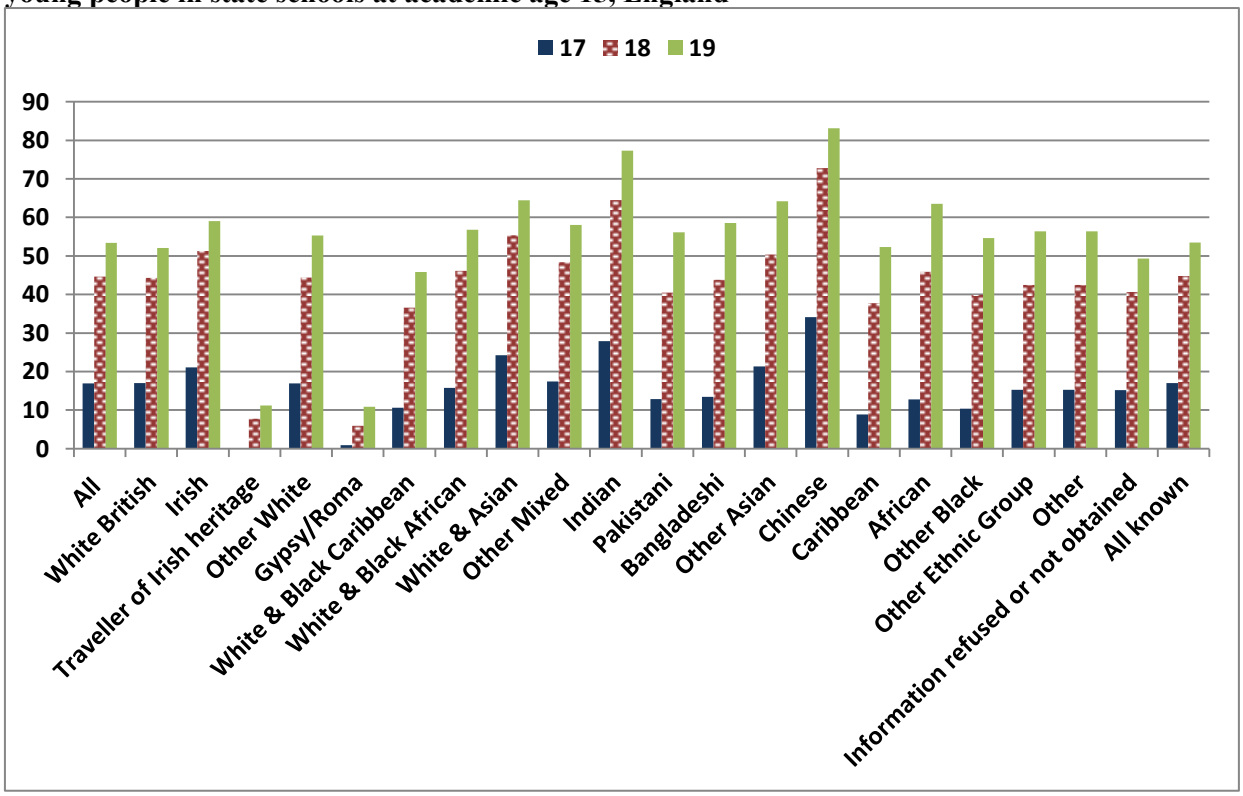

Source: Hills et al., 2010

**Figure 5: Percentage achieving 5+ A*-C grades including English and mathematics GCSEs 2011-12, by gender and ethnicity, England (Key stage 4)**



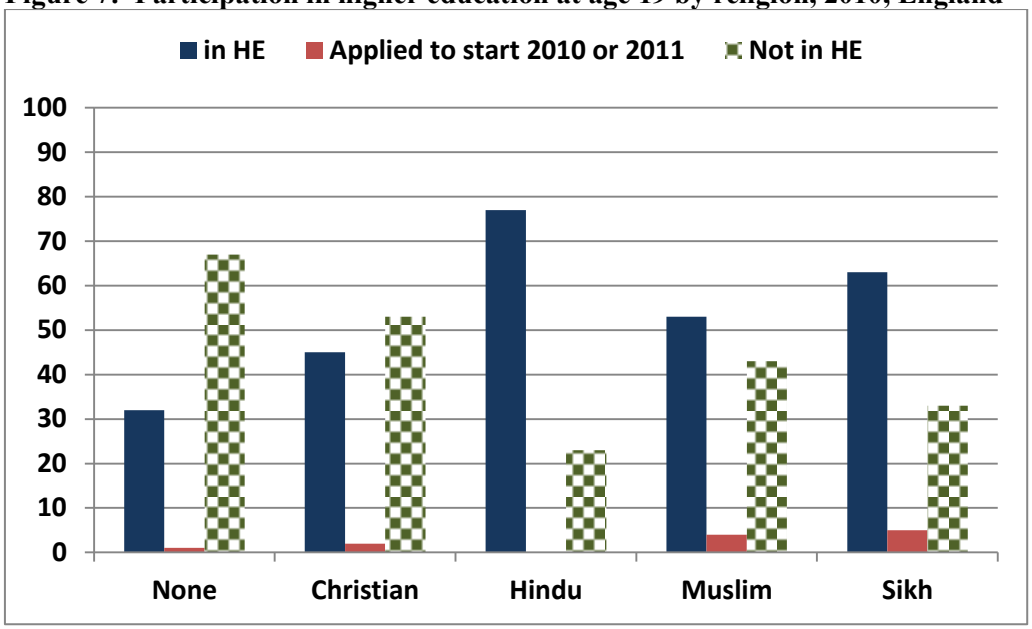

Source: Department for Education, 2013

**Figure 6: Percentage of young people qualified to Level 3 by ethnicity and age in 2011 cohort, young people in state schools at academic age 15, England**




Source: Department for Education, available on: http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s001059/index.shtml, accessed 5/2/2013

**Figure 7: Participation in higher education at age 19 by religion, 2010, England**




Source: Department for Education, 2011b

**Table 2: Type of higher education institution attended by ethnicity at age 19, 2010, England, percentages within each ethnic group**

| Ethnic group | Oxbridge[1] | Russell Group[2] excl. Oxbridge | All other HEIs | Not in HE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| White | 1 | 8 | 28 | 62 |
| Mixed | 2 | 8 | 29 | 60 |
| Indian | 1 | 13 | 60 | 26 |
| Pakistani | *[3] | 7 | 43 | 49 |
| Bangladeshi | * | 8 | 44 | 47 |
| Other Asian | * | 21 | 49 | 27 |
| Black African | * | 7 | 59 | 34 |
| Black Caribbean | * | 4 | 37 | 59 |

Source: Department for Education, 2011b

1. University of Oxford and University of Cambridge
2. University of Birmingham, University of Bristol, Cardiff University, University of Edinburgh, University of Glasgow, Imperial College London, King's College London, University of Leeds, University of Liverpool, London School of Economics & Political Science, University of Manchester, Newcastle University, University of Nottingham, Queen's University, Belfast, University of Sheffield, University of Southampton, University College London, University of Warwick
3. Number suppressed due to small sample size

A more detailed study of factors influencing educational attainment of Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils was carried out using the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LSYPE) (Strand, 2007). It allows for a more fine grained analysis of the social backgrounds of Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils in England. The survey was conducted in 2004 and included a representative sample of 15,000 pupils aged 13 or 14. Interviews on educational experiences were conducted with pupils and their parents/guardians. With regard to parental occupation, the Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils had less socially advantaged backgrounds compared with their White counterparts. Fifteen per cent of Pakistani and 7% of Bangladeshi pupils came from social classes I and II compared to 41% of White British pupils. Muslim pupils were also more likely to be entitled to Free School Meals (59% of Bangladeshi and 38% of Pakistani pupils compared to 13% of White British pupils). In relation to parental expectations, Pakistani and Bangladeshi parents had higher aspirations for their children than White British parents. Around 94% in both groups expected their children to continue in full-time education post school. Their involvement with the school was slightly lower than that of White Parents. The aspirations of the pupils themselves in relation to full-time tertiary education were also higher (over 90% of Pakistani and

Bangladeshi pupils hoped to progress to tertiary education, compared with 77% of White British). Pupils from these two ethnic minorities also had a more positive attitude to school than White British pupils and they were more likely to report completing homework than their White British counterparts. However, for Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils (as well as those of Mixed heritage and Indian backgrounds), attendance at religious classes seemed to impact negatively on their achievement and the suggestion made is that it reduced the time spent on homework. Bangladeshi pupils were marginally more likely to report having truanted at some stage during Key Stage 3 than White British but Pakistani pupils were less likely to state they had truanted. In contrast, Pakistani pupils were more likely to report absences for more than one month in the year than White British. Bangladeshi pupils were least likely to report this of all groups surveyed.

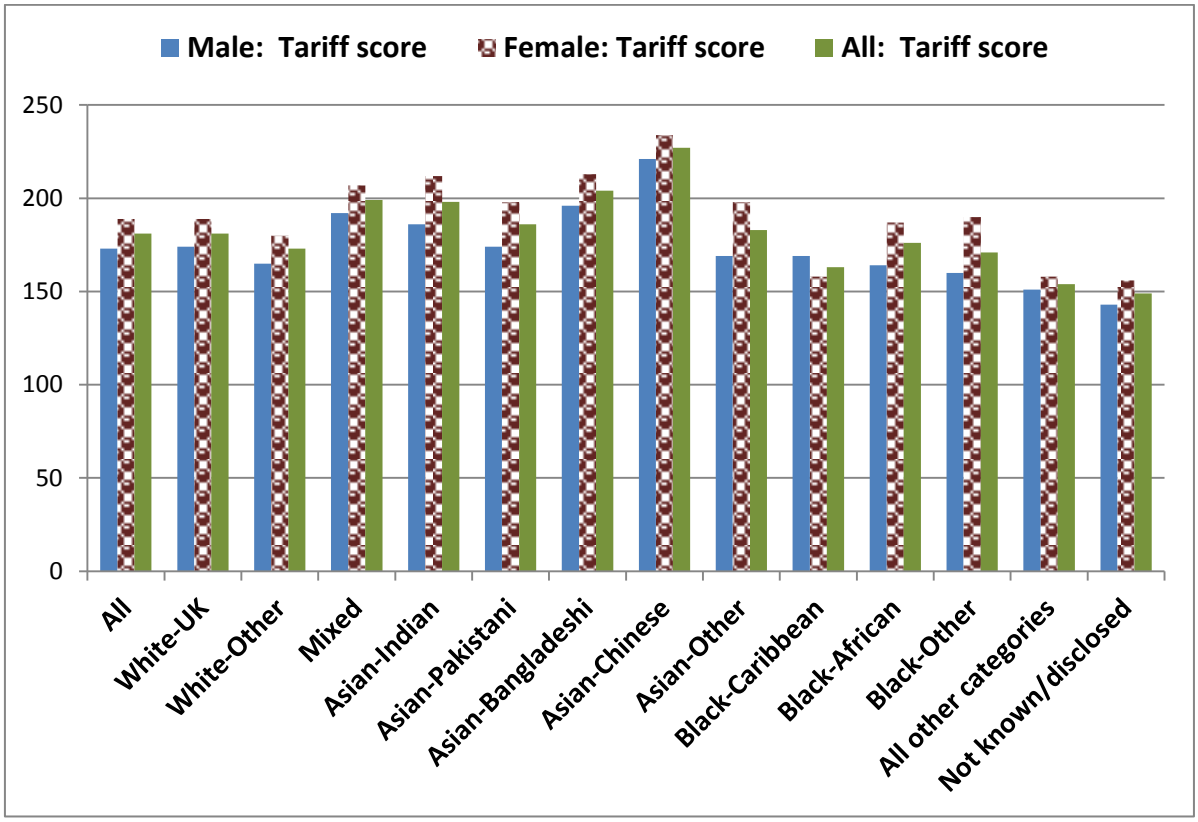
*Scotland*

In Scotland, 86.3% of the school population is White Scottish and the overall White school population is 93%. Asian pupils account for 3.2% of the school population and the largest group is Pakistani (1.7%). Bangladeshi pupils account for only 0.1% of the population (Scottish Government, 2012). This is different from England where the overall White population is 76.9% in primary and 79.8% in secondary schools. The proportion of pupils of Asian origin is 10.3%. As a proportion of all pupils, 4.3% are of Pakistani origin and 1.7% are of Bangladeshi origin. In secondary schools, the overall White population is 79.8%; the Pakistani population is 3.3% and Bangladeshi 1.4% (Department for Education, 2012). As a result of these variations in population, different categories are used in the two countries. This should be taken into account when making any comparisons between the two countries and also when interpreting data where numbers are very small (as in the Bangladeshi population in Scotland). Figure 3.9 shows the average tariff scores achieved by Secondary 4 pupils ('equivalent' to Key Stage 4) by ethnicity. Chinese pupils followed by Bangladeshi and Indian pupils achieved the highest scores. Pakistani pupils achieve above average tariff scores and perform better than White-UK pupils because of the high achievements of Pakistani girls. The scores of Pakistani boys are the same as for White UK boys. Those in the 'Not Known', 'All Other Categories' and 'Black Caribbean' categories have the lowest tariff scores. It is likely that those within the 'All Other Categories' group includes recent arrivals such as asylum seekers and refugees who may not be proficient in English. It is worth noting that at this level Pakistani boys perform as well as White UK boys, and girls' scores are higher than those of White pupils. This is not the case in England. In all cases girls perform better than boys except for Black Caribbean pupils, however, it should be noted that the numbers in this category are very small (Scottish Government, 2013).

Figure 10 provides information about Highers and Advanced Highers, again showing that Chinese pupils outperform all other groups. The proportion of Pakistani pupils gaining 5 Highers was slightly higher than for White pupils; a smaller proportion gained 1-2 Advanced Highers but about the same achieved 3+ Advanced Highers. Overall Scottish Pakistani pupils perform above average, whereas in England their performance is slightly below average. This may be because the Pakistani community in Scotland has been settled for a longer period than is the case in England. It is not possible to comment on the achievements at this level of Bangladeshi pupils as the numbers are very small.

Figure 11 shows that in Scotland, Asian students, particularly those of Chinese origin, are more likely to go to university than their white counterparts, who are more likely to go straight into employment. This, of course, does not imply that white pupils in general are failing to get into higher education in Scotland, but simply the large variance in levels of achievement amongst the indigenous population, reflecting very large social class differences (OECD, 2007).

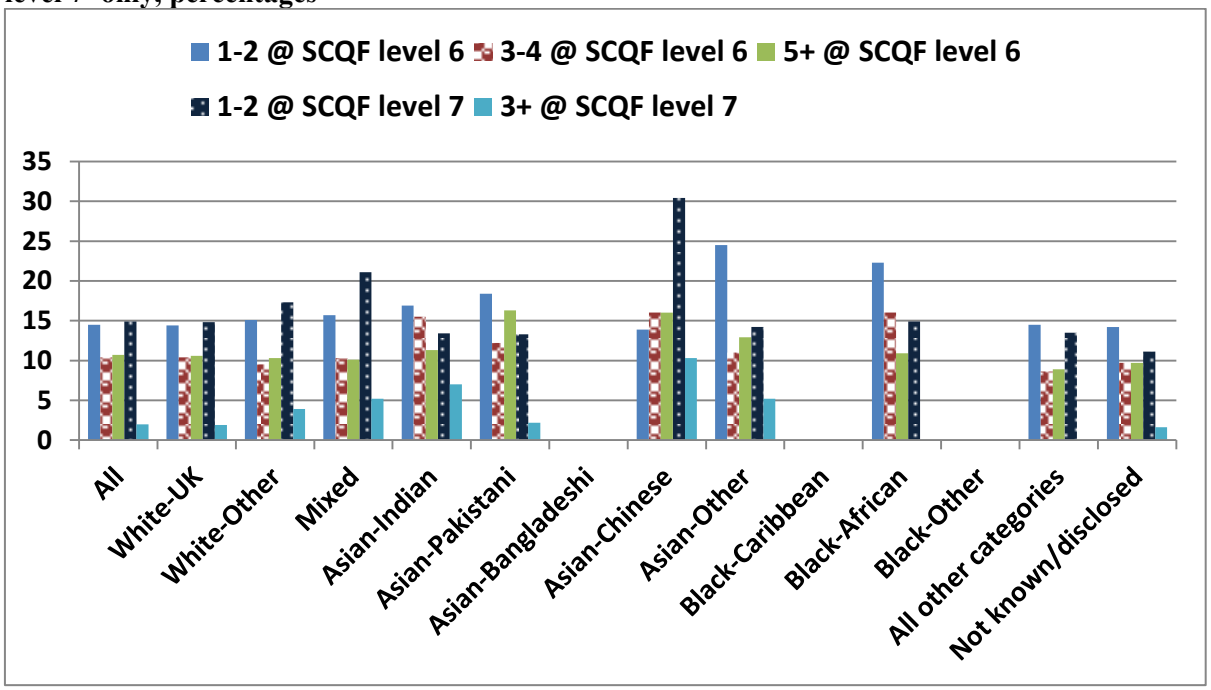
**Figure 9: Three year average tariff[1] score of Secondary 4 pupils by ethnic background, Scotland, 2008-09 to 2010-11**




Source: Scottish Government, 2012

1. 'The Unified Points Score Scale is an extended version of the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) Scottish Tariff points system. … The tariff score of a pupil is calculated by simply adding together all the tariff points accumulated from all the different course levels and awards he/she attains' (Scottish Government, 2012)

**Figure10: Highest qualifications attained by Scottish leavers by ethnic background, level 6[1] and level 7[1] only, percentages[1]**




Source: Scottish Government, 2012

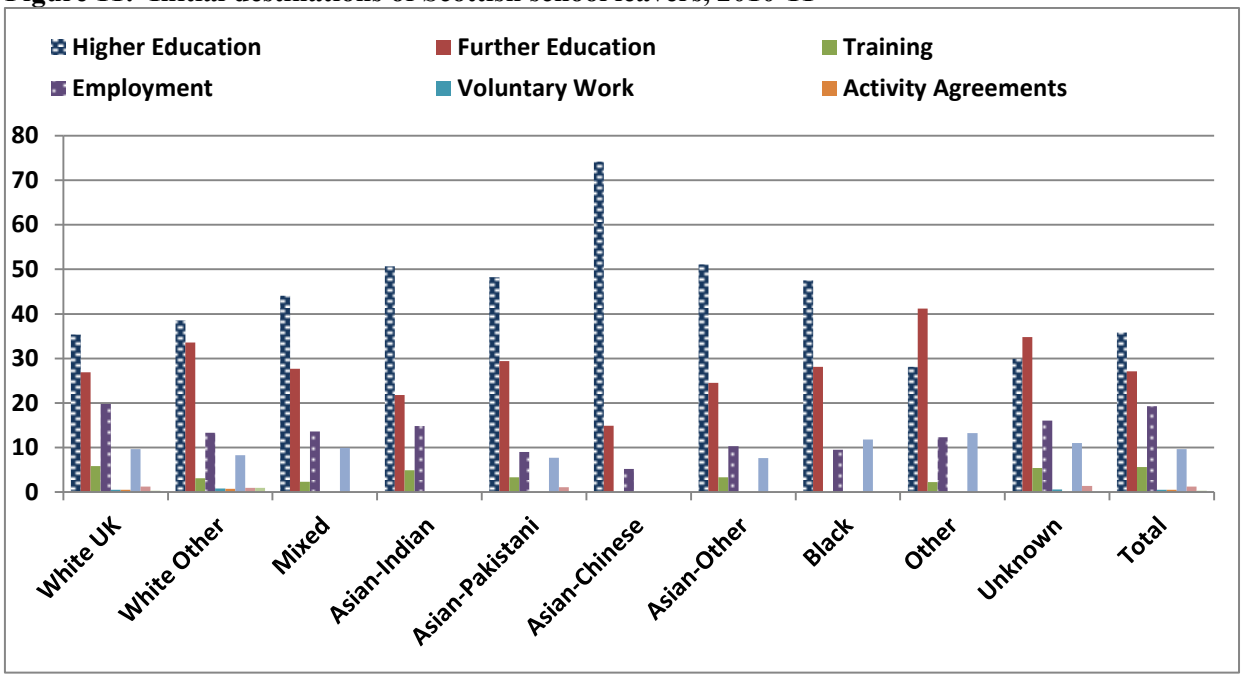
1. Level 6 is Higher qualifications; level 7 is Advanced Higher. Level 6 qualifications or above are required for university entrance; the most prestigious universities require a minimum of 5 Highers

2. Based on total population within ethnic group

Note that:

- All other categories consists of: Black-Other, Asian-Bangladeshi, Black-Caribbean, Occupational traveller, Gypsy traveller, Other traveller and Other
- Numbers below 5 are not included in publicly available data due to confidentiality issues

**Figure 11: Initial destinations of Scottish school leavers, 2010-11**




Source: Scottish Government, 2011

Note: that for some ethnic groups the numbers in certain categories, e.g. activity agreements and voluntary work numbers are disclosable (below 5) and these have not been included

Overall then, Asian young people, including a large proportion of Muslim pupils, are more likely on average to go to university than White pupils, but they have been more likely to attend less prestigious universities. The data in table 2 seems to suggest that this might be changing.

Data on the post-school experiences of Muslims in Britain, which relate to older age groups, point to less positive outcomes. As can be seen from figure 1.2, Muslim women are less likely to be in employment compared with other groups, and the employment rate for Bangladeshi and Pakistani men is lower than that of White UK males. According to data from the National Equality Panel, Bangladeshi and Pakistani men experience a pay penalty, indicating that they are paid less than other groups when previous educational qualifications are taken into account (Hills, 2010). These data probably explain why Muslim parents have high educational aspirations for their children. Education is seen as an important route to social mobility as noted by other researchers (see Shah et al, 2010)

*Discussion of statistical data on educational attainment*

A key point made by Strand (2007) is that 'it is important not to over-generalise from group mean scores to all members of any ethnic group' (Strand, 2007: 103). It is clear that focusing on ethnic background and treating these groups as homogeneous entities is problematic. Analysis of achievement of White UK pupils consistently shows a very wide spread in attainment reflecting the strong influence of social class. This was highlighted, for example, in an OECD report on the achievement of Scottish pupils (OECD, 2007). English data using free school meal entitlement (FSM) indicated a smaller impact of social class on some ethnic groups ( e.g Bangladeshi pupils) but a higher impact on Pakistani pupils (Archer and Francis, 2007). These researchers also stress the need to recognise the interrelationship between social class, ethnicity and gender and that analysis which only looks at average performance of specific ethnic groups masks the differences within these categories. Using Bourdieu's concepts of economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital, they suggest that within each ethnic group some parents are able to draw on privileged forms of capital to access the' best' education for their children.

Shah et al. (2010) explored educational achievements and outcomes focusing specifically on British Pakistani pupils. They were particularly interested in why some Pakistani young men from working-class backgrounds were more likely than White working-class to continue to further and higher education. To account for this they proposed the addition of 'ethnic capital' drawing on Zhou's concept of 'ethnic social capital'. This refers to 'familial or ethnic shared norms and values as contributing to educational achievement among immigrant groups' (Shah, et al: 2010: 1110). In their study of a group of 64 16-26 year old Pakistanis in Slough, they found that whilst social class influenced the educational outcomes of middle-class Pakistanis, ethnic capital accounted for the higher than anticipated achievements of some working class Pakistani boys. They also noted it was necessary to include gender in the analysis:

> … gender identities, constructed in relation to family expectations and peer influences, were a key factor in influencing their orientation towards education and career. (Shah et al, 2010: 1119)

These researchers commented on shifting cultural values, with Pakistani families increasingly having high educational and labour market aspirations for their daughters as well as their sons. In contrast, they noted different effects on some working class young men of Pakistani origin, where a peer culture emphasising non-conformity and negative attitudes towards school affected some detrimentally. However, this did not apply to all working-class Pakistani boys. Shah et al argued that the role and nature of ethnic capital mitigated the impact of class and peer group cultures and this explains why a greater proportion of Pakistani working-class boys attend higher education. They also noted the impact of religion on working class men's participation in higher education. Those who identified their religion as highly important and practised regularly were likely to have higher levels of education than those who did not. Overall, empirical research suggests that it is not feasible to examine parents' aspirations purely through the lens of ethnicity or religion. Rather, it is necessary to consider the impact of social class and gender as well.

**Parents' educational aspirations: findings from case studies**

It is against this backdrop that we consider the aspirations of the parents that we interviewed. It was clear that most of the parents had high hopes that their children would progress into higher education and many stressed this in relation to making school choices, especially at secondary level (see next section). A smaller number of parents also put emphasis on the status of the higher education institution that they wished their children to attend. Many parents recognised the increasing importance of academic credentials in a labour market that they perceived as changing and increasingly competitive. A small number of parents were concerned about the difficulties that their children may face because of their religion when going into higher education. This meant that some of the young people studied at universities close to home so that they could continue living at home or arrangements were made to ensure that they were not in the traditional types of student accommodation. In other cases, parents aspirations were high but not realised because of lack of resources. Whilst most parents were hoping that their children would study further, there were a small number who stressed that the most important thing for their children was their emotional and social well-being.

*Higher education as a means to a good career*

The first two cases studies are presented to illustrate the importance that many parents attached to gaining good qualifications in order to ensure access to good quality jobs. They also show this it is in part linked to their positions within their societies where they are part of an ethnic minority that can potentially face discrimination.

*Case study 34*

The family were from Malaysia and were currently living in Eastville, England. Both parents were highly educated and the father (Khalid) had studied in the UK and the children had attended local but carefully chosen state schools at that time. They had then moved to Singapore but returned on a temporary basis for the children to complete their A-levels at private school in Eastville because they felt Singapore did not have well-developed and academically excellent A-level provision. Jala, the mother had her own business which meant she could work from home using the internet and live with the children in England whilst Khalid worked in Singapore. They intended to return to Singapore but

wanted to ensure that their children achieved high academic qualifications. This was necessary, according to the parents as they were part of an Arab ethnic minority in Singapore where the majority are ethnic Chinese:

> we are Muslims and we are Arabs … we belong to 2% of the nation. In Singapore, if you're not mainstream ethnically it's twice as difficult … It's difficult to get good jobs, to be treated as equal, you have to be twice as good. (Jala, mother)

They were hoping and aiming for high flying university and for that reason were not restricting the children's choices to British universities:

> I mean of course … our preference is for them to do their university here, but Abbeylands School had a talk that they're not just in British universities but in American universities and I told the children, my daughter was in sixth form, you have choice to go anywhere, even if it's an American university you can. Of course it's condition if it's Ivy League really only, otherwise don't waste time (Jala, mother,)

The aspirations of the parents were reflected in their daughter's choice of career as she was applying to do medicine at a Russell group institution.

> Well I'm intending to do medicine, I'm in the process of completing my UCAS form, I'm actually applying to the University of Edinburgh and all the UL universities, like King's, Queen's and UCL. I want to be a paediatrician practising here hopefully and then after in the future I hope to go to countries where I can help less fortunate people in medical care. (Leena, aged 17)

For this family, the need to ensure that the children were well educated in order to access a good career was a strong theme in the interviews and the choice of Leena's career. The increasing importance of higher education in securing a good career was also in evidence in other case study but the reason related more to the changing opportunities for the Pakistani population in the labour market in the UK. Participants in Shah et al's (2010) study of young British Pakistani commented on changing labour markets for the Pakistani population and that parents had viewed education as a means to social mobility. Nuzhat, a mother of Pakistani origin (case study 33) was of this view:

> The other generation were mostly in the business in the shops so they didn't get much [education]…There are not many corner shops round now, there's supermarkets. Now all those men who had shops, they really want their children to do well in studies academically. It's improving in this generation. Because this is the third generation like I think our children will be the fourth generation here. (Nuzhat, mother)

Her eldest son had just started on a degree in Computing Science and Mathematics at a Russell group institution in a different city and her daughter was applying to do medicine. There seemed to be no problems with the children moving away from home to study although Nuzhat expressed some concerns about her son coping.

*Higher education whilst living with the family*

The emphasis on higher education and professional careers was also evident in the case below; however, in this case the family felt it unsuitable for their children to live away from home without parental support. This case study illustrates the tensions that exist for many parents between Western culture and their own home culture and religious values. This family had dealt with it by one of the parents relocating to look after the children whilst they were studying.

*Case Study 22*

The family were refugees from Afghanistan and both parents were well educated (Marid, the father had a PhD from a UK university). They had 3 children who were aged 23, 20 and 17. Their eldest, a daughter was currently studying medicine, their son was studying engineering and the younger daughter was in 6$^{th}$

year at school. Education was highly valued by the family and they were in favour of co-educational schools; however, it was not considered acceptable for their children to live in traditional student accommodation. For that reason Marid was living in River City and working as a private tutor at the time of the interview. His wife was in rented accommodation in another Scottish city to be with her children as they completed their studies. Marid explained that this was because in their culture it was not acceptable for the children to live on their own.

This case study illustrates some of the tensions that arise for both parents and young people when they come to the end of their compulsory education. There were some further examples of the young people continuing to live at home whist studying but also others where parents were trying to encourage their children to move away from home but the children preferring to study locally and live at home. This highlights the diversity within the Muslim population and the dangers of assuming that there is one 'Muslim' view.

*Post-school education and social class*

The families above had high aspirations and they had sufficient resources to support their children to move into higher education as was the case for a large proportion of our families. However, it was not the case for all as can be seen in case study 6.

*Case study 6*

This family, of Pakistani origin was living in an area consisting predominantly of social housing in Sea City. It was an area where the schools had to deal with the problems associated with social deprivation. The accommodation was an upstairs flat with limited space. Ramsha, the mother came to the UK when she got married but her husband had lived most of his life in the UK. There were 4 children in the family aged 18 (boy), 12 (girl), 10 (boy) and 8 (girl). Her eldest son had experienced difficulties in school which his mother ascribed to being bullied. He had not wanted to attend school and had fallen behind with his education. After he left school he had started a college course. He subsequently dropped out and was, at the time of the interview, working in a factory:

> I still wish he were back to the study. At the moment he's saying he will go back but I'm not 100% sure about it. (Ramsha, mother )

Ramsha's eldest daughter was in the first year of secondary school and spoke of wanting to go to college when she left school but was aware of her father's desire that she went to university:

> I want to go to college but my dad said – no go to uni. I want to do a beauty course in college … I'll go to college and then I'll go to uni (Roshini daughter, 12)

Whilst the parents' aspirations for the children were high, it seemed that, at least for the eldest son there were problems in realising these aspirations. The first three case studies indicate that the families possessed sufficient social and economic capital to ensure that their children would progress into higher education. Ramsha's family, on the other hand did not and there seemed to be little evidence of 'ethnic capital' as conceptualised by Shah et al (2010) mitigating the lack of other capital in terms of Ramsha's eldest son.

*Post school aspirations and emotional and social wellbeing*

It was quite clear that many of the parents were using strategies that would enable their children to access high status education to enhance their labour market outcomes. There were some concerns among several of the parents about not pressuring children into specific occupations. In addition there were some parents who felt that the children should do something they liked and also that their emotional and social well-being was as important as gaining high academic credentials. This is illustrated in the case studies below.

*Case study 28*

The parents, Aaquil (father) and Saila (mother) were of Pakistani origin but had grown up in the UK. They lived in Hilltown in the North West of England. Saila had a degree in biological sciences, was a

science teacher and had worked until her eldest child was born. Aaquil had left school to run his father's shop when his father had a heart attack. His older brother, who died a few years ago, had gone to university and then become a vice-principal of a further education college. They had 3 children aged 8 (a girl), 5 (a boy) and 20 months (a boy). They were adamant that they would like the children to continue into education because this was important for them and very important within the Asian community as already expressed by Nuzhat in case study 3:

> I hope that I can give my kids the balance, because education … as Muslims … we have a real desire to succeed in education because we feel that's in one way out of doing the traditional jobs that ethnic minority people do, and I understand that … You know the Asian community in this country I can only speak for the community that's round here, they see education as a gateway to anything they want, women see it as a gateway. (Aaquil)

However, Aaquil explained that he had been put under pressure from his parents to become a doctor and had not gained the relevant qualifications. He did not want his children to experience the same pressures so whilst it was important to him as well as to his wife that the children did their best in education his main emphasis was on hard work and doing their best:

> I would like them to be happy, I want them to do something different, I don't want them to live, I would love it if my little boy or little girl said to me dad I want to work in Malaysia, I want to work in America, I've got a job in France, I just want them to be happy, if my little boy said to me dad I'm going to be a doctor I would say good for you every day, my brother used to say to me if you want to be a taxi driver be the best taxi driver, whatever they want to do as long as they do it to be the best of their ability and to do it with respect, … My three kids that I've got I want them to develop as people [whose] minds are open, I don't want them to be just in Hilltown, how big's the world it's not just Hilltown. I want them to learn another foreign language other than Punjabi and English (Aaquil)

This emphasis on affective needs and choice was also evident in the following case study.

*Case study 1*
This family was also of Pakistani origin but lived on the outskirts of Sea City in their own house in a comfortable but not affluent suburb. Adifaah, the mother had grown up in the city, been educated at a private single-sex school and gained a degree in biological sciences. Like Aaquil she had been under pressure to do medicine. She had met her husband when travelling in Pakistan, he moved to the UK and they now had 3 daughters aged 11, 6 and 5. The eldest was just about to start secondary school. Adifaah felt that children needed emotional and social confidence as much as good grades in order to succeed in the labour market and that the children should choose their future occupation:

> I think I'd want them to feel confident first of all, happy in who they are, because I really believe if you don't know who you are then you just spend your whole life trying to figure out who you are. I want them to be passionate about something, it could be anything, it could be something academic, could be something outside school that they love, something like that. I want them to feel mentally and socially secure and what that means is having emotional confidence that's really number one for me, so they're not going to get emotional confidence if you go 'OK you've got your five grades whatever As grades you're perfect', that's not how to measure it. It's things like they understand what's happening, they know how to do things without feeling worried about stuff, they feel that they can communicate, they've got enough friends, they can identify contacts around them who to go to for stuff or they basically feel secure emotionally (Adifaah, mother)

Adifaah, like Aaquil and Saila spoke of wanting her children to travel and see the world. It was clear in many of the case studies that parents did not want to put pressures on their children to make particular choices; however, many put greater emphasis on good grades than these young parents did.

*Post-school education and intergenerational change*

Shah et al (2012) noted the need to explore gender in relation to aspirations of Pakistani parents because traditional values emphasised different roles for men and women. According to traditional values women were seen as home-makers and not requiring higher education. There was no evidence that these values were held by any of our participants. However, the case study below shows evidence of intergenerational change and there were some mothers who spoke of not having been allowed to continue into further education after school. This is shown in the following case study.

*Case study 26*

Saima was a woman in her 20s who had married young and gone to live with her husband's family. She had grown up in the UK and lived most of her life in the North West of England. At the time of the interview she was living with her own family in Hilltown, apart from her husband. The family owned their house but it was in an area which was strongly segregated by ethnicity. She was one of 7 children and had a large extended family. She had 2 young children, aged 5 and 1 who were living with her. She had not been allowed to leave home to study but had managed to do an Open University degree which she had just completed.

> I've never worked, I was married at 18. The family I got married into was not too heavy on women going out in the house so I never worked. I did manage to study. I did the Open University … a psychology degree from home, again because they weren't too keen on women going out to study. They have opened up since which was a bit crap for me I must say because I wanted to do it when I got married at 18 but at that time it was a big no, they wouldn't allow it, so I had to do it from home. I didn't want to just completely stop and be the sad old housewife, not because there's anything wrong with that. It is time-consuming but I just need that extra motivation, that extra stimulation. (Saima, mother of Pakistani origin Case study 26)

It was clear that Saima felt that education and gaining qualifications were important as they would help her children to get a good job. However, like Aaquil and Adifaah she did not feel it was right to push children into something that they were not able to do. Her son was very young and just at the beginning of his school career and she felt that it was important to pay attention to the needs and abilities of the child:

> Hopefully he gets through his GCSEs, get to college, gets a good career, anything that they enjoy. I want him to give the education system a chance at least ... if I knew what level he was at then maybe in my head I could say 'OK well he's bright then he could go in for Pharmacy or medicine, if he's not so bright may be something else, something on his level, I wouldn't want to push him on something he can't do. I don't think that's fair for either of them, I want them to try their best. (Saima, mother)

These case studies illustrate the children in our study did not face any restrictions on girls entering higher education. However, there was some evidence of concerns in relation to the pressures that the children might face when entering higher education and some families dealt with this by ensuring that girls were appropriately supervised either by living at home or with a 'chaperone'. However, there was also evidence of parents encouraging their children to move away from home and to travel. One mother spoke of encouraging her daughters to apply to universities away from home but had not managed to persuade her two eldest daughters to move away from home.

**Conclusion**

A number of researchers have noted high aspirations among immigrant communities. However, there have also been concerns about underachievement among some ethnic minority groups, in particular Black Caribbean boys and Pakistani boys. The secondary data gathered reflected the poorer achievement levels, compared to the average, of Black Caribbean boys and to some extent Pakistani boys in England. However, recent data in Scotland showed Asian Pakistani boys achieving at the same levels as White UK boys and girls outperforming White girls at Key Stage 4/Secondary 4. There seems to be an improvement in the overall performance of Pakistani pupils, suggesting high levels of parental

encouragement, but also good educational support within schools. At the same time, within each ethnic group there is wide variance in achievement associated with social class and, to a lesser extent, gender.

It was clear from the qualitative data that the majority of the parents had high aspirations for their children, reflecting changes in the labour market and the reduction in the number of low-skilled jobs. In the past, many immigrants found work in factories or had been shopkeepers and several of our interviewees referred to their parents having been in these occupations. Supermarkets have changed the nature of shopping in society leaving fewer opportunities for small shops and there is less work in manufacturing. High status, portable educational qualifications were seen as essential by many. However, although all wanted their children to achieve to the best of their ability, there were a small number of parents who downplayed the importance of qualifications and emphasised the importance of soft skills for personal development and successful integration into the labour market. In addition, parents with access to economic, social and cultural capital were in a much better position to support their children's achievement compared with parents living in socially disadvantaged circumstances. Many parents believed that children should choose their post-school destination and occupation independently. A number of parents spoke of 'others in their community' putting pressure on their children to go into high status occupations such as medicine and had experienced such pressure themselves. There was no evidence that girls were being denied further or higher education and many stressed that education was highly valued in Islam and as important (some said more important) for girls as it was for boys. The importance of education in life was something stressed by all parents and well expressed by a father of two daughters:

> And for us, as most Muslims and our particular type of Muslim community, the pursuit of education, it's very important. And it gets drummed into you from a very, very young age that if there's ever an opportunity to pursue quality education then you take it. … Because that's the one thing you can actually take with you. (Fadil, a middle-class father of Indian origin with postgraduate education)

In summary, this research has demonstrated that even within a small sample there is variation between individuals who identify as Muslims and that this variation is linked to context, culture and socio-economic status. In many respects, the choices they make and the concerns they have about their children's futures are similar to parents from other backgrounds. However, many are also concerned about helping their children develop a Muslim identity that allows them to retain their faith in a multicultural society. Problems with widening levels of inequality across OECD countries, accompanied by growing divergence in educational attainment according to social class, are a major issue for Muslim pupils as for other groups. As noted by the OECD (2008), stemming the trend towards wider educational and economic inequality is vital to preserve social cohesion.

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