The Governance foundation

Community Conflict and Cohesion in Handsworth and Lozells (Birmingham)

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1.   Introduction: The National Cohesion Policy Context

The emergence of the concept of community cohesion in public policy, can be traced to violent disturbances which took place in the Bradford, Burnley and Oldham during the summer of 2001. In the aftermath of these disturbances, Central Government initiated five reports in order to examine the causes behind, and factors that contributed to, the events and make recommendations on the way forward. These reports were published in 2001 and 2002. Three of the reports sought to provide more detailed information regarding the disturbances that took place and the local circumstances that gave rise to the events in each of the three northern towns[1], and the two other reports[2] provided a national overview of the causes behind and wider policy implications arising from the disturbances. All of the reports identified ethnic and racial segregation as a growing problem and a significant contributory factor to the disturbances.

The independent Community Cohesion Review Team, chaired by Ted Cantle (generally referred to as the 'Cantle Report'), was a national review established by Government to seek the views of local residents and community leaders in the three affected towns and in other parts of England on the issues that needed to be addressed to bring about social cohesion and also to identify good practice in handling these issues at the local level[3]. The key finding from the Cantle Report was the depth of physical segregation and social polarisation of communities evident in many of England's urban areas and the idea of many communities living '*parallel lives*":

> *"… the team was particularly struck by the depth of polarisation of our towns and cities. The extent to which these physical divisions were compounded by so many other aspects of our daily lives, was very evident. Separate educational arrangements, community and voluntary bodies, employment, places of worship, language, social and cultural networks, means that many communities operate on the basis of a series of parallel lives. These lives often do not seem to touch at any point, let alone overlap and promote any meaningful interchanges ….. There is little wonder that the ignorance about each others' communities can easily grow into fear; especially where this is*

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[1] (Burnley Task Force (2002) *Report of the Burnley Task Force*; Oldham Independent Review (2001) *One Oldham, One Future. Panel Report*, Oldham: Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council; Ouseley, H. (2001) *Community Pride not Prejudice. Making Diversity Work in Bradford*. Bradford: Bradford Vision.
[2] Home Office (2001) *Building Cohesive Communities: A Report of the Ministerial Group on Public Order and Community Cohesion*. London: Home Office; Home Office: Independent Review Team (2001) *Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team*, London: Home Office.
[3] Home Office, Independent Review Team, 2001, op cit

> *exploited by extremist groups determined to undermine community harmony and foster divisions"* [4]

The Cantle Report went on to distinguish between social cohesion, which was evident in increasingly divided communities where individuals are integrated into their own local ethnic or faith-based communities, and community cohesion, where participation and interaction should take place across communities, knitting them together into a wider whole:

> *"Community cohesion … is about helping micro-communities to gel or mesh into an integrated whole. These divided communities would need to develop common goals and a shared vision. This would seem to imply that such groups should occupy a common sense of place as well"* [5]

Furthermore, the Cantle Report suggested that area-based regeneration initiatives had reinforced the separation of communities at the local level and that *"some communities felt particularly disadvantaged and that the lack of hope and the frustration borne out of the poverty and deprivation all around them, meant that disaffection would grow"* [6]. The Cantle Report made some 67 specific recommendations to Government regarding the way forward in promoting community cohesion. One set of the key recommendations focused on combating the *"fear and ignorance of different communities which stems from the lack of contact with each other"* [7], through each area preparing a local community cohesion plan, which would include a focus on *"the promotion of cross cultural contact between different communities at all levels, foster understanding and respect, and break down barriers"* [8].

In response to the Cantle Report and the three local review reports, the Government established an inter-departmental Ministerial Group on Public Order and Community Cohesion, chaired by (then) Home Office Minister John Denham MP. The ministerial group's report (known as the Denham Report) set out actions that could be taken by Government to minimise the risk of further disorder, and help build stronger and more cohesive communities [9]. The key recommendation from the Denham Report was

> *"… the need to make community cohesion a central aim of Government, and to ensure that the design and delivery of all Government policy reflects this. We recognise that in many areas affected by disorder or community tensions, there is little interchange between members of different racial, cultural and*

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[4] Home Office, Independent Review Team, 2001, op cit, paras 2.1- 2.3.
[5] Ibid, p. 70.
[6] Ibid, para 2.10
[7] Ibid, para 2.16
[8] Ibid, para 2.17
[9] Home Office , 2001 op cit)

religious communities and that proactive measures will have to be taken to promote dialogue and understanding"[10].

Following on from the national and local reviews a working definition of community cohesion was developed by Government in conjunction with the Local Government Association, and the Commission for Racial Equality[11].   This definition was further refined by the Commission on Integration and Cohesion, which argued that a new of cohesion definition was needed which reflected increasing local complexity and changing patterns of migration, and one that went beyond issues of race and faith[12]. The Commission, however, noted that there were distinct differences between the concepts of cohesion and integration:

> "*Cohesion is principally the process that must happen in all communities to ensure different groups of people get on well together; while integration is principally the process that ensures new residents and existing residents adapt to one another. Different communities will have different relationships between existing residents; and differing levels of new residents arriving. So our view is that the two processes go on side by side, and that they interact with one another as local communities experience change and develop a shared future together. We also want to make clear that cohesion is not just about race and faith, and that integration in particular is not about assimilation*"[13].

More specifically, the Commission stated that integration is a key contributor to wider community cohesion with both being regarded as "*two tightly interlocking concepts*"[14]. Following on from the work of the Commission, Central Government set out a new vision for a cohesive and integrated society:

> "*Community Cohesion is what must happen in all communities to enable different groups of people to get on well together. A key contributor to community cohesion is integration which is what must happen to enable new residents and existing residents to adjust to one another.*
>
> *Our vision of an integrated and cohesive community is based on **three foundations**:*
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> - *People from different backgrounds having similar life opportunities*
> - *People knowing their rights and responsibilities*

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[10] Home Office, 2001, op cit, para 7
[11] LGA, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Home Office, Commission for Racial Equality (2002) *Guidance on Community Cohesion*. London: Local Government Association
[12] Commission on Integration and Cohesion (2007a) *Our Shared Future*. www.integrationandcohesion.org.uk
[13] Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007a, op cit, p. 9
[14] Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007a, op cit para 3.2 -3.4.

- *People trusting one another and trusting local institutions to act fairly*

And **three key ways of living together**:

- *A shared future vision and sense of belonging*
- *A focus on what new and existing communities have in common, alongside a recognition of the value of diversity*
- *Strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds"*[15].

Since 2002, issues associated with race, ethnicity and faith have been a central theme in the national community cohesion agenda. This emphasis is evident in the Government's strategy on race equality and community cohesion[16], the report of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion[17] and the Government's response to the Commission's report. In particular, the Government's race equality and cohesion strategy – *Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society* – brought together (in a single document) the Government's objectives and priorities with regard to improving race equality and promoting community cohesion[18].

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[15] Department of Communities and Local Government, 2008a, *The Government's Response to the Commission on Integration and Cohesion*, Communities and Local Government: London
[16] Home Office (2005) *Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society: The Government's Strategy to Increase Race Equality and Community Cohesion*. London: Home Office
[17] Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007a, op cit
[18] Home Office, 2005, op cit

2.   Promoting Cohesion Through Community Interaction

In recent years there has been a significant growth in Central Government interest in the quality and frequency of contact and interaction between different communities at the local level, as a means of promoting cohesion. This interest can be traced back to concerns about communities living 'parallel lives' and engaging in 'self-segregating' activities and practices[19]. Indeed, the Cantle Report stated that in area based regeneration initiatives '*the development of cross-cultural contact and the promotion of community cohesion, was not valued as an end in itself*'[20], and went on to state that:

> "*It is unfashionable to speak of loving one's neighbour, but unless our society can move at least to a position where we can respect our neighbours as fellow human beings, we shall fail in our attempts to create a harmonious society in which conditions have changed so radically in the last 40 years. Such respect depends, in part at least, on being open with one another about differences of belief, tradition and culture. In our anxiety to eliminate the forms of insulting behaviour and language, we have created a situation in which most people are now unwilling to open any subject which might possibly lead to uncomfortable differences of opinion. In this lies a big danger. If neighbours are unable to discuss differences, they have no hope of understanding them. Those who wish to cause trouble then have a fruitful field in which to operate. The recommendations in our report seek to create conditions in which all of us can engage in open debate on issues which affect us all and when, as is inevitable, disagreements become plain there will then be a real chance that they can be accepted with mutual respect*" [21]

Nonetheless, evidence from the national Citizenship Survey indicated that 82% of people felt that individuals from different backgrounds get on well in their area.

The importance placed on community interaction as both a factor in generating poor cohesion at the local level and as potential tool to promote cohesion is evident in the range of policy papers and research that has been conducted at the national level[22]. Indeed, the Government has clearly stated that "*meaningful interaction between people from different backgrounds has been shown to breakdown stereotypes and reduce prejudice*"[23].

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[19] Home Office: Independent Review Team, 2001, op cit
[20] Ibid, para.2.9
[21] Ibid, para. 5.1.16
[22] *Commission on Integration & Cohesion, 2007b,* Bringing Communities and People Together www.integrationandcohesion.org.uk; Commission for Racial Equality, 2007, *Promoting Interaction Between People from Different Ethnic Backgrounds*, Commission for Racial Equality: London; Department of Communities and Local Government, 2008b, *Guidance on Meaningful Interaction*, Communities and Local Government: London
[23] Department of Communities and Local Government, 2008b, op cit p.11.

In line with this view, Central Government has identified improved meaningful interaction between people from different backgrounds as a national policy priority. In the Government's response to the Commission on Integration and Cohesion's report, building positive relationships between people from different backgrounds was identified as one of six key principles, that formed the focus of a national programme of work to support the local delivery of cohesion[24]. Furthermore, in 2007 a new single national public service agreement (PSA) was developed focused on community cohesion. This cohesion PSA (PSA 21 to build cohesive, empowered and active communities) sought to capture the breadth of the Government's national ambition with regard to building integrated and cohesive communities. The Government's progress on achieving this cohesion-focused PSA is measured against three national indicators (two of which directly focus on community interaction):

- The percentage of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area

- The percentage of people who feel that they belong to their neighbourhood

- The percentage of people who have meaningful interactions with people from different backgrounds[25].

3. A Review of Cohesion in the Handsworth and Lozells Area of Birmingham

3.1 The 2005 Handsworth & Lozells Disturbances: Background and Local Responses

In October 2005, there were violent disturbances in Lozells, when members of the African Caribbean and Asian communities clashed after the circulation of rumours about an alleged rape of a 14 year old African Caribbean girl in a local Asian-owned business, the 'Beauty Queen' shop. Following demonstrations and a call for a boycott of Asian shops, a 23 year old Black Council Information Technology worker was murdered by a group of Asian youths as he made his way home in the area from the cinema. In the violence that occurred during the Lozells disturbances, 347 crimes were committed, including 12 firearms offences and 12 attempted murders, and 80 people were injured[26].

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[24] Department of Communities and Local Government, 2008a, op cit

[25] Department of Communities and Local Government, 2008c, *Cohesion Delivery Framework Overview*, Communities and Local Government: London.

[26] Black Radley (2007) *Lozells Disturbances: Summary Report*, Birmingham, Black Radley Ltd, p.5; Focus Consulting (2006) *Listening to Lozells: The Birmingham Dialogues*, London, Focus Consulting, p.4.

These disturbances were different from previous riots or 'uprisings' in the area dating back to 1985, when the conflict was mainly based on tensions between the black community and the police. In 2005, the disturbances were based on tensions between the Asian and African Caribbean communities in the area. The catalyst was the rumoured rape, but the underlying conditions had to do with values, cultures and perceived inequalities in relation to access to material benefits and resources. When the community was asked what had created the disturbances, the answers were many and varied. Nevertheless, the two dominant responses were 'drugs and gangs' and 'community mistrust'. When asked what could have prevented them, the focus of responses was on better communication and a greater police presence[27].

An initial review into the causes behind the Lozells was commissioned by Birmingham City Council and undertaken by consultants Black Radley. The Black Radley Report pointed to a number of issues that lay behind the fault lines between the communities at that time: persistent disadvantage, worklessness, housing and population change, democratic representation and the orientation of the statutory agencies[28]. Related issues included the changing ethnic population of the area; clashes of fundamental value systems including views of women; unashamed stereotyping by young Blacks and Asians; competition for commercial opportunities, access to jobs and public funds; the exclusion of young people from community participation; the growth of local gangs; statutory agencies that do not fully engage with the issues and the distribution of community funding in a way that undermines cohesion.

The way the disturbances were handled and calmed down by a combination of community representatives and facilitators, the police, city council officers and members, the youth service and others is potentially an example of good practice which has still to be written up. The immediate aftermath was then followed by a flurry of activity by partnership agencies, much of which either appears to have disappeared or to have developed into new actions and policies. It is difficult to trace the linkages through to the present time but, following the disturbances, Birmingham City Council's response was based on a partnership approach resulting in the Council co-ordinating and leading a partnership of key agencies to develop and deliver a strategic agenda for Lozells; it also commissioned two pieces of research on how local inequities contribute to the fracturing of communities[29] and on the work undertaken by the Lozells Partnership[30].

The Lozells Partnership Group, which was set up in response to the disturbances included the West Midlands Police, GOWM, the Probation Service, the Commission for Racial Equality, the Community Safety Partnership, Birmingham University and

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[27] Black Radley (2007) *op. cit.*
[28] Black Radley (2007) *op. cit.*, p.10.
[29] Focus Consultancy (2006) *op. cit.*
[30] Black Radley (2006) *Community Relations in Lozells: An outline of Good Practice*, Birmingham, Black Radley.

various directorates and services of the City Council including Local Services, Equalities, Housing, Corporate Communications and PR, Youth Services and Regeneration. An action plan with six core activity projects was agreed. The projects were Community Consultation and Empowerment; Inter/Intra Community Relations and Community Engagement; Safer Environments; an Investment Plan; Youth Engagement and Services and Tension Monitoring.

The Community Consultation and Empowerment project considered how to improve communication with the voluntary sector and community groups and pointed to the need to bring some synergy and greater purpose to communication and information channels. The objectives of the Inter/Intra Community Relations and Community Engagement project were to research the area of community relations and bring forward proposals on best practice. The Safer Environments Project carried out an environmental audit to identify litter hotspots and recommend action to reduce environmental crime. The Investment Plan Project produced a ten year strategy for development in Lozells and East Handsworth, based on encouraging investment into North West Birmingham. The Youth Engagement Services Project set out to develop a multi-agency development group which strengthened the young people's sub-group of Birmingham Reducing Gang Violence in the City Council and develop key voluntary and community sector groups working in this field. In addition a Tension Monitoring Framework Project set up a framework for analysing and reacting to rising tensions in the area.

In pursuit of community cohesion, a wide range of strategies, projects, priority working groups and sub-groups, task groups, inter-faith groups, service teams and commissions were set up both locally and at a city level. Although many of these groups appear to no longer exist, the setting up of the Community Team, the appointment of Neighbourhood Management Teams and the formation of the Handsworth and Lozells Action Steering group are all expressions of the public sector's commitment to resolving the cohesion issues in the area.

Recent information for the area, however, suggests that the problem has not gone away and standard socio-economic indicators do not lead us to be positive for the future. Handsworth and Lozells score poorly in the Indices of Deprivation, is a reception area for new migrants, has a high proportion of old properties in the private rented sector, suffers from overcrowding and a high turnover of residents, and has high levels of unemployment and Worklessness, particularly amongst young people. On the basis of these indicators, we might expect to find a community under stress, with tensions high. On the other hand, Handsworth and Lozells is also a super-diverse area, which contact theory might lead us to expect higher than average levels of community cohesion. This in turn leads us to ask whether the profile of the area and the experience of recent conflict can tell us anything about the relevance of the social theory that underpins government policy for Community Cohesion.

3.2 Profile of Handsworth and Lozells

3.2.1 *Race and Ethnicity*

The two constituencies that include the Handsworth and Lozells area are the most ethnically diverse in the city[31]. Of the 28,806 people who lived in the Lozells and East Handsworth Ward at the time of the Census in 2001, 83% were in the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) population. This compares with 30% in Birmingham as a whole[32]. However, the ethnic composition of these areas is changing over time. More recent figures show that the Perry Barr constituency is one of the most ethnically diverse in the city and that the Handsworth and Lozells area, which is slightly larger than the Lozells and East Handsworth ward, has one of the highest proportions of BME populations in the city (See Tables 1 and 2 in Appendix 1).

3.2.2 *Deprivation*

In 1997, the Indices of Deprivation showed that Handsworth was the 30th most deprived ward in the country, a position which was better than nine other Birmingham wards[33]. Following the introduction of Output Areas in the 2001 Census and changes to geographies of wards in 2004, the boundaries of the Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) that are used in the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) in 2007 are not consistent with the boundaries of the new Lozells and East Handsworth Ward. Nevertheless, there are 18 LSOAs that are within or mainly within the ward. The IMD scores for these LSOAs for 2007 provide a fairly accurate picture of the level of deprivation in different parts of the ward and in the ward as a whole.

Of these LSOAs, two are amongst the one percent of the most deprived areas in the country, a further seven are in the worst three per cent and six have levels of deprivation that place them in the bottom 5%. That is, of the 18 LSOAs in Handsworth/Lozells, 15 (over 80%) are amongst the 5% most deprived areas in England and Wales.

Another feature of the area is the importance of new migrant communities. Levels of international migration have risen significantly in recent years, particularly from the EU Accession States. Employers have generally welcomed new EU migrants, mainly because they have been filling jobs that were previously hard-to-fill. It is argued that if these migrants are seen to be displacing some indigenous people from

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[31] BMG (2008) *op.cit.,* p.97.
[32] http://www.bebirmingham.org.uk
[33] Middleton, A., Loftman, P and Schaechter, J (1997) Birmingham – The International Convention Centre, *Urban Redevelopment and Social Polarisation in the City: Vol 1,* Lille, ILFRESI, p. 118.

employment, this could lead to resentment[34]. More important for Handsworth/Lozells, migration from the Indian subcontinent is still significant and, if the recent European migrants are seen to be replacing either earlier migrants or their British-born children in the labour market, this too could harm community cohesion. There is already some evidence that young black and Asian people are expressing such resentment and that, within the migrant community itself, both Iranians and Kurds accuse the Poles of working for less than the minimum wage[35]. Almost all Polish respondents are employed, including Polish women. In contrast, the vast majority of refugees are unemployed – between 70% and 90% of each community and almost all women[36]. The main reasons for unemployment amongst this group are language and lack of UK work experience or qualifications. Obviously, these indices of deprivation are not indicators of a lack of Community Cohesion. They may however, contribute to inter-ethnic conflict.

3.2.3 Housing

Recent information suggests that home ownership in Handsworth/Lozells stands at 56%, compared with 71% the rest of the city and the same percentage in the Perry Barr constituency[37] . In contrast, 21% of housing in the city is social housing, compared with 27% in Lozells and East Handsworth and 33% in Lozells and Birchfield West (L&BW). This balance of tenures is to some extent a reflection of the social class composition of the ward, but it is the importance of private renting that distinguishes it from other parts of the urban area and helps explain some other features of the area. Seventeen per cent of the households in Lozells and East Handsworth rent from private landlords, compared to just 7% across Birmingham.

Because of the way that the statistics are presented in different surveys, we cannot compare length of residence of respondents in Handsworth/Lozells with respondents across Birmingham. However, it would appear that residents in Handsworth/Lozells may be just as likely as others in Birmingham as a whole to have been living in their area for more than 10 years and more than 20 years[38].

The fact that the private rented sector is so important has implications for the stability of the population of Lozells and East Handsworth. This housing tenure is characterised by relative ease of entry and exit, contributing to the rate of immigration and out-migration in the area. Irrespective of the cultural attraction that Handsworth and Lozells might have for new migrants, with its high proportion of

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[34] West Midlands Regional Observatory (2008) *Birmingham, Coventry and the Black Country City Region – Outline Strategic Economic Assessment,* Birmingham, WMRO, p.32.
[35] Phillimore, et al (2008) *The Neighbourhood Needs of New Migrants, University of Birmingham*,
[36] Phillimore, et al (2008) *op. cit.*, p.42.
[37] Vector (2009) *op. cit.*
[38] This requires further analysis and verification but these figures suggest that there is a substantial long-term residential population co-existing with significant short-term churning

stable residents who were born outside of the UK, the ease of entry into housing in the area confirms Lozells and East Handsworth as an accessible destination for new arrivals. Once they find a niche in the city's employment market, if they decide to stay in the city, they are able to identify locations where they would rather live, and they move on – leaving residential space for other new migrants.

In 2008, 34% of new migrants to three Neighbourhood Management Areas in north-west Birmingham were living in the private rented sector, many in shared accommodation[39]. Some, such as asylum seekers, had little choice of where to live when they arrived in the UK but stayed on because the area was familiar to them and they had local friends and family in the community. For others, the point of arrival was a starting point, before moving on. Some, such as the Kurds, initially settled with friends around them but moved on later because the area was seen as unsuitable for families. People come for the cheapness and accessibility of housing, to enjoy the multi-cultural aspect of the area and absence of racism, and move on for a variety of reasons. Nevertheless, initial impressions were mainly negative: they had difficulty in accessing information and were confused by the complexity of bureaucratic systems; they thought the housing was of poor quality and that landlords did not fulfil their responsibilities; they noted the dirtiness of the streets and thought it was unsafe. Like the indigenous population and longstanding migrants, they were deeply concerned about violent crime and the poor environment[40]. Lack of English was an issue in their difficulties with negotiating the systems and communicating with others around them.

Anecdotal evidence from around the country suggests that as councils and housing associations improve the quality of life of their tenants by the removal of problem tenants from their estates, these families are moving into the housing that is being snapped up cheaply by private landlords in Housing Market Renewal and NDC areas. We don't know for certain if this is happening in Birmingham but, if it is, it will be having a direct and negative impact on the lives of the people of Handsworth and Lozells. The numbers may be so small that they are not picked up in official statistics, but the local impact of small numbers of anti-social residents can be immense.

A large minority (39%) of private housing stock within the North West Birmingham and Sandwell Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder area fails the decent homes standard[41]. There has been a decline in the social rented sector, most notably as a result of the clearance of the least desirable housing stock, whilst the private rented sector has made ground on the owner occupied sector as a result of the strong

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[39] Phillimore, et al (2008) *op. cit.,* p.33.
[40] Phillimore, *op. cit.,* p.34.
[41] Latchford, P (2007) *op. cit.,* p. 11.

growth in buy-to-let investment[42]. The growth in private renting has, to some degree, occurred as a result of the shortage of 'affordable housing for sale and a reducing/static social housing stock at a time of strongly rising demand'[43]

An additional problem is that overcrowding is evident in both the social rented sector and older private rented properties where, 'there is also a concentration of families living in unsuitable accommodation'[44]. This is reinforced by Latchford who notes that[45]:

> Over 80% of dwellings in the private rented sector are in the pre-1919 stock. With just over half of all tenants moving within a year and three quarters within three years, churning in these neighbourhoods is high, adversely impacting on neighbourhood stability.

In Handsworth, this view is reinforced by anecdotal evidence and data gathered during the 2007 Keith Newell consultancy exercise, which suggests that 'double renting of rooms (day and night shift)' is taking place in respect of individuals from newly arriving communities[46]. This double-renting phenomenon has been confirmed by local public sector workers in the area.

The high turnover, or churn, of tenants is confirmed by Tribal, who indicated that 44% of tenants in their survey had been resident for less than a year. The Tribal study identified that the PRS market within the pathfinder area 'continues to influenced by international migration – 58% of respondents were born outside the UK'[47].

3.2.4 Unemployment

Over the past 25 years, unemployment in Handsworth and Lozells has been well above the city average and there is evidence that the gap has been growing. There is also evidence that as the economy of the city and the nation improves, the relative performance of the area deteriorates compared to the city and the country as a whole. When the national economy picked up in the 1990s, the situation in the Handsworth ward improved more slowly than the rest of the city. In 1992, in the midst of the last recession, the unemployment rate in Handsworth was 1.8 times the

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[42] Urban Living (2008): Affordable Housing Policy for Urban Living 2008-11; ECOTEC (2006): *Future Demand for Affordable Housing: Final Report*.
[43] Urban Living (2008) *op. cit.*, p.2.
[44] *ibid.*
[45] Lachford (2007), *op.cit.,* p.11.
[46] Keith Newell Consultancy (2007) *Perry Barr District. Handsworth Neighbourhood Management Initiative. Baseline Assessment*, p.22.
[47] *Ibid.,* p. ii.

city average but as the economy picked up the gap between the ward and the rest of the city grew[48]. By 1997, unemployment in the old Handsworth ward was 2.0 times the average. This is a reminder of what we might expect as the national economy recovers from the current recession, with all its implications for community cohesion. At 2.4 times the city average in 2008 (Table 3) and with rates for the long-term unemployed even worse, at 2.9 times the city average, the difference between unemployment in the ward and the city is already greater than it was in 1997, and it will inevitable grow as the economy moves out of the present recession. Lower levels of education, skills and work experience, along with the stigma that the area suffers amongst employers, will ensure that this transpires. In May 2007, unemployment rates in Lozells and East Handsworth were almost seven times the national average for England and Wales [49]. In the Perry Barr constituency, the Bangladeshi population is six times more likely than the white to be long-term unemployed, the Pakistani more than four times and Blacks more than three times[50].

Levels of worklessness[51] are more concentrated in certain demographic groups than others – under 25s and over 50s, those with a disability and black and minority ethnic groups in particular. The proportion of the working age population in Lozells and East Handsworth who have no qualifications is 10% higher than in the city as a whole (47% against 37%) and 18% higher than the national average[52]. At the time of the last Census, the proportion of people in the bottom three occupational categories[53] was 54%, compared to 32% citywide[54]. This is reflected in below average earnings. With an estimated 86% of the population belonging to BME groups, the unemployment figures are not surprising.

NOMIS statistics suggest that youth unemployment rates are 1.6 times those in the city as a whole[55]. However, other figures show that young people, aged 16 to 18 years old, were only marginally more likely to be 'Not in Education, Employment or Training' (NEETS) than people of the same age in other parts of the city (7.15%compared to 6.9%)[56]. As unemployment rises towards three million, young people in areas such as Handsworth/Lozells will be disproportionately affected. This means not only higher unemployment during the recession, with divergence between

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[48] Middleton, A., Loftman, P and Schaechter, J (1998) Birmingham - United Kingdom Case Study, *Urban Redevelopment and Social Polarisation in the City: Vol. 1,* Lille, ILFRESI, p. 39.

[49] Be Birmingham (2008), *Lozells and East Handsworth Ward Profile*, p.14

[50] Birmingham Economic Information Centre (2007), op. cit., p15.

[51] Worklessness is defined as those of working age who are not employed, whether or not they are seeking work. The 'Working Age Client Group' includes those not seeking work but in receipt of at least one of a range of benefits that can be paid to people of working age.

[52] Birmingham Economic Information Centre (2007) *Perry Barr Constituency: Economic and Employment Profile*, Birmingham City Council.

[53] SOC2000 - Sales and customer services; process, plant and machine operatives; and elementary occupations.

[54] www.birmingham.gov.uk/community

[55] Birmingham Economic Information Centre (2007) op. cit., p.14.

[56] Be Birmingham (2008), *Lozells and East Handsworth Ward Profile*, p.15.

the area and other parts of the city increasing, but also these differences in unemployment continuing to increase during the recovery because the young people in Handsworth/Lozells are least able to take advantage of the new opportunities. Unemployment while young causes permanent damage for future employment prospects. It increases the chances of unemployment later in life and reduces lifetime earning capacity. If it is the case that employers outside Handsworth/Lozells are reluctant to employ people from the area, this may contribute to local tensions. However, enterprise in the area is also declining.

3.2.5 Enterprise

Since 1999, the ward has lost almost 60 of its 700 enterprises, after new starts and closures are taken into account. This net loss of local firms represents a drop of around 8% at a time of economic growth in the economy, when the number of firms in the constituency grew by 5% and in the city by 6%. Business survival rates are also well below average. A new business in Lozells and East Handsworth has less than a 50% chance of surviving 4 years, compared to 60% in Birmingham as a whole. There is a common perception that there is a high rate of self-employment in Handsworth and Lozells and this becomes expressed in an assumption that young Pakistanis will be better able to bear the brunt of the recession because they can find under-employment in their parents' businesses. In fact, at the time of the last Census, the level was lower than in Birmingham as a whole and much lower than was the case nationally (8.7%, 9.1% and 12.4% respectively)[57]. Nevertheless, the perception amongst Afro-Caribbean population that the Muslim community benefits disproportionately from government support is a powerful driver of conflict.

3.2.6 Cohesion Indicators

In the 2007 Local Area Agreement Survey, 80% of respondents from across Birmingham agreed with the statement that their local area was one where people from different backgrounds get along (Table 4). This compared with only 11% who disagreed and 9% who were not sure. The net agreement (80% - 11%) with the statement, which is taken as a measure of cohesion in the report, was 69%. (This has increased from 61% in 2004[58]).

The survey also shows that the Perry Barr constituency has an 80% level of net agreement, the highest of all the constituencies in the city and an improvement of 5% on the previous survey of 2006[59]. Following the disturbances in Lozells in 2005, this would appear to be a remarkable result. It has raised the question as to why such a high proportion of the residents of the constituency are in agreement that they

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[57] www.birmingham.gov.uk/community
[58] BMG Research (2008) *Local Area Agreement Survey*. BeBirmingham, p.26
[59] *Ibid*., p.28. This compares with a 55% net agreement in Yardley, the lowest in Birmingham.

live in an area where people of different backgrounds get on well together. It has been suggested that it may be because the constituency is very diverse and has been so for a long time. People from different backgrounds have become accustomed to living together; neighbourhood management programmes in Handsworth and Lozells have addressed community cohesion issues in their neighbourhood plans and the introduction of neighbourhood policing has resulted in people feeling safer and more committed to their communities. It has also been suggested that, as each year passes following the disturbances, people's feelings of a sense of community and togetherness are increasing[60].

In a household survey carried out for Urban Living in 2008, the results are rather different[61]. In the Urban Living area as a whole, only 62% of respondents agreed that 'people from different backgrounds get along well around here'. Net agreement with the statement was only 56%. In the Handsworth and Lozells area, only 54% agreed that people get on and 7% disagreed, giving a net agreement of just 47%. The balance of 39% would not commit to either agreeing or disagreeing. In contrast with the constituency, many people were not sure. Digging down further, the situation in the area where the disturbances took place is even bleaker. In Lozells and Birchfield West, only 45% agreed that people from different backgrounds get on well and 7% disagreed, resulting in a net agreement of only 38%. If net agreement is indeed a measure of community cohesion, this is a far cry from the celebratory 80% in the Perry Barr constituency. The best that can be said is that 48% of the people in Lozells and Birchfield West are not sure if people of different backgrounds get along well in the area. The most likely reasons for this is that people from different backgrounds do not mix with each other, do not know each other, and make no effort to get along.

The Urban Living survey also suggests that there is a poor sense of belonging in the area. While 21% of the population in the Urban Living area do not feel a bond with their immediate neighbourhood (that is, not a very strong sense of belonging or not at all), the corresponding figure in Lozells and Birchfield West is 29%. The authors of the report also point out that 'a quarter of respondents [in the Handsworth and Lozells area] did not feel that bond with their neighbourhood, area, city or England'[62]. In Lozells and Birchfield West, around one third does not feel a bond with their local area, Birmingham or England.

These figures raise questions about the interpretation of the good constituency figures, which have been used to suggest that because the area has been diverse for a long time, people have become accustomed to living together and, as time passes, people's sense of community is increasing. In addition, data on the changing

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[60] E-mail correspondence.
[61] Vector Research (2009) *Urban Living Household Survey 2008: Handsworth and Lozells*, Vector Research, p.36.
[62] Vector Research (2009) *op. cit.*, p.38

ethnic composition of the area would suggest that the underlying cohesion issuers are not just about relations between the white and other communities.

3.2.7 White/Black/Indian Flight

In Table 5, we can see that in the inter-census period 1991 and 2001, in addition to 'white flight', there was a substantial loss of people with an Indian background, despite the growth in numbers in the city as a whole. There was a growth of 20% in the Black population but, since this was much less than in the city as a whole, we might assume that segments of the Black population are also moving out. The Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities are increasing substantially, but more or less in line with the increase in these populations in the city as a whole.

A variety of sources provide different figures for the current ethnic profile of Handsworth and Lozells but by combining some of them we can get a reasonable picture of the current situation[63]. In Table 2, we saw that in Handsworth/Lozells the population is 48% Asian and 32% Black and that there is some minor variation across the area.

In Table 3, we saw that the Asian population, as a proportion of the total population, is 20% Indian, 19% Pakistani and 8% Bangladeshi. This, of course, is far from being a homogenous ethnic community. It is divided by a history of conflict in the Indian subcontinent, territory in Birmingham and religion - and there is anecdotal evidence that there is division not only between these groups but also within them. It is to the credit of faith and other community leaders that the historical conflict seldom finds its expression in Birmingham but, once again, it would be wrong to be complacent

The complexity of the changes that are taking place in the ethnic composition of the area are compounded by changes in other aspects of social demographics that will be confirmed by the 2011 census. These changes relate to class composition of the area; anecdotal evidence suggests that the Black middle class is moving out, that family sizes may be getting larger and that the numbers of young people are increasing. We might also anticipate future changes in the importance and nature of the joint or extended family system as young British Asians continue to move into the housing market. All of these issues and other socio-economic factors will have an impact on future cohesion in the area.

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[63] Sources include: BeBirmingham (2008)*Lozells and East Handsworth Ward Profile*; Vector Research (2009); BMG (2008); BeBirmingham (2008) *Neighbourhood Profiles.*

4.   Conclusion

The experience of Handsworth/ Lozells highlights the cohesion risks associate with a neighbourhood experiencing a combination of high levels of deprivation, economic and social disadvantage and longstanding and deep rooted community tensions in a locality exhibiting the characteristics of super-diversity. It is difficult to argue with the Government's emphasis placed on the promotion of greater interaction between people and communities from different backgrounds in support of community cohesion. Indeed, it is almost tautological. Nevertheless, the situation in Handsworth and Lozells raises a number of questions for a school of thought that arose out of divisions between White and Pakistani Muslim communities in a number of northern towns during 2001 and in the wake of the events of 9/11 in New York. How does Contact Theory apply to communities with multiple ethnicities and super-diversity?

The Community Cohesion issues in Handsworth/Lozells are different from those in the northern towns. When the Perry Barr constituency (within which Handsworth Lozells is located) scored highly on a key national and City community cohesion indicator, there was a tendency to celebrate this as an example of the value of the theory: it was thus because people of different backgrounds had become accustomed to living together. Digging down further into the available evidence suggested a different picture: a lack of cohesion and a lack of agreement that people got on well together where the theory would be most likely to predict it. There is conflict not only between Black and Asian young people, but also evidence of tensions within the Asian Community and anecdotal evidence of conflict between recent incomers and both the Black and Asian population.

In these circumstances, it is difficult to agree that Contact theory is wholly applicable to the circumstances of areas experiencing problems similar to those evident in Handsworth and Lozells. This in turn raises questions about the wider applicability of the Government's focus on improving community interaction as a key element of its national approach to building integrated and cohesive communities at the local level. The cohesion problems of Handsworth/Lozells are rooted in its social and economic characteristics, some of which can be treated fairly quickly by local policy-makers, while others will require a 20-year plan of infrastructure investment in and around the area.

There are also questions about the quality of the evidence that is driving policy. The Place Survey may be asking valid questions concerning community cohesion and interaction and gathering important data to enable Government and local partnerships to measure progress on key cohesion-related national indicators. In most local authority areas, however, the Place Survey as currently constituted will not produce adequate and robust evidence concerning community cohesion at the neighbourhood level. In the Perry Barr area of Birmingham, pre-Place Survey

generated community cohesion data was produced at the constituency level, which led to a celebration of success in promoting and maintaining community cohesion and interaction, and there may be many cases of positive outcomes at the ward level that also disguise neighbourhood problems. In order to uncover positive or negative evidence at the neighbourhood level, local knowledge needs to be captured to identify places for further survey work – and the survey methodology needs to interview sufficient numbers of residents allow the significance of the results to be tested. Focus groups and interviews with community leaders are not sufficient for understanding whether a particular community is any different from others in the same district or nationally.

Appendix 1

Table 1: Ethnic Diversity

	Birmingham	Perry Barr	H&L	Lozells & BW	Other H&L
	%	%	%	%	
White	67	43	14	13	16
Mixed	2	3	3	2	3
Asian	21	33	48	50	48
Black	8	18	31	32	30
Other	2	2	3	3	4

Note: H&L is Handsworth and Lozells, BW is Birchfield West
Sources: BMG (2008), p.97; Vector (2009) p.6.

Table 2: Ethnic Profile: Handsworth & Lozells, Lozells & Birchfield West (BW), and Other Handsworth & Lozells

		H&L	Lozells & BW	Other H&L
		%	%	%
White		**14.4**	**12.9**	**15.6**
White British		10.4	11.1	9.9
White Irish		0.9	0.5	1.3
Other White		3.1	1.3	4.4
Mixed		**2.6**	**2.2**	**2.9**
White & Black Caribbean		1.3	0.0	2.3
White & Black African		0.3	0.5	0.1
White & Asian		0.3	0.3	0.3
Other mixed		0.7	1.4	0.2
Asian		**48.4**	**49.5**	**47.7**
Indian		20.2	13.1	25.5
Pakistani		18.6	21.0	16.8
Bangladeshi		7.8	14.8	2.7
Other Asian		1.8	0.6	2.7
Black		**31.5**	**33.8**	**29.9**
Caribbean		22.5	20.5	24.0
African		7.7	10.5	5.7
Other Black		1.3	2.8	0.2
Other		**2.9**	**1.7**	**3.9**
Chinese		1.1	0.6	1.5
Other Ethnic Group		1.8	1.1	2.4

Source: Vector, 2009, p.6

Table 3: Unemployment and Disability in Lozells and East Handsworth

	Date	L&EH %	Perry Barr %	B'ham %	L&H/B'ham
Unemployment (claimant count)	May-08	19.9	8.7	8.2	2.4
Income Support	May-07	13.1	7.7	9.2	1.4
Incapacity Benefit & SDA	May-07	11.0	7.9	8.9	1.2
Long Term Unemployment	May-08	10.7	4.4	3.7	2.9
Youth Unemployment	May-08	21.3	14.7	15.8	1.3
Worklessness	May-07	30.4	19.8	21.6	1.4

Source: http://local.bebirmingham.org.uk [Accessed May 2009]

Table 4: Community Cohesion in Birmingham, Perry Barr, Handsworth & Lozells, and Lozells & Birchfield West (B. West)

Percentages agreeing that this is an area where people from different backgrounds get along						
	2007		2008			
Responses	Birmingham %	Perry Barr %	Urban Living %	Handsworth & Lozells %	Lozells and B.West %	
Agree	80	n.a.	62	54	45	
Disagree	11	n.a.	6	7	7	
Net Agreement	69	80	56	47	38	
Not sure	9	na	32	39	48	

Table 5: Change in Ethnic Populations 1991-2001

% CHANGE IN % SHARE	White %	Black %	Indian %	Pakistani %	Bangladeshi %	Chinese %	Other %
Soho / Handsworth	**-23.68**	**19.19**	**-12.77**	**51.42**	**63.25**	**1.06**	**59.19**
Birmingham	-10.35	34.06	7.41	54.82	60.98	51.72	54.57

Source: 1991 Census, 2001 Census – elaborated in Urban Living (2005) *Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Needs and Aspirations*.