

Third Sector Research Centre

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## **The black minority ethnic third sector: a resource paper**

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## Abstract

Contributing towards building a foundation of knowledge on the black minority ethnic (BME) third sector, this paper offers an introductory resource on research in this field. The paper begins with discussion on the (contested) concept of a BME third sector (BME TS) and the existing narrative of distinctiveness; it then goes on to highlight the importance of robust comparative analyses to identify empirical trends of difference between subsectors in order to examine the policy implications for the different subsectors. In an attempt to bring together a disparate collection of material on the BME third sector the remaining section of the paper provides brief overviews of material about different types of organisation that might constitute the BME TS in the broadest sense of the term. These include: refugee and asylum seeker organisations (RCOs), faith based organisations, diasporic immigrant community organisations, black organisations, gypsy and traveller organisations and multicultural organisations. In closing, the paper identifies gaps in the current research base that will be of interest to the wider research community and will inform TSRC's cross-cutting equality research programme.

### Keywords

Black minority ethnic, third sector, distinctiveness

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### Acronyms

BME	black minority ethnic
BMEO	black minority ethnic organisation
BR	below the radar
CLG	(Government Department of) Communities and Local Government
GA	grassroots association
LGBT	lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender
RCO	refugee community organisation
RNGO	religious non-governmental organisation
TS	third sector
TSRC	Third Sector Research Centre
VCO	voluntary community organisation

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## Introduction

There is a wealth of material on the black and minority ethnic (BME) third sector, albeit, much of this is produced by and for BME third sector (BME TS) organisations. There are various narratives on the challenges faced by the BME TS (in comparison with the wider third sector) from this body of literature. In particular, these tend to be on the (unequal) access to resources and on the difficulties of sustaining the development of BME organisations (see, for example, Voice East Midlands 2003). Further, and partly reflecting anticipated cuts in mainstream funding, there is work to suggest that these inequalities are likely to widen in the current economic climate (see, for example, CEMVO 2010 and ROTA 2009).

Despite the plethora of material on this, there is little empirical evidence with systematic comparative analyses between the BME and their counterparts within the third sector. Without this, the (potential) implications of these differences can run the risk of being treated as nothing more than rhetoric. As a first step, then, the purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of the material on the BME sector, with a focus on papers published in academic journals. The aim of this is to contribute towards improving the foundations of knowledge on the BME TS by identifying gaps in the literature and to highlight where more empirical analyses can help towards furthering understanding on the sector. This will, subsequently, help inform the TSRC's cross-cutting research agenda and could raise further questions for the third sector research community at large.

More so, an important dimension to this paper is to provide a resource for readers on the literature on diverse parts of what might constitute the BME TS. This is by no means comprehensive; nonetheless, it will at least introduce the (contested) concept of the BME TS, highlight the need for systematic comparative analyses to further understanding on the sector and to provide an indication on the different types of groups that might fall under this heading and some of the challenges and issues that face them. The paper is divided into three main parts: the introduction includes data from the most recent census (2001) to show the prevalence of ethnic minorities in the UK and a list of sources used for identifying literature on the BME TS. In the second section discussion focuses on two frequent assertions made about the BME TS: first, that there is such a sector and second that this is distinct from its wider mainstream counterpart. Literature that focuses on the latter assertion tends to oscillate between claims that BME groups contain unique characteristics through to claims that they are subject to distinctive experiences. The third section consists of rapid overviews for each of the different types of organisation that might constitute the BME TS, in the broadest sense of the term. These include: refugee and asylum seeker organisations (RCOs), faith based organisations, diasporic immigrant community organisations, black organisations, gypsy and traveller organisations, and multicultural organisations. Several of these categories overlap and are arbitrarily defined and are not without their own contestations. Here, however, they are used to help sort and manage information, and are not used for any particular philosophical or political position.

## Background

### Demographics of the BME population

Using data from the most recent UK census (2001), the table below summarises the proportion of the UK population who self-identify as BME. For 2001, almost 8% (7.9%) self-identified as something other than white British. Of these, the most frequently reported categories include: 'Asian/British Asian' (50%), followed by 'black/black British' (23%).

**Table 1: The BME population in the 2001 Census**

	% Non-white population %	
White	92.1	
Mixed	1.2	14.6
Indian	1.8	22.7
Pakistani	1.3	16.1
Bangladeshi	0.5	6.1
Other Asian	0.4	5.3
All Asian or Asian British	4.0	50.3
Black Caribbean	1.0	12.2
Black African	0.8	10.5
Black Other	0.2	2.1
All black or black British	2.0	24.8
Chinese	0.4	5.3
Other ethnic groups	0.4	5.0
All minority ethnic population	7.9	100
Total	100	

Source: 2001 Census, Office of National Statistics, <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/default.asp>

The data generated from the census survey is not without flaws: there are well documented problems to do with defining ethnic minority populations in which census categories tend to conflate skin colour, ethnicity and nationality. In addition, the census was taken a decade ago: a time in which the UK has experienced changes to its population structure – not least with the expansion of the EU and increased immigration from new members. Nevertheless, census data remain the most reliable and comprehensive source for statistics on the UK non-white British population at national level. Though not precise, this data can provide some indication or benchmark for the population that run BME groups and who they aim to serve, at a general level. To illustrate, in a UK survey study on community development workers, Henderson and Glen (2006) found that the percentage for minority-ethnic groups reflected census statistics.

Using the table above, supported by Henderson and Glen's (2006) research, one can assume that the majority of BME TS organisations are run by, and are for, people of Asian and African-Caribbean origin. Added to this are refugees and asylum seekers, who overlap with the categories mentioned above but also present specific issues (discussed further in later sections). Further, it is likely that there has been an increase in TSOs aimed towards the Eastern European migrant population to reflect recent demographic trends (see section 3 on diasporic and immigrant community organisations).

### **Approach to literature review**

As noted earlier, the term 'BME' is contested; to ensure capturing a breadth of work this is used in the broadest sense to include material on TSOs that are *run by* and TSOs that are *for* black and minority ethnic groups. Further, the term 'ethnic' is not used to focus on 'visible minorities' – a definition adopted in some of the work discussed later on. The terms used to search material are listed in Table 2 along with a list of journals.

**Table 2: Journals reviewed**

Journals	Search terms
Community development journal	Asylum seeker
Nonprofit and voluntary sector quarterly	Black
Voluntas	BME
	Eastern European migrant
	Ethnic minority
	Catholic
	Chinese
	Christian
	Gypsy traveller
	Immigrant
	Irish
	Jewish
	Muslim
	RCO
	Refugee
Ethnic and racial studies	Community group /organisation
Ethnicities	Nonprofit
Race/ethnicity	Third sector
Race and class	Voluntary
Race and society	Volunteer
Journal of black studies	RCO
Journal of ethnic and migration studies	
Journal of refugee studies	

Complementing this, a selection of books was identified from article bibliographies and material published for TSOs that were located using internet searches and existing contacts.

Though the emphasis in this review is on academic literature and research that focuses on the UK context, there is a large volume of international research, particularly concerning the US, and grey literature from the UK. Subsequently, where relevant, we have drawn on some of these to discuss different aspects of the BME TS. A note of caution, however, is that this is by no means a comprehensive literature review. This is not least to do with balancing the volume of material with resource constraints, but also because there is likely to be material in disparate journals across different disciplines that are not captured here. In addition, with the contested concept of BME it is possible that certain issues, viewpoints or communities have been inadvertently excluded from searches through material.

## The BME third sector

### What is the BME third sector?

Defining the BME third sector is double-edged in that one first needs to define the ‘third sector’ to then move on and discuss the *BME* third sector. Since discussion on the wider third sector is well-documented elsewhere (see, for example, Alcock 2010 and Halfpenny and Reid 2002), the focus for this paper is on the BME TS. Like the wider sector, defining the BME TS is a contested field; going further to question its existence (Butt 2001). The term ‘BME TS’ presents several challenges; not least because several labels are used interchangeably and with nuances, such as ‘ethnic associations’, but also because it is evident even from this initial literature review that there are several ways in which any one label can be used. Each approach has definitional ambiguities that highlight the problematic nature of defining groups within the population. Nevertheless, as a starting point, reviewing these is a useful exercise and serves as a reminder to be reflexive when adopting definitions and categories to understand aspects of the BME TS.

At one end of a broad and messy spectrum is material in which the term BME TS is relatively inclusive – used to describe diverse ethnic, religious and cultural groups. At the other end is that which tends to use tighter definitions to refer to particular groups of people, such as ‘visible minorities’. To illustrate some of the broader approaches used to define BME communities, in a report produced for Volunteer Development Scotland and Black and Ethnic Minority Infrastructure in Scotland (BMIS) (Reilly 2004) offers the following explanations:

**Black and minority ethnic (BME)** — For this research we have taken this to be representative of all the diverse groups within BME communities, not just those mainstream religious and cultural groups within general awareness.

Note: Not all groups who took part identify themselves with the term black and minority ethnic. However, we have used it as the most representative and recognised term for all those we consulted.

**Black and minority ethnic diverse communities** — For the purpose of this research, we have chosen to use the term black and minority ethnic diverse communities to represent the entire body of those who were consulted throughout the research. (p.1)

In this case, the approach adopted is relatively inclusive and suggests that 'white' is not excluded from the BME term. Nevertheless, the definitions are vague, conflated with religious and cultural groups and assume a tacit understanding of what is meant by BME.

In contrast, in a mapping study on the BME TS in England and Wales, McLeod et al. (2001) refer to BME TSOs as those led by 'visible minorities' and expound on this by stating that 'groups such as Jews, Poles, Italians, Cypriots etc. are not included' (p.2) nor are religious organisations. From their findings, McLeod et al. (2001) estimate that there are 5500 BME-led voluntary and community groups. Like this, another mapping project on the BME TS in the East Midlands (VEM 2003) used the term 'black and minority ethnic' to mean 'visible' (non-white) minorities'; nevertheless, they indicate the tensions of definition in this field by later stating that "black and minority ethnic organisations" are defined as organisations primarily led by and servicing people from black and minority ethnic communities, but increasingly to a growing number of white communities' (VEM 2003: 2).

The methods used for this study are not clear, though it is known that 1600 BME organisations were surveyed as part of the study and that they identified 7000–8000 BME groups in the region (20% of the wider third sector); a figure that far exceeds the national estimates provided by McLeod et al. (2001).

Using 'visibility' as a way to define and identify BME groups extends beyond mapping exercises. For example, combined with place of origin, this was used in a qualitative study to examine the BME's engagement with voluntary sector mental health services in Aberdeen (Lai 2000). Here, the working definition for BME is 'anyone from African-Caribbean, African, and Asian origin who may face particular pressures as a member of a visible minority' (Lai, 2000: 17). From the research findings, Lai (2000) concludes that services are provided in an ethnocentric way in which people from black ethnic minorities make little use of voluntary sector services as a result of lack of knowledge about these services and because of invisible cultural barriers. The use of 'visibility' as an analytical tool, however, can raise questions. This is because the cultural barriers to accessing voluntary sector mental health services that are identified by Lai (2000) are not necessarily limited to those whose skin is not white: exclusion is not always a result of discrimination on the basis of skin colour, further non-white people are not necessarily 'culturally different'.

Other ways in which BME TSOs have been defined include dimensions such as: 'run-by' and 'run-for' BME groups. To illustrate, in an article on minority ethnic housing associations Harrison (1998) writes:

The Housing Corporation's two five-year programmes for black and minority ethnic housing associations were amongst the most exciting developments in UK social policy in the 1979-96 period. Through the second half of the 1980s, and into the 1990s, the Corporation encouraged development of housing associations run by black people. The five-year programmes channelled monies and proactive official support towards a variety of black and minority ethnic housing organisations. This was significant not merely because of its impact in meeting housing needs, but also because of its consequences in

terms of organisational development, and its implications for the collective empowerment of minority ethnic communities. (p.74)

Aside the qualifying 'run-by', in this work there is use of 'black and minority ethnic', 'run by black people' and 'minority ethnic communities' whereby all three are synonymous; in that, for example, 'minority ethnic' means 'black' and 'black people' mean 'ethnic minority'. The deliberate emphasis on skin colour can be considered part of a political and policy-led strategy and is expounded in the following quotation:

The justification for the strategy was that the programme was set up 'in response to reports by the National Federation of Housing Associations and other bodies which indicated that the housing needs of *black and minority ethnic* people were substantially worse than for other groups', and because people 'from *ethnic minorities* were also under-represented in every area of housing association work: committees, staff and lettings'. (our emphasis, p.75/76)

The usefulness of this approach may well be embedded in the context and the purpose of the research, as well as the potential (policy) gains arising from the findings. Nevertheless, such approaches beg the question on whether, for example, white-Irish and white-Polish immigrants face inequalities and, thereby, whether associations geared towards their benefit ought to be included in the BME TS. Both white-Irish and white-Polish UK citizens, for example, have historically experienced xenophobia, the former experiencing long periods of economic and social marginalisation. See, for example, Walter's (2001) historical account on 'whiteness, place and Irish women'.

The pursuit for answers to these questions begins to unravel the usefulness of the category. It is not the aim of this review to propose an argument either way. However, if one message emerges it is surely that a more nuanced understanding of the complexity of associational relationships which fall within the blurred boundaries of the 'third sector' must be the starting point for any research in this area.

### **A distinctive BME third sector?**

Beyond definitional ambiguities, there are those who consider the BME TS to be distinctive – presumably from the wider third sector. Though not always qualified, reference to distinctiveness tends to oscillate between those who claim BME TSOs offer unique purpose, function and role and claims that they are at a 'distinct' disadvantage, often in relation to accessing resources for their work and to sustain their organisations (see, for example, ROTA 2009 and CEMVO 2010). To demonstrate, Reilly (2004) writes on distinctiveness in relation to a combination of features, including the function, motivation and purpose of the organisations through to their experiences with the (lack of) access to facilities and resources. Using a mix of research tools (quantitative and qualitative) Reilly identifies key trends within the BME TS, some of these include:

- **The concept of volunteering:** volunteering exists as a concept within BME communities but many people do not identify work that they are doing as 'volunteering' – i.e. high levels of informal volunteering are not recognised by the mainstream third sector – though younger generations are more open to using the concept.

- **Involvement with the mainstream:** there are issues around the way in which BME diverse communities are utilised as volunteers for mainstream organisations. Some groups have a clause in their funding agreement that they must include BME volunteers in their work; setting these targets has contributed towards bad experiences for these volunteers in which, for example, they have been offered menial tasks and little, if any, opportunities for personal development.
- **Preference for the familiar:** the BME TS tends to offer culturally specific resources/facilities, e.g. prayer facilities and specialist food provision, these are also places in which people can share experiences and offer support to each other.
- **Motivations:** the motivations for volunteering are similar to those of non-BME volunteers, although there is a stronger link to faith and family values. In addition, volunteering for the BME diverse communities is often entwined with volunteers' culture and faith.
- **Training:** there is a lack of training for volunteers within the BME communities; in part, this is to do with insufficient resources. In addition, much of the training is offered in English and can be considered exclusionary to those who do not have a good grasp of the English language.
- **Funding:** lack of funding, particularly core funding, inhibits BME organisations' ability to promote volunteering and recruit volunteers. Further, the large amounts of time are being spent on funding applications, can lead to volunteer leaders being taken away from the actual tasks of the project.
- **Long-term volunteering:** those who volunteer early in life are most likely to continue to volunteer long-term.
- **Volunteer centres:** there is limited interaction between Volunteer Centres and the BME diverse communities.
- **Basic provisions:** lack of general provision of things such as out-of-pocket expenses and childcare facilities.

Although Reilly (2004) recognises that any one of these trends and the contributing factors for them are not unique to the BME TS, as a package she considers them as making the sector distinctive.

In another study mentioned earlier, McLeod et al. (2001) assert that despite the distinctive and important role of BME TSOs, they face 'even more formidable challenges than white-led community organisations in establishing alliances and partnerships for change' (p.5). Further, McLeod et al. (2001) explain that these and other differences are to do with societal racism in the forms of 'employment barriers, educational marginalisation, linguistic and cultural exclusion, residential segregation and racist harassment' (p.5). Nevertheless, whilst many 'non-white' people face these issues it is problematic to assume that all non-white people living in the UK face these issues and that 'white' people do not experience these. This lack of nuanced understanding of both the BME TS and the BME population more generally proves problematic throughout the report. Further, McLeod et al. (2001) do not offer a definition beyond reference to 'visible communities' and 'white-led' and leave comparative analyses between the BME TS and their (non-BME) counterparts untested.

The narrative on distinctiveness in which BME TSOs fair worse than other organisations is well-documented, albeit primarily in grey literature by and for BME TSOs. Some of these anticipate widening inequalities as a result of the current economic downturn in which already-vulnerable (BME)

organisations are more likely to be affected by public spending cuts (see, for example, ROTA 2009 and CEMVO 2010). Despite these assertions, there is a continued lack of systematic comparative analyses in which like-with-like is examined between the BME and wider third sector. Without this, discussion of distinctiveness, particularly in relation to unequal access to resources, can run the risk of being largely rhetorical if there is little evidence to underpin the claims made. If we are to understand the BME TS in the context of the wider sector, there is a need for robust analyses to identify and understand empirical trends; findings arising from these may well have important implications for policy development. As part of TSRC's BME cross-cutting agenda, a complementary report will follow shortly in which Soteri-Proctor and McKay (forthcoming) review a wide range of national datasets to examine the extent to which they can be used for such comparative analyses.

For purpose of this review the authors have adopted an agnostic position in which a discrete and distinct BME TS is not presumed. There are those, however, who oppose the notion of distinctiveness. Nevertheless there is little material on this position. In part, this is likely to be because the review tends to include literature that makes *implicit assumptions as well as explicit* claims on distinction. In contrast, to capture those with opposing views there would need to be explicit challenges to this. The main document identified in which 'distinctiveness' is questioned and opposed is the well-known Deakin report (NCVO 1996). Here, the BME TS is considered a 'myth of separateness' and, instead, their characteristics are considered to be similar to other organisations that deal with target groups with specific needs, such as homeless people (NCVO 1996). Further, in this report, integrated services are considered to be the preferred option. Nevertheless, this is as much an ideological position as that of those who promote the use of 'specialist' services for the BME population.

So far, the material discussed in this section tends to focus on research that uses organisations as the unit of analyses to understand aspects of the BME TS. Nevertheless, there is other material in which the individual is used as the main unit of analysis. Further, some of this material includes that which uses comparative analyses to examine the extent to which there is a difference between individuals' experiences and behaviour in relation to third sector issues, such as: volunteering, their propensity towards charitable giving and political participation (see for example, Graddy and Wang 2009 and McMiller 1999).

For example, in a survey that used probability sampling of US adults in 1997 in which there was weighting for 'black' people, McMiller (1999) examined the extent to which involvement in different types of voluntary organisations was associated with political participation. In this work, McMiller (1999) distinguished between 'instrumental' groups and 'expressive' groups. Instrumental groups 'focus on objectives that lie outside of the groups themselves... [they] tend to pursue serious political objectives' (p.86) and expressive groups 'tend to be confined and self-contained within the organisation itself... [they] routinely avoid politics unless involvement can enhance the value of being affiliated with the group' (p.86). Intermediate organisations are the third category and offer a combination of the two.

From this work, McMiller concludes 'there is a general tendency for whites to participate more than blacks in instrumental and expressive organisations, and in the latter case, that many of these differences are statistically significant' (p.89). However, 'blacks are generally more involved than

whites of comparable socioeconomic status in intermediate organisations [these are a combination of expressive and instrumental]... several of these difference are [statistically] significant' (p.92).

According to McMiller these findings are generally inconsistent with those predicted by analysts researching before 1987 and suggests this is partly to do with societal changes; notably the increased socio-economic status of black people in America. He goes further to warn that: 'studies show that social position influences one's decision to join voluntary associations... the wealthy and well-educated are more likely to be targeted for mobilisation than the poor and less educated' (p.93).

In short, McMiller finds voluntary associations and their impact on personal political activity to vary by race. This relates to the socio-economic status of different racial groups and consequently, the differences may alter over time as the social and economic status of certain groups changes. However, the variable of class should be taken into account as socio-economic change is rarely uniform and it may be that more wealthy educated BME cohorts move to voluntary sector involvement traditionally associated with the white population. Whether there is then a convergence along class lines between whites and non-whites or whether race and ethnicity continue to distinguish organisation type and impact is not clear.

In a more recent study, Graddy and Wang (2009) looked at community foundations and found that ethnicity in part determined involvement with voluntary sector organisations, the type of involvement, and the propensity to charitable giving. Though focus was more on charitable giving (and ethnicity, rather than colour), their findings show that ethnicity has an impact on the character of different organisations in the BME TS. There are other studies that offer a BME dimension of analyses on third sector issues. Some of these are captured in the next (and main) section of this paper under the headings of different types of organisations that may constitute the wider BME TS.

In concluding this section, there are those who consider the BME TS to be unique. However, the extent to which there is a BME TS that has special needs and attributes, or that labelling a cohort of organisations as such will benefit them, remains contested. Further, there is little comparative evidence to understand the distinctiveness of this sub-sector. Perhaps a more useful way to view BME TSOs is to understand them in the context of their client group; run by individuals or communities with special needs that are specific to that client group. This can be considered similar to those organisations or clusters of organisations within the third sector and so the issue is less about distinctiveness and more about all organisations being able to access the funding and support that they require within the context of the challenges which their client groups faces. Many of these issues will overlap across apparently diverse organisations and limiting this along ethnic or racial lines may not be the most fruitful path to take.

## Disaggregating the BME third sector

As discussed earlier, whether the BME sector is distinct from the wider third sector is a contested field; nevertheless if it does exist as a sufficiently similar collective of organisations that can be grouped together, what can be said is that these constitute vastly diverse groups. To sort and manage the literature on these, the material is discussed under sub-categories of the types of organisation that may be identified as constituting parts of the BME TS. These are: refugee and asylum seeker

organisations, faith-based organisations, diasporic and immigrant community organisations, black organisations, gypsy and traveller organisations and the 'multicultural third sector' – each of these, to a greater or lesser extent, are contested labels themselves.

In closing, there is discussion dedicated to some of the (potential) benefits and challenges arising from their relationship with the state. This is included because it is discussed in some of the material in this review.

### **Refugee and asylum seeker organisations**

If there is any distinctive characteristic of refugee and asylum seeker organisations (RASOs) it is that the community of service users is constructed as a result of legal definitions: refugees are those who have been granted asylum and asylum seekers are those who are awaiting a decision on their application for asylum. Beyond their legal definition, however, these individuals are from vastly diverse backgrounds – to say the least, they come from different countries, speak different languages and have different faiths. Further, reflecting the wider third sector, RASOs are diverse, providing a breadth of services from conversation clubs to legal advice and targeted to different groups, such as a national or ethnic group, e.g. Eritrean refugees, as well as at refugees in general.

There a growing body of literature on refugee and asylum seeking voluntary and community organisations that covers a breadth of topics, including: discussion on the label itself, function and role, the internal challenges faced by these organisations as well as the wider policy level in which they operate. In addition, there is work on interest groups and specific sub-sectors, such as housing. Some of these are discussed immediately below.

Turning first to the issue of labels, like the term 'BME' there are several ways in which 'refugee community organisations' have been referred to in academic literature (here on referred to as RCOs unless otherwise specified). These include: refugee associations, refugee organisations, refugee-based organisations, refugee community organisations or refugee community-based organisations (Griffiths et al. 2006). For some academics, the terminology used is important because it is considered to be an expression of the relationship between refugee organisations and the communities they are assumed to represent and because they can contribute towards a clearer conception that may resolve some of the 'conflicting pressures faced by refugee organisations and the ambiguities surrounding their role' (Griffiths et al. 2006: 884). Griffiths et al. (2005) suggest that the term RCO embraces 'a variety of informal networks and more formalised bureaucratic arrangements' amongst members of refugee communities (p.188). In the work of Carey-Wood (1997) the term 'refugee-specific initiative' (RSI) is used to describe any project that has been developed to work with, or provide a service to, refugees and/or asylum seekers, and which is distinct from a service provided to the general population. Others have gone further by using categories such as 'cultural', 'political' and 'advice based' (Joly 1996) to subdivide RCOs.

Using data generated from two research projects commissioned by the Housing Corporation in Manchester, Birmingham and London, Zetter and Pearl (2000) examine aspects of RCOs and discuss some of the challenges faced by them. For this work, they define RCOs as 'organisations rooted within, and supported by, the ethnic or national refugee/asylum-seeker communities they serve' (p.676). A mix of tools was used to collect data from a variety of stakeholders. This includes

interviews, focus groups and surveys with those working in local and national public sector agencies, voluntary and community sector organisations, housing providers, refugee and asylum-seeker tenant households. This work is particularly informative on the issue of RCOs and for this reason is discussed at some length.

Reflecting refugees 'precarious physical and legal status' (p.861) and the fact that 'most asylum-seekers now arrive spontaneously rather than as quota refugees in the past', Zetter and Pearl (2000) argue that it is difficult to quantify, with any accuracy, the number of RCOs operating at any given time (p.862). Further they argue that few RCOs survive to become enduring organisations and, in part, consider this to be linked with the (lack of) 'critical mass' necessary compared with larger influxes in the past. What is known is that most of these organisations are based in London, with an increase of groups elsewhere in other cities since 1999 (see also Zetter et al., 2005). Further, they note there has been substantial growth in recent years, 'more RCOs exist, though often in a precarious state, and the demand for their services encompasses a much wider portfolio of provision' (p.683). This includes 'involvement in housing management and own-account housing provision for asylum-seekers and refugees... rights-based advocacy -welfare entitlements, immigration-status determination and appeals etc.' (p.683).

Zetter and Pearl suggest that to the extent that refugees and asylum-seekers have established networks and organisations to support cultural identity, meet material needs, advocate, give collective 'voice' to individuals, and link people to service providers, they 'are little different from other immigrant group organisations' (p.682). The contrast, at the present time, is the difference that 'lies in the extent of social exclusion that asylum-seekers increasingly experience in the UK' (p.682): 'since the mid-1990s, policies and legislation for refugees and asylum-seekers have become increasingly restrictionist in the UK. Disentitlement to housing and welfare benefits and fragmented service delivery have caused widespread social exclusion and destitution amongst asylum-seekers' (p.675).

In addition to their size and usefulness of these groups, Zetter and Pearl note variation in their growth and identify some of the challenges with this. In the case of long-established groups, Zetter and Pearl consider there to be little consolidation amongst more established groups and argue that there has been variation of growth amongst them. For example, in comparison with their Kurdish and Iraqi counterparts, the Somali community has successfully developed organisations, become more established and engaged with public and governmental structures.

For newer RCOs, the authors report the positive attribute of dynamism and 'unrivalled range of skills, insight and knowledge of their communities' needs' (p.687). However, 'their very diversity and specificity (in terms of location or ethnic group) hamper the development of institutional capacity and organisational sustainability' (p.686). Co-ordination and co-operation between these small RCOs is also inhibited by their size, which in turn limits growth. In addition, size prevents access to power structures such as local authorities. The authors note that the lack of information-sharing and networking taking place between RCOs is unusual in the voluntary sector, where such activities are usually a high priority. More in line with the wider community-based sector is the duplication and competition by some RCOs at the local level. Furthering the negative feedback loop, this competition inhibits networking and information sharing. Zetter and Pearl conclude that:

There is therefore a considerable degree of chance involved in whether or not such groups manage to become established. Often, the thin line between success and failure is less about performance and accountability and more about being in the right place at the right time. This engenders the sense of powerlessness amongst many groups, 'sometimes you get the feeling that RCOs are themselves treated as a minority within the minority sector of the BME housing sector' (focus group respondent). In such a climate of exclusion and marginalisation, any failures amongst RCOs, as they are keenly aware, will only serve to intensify public antipathy to asylum-seekers and the organisations representing them, and underpin the already poor image of RCOs amongst politicians, potential partners and service users. (p.689)

As noted earlier, there are also geographical variations on the estimated numbers of RCOs in the UK that reflect settlement patterns. Pre-1999 many of RCOs emerged in the South East, particularly in London. However, since the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act in which asylum seekers are now subject to forced dispersal around the country, there has been growth in RCOs elsewhere in the UK. Using data from a survey of 40 RCOs, 20 of which were in dispersal regions, Zetter et al. (2005) examine the impact of this. They argue the impact 'of dispersal on RCOs has been both profound and enduring' (Zetter et al. 2005: 171) in which this has 'consolidated a solid core of established RCOs in London, whilst stimulating a regional periphery of volatile semi-secure and insecure RCOs competing for shrinking financial support' (p.169). In addition, Zetter et al. challenge the widely held belief that RCOs provide essential integrative and mediating functions between refugees and the indigenous population and go on to state that the 'traditional role and rationale [of RCOs] has been sacrificed for largely short-term, defensive tasks in a hostile policy environment' (p.169) where there has been a shift in asylum policy from one broadly within the rubric of humanitarianism and multiculturalism to one characterised by restrictivism, fears over community tensions, and hostility to all but the most economically beneficial immigration.

Using a qualitative case study of Glasgow, Wren (2007) examines the emergence and development of RCOs in Scotland. Reflecting the external policy environment, Wren discusses the differing context in which they emerge and operate compared with England. In contrast with England, for example, Scotland has a smaller black and minority ethnic population, with smaller numbers of asylum seekers arriving prior to dispersal. Further, the decline in Scotland's population has prompted initiatives to attract more skilled migrants and so public discourses on asylum have, according to Wren, been less exclusionary. Although asylum seekers remain subject to UK immigration law, which determines their entitlement and access to social rights, at the policy level the Scottish Executive has devolved responsibility for the integration of asylum seekers.

According to Wren (2007) 'at the inception of dispersal in Glasgow there were no formalised structures for the participation of the voluntary sector in service provision or community development' (p.397). Subsequently, multi-agency working was pursued to facilitate the role of the voluntary sector in supporting both asylum seekers and refugees, with larger agencies, such as the Scottish Refugee Council, to play a partnership-brokering role. Wren identifies ten local networks that were established in Glasgow 2000–2003, which formed the basis for the development of these services. Wren argues that the divergence from England appears to be that this process has allowed smaller community organisations to play an integral part 'in community development work with asylum seekers in a way

which promotes social cohesion in communities where they have been dispersed' (p.396). However, negative outcomes of this process are identified, including: 'the reactive way in which services have been provided, where responsibility has fallen on voluntary and community organisations to fill gaps in statutory service provision' (p.392), and competition over accessing resources.

On material that consists of discussion on the purpose and usefulness, there is literature that focuses more broadly on third sector organisations. For example, using secondary sources, supplemented by interviews with NGOs working with refugees, Kelly and Joly (1999) state that

Community groups play a vital role, supporting and assisting new arrivals and providing a link between the members of the community and the rest of society. Research shows that in many cases refugees prefer to live in areas where there are others from the same background, and that the presence of a strong community group can help to reduce adjustment problems. (p.23)

However, they also note that

Some refugee populations contain within them religious, ethnic, political, and linguistic divisions, and this can lead to several groups being established, all claiming to meet the needs of a particular community, or to a community association failing to represent the interests of all those it claims to represent. This becomes problematic when service providers seek to establish the needs of a group via consulting with 'community leaders'. In particular, the needs of women, single parents and elderly refugees may be marginalised. (p.24)

Echoing these challenges on the tensions arising from working with different interest groups, includes Daley's (2009) qualitative study on community relations between refugees and asylum seekers, other migrants and long-term residents within a local area of refugee settlement in the West Midlands. Using a case study approach that involved formal and informal interviews with community workers and community and participant observation with nine community groups, Daly found that there was a 'lack of meaningful relationships between people from different backgrounds, significant prejudice, underlying tension and few opportunities for inter-group contact'. This research is underpinned by a critical reading of the 'community cohesion' and 'integration' policy frameworks. Importantly here is the finding that asylum seekers are not included within those who should be integrated, though their presence is presented as a risk to community cohesion by both policy makers and resident interviewees in her study. Experiences of exclusion meant that refugee groups 'were reluctant to engage with political systems and networks and therefore became further marginalised' (p.164).

Moving on, there is an eclectic mix of literature that focuses on even more specialist interests within RCOs, including work on specific target groups (for example Davis and Cooke 2002a and 2002b), work across sectors, such as housing (for example Carey-Wood 1997) and research on, for example, the power of tools such as the internet to bring about democracy (see, for example, Siapera 2005).

Turning to work on specific target groups there is, for example, the work of Davis and Cooke (2002a and 2002b) on 'black women's organisations'. In their work, they found that those organisations that serve the needs of black migrant and refugee women offered a wider geopolitical context than that provided by the longer standing African-Caribbean and South Asian women's

organisations. Thus, the women came together in organisations to deal both with issues that led them to flee their homes and those created by British society in the form of discrimination and racism. The African Women's Welfare Group noted in their 2000/2001 annual report that refugee women come out of situations of

conflict within which they have suffered displacement, loss of home and property, loss of close relatives, poverty and family separation. They are... often the victims of terrorism, torture, sexual abuse and forced pregnancy... The refugee plight is compounded by having to cope in the foreign country and ensuing cultural shock these women are suddenly confronted with. (quoted in Davis and Cooke, 2002a: 2)

In the case of research on specific sub-sectors there is work on, for example, housing. Carey-Wood (1997) reported on a research project conducted by Salford University for the Home Office which focused on the practice of meeting refugees' settlement needs at the local level. Using case studies of several projects that provided resettlement services for health, housing, education/training and community development, Carey-Wood undertook analyses of published and unpublished information on a wide range of refugee agencies, interviews with key individuals in statutory, voluntary and community agencies, and case studies of selected initiatives targeted at refugees. The selection of refugee-specific initiatives was based on recommendations from 'key individuals in the refugee field, willingness to participate, and demonstration of successful practice, either currently or previously' (p.4). The policy context has altered considerably since 1997, with refugees being progressively stripped of rights by the New Labour government (Squire 2009). Using this research, Carey-Wood identifies several ways to benefit RCOs, these include:

- empowering refugees themselves to engage in and take control of services for refugees,
- getting involved in a wide array of activities which provide a very immediate, flexible and local response to social, economic and cultural needs,
- directly providing employment opportunities and work experience for refugees,
- filling gaps in existing provision and assisting refugees to access mainstream services.

Nevertheless, she also points out that community self-help provisions can face certain difficulties, including:

- placing immense pressure on the resources of small voluntary groups;
- divisions (e.g. religion, ethnicity and politics): community groups may not represent or support all such subdivisions;
- groups with special needs such as single parents, women or older refugees may be marginalised;
- accessing funding;
- managing change and formalisation;
- the gap between expectations of the initiative and what it is possible to deliver;
- representation and leadership when dealing with such a diverse population.

Yet, the author writes: 'Perhaps the greatest limitation of refugee-specific health initiatives in general is their 'special project' status. This status will demand frequent and time-consuming fundraising and

lobbying to ensure their continued existence, time which could be better spent in providing a service' (p.22).

Where mainstream services fail to meet the needs of refugees and asylum seekers, RCOs sometimes engage in service provision or joint working with statutory agencies to provide appropriate services. One area in which refugee-specific provision is important is healthcare. Carey-Wood points out that

There are clear advantages to developing refugee-specific initiatives in the health field because of the need to combine language skills, medical knowledge and knowledge of the refugee experience. The use of interpreters without specialist training in medical situations is not adequate in these difficult and sensitive situations. (p.21)

On housing, Carey-Wood finds that there are several advantages in having refugee-specific housing initiatives:

- they target resources on refugees;
- they are easily identifiable to refugees as providers and are therefore easier for refugees to find out about;
- they tend to have a high proportion of refugee workers, which provides employment opportunities for refugees, and benefits at the same time tenants, due to their language skills, knowledge and experience;
- refugees living together can give mutual support because they have something in common and do not have to keep explaining their predicament;
- they provide more than just a roof over someone's head and can respond to the particular support needs of refugees.

The difficulties for housing initiatives identified in Carey-Wood's study relate to the housing market and resourcing problems, rather than to the refugee client group: 'many of the problems facing refugees are similar to those of other groups in the population who experience homelessness or live on low incomes' (p.29).

Other literature has even looked at the way in which the internet has been used to engage with policy debates. For example, Siapera (2005) explores how minorities employ the internet to influence the asylum and immigration debate, as well as supporting refugees. Here, Siapera describes the internet as a tool for political ends, 'either in messianic terms, as the long-awaited saviour of democracy, or in apocalyptic terms, as a dreaded destroyer of the precarious democratic gains of recent years' (p.500). Theoretically, Siapera discusses 'deliberative democracy as the model underlying accounts of the relationship between the Internet on the one side, and politics and multiculturalism on the other' (p.499). This work appears to be informed by discourse analytic approaches, and includes 18 websites set up and operated by refugee communities. Two key questions are 'who is addressed?' and 'how are these addressees or publics addressed?' Two publics as the addressees of the websites are 'reconstructed': a public in its general capacity and a public of refugees – though categories are not viewed as mutually exclusive. The political relevance of these

sites is disregarded by deliberative democratic theory, allowing for only some elements to be understood as properly political. Siapera argues:

there are grounds for arguing for the political relevance of these websites - whose main work can be described as 'pre-political' - in the sense not only of pre-ceding but also of pre-paring. At the same time, however, these websites, and the political work they do, suffer from a crucial ambiguity: insofar as they speak for, and on behalf of, as well as to, refugees, they appear to impose a singular understanding of community. In addition, the lack of any response by the refugee public, or indeed any room for it, throws into question the potential political gains of these websites. (p.500)

The contribution of this selection of what could be termed the online third sector in either supporting refugees and asylum seekers, or making political gains for these groups is called in to question here. Yet the potential of the internet to build links, networks, further political aims and generally fulfil some of the functions of third sector organisations is raised here. This opens out an aspect of third sector activity, prolific in recent years and yet arguably under-researched.

### **Faith-based organisations**

There are situations in which faith-based third sector organisations (FB TSOs) may be included in the wider third sector. In these cases, however, they must presumably only be those FB TSOs that consist mainly of BME members. Not only does this bring us back to the tricky issue of defining 'BME', but it also does not eliminate any religion; subsequently making the identification of BME faith-based organisations highly complex. From this preliminary review, there is little literature on faith-based organisations (FBOs) and the third (or voluntary) sector and even less that include the additional dimension of BME groups. Further, much of this is on Christianity within a US context. From this disparate source of material, discussion focuses primarily on the UK context; nevertheless, work from elsewhere is included on occasions where it may offer some insight.

Turning first to the more general theme of religious and faith-based organisations and their position in the wider socio-political (and third sector) context, Berger (2003) challenges the view of 'modern mentality' in which religion is relegated 'to the realm of private life'. Expounding on this, Berger refers to religious NGOs (RNGOs) as an entity that 'represent a unique hybrid of religious beliefs and socio-political activism at all levels of society' (p.16). Here, Berger defines RNGOs as NGOs whose 'mission and operations are guided by a concept of the divine and recognition of the sacred nature of human life' (p.19). Those who are said to be represented are likely, though not always, members of a religious tradition. Berger writes that 'in the same way NGOs represent specific constituencies; RNGOs represent congregations, denominations, spiritual or political orientations, even the entire membership of a particular religion' (p.19).

Other documented evidence illustrating FB TSOs work beyond private life include research on their role in the delivery of public services, civic participation and community development work. For example, in the report *Faith and voluntary action: an overview of the current evidence and debates* (NCVO 2007), Rochester et al. outline (large) religious organisations historical (and continued) contributions towards the delivery and development of public services, such as health and education. In addition, they discuss the renewed interest in which there is a new emphasis (by government)

towards encouraging those that operate on a small-scale at local and community level. Summarising what might be driving this new agenda, they explain that this can be seen as

part of the government's concern with community cohesion and civic engagement, whilst faith-based organisations are also seen as a means of extending services to so-called 'hard-to-reach' groups or black, minority ethnic and refugee communities (although it might be more accurate to describe the services as 'hard to reach' for many of those they are intended to service). Religious and faith-based groups are also included in the wider policy push towards the privatisation of welfare through transferring responsibility for delivery services from the state to the voluntary sector. (Rochester et al., 2007: 43)

In another study, Lowndes and Chapman (2005) examine the importance of religion as an arena for civic participation and volunteering in Britain. Using findings from an existing survey, Lowndes and Chapman (2005) discuss the high prevalence of 'social' action in which there is evidence of more than 2000 faith-based social action projects in the city, supported by 3000 paid staff and 13,500 unpaid staff (volunteers), benefitting 120,000 people (2005: 9). They argue that these figures are likely to be higher given that the response-rate from worshipping communities was just under 30%. The methods used to explore faith and civil renewal include analyses of policy documents; a review on existing research; interviews with national-level faith group representatives and with faith leaders in the city of Leicester; and interviews with central government policy-makers (Home Office and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister) and local practitioners (Leicester City Council and Leicestershire Constabulary).

Lowndes and Chapman (2005) also found that the role of religious values was a motivator for volunteering, but conversely, explain that some faith group representatives expressed concerns that involvement with funded community projects could 'corrupt' people of faith, distracting them from more fundamental goals. They also found that the perspective of the government was that faith groups could play a role in 're-moralising' public life.

In a study on faith-based community work in English urban areas, Smith (2002) identified some of the benefits and challenges that make FBO work 'distinctive'. The original research project was an evaluation of the charity's community worker scheme as part of a wider study into the faith-based groups that undertake community work. In addition to this, eight external community work projects were evaluated. Five were associated with Christian churches, one with a Sikh Gurdwara, one with an Islamic centre, and one with a secular tenants group. A postal survey was also distributed through religious networks for community work, with 140 projects responding. Ten key themes emerged from the research:

- **Resources:** faith communities in England have considerable resources 'which could be used more extensively for the common good' (p.171).
- **Funding:** despite working hard, there is a constant struggle to obtain funds and that their main sources of income are religious sources and charitable trusts. A possible reason for their failure to access mainstream funds is to do with cultural gaps between faith-based applicants and secular funders.

- **Community development:** there are several ideas around community development that are shared across faith-based and secular sectors; with examples of best practice in community development in the faith-based sector.
- **Managerial style:** traditionally the managerial style in faith-based organisations is very informal with some learning to create a 'more professional voluntary sector environment' – a balance between the two is described as 'important for faith-based community work' (p.171).
- **Equalities:** there are issues to do with inequalities and equalities, for example, homophobia in, for example, Evangelical Christianity.
- **Religion:** Christianity appears to dominate in faith-based community work, followed by Judaism. There are also perceptions amongst some of these groups that the secular establishment is anti-religion, holding several groups back from partnership-building.
- **Community work:** there is a long tradition of community work in faith communities, which is often seen as non-speciality work.
- **Monitoring and evaluation:** monitoring and evaluation has been undertaken, but this has been uneven. For some, this is considered to be an important task that can show how, for example, clients' lives have changed (as a measure of success).
- **Spiritual motivation:** this purports to give people an 'extra degree of commitment and perseverance' (p.172).
- **Partnership building:** there are many examples of faith organisations undertaking proactive partnership building and networking, though this is rarely in large scale formal regeneration programmes.

In a small qualitative study, Netting et al. (2005) looked at the roles of participants, volunteers and paid staff. Using a grounded theory approach and interviews with programme participants, board members, administrators, coordinators, and collaborators in 15 faith-based, Netting et al. (2005) found that volunteers wear multiple hats 'facilitated by a tendency toward cross-training, role diffusion, and doing what is needed' (p.179). In the organisations, the boundaries created by roles appeared to be less important than 'pragmatically responding to meet human needs' (p.179). Faith served as a recruiting tool for both paid staff and volunteers and participants cited faith-based rewards as a personal benefit. This is noted as significant by the authors but is arguably true of most people working (paid or unpaid) in the voluntary sector – a passion for the issue. The researchers found that the challenges faced by these faith-based organisations were also much the same as other third sector organisations: high turnover among paid staff and volunteers, heavy reliance on volunteers and low pay.

Of the little material, there was some literature on FBOs' motivation for community work. This tended to be on church work in the US. Although these operate in a different socio-political environment, some of the findings may be relevant to Christian (and other) faith-based organisations operating in the UK context. In one study, Slessarev-Jamir (2004) explore why certain churches have become engaged in local faith-based community organising in the US. Based on interviews with the pastors of 15 congregations actively engaged in faith-based community organising in three cities,

Slessarev-Jamir (2004) found that the majority of congregations are not politically active. Instead, they found that community organising fit into congregations' localised priorities, subsequently leading to 'tangible community improvements, especially within poorer communities that are often excluded from professionalised forms of civic engagement' (p.585). The most frequently cited benefit of community organising around faith congregations was the creation of relational bonds among diverse congregations, which may be one of the unique characteristics of faith-based organisations – the power to bridge racial and ethnic lines. However, the fact that churches were categorised along racial lines (e.g. 'black evangelical church') suggests that people are attracted to congregations with members of the same racial or ethnic group as well as faith.

On this theme, Daley (2009) found in her research into community cohesion in one neighbourhood in the West Midlands that:

shared religion was felt to bring different people together in the area, but only at the level of sharing of religious practices and values, and alone was not seen as strong enough by participants to bond together people from different cultures and traditions. (p.164)

One of her interviewees had this to say on the subject:

There seems to be, especially within BME communities, a uniting factor, which is religion, which is Islam, which kind of creates an infrastructure for a lot of these communities in the area. That's on the surface, but below the surface they're a lot more fragmented and separated due to either language or cultural differences. (p.164)

Few studies were identified on non-Christian FBOs and third sector activity and even fewer were to do with FBOs and Islam. One of these includes the work of Phillips (2008) on the role of the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB) in organising the mobilisation of millions of people in opposition to the Iraq war in 2003. His focus is how MAB activists understood their working relationship with the other organised groups in the Stop the War coalition – a broadly left-wing movement. Findings are based on interviews with leaders, members, supporters and critics of MAB and other organisations involved in the anti-war movement.

The fact that a small number of individuals senior in MAB were willing to both develop the political aspect of the organisation and to work with non-Muslim, non-religious organisations was found to be key to involvement. Phillips writes:

Altikriti [a senior figure in MAB] and others in the MAB leadership were working to persuade members that collaboration with non-Muslim anti-war activists was halal (religiously permissible) and that this was within the remit of their organisation. Their argument was that, if gender-segregated spaces and halal food could be provided at meetings, demonstrations and other events, then Muslims could participate in the anti-war movements without being assimilated. Moreover, they defined limits to joint action: making it clear that, while they could overcome misgivings about sharing platforms with some groups (such as socialists and atheists), they could never do so with others (Zionists and Israelis in particular). While they acknowledged that some difficulties would remain, they counselled members and other Muslims to use the opportunity of joint action to add their voices to the anti-war movement through StW.

The concern over being forced to compromise on religious beliefs and practice, or even being assimilated is not something that appears in the literature on the Christian third sector and may relate to the minority status of the Muslim community in Britain. Indeed, Phillips insists that the involvement of MAB 'must be understood in the context of the stereotyping of Muslims in wider society, which had been exacerbated by the 'war on terror' after September 11' (p.104). This 'divisive and neo-colonial logic' (p.104) had, Phillips argues, drawn a line between Muslims and non-Muslims, which the third sector had, in this situation, and presumably in society more broadly, an important role to play in breaking down.

### **Diasporic and immigrant community organisations**

For this paper, diasporic and immigrant community organisations (referred to here on as ICOs) are those that serve new immigrant group communities. These are diverse and overlap with several other sub-categories identified in this paper. Nevertheless, they can be considered distinct from BME groups that primarily serve settled migrant communities. This is because, like RCOs, their community of interest are more likely to face immediate needs and face language barriers. Like any sub-category there are definitional challenges to this. For example, can an organisation that provides services to a mix of settled and new ('refugee' or 'immigrant') communities be considered an ICO? If so, where does the balance lie?

There is material from the review that touches on definitional issues. For example, focusing on immigrant groups and in search for a definition for 'voluntary associations', Moya (2005) undertook a literature review. Using largely North and South American sources Moya found that much of the research was on larger organisations, which produced 'a distorted picture because immigrant associations actually represent the most common form of immigrant sociability outside the family'. The definition he uses for voluntary associations is 'secondary organisations that exist between the primary links of kinship and the equally non-voluntary arrangements of tertiary institutions like the state' (Moya, 2005: 834). This, he recognises, is an inclusive definition that can potentially cover a broad spectrum of organisations. Moya recognises problems to do with definition and asks, for example, 'when do immigrant organisations stop being immigrant?' In other words, is a majority third generation Indian organisation an immigrant organisation or is it something else, such as a BME or other organisation (Moya 2005: 834)?

Within this one-subcategory alone, the sheer diversity is well illustrated in Hung's (2007) overview on immigrant nonprofits that are formed and maintained by Asian-American or Hispanic-Latino community leaders in US cities. Despite sharing the 'diasporic label', Hung identified a variety of differences on many levels, including: their formation, character, services, membership and purpose, through to financial success and stability.

Reflecting this diversity, the material collated for this aspect of the literature came from disparate sources and covered several topics, including ICOs' function and the role they play for their beneficiaries, as well services aimed towards a particular immigrant group. Much of this material has an American focus. Setting aside the varying political contexts within which ICOs may operate, sources of literature based on other countries is included in this paper as they may highlight relevant issues to UK ICOs.

Writing from a perspective within the Migration Studies discipline, Schrover and Vermeulen (2005) note that understanding ICOs is a useful way to understand immigration and integration processes 'because the extent to which immigrants cluster in organisations is a critical measure of collectively expressed and collectively ascribed identity' (p.824). They go on to say that the 'the character, number and size of organisations indicate the extent to which immigrants want to profile themselves as being different, or how they are seen to be different by others' (p.824). More so, Shrover and Vermeulen (2005) assert that ICOs provide a means for others to address a given immigrant community as a collective and that setting up such groups is a 'choice of immigrants to set themselves apart from others' (p.825). Nevertheless, they also make distinctions between those ICOs that encourage integration and those that aim to distinguish their members from the host society. In this way the authors take a very categorical approach to immigrant associations that does not allow for individual autonomy outside of the association, nor does it take into account the complexity of people's lives and the various roles they may play within the blurred boundaries of an 'immigrant community' and an abstract concept of a 'host society'. Schrover and Vermeulen do, however, helpfully highlight the problem of researching informal organisations:

by their very nature they are difficult to track down and leave few traces in archives. As a result most studies focus on formal organisations. Formal and informal organisations are not the same. They do not have the same goals, the same continuity or the same leadership. (p.825)

In the UK, the character of ICOs and the approach towards them by the state has changed considerably over time. From the literature that provides a historical context, there is a tendency to begin with the post-war migration of people from the commonwealth countries. This is a story of an evolving relationship which reflects the prevailing approach to immigrant inclusion and race relations at the time. For example, writing in the 1980s, Cheetham (1985) bemoans the lack of attention paid to ethnic associations in the academic and policy literature and puts this down to British assimilationist tradition vis-à-vis immigrants and an assumption that immigrants' welfare provisions should be provided by mainstream services. Although these approaches are not currently being used, some of the questions asked by Cheetham continue to be raised by other scholars today. Namely, for newcomers and their families in Britain, do ethnic associations act as a bridge between the old life and the new or are they primarily focused on the preservation of links with immigrants' original countries, with the continuity of ethnic traditions? Can ethnic associations assist in the problems of settlement by giving services directly or through help in negotiating the labyrinth of the British public services? In terms of more general social policy can they assist public agencies to develop services more sensitive to the ethnically heterogeneous populations of many parts of Britain?

Aside from whether or not ICOs can be bunched together more broadly with other sub-categories of BME organisations, the material in this review highlights the important role they can play in terms of providing services and resources to migrants who are from a similar community.

For example, in a case study on Immigrant Workers Centre (IWC) in Montreal, Canada, DeFilippis et al. (2009) looked at labour issues and the community. From their case study, they found that changes in the structure and organisation of work and labour markets have led to the emergence of

new community-labour strategies 'with community organising processes and organisations, particularly in immigrant communities finding new ways to promote improvements in working conditions' (p.39). They estimate that there are 130 similar centres operating across the US; mainly in immigrant communities and primarily working with those at the bottom of the labour market. The authors note that benefits of these types of groups is the provision of designated space for workers to meet and discuss employment issues outside of the workplace and providing services, many of which were of a political nature, such as political campaigns for workers' right. In addition, the authors identified a double-benefit of political campaigning in that it can increase awareness in the wider community about immigrant labour issues.

Turning to the UK context, in a study that focuses on Polish migrants Garapich (2008) emphasises the role of market forces in immigrants' pathways to inclusion in the social and economic system of the host society. Garapich addresses the fact that there are traditional agents of civil society – voluntary organisations, state policies, the Polish Church or advocacy networks, who might have been expected to provide the majority of the support to migrants. Nevertheless, Garapich argues that third sector and state support have (before and after EU enlargement), 'been less prominent in responding to the immediate needs of recent migrants for information, networks and access to host-society institutions, than the migration industry' (p.735). Here, the 'migration industry' is understood as a particular sector of the service economy, in that it is profit-driven and stimulates mobility and eases adaptation. Further, emphasis is on immigration advisors, job brokers, newspapers, new media, shops, travel agents, money-sending offices and bars where migrants meet, as institutional settings for creating a grassroots, civic culture. Garapich argues:

the academic discourse on social integration and civic participation of immigrants and on processes of construction of associational structures among immigrant groups focuses mostly on typical agents of civil society: the 'non-profit' voluntary NGO sector, state agency networks or particular diasporic organisations... Unfortunately, the communitarian or voluntary side of processes of construction of civil society, and the consequent political participation among immigrant groups, are biased towards a normative, neo-Toquevillian republican philosophy of communal engagement (p.738)... To put it briefly, in the case of Polish migrants, no voluntary NGO could have facilitated migrants' entry into their host society better than the media and the underlying migration industry have done. (p.744)

As migratory movements within the EU are governed by the expanding free market with its associated free movement, integration and participation of immigrants are, Garapich suggests, strongly determined by market forces, which leads to the conclusion that economic opportunities for immigrants to create their own migration industry are essential in integration. Yet, as the author points out that it is difficult to disentangle the relationship between 'professional activism' and 'civic activism' at the individual level. There are some interesting and insightful points in this paper but the author appears to fail to follow his own critique of the migration literature, that migration and immigrants' lives are extremely complex. Surely, if this is to be the starting point, then all types of civic engagement should be considered potentially important, to varying degrees, for different individuals – from small third sector organisations, to large NGOs, commercial business and the state.

In the work of Daley (2009), noted earlier in the paper, on community cohesion and immigrant integration in the West Midlands 'few links were identified between community groups, statutory

structures and public agencies and those existing tended to be with local workers and services' (p.163/4). A small number of individuals in her study achieved some wider representation but this was only those from more established and dominant communities in the neighbourhood. She identified a 'definite but shifting hierarchy of power relationships' between community groups in the neighbourhood whereby those more established communities dominated and remained much more influential than 'less visible' and newer groups. The latter were consequently excluded and marginalized in terms of needs and resources; competition, she argues, that did not facilitate community cohesion.

Focusing on African-Caribbean community organisations and organising in Leeds, Hylton (1999) carried out two case studies, one on an education project and the other on a community radio project and in-depth interviews with 11 activists. In this work, Hylton writes of the strong allegiance between African and African-Caribbean immigrants in the UK and the emphasis within the community on education as a means of individual and group advancement. He speaks of an African world-wide diaspora and the ongoing project of the diaspora to re-establish an Afrocentric culture. This involves maintaining cultural traditions but also sometimes means adapting to life in the West in order to survive. Some of these themes are carried on in the following section on black organisations.

Though this research is being discussed under the immigrant/diaspora heading, there is an overlap with the self-identification term 'black organisation' and many of the groups in Hylton's case study are pursuing, or grappling with a black political agenda. The author writes:

The African-Caribbean efforts in the area of education are a microcosm of the dilemma confronting African-Caribbean's in the area of public service provision, and connect with the balancing act individuals have to undertake in all areas of their everyday life. The dilemma is whether to opt for involvement in the present rules, regulations, and administration systems [which discriminate against black people] or for rejecting the status quo and replacing it with alternatives. (p.4)

### **Black organisations**

Though many organisations describe themselves as 'black', it is very difficult to generalise in academic writing about a 'black' third sector organisation. This is because nationality, ethnicity, community establishment and many other factors play their part. Perhaps the only satisfactory way of classifying 'black' third sector organisations is through self-identification. The literature from this review tends to comprise work on second, third or fourth generation African and Caribbean immigrants. Material on this suggests, historically and contemporaneously, that this portion of the third sector is motivated by an anti-racist struggle against a white hegemony in access to both resources (employment, education, housing, etc.) and ideas. This is captured in a quote dating back to the 1980s from Desai who writes on race and class that 'there seems to be a view, emanating from the intellectual rump of the black community, that working through existing structures and institutions of local authorities somehow compromises black militancy and/or black politics' (1987: 69).

Yet Desai also notes that for those working 'on the ground', needing to tackle everyday problems such as housing, 'it is a practical necessity to use the tools of the system to fight the system with, while at the same time avoiding the propensity for corruption that such a course of action involves' (p.69). Using Newham in London as a case study example, the author critically discusses the role of

the police and the local authority in combating racial harassment. Clearly many changes have taken place since 1987. However, one of the main reasons that the writer gives for why community perspectives are important in strategies to combat racial harassment at an institutional level is the under-reporting of racist attacks; an issue that continues today. The following extract illustrates how this resonates with the current situation:

even the Home Office admits a gross underestimate of what really goes on ...the information that we are getting through Anti-Fascist Action, through monitoring groups around the country, through the CREs and their monitoring systems, through bodies like the Institute of Race Relations and so on, points to a much higher figure [than the official statistics] and paints a frightening national picture. And it's not just the number of attacks that is significant, but the organisation behind those attacks, the way those attacks are carried out, and the sort of weapons used in those attacks. And for me the most frightening thing is that attacks are taking place in areas that have no solid black communities, where there are no groups of anti-racist activists to monitor the situation, where there are no community organisations whatsoever – the small towns in the Midlands, the small towns in Scotland – where all sorts of weapons ranging from air rifles to catapults have been used in attacks against black people. (p.70)

Reflecting on the continued growth of the black voluntary sector, Britton (1999) writes about the well established history of volunteering among black people in Britain. Britton considers these to be a response to the difficult circumstances with which black people are confronted (p.9) and range from the initiatives of traditional organisations, such as church and community service groups, to the activities of political pressure groups seeking to challenge racial inequalities.

Carrying out a two-year ethnographic study on one black-run project in England that included participant observation and semi-structured interviews with volunteers and the project co-ordinator, Britton looked at aspects of volunteering. From this, Britton found high levels of morale and a high retention rate in the project as a result of the good training programme and supportive relationship between volunteers and the co-ordinator. In addition, Britton found that one-third of the volunteers reported choosing to volunteer with the project because it was aimed at black people. Though significant, this can challenge the black political motivation theory regarding the reasons for volunteering; particularly since two-thirds of the volunteers just thought that the project was worthwhile and did not mind what race the client group was.

In a qualitative study on black activists, Christian (1998) set out to examine 'the notion and potential for developing concrete strategies in the empowerment of black communities in Britain'. The fieldwork involved interviews with six black activists working in the Liverpool area. Christian's contribution is to highlight the 'nebulous nature of the concept of "empowerment", and its relevance to grassroots 'black activists' and 'community development workers' (p18). Here, the author contends that the black perspective is different from other perspectives, especially those of white people who do not have the same experiences of racism. As such the study 'analyses phenomena related specifically to the social welfare interests of black people in Britain from their own cultural base' (p.19). For the black third sector this means not only giving such organisations a voice but also facilitating efforts by black people to 'secure self-help programmes, specifically in the areas of community-based education/training, housing, health and self-employment initiatives' (p.19). For this to happen,

Christian argues, black people must have a stronger position in decision-making roles around funding. The paper follows a black/white binary (with its associated power relationship) and consequently does not address parallels or overlaps with other minority communities. Written at a time when 'empowerment' was a rising theme in public policy, the paper remains pertinent in light of the current empowerment agenda being pursued by central government.

Other studies on BME organisations and organising go further to include additional dimensions, such as gender. For example, Bryan et al. (1985) address the intersection between gender and race for 'black women organising'. They tell the story of 'black women's organising' developing out of black community activism and suggest that there is always a need to maintain a balance between fighting for black people's rights with fighting for black women specifically – particularly if the latter requires self-reflection and calls for change within the black community. This goes to the heart of the political agenda behind a black third sector.

In another study using comparative analyses on a cross-section of black women's organisations from 13 different local authority regions in England, Scotland and Wales, Davis and Cooke (2002a) examined factors that determine needs, types and structures of organisations. From their study, they found that the majority of organisations were underpinned by the following principles:

- black political identity;
- self help, autonomy and empowerment;
- justice and social inclusion.

Davis and Cooke (2002a) note that 'of these principles the most contentious was that of "black" as a political identity' (summary, p.2). What is interesting is that organisations participating in the study took 'black' to encompass recognition of a shared political identity beyond ethnicity (i.e. the anti-racist struggle). However, local authorities did not always follow such a political interpretation of 'black'. Most preferred 'BME', in which 'black' refers to African-Caribbean people and 'minority ethnic' to South Asians. Therefore, the authors argue that policy makers strip the label 'black' of the political significance attached to it by self-identifying 'black' organisations.

### **Gypsy and traveller organisations**

Gypsies and travellers are an ethnic minority in the UK, but not necessarily a diaspora. Some may be British in the sense that they were born in the UK, some may have come from Ireland and some (though less) may be Roma from mainland Europe. However, it cannot be assumed that gypsy and traveller organisations would self-identify as being part of the category 'BME'.

By virtue of opting out of a settled residence, gypsies and travellers are often excluded from society socially, economically and culturally: access to basic services such as healthcare and education can be difficult if you are nomadic. Being involved in organised politics is near impossible – how do you register to vote without a permanent address? Not having a fixed address also excludes nomadic people economically as it is very difficult to open a bank account, access benefits, pay taxes, take out loans or get a salaried job. Gypsies and travellers also report experiencing considerable discrimination (sometimes violent) from the settled population. Indeed, the Gypsy Roma Traveller Leeds website

(listed below) quotes that the Commission for Racial Equality states that ‘discrimination against gypsies and travellers is the last “respectable” form of racism’.

Though there are a number of gypsy and traveller third sector organisations, there was very little material identified in the review on this particular field, which includes recent work by Greenfields and Ryder et al (2010) on the social and economic inclusion of gypsies and travellers. Subsequently, the remainder of this section reports on information made available from some of the larger gypsy and traveller TSOs. It is worth noting, however, that these have been identified through internet searches and subsequently exclude those that do not have a web presence. Key organisations identified include:

- **The Gypsy Council:** <http://www.gypsy-association.com/gypsycouncil.html>
- **The Irish Traveller Movement in Britain:** [www.irishtraveller.org.uk/about\\_us/capacity-building](http://www.irishtraveller.org.uk/about_us/capacity-building)
- **Friends, Families and Travellers:** [www.gypsy-traveller.org](http://www.gypsy-traveller.org)
- **Gypsy Roma Traveller Leeds:** [www.grtleeds.co.uk/information/GypsyCouncil.html](http://www.grtleeds.co.uk/information/GypsyCouncil.html)

A review of these websites suggests that the main issues that these organisations are working on are:

- securing sites for gypsies and travellers (including, lobbying local authorities)
- access to education
- healthcare – these include securing access to health services and promoting awareness of health issues within the community as gypsies and travellers are more likely than the settled population to suffer health problems
- racial and ethnic discrimination – fighting against it and raising awareness within the community about rights and legislation regarding racial discrimination.
- cultural maintenance of gypsies and traveller traditions in music, story-telling, poetry, art and design and dance.

Several of the issues identified above resonate with the wider BME TS, and in this sense it can be argued that gypsy and traveller TSOs are working towards a similar agenda to their counterparts. Nevertheless, unlike the wider BME TS, the literature review suggests that there is even less material on gypsy and traveller TSOs.

### **The multicultural third sector**

So far discussion on material in this review has been grouped into discrete sub-categories, such as ‘faith-organisations’ and ‘immigrant organisations’. This is largely to assist with managing and sorting material to help provide a coherent discussion on different aspects of the BME TS. In practice, however, several of them are likely to overlap and have a mix of members, beneficiaries and staff from different groups and generations. In this section, discussion is on a small number of research projects (two) that examine TSOs, in the loose sense, that involve people of diverse backgrounds and that explicitly aim to bring together people of different racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

The first of these two studies is on community action by Harrison et al. (1995). Using a case study approach, three multiracial localities in Britain were selected in which the relations between various

communities had become 'racialised'. By this, the authors mean that 'ethnic differences had become infused with distinctively racist meanings built around discourses of inferiorisation' (p.144). The case study areas were, however, highly varied as a result of the demographic and cultural characteristics of the communities, the forms of organisation taking place, the nature and impact of central and local government interventions upon them, and the dominant modes of interaction for the communities.

To spotlight communal sites where interaction took place, the researchers focused on a number of smaller case studies either of small areas such as housing estates or particular community organisations or initiatives in each case study area. Two key themes emerged: co-operation and competition. The tension between these two was ever present between the communities looked at. Where there was co-operation a win-win outcome was more likely in terms of access to resources for all groups. In the most successful instance this took the form of a tenant management co-operative which actively sought to increase diversity in participation between ethnic communities who had previously largely kept to themselves. At the other extreme, where competition was dominant to the point where co-operation was impossible, all groups tended to lose out (even if one community was perceived to receive comparatively more resources). The research found that though 'the allocation of resources by governmental and other organisations may directly contribute to either competition or collaboration across communal boundaries... most resource-giving organisations appear to be unaware and ill-informed of the consequences of their actions' (p.146).

There is therefore a key role for local and central government, as well as other funding providers, in facilitating inter-ethnic communication and co-operation. This may undermine the need for a BME TS in some neighbourhoods, but that might not necessarily be a bad thing.

In the second study, Ledwith and Asgill (2000) propose that 'critical alliance is a vital concept for the future of community work in the process of collective action for social justice' (p.290). They argue that 'despite the fact that women are the prime collective force in communities, when they come together in alliance across [racial] difference this action is not sustained' (p.290). The authors observe that black women and white women often organise separately and when they do seek partnership, caution and hostility undermine the collaborative process. Starting from a feminist perspective and utilising heuristic research techniques, the authors began with self-inquiry and then began to expand their work out to include black and white women involved in community action. The paper is therefore a project reported as a work in progress. This is not research that seeks only to understand the world, it also seeks to change community relations in a form of self-help therapy around questioning thoughts and actions which allow oppression to continue. The work leads to a call for 'more sustained, horizontal forms of relating' (p.290) in order that interracial alliances for social justice might be more successful.

The next chapter discusses the relationship between the BME TS and the state. This has been a reoccurring theme throughout the review thus far although it has not been explicitly addressed. It is therefore useful to spotlight this important relationship and how it might have an impact on voluntary and community organisations.

## The BME third sector and the State

In addition to their substantive topic, much of the material discussed for this review contains discussion on the relationship between the BME TS and the state. In some cases, these include potentially positive outcomes arising from state intervention. In other cases, however, there is a more cautious outlook; highlighting some of the potential negative consequences arising from this. These cover disparate geographies, communities and research foci and yet all address the role of the state in community organisations. If we are to talk of a BME TS, sitting alongside the public and the private, then the role of the state in the sector can be considered a pertinent issue.

Turning first to some of the material that contains discussion on the positive aspects of state intervention, Bloemraad (2005) writes about some of the ways in which migrants can benefit from this. Drawing on data from 147 qualitative interviews, plus documentary information, from the Portuguese and Vietnamese communities in two cities in the US and Canada, Bloemraad (2005) argues that state intervention can foster immigrants' and refugees' ability to establish and to sustain community organisations; that migrants benefit from government involvement. She draws on that fact the policies to facilitate settlement and promote multiculturalism are found to 'provide material and symbolic resources that immigrants can use to build a large and diverse organisational infrastructure' (p.865). This is, the author argues, a win-win situation as 'by facilitating community building, host societies can encourage migrants' participatory citizenship in their new home' (p.865), thereby benefiting the locale.

From a different angle, and reporting on devolution in the UK, Chaney and Fevre (2001) discuss ways in which the creation of a national legislature for Wales has brought about further involvement between the (Welsh) government and the third sector, where this

has had a major and potentially far reaching impact on the 'third sector' because innovations in devolved governance have been accompanied by new legal duties and responsibilities that link voluntary organisations and the Welsh government into a binding partnership arrangement. (p.131/2)

As 'inclusiveness' has been the watchword of devolution in Wales, the involvement of the voluntary sector in policy development is inherent in the new system. In policy terms this means that in both the Assembly's equality programme and the Voluntary Sector Scheme, third sector organisations have been given a crucial role. The three groups targeted for work on 'equalities' are women, the disabled and ethnic minorities. The authors write:

If the aim of achieving inclusive governance in Wales is even partly realised through partnership with voluntary groups, a radical reappraisal of the (UK) government's policy priorities can be expected... the third sector has often been seen as the main weapon at the disposal of any government that is concerned to tackle exclusion. The policy debate over these issues has made much of the role that voluntary groups representing those at the margins of society can play in overcoming social exclusion. If this central feature of current thinking is to be as important as its many advocates have hoped we will expect to find early evidence of successful partnership between government in Wales and the voluntary groups representing the marginalised sections of Welsh society. (p.133)

In order to investigate the issue the researchers conducted 250 semi-structured interviews with managers, service users, and 'ordinary members' of 90 voluntary organisations in the three 'minority'

groupings (women, disabled and BME). These interviews were analysed qualitatively. The research found that the major challenges of this approach were ensuring that all voluntary organisations can engage in an inclusive mode of governance. Umbrella bodies were chosen to act as channels between the Assembly and the thousands of 'minority' voluntary organisations and their members. Questions over the representativeness of these bodies inevitably arose, especially since there were significant inequalities between the BME organisations they were representing. In addition, Chaney and Fevre suggest that in trying to give voice to all voluntary groups, the new legislature risked over-bureaucratising the sector. Nonetheless, interviewees were positive about the inclusive agenda and hopeful for the future.

In the case of studies carried out in England, there is research on the implications of the (lack of) support received by immigrant and refugee individuals. For example, from a qualitative study based on depth-interviews with 25 African-Caribbean residents of a deprived multi-ethnic area of a south England town, Campbell and McLean (2002) found that the disadvantages experienced through the absence of community organising is associated with the lack of state support,

while African-Caribbean identity played a central role in peoples' participation in inter-personal networks, this inter-personal solidarity did not serve to unite people at the local community level beyond particular face-to-face networks. Levels of participation in voluntary organisations and community activist networks were low. Informants regarded this lack of African-Caribbean unity within the local community as a problem, saying that it placed African-Caribbean people at a distinct disadvantage furthering their social exclusion through limiting their access to various local community resources. (p.643)

They went on to suggest that though the African-Caribbean community in this area felt no need to organise, they felt that institutionalised racism meant that their needs were unlikely to be represented in local decision making. In the absence of community organisation they felt disempowered and unable to have their voices heard.

Offering a more complex story, from a qualitative study on UK refugees from Bosnia, Kelly (2003) discusses the notion of community-organising and the state's engagement with this. Using data generated from interviews with 28 refugees, Bosnia Project staff and community association representatives and participant observation in a wide range of situations (private and public social events, community group meetings), Kelly found that Bosnian refugees in the UK form contingent communities as a result of the British funding and refugee support system. This is undertaken reluctantly and Kelly notes that as there is no tradition of community organisation, the fact that Bosnian refugees in the UK have nothing in common except their nationality poses considerable obstacles to developing successful third sector organisations:

the notion of a community association was something that had to be explained to them by the Bosnia Project and other interested parties. For each of the five associations I examined, the origins of community association formation lie outside of the group... In each case the reasons for establishing community associations included the ongoing need for support of the Bosnian population and the finance and support that could be gained once an association was formally established. However, each association faced some difficulties in establishing itself and maintaining its existence... The members had widely different class, economic and educational backgrounds and came from different regions of Bosnia. (p.43)

In other cases, communities are organised but may not have relationships set up with the authorities. For example, Davis and Cooke (2002a) found that the black women's organisations that they spoke to highlighted engagement with the authorities as an issue. Black women's organisations across the country said that they were insufficiently engaged with local and regional strategic partnership schemes. The impact of this was reflected in the limited funding given to black women's groups by regeneration programmes such as New Deal for Communities and Health Action Zones.

In his keynote address to the Seventh International Conference of the International Society for Third Sector Research (Bangkok, July 2006), Sidel (2006) problematised further the relationship between the third sector and national governments. He suggested that

To be sure, there has always been mistrust of the voluntary sector by governments in many nations around the world. This mistrust, or scepticism, finds policy expression in tightened regulation, stricter governance and financial requirements, restrictions on foreign funding, imitations on endowment growth and investments, barriers to advocacy, and a host of other legal and policy requirements. The current suspicion, though, in a number of nations, goes further than the traditional mistrust or scepticism and reflects a vision of the third sector as a source of insecurity and incivility that has been fuelled by the re-emergence of terrorism, particularly since the attacks of September 11, 2001 and subsequent attacks in Bali, London, Madrid, and elsewhere. (p. 201)

Sidel noted the inclusion of charities in new anti-terrorism legislation in Britain. He suggested that this places pressures on the third sector, especially BME organisations, and said in response the third sector has been both timid in the face of state action, and timid in the face of the need to be responsible for their own accountability and legitimacy. The solution is to be both self-reflexive about the role of the third sector in human insecurity, whilst maintaining a critical stance vis-à-vis state encroachment on creativity and personal freedom.

Finally, with regard to faith, Lowndes and Chapman (2005) found that religion could be a barrier to accessing state funding. One participant is quoted as saying 'the government doesn't want to hear about what makes us faithful people. They'll fund us if we don't do anything religious with the money' (p.12).

## Conclusion

This working paper has provided an overview of key research in the broadly defined BME TS. The aim is to inform aspects of the research programme that is being developed for the TSRC cross-cutting BME work stream and other work streams including, for example: service delivery, below the radar and the social enterprise work streams. The approach taken to the review is that it is not always wise to presume the BME TS to be a distinct part of the third sector. Indeed, some of the issues raised have problematised the use of the term 'BME'. In addition, the idea of a 'third sector' which is neither 'private' nor 'public' is something which must not be presumed to have definite boundaries.

The review has taken the broadest possible view of BME, taking cues from the literature around what or who might be included. This has narrowed the field down to any research undertaken which deals with (broadly defined) third sector organisations run by and/or for black and/or ethnic minorities. In the UK, an ethnic minority may be any category of person who is not white British, including non-

white British (e.g. British Asian), and white non-British (e.g. Irish). Taking this as a starting point, the paper asked: 'what is the BME TS?' and 'can we speak of BME TS which is distinct from the wider third sector?' The answer was, rather ambiguously, 'maybe, but only when it serves a useful purpose for the organisations involved'. This stance draws out some important questions around presumed distinctiveness which may or may not be beneficial to either research on such organisations, or their work.

However, the existence of the review itself suggests that the BME TS is a widely used term and useful for some in understanding or furthering the goals of particular organisations. Therefore, included within the review is a disaggregation of the field in order to both highlight complexity and contradiction, and demonstrate similarity. Some of the different types of organisation which may come under the heading 'BME TS' were discussed in depth. These include refugee and asylum seeker organisations (RCOs), faith based organisations, diasporic immigrant community organisations, black organisations, gypsy and traveller organisations and multicultural organisations. This is clearly not a comprehensive list of what might constitute the BME TS. It is nevertheless sufficient to show the variations of types of organisations that might be included in this sub-stream of the third sector. The penultimate section addressed the important relationship between the BME TS and the state. This is an issue that cuts across the various types of organisations involved, and indeed across much of the third sector, and yet is arguably insufficiently discussed in the literature.

The review is inevitably restricted by resource constraints, not least that of time, and as such may well have inadvertently excluded certain issues, viewpoints or communities. In addition, literature is mostly taken from the UK, supplemented by work from the USA and Canada where appropriate, but a broader search may have proven fruitful. To conclude the paper, a number of gaps in the literature are suggested below.

### **Gaps in the literature**

This section outlines some gaps in the literature on the BME TS identified through the course of the review. This is by no means an exhaustive list, and it is equally possible that though this review found certain absences of particular topics, this may have been an oversight. It is the aim of this section not to be entirely accurate or comprehensive but to suggest some possible avenues for further research which may be pursued by readers or, more importantly for the remit of the review, the TSRC BME work stream.

First, there is a dearth in research on a number of minority groups whom we know form significant minorities in the UK:

- gypsies and travellers;
- new migrants from East and Central Europe
- Chinese communities
- Irish communities

There is also a lack of research into white ethnic minorities. This is reflected in the fact that gypsy and traveller, Eastern European and Irish community organisations barely appear in the research. One issue which may be linked to this is the lack of sophistication in defining BME in much of the literature.

A dependency on the 'visible minorities' concept is inadequate and does not take into account the large body of literature from ethnic and racial studies which has theorised the concepts of race and ethnicity extensively.

In addition, there is a lack of research that looks at faith-based organisations, particularly non-Christian organisations in the UK. The role of race in religion is mentioned by a small number of writers but not explicitly addressed. Internal and external factors are relevant here from choice of place of worship to discrimination in wider society. This is especially pertinent for Muslims in the UK at the current time. Furthermore, the role of religious institutions, notably the Christian Church, in providing places of shelter for refugees and asylum seekers in the absence of state support is an important but little discussed subject.

Finally, the intersections of race and gender, race and religion, and race and class are mentioned briefly in a number of studies but the whole issue of identity intersections in the third sector remain inadequately explored. The complexity of both individual and group identities, affiliations and networks is tentatively addressed but was not approached as the focus of a research project in the literature identified.

### **Future research**

This paper is an introductory resource on research in this field. It is largely organised under headings on types of BME TSOs in the broadest sense of the term. There are, however, other ways to do this, such as the topic-led style. Within TSRC's wider work programmes, future research papers are likely to focus on particular topics germane to other TSRC work streams – for example, as noted earlier, there will be a paper on the extent to which national datasets on volunteering lend themselves to comparative analyses across subsectors. We have also taken advice from Professor Gary Craig (who specialises in research on the BME TS), who has identified a series of gaps in the current research base and which will be of interest to the wider research community. These include an examination of the (limited) capacity towards and the challenges of generating income through contracts rather than grants (BRAP 2008), the extent and implications of moving away from funding 'single identity' organisations (DCLG 2008), and the (under-)representation of BME volunteers in the mainstream third sector. These and other topics will inform TSRC's cross-cutting equality research programme and we would be keen to hear of other researchers working on these or related topics.

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