

## Names in Multi-Cultural Scotland

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### **Abstract**

Naming traditions arise as products of the culture in which they are used. This research asks the question: what happens when these traditions are transplanted into a society with different naming conventions? The focus of this investigation is on personal naming practices used in immigrant communities in Scotland. One established and one very new immigrant group were studied, and the different methods necessary to gain access to such subjects are examined in this discussion.

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### **1. Introduction**

Immigrant names have been fairly widely discussed in a historical context, particularly in relation to their assimilation into or adaptation to a dominant culture (Liebersohn 1984; Watkins & London 1994; Hanks 2003). There have also been some, though fewer, primary studies of the names of immigrants in present-day societies (Lawson and Glushkovskaya 1994; Thompson 2006).

This paper discusses ways in which the personal names of immigrant groups may be researched within a particular society, with specific emphasis on gaining access to informants. Anthroponyms are an important and obvious marker of cultural identity, yet the general population appears to have very little knowledge of the types of names given in their immigrant communities or the significance which these names have to the people who bear them.

In the 2001 Census, Scotland was recorded as having a population of 5,062,011 people. Of these, only 2.25% were born outside Europe, with a further 1.10% born within Europe but outside the United Kingdom and Ireland. The city of Glasgow is the fifth largest city in the United Kingdom and the largest in Scotland, with a population of around 580,000 (Glasgow City Council 2007). In Glasgow the mix was a little more diverse than Scotland as a whole, with 5.46% of respondents being non-white. By far the largest of these groups were the 2.65% of Glasgow's residents describing themselves as Pakistani, with Chinese being the second most common category (General Register Office for Scotland n.d.). Since the year 2000, asylum seekers have also resided in the city due to an agreement with the UK government while, following the European Union expansion of 2004, large numbers of East Europeans, and especially Polish people, have also emigrated to Glasgow.

### **2. Qualitative Methods**

Through qualitative interviews I aimed to gain access to some of the anthroponymic information possessed by two immigrant groups, specifically the Pakistani and asylum seeker communities in Glasgow. Qualitative approaches lay emphasis on understanding human behaviour, rather than on quantifying actions (Bryman 2004). Though quantitative methods can be useful tools in determining what occurs, qualitative research methods are important in discovering why this occurs and what meanings are applied to it.

The interviews with informants in both these communities were semi-structured, in that I had particular topics to address but wanted the informants to be comfortable discussing any topic they wished within their naming system. Encompassing a wide range of aspects of personal naming, including both official and unofficial names, the interviews were designed to gain an overview of the naming system through qualitative discussion, rather than elicit a certain quantity of the names themselves.

### 3. The Pakistani Muslim Community

Minority ethnic populations within Britain generally tend to be concentrated in large urban areas, particularly London (Scott et al. 2001: 8); within Scotland, the majority of ethnic minorities live in the Strathclyde area (Verma 1995: 119). The original Pakistani Muslim migrants to Glasgow largely emigrated from the same small area within the Punjab region of Pakistan. This is due to a very concentrated level of chain migration, which meant that people from the same area joined others in Glasgow who could help them to find work and to settle, and it has resulted in a close-knit community (Maan 1992). The idea of this being an immigrant community is no longer entirely accurate. Census statistics show that 47% of Scottish Pakistanis were born in Scotland, with a further 11% born in England. Around 37% of people reporting themselves as being 'Pakistani' in the 2001 census in Scotland were actually born in Pakistan (Office of the Chief Statistician 2004). Within Glasgow, the population is concentrated mainly on the south side of the city, with a lesser concentration in the west end.

Within Scotland nearly 90% of Pakistani people also report themselves as being Muslim, and 3.08% of the total Glasgow population describe themselves as Muslim (General Register Office for Scotland n.d.). There are currently twelve mosques in Glasgow, with the majority of these on the south side of the city but most religious, and much community, activity is centred on the Glasgow Central Mosque.

English, Punjabi and Urdu are all spoken within the community and many people have some knowledge of Arabic. These languages tend to belong to very different domains. Arabic is likely only to be used for the purposes of religion, as Muslims believe that the Qur'an should be read in what is considered to be its original language. The use of Punjabi and Urdu is restricted to the home domain and the community itself within Glasgow, but the social networks of people within the community generally extend to kin in other parts of Britain and in Pakistan with whom they may use these languages. Though Urdu is seen as the more prestigious language (it is the national language of Pakistan), people within the community appear more likely to know and use Punjabi. The use of English is necessary to interact with most people outside the Pakistani Muslim community, and is essential for gaining education in Britain. Therefore the 58% of the community who were born and brought up in either Scotland or England are likely to have attended English-speaking schools. English is also likely to be the main language used in any occupation outside the community.

Access to the community was a problem, as I am an outsider. Initial contact came through meetings with two individuals. These were people who knew and trusted me as a person, as well as a researcher, either because they had known me prior to the study or because they knew somebody else who knew me well and who had introduced us. I asked my two primary local informants to recommend me to others in the community who might be willing to speak to me. They contacted each person first to explain what I was doing and to ascertain whether they might be willing to be interviewed. Once given permission, I would then contact that person to arrange an interview. This introduction by a 'gate-keeper' was essential in gaining their trust, as others whom I had contacted without this introduction were unwilling to participate. This 'friend of a friend' approach to gaining access to informants was used with success by Milroy (1980; 1987) and has become prominent within sociolinguistic investigation (Labov 2001; Raschka, Li and Lee

2002). However, unlike much sociolinguistic enquiry, social networks were used as a tool to gain access to informants rather than as an analytical device.

The line of interviews followed two completely separate social networks (see figs 1a and 1b, below), which could loosely be described as the *younger* and the *older* networks (see colour key for approximate ages). The hierarchy shows the order in which I was introduced to each informant. The codes P1, P2, etc. are simply each participant's unique identification number given for the purposes of anonymising the data.

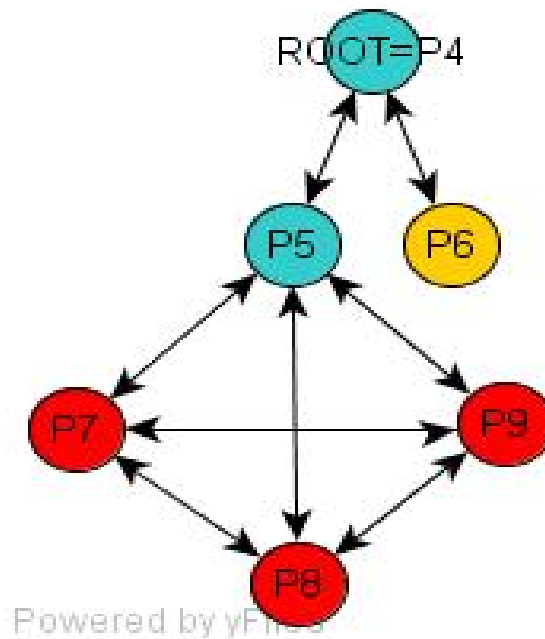


Fig. 1a Diagram showing acquaintance of informants in the 'younger' network

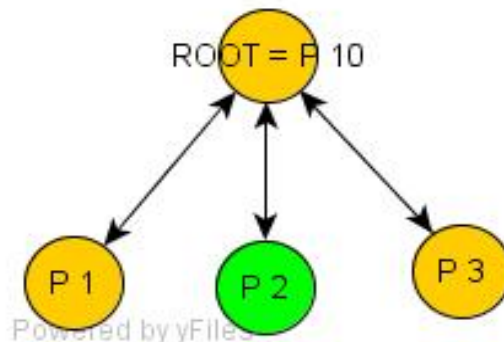


Fig. 1b Diagram showing acquaintance of informants in the 'older' network

Key to age of informant by colour for Fig 1a & 1b:

Yellow = 45–54

Green = 35–44      ROOT = Initial contact in group

Cyan = 25–34

Red = 15–24

(Graphs produced using y Ed Graph Editor: <http://www.yworks.com>)

The results obtained by extensive interviews with these informants allowed for a picture of the naming system in the Pakistani Muslim community in Glasgow, as discussed elsewhere. All names used were very much Pakistani Muslim names, as opposed to those of the dominant Scottish culture, and their meaning was extremely important to their bearers. This was felt to impact upon their very personality. The area in which the Scottish naming system had impacted most was on the structure of the names, which was gradually changing. Surnames in this community are not always hereditary or common to a family group. However, the hereditary family surname was becoming steadily more widespread.

#### 4. Asylum Seekers in Glasgow

In the year 2000, Glasgow City Council agreed with the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) to house a number of asylum seekers as they awaited judgement on their claim to be refugees. They continue to fulfil this role; 3,905 people who claimed asylum in the UK in 2007 were dispersed to Glasgow (Home Office 2008). In Scotland as a whole, the number of asylum seekers supported was 4,230 and the largest geographical groupings of these were from sub-Saharan Africa (1,625, particularly from Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo) and Asia and Oceania (1,145) (Home Office 2008). These figures do not include former asylum seekers who have been granted refugee status and decided to stay on in Glasgow or asylum seekers who are not receiving Home Office support. Wren (2007: 394) quotes an estimate from agencies and doctors' practices within Glasgow of approximately 10,000 asylum seekers and refugees in the city in 2003, of more than 70 nationalities. This is a far greater number than the 5,680 asylum seekers recorded as being supported by NASS in 2003 (Home Office 2004).

The asylum seekers have largely been housed in high-rise tower blocks and, because of the location of vacant accommodation, dispersed in socially deprived areas. Asylum seekers were also not housed in language or cultural groups, as had been recommended by government agencies (Wren 2007). As a result of this enforced settlement, the areas in which asylum seekers have been housed in the city are now home to a diverse range of cultures, but also to a very fragmented group of people when compared with the more established Pakistani Muslim community.

My research has been in one of the groups of high-rise tower blocks which houses a mix of Scottish people and asylum seekers. Statistics on the wider neighbourhoods in which the high-rise blocks are located show that 4.4% of the population are asylum seekers, with an additional 4.1% from minority ethnic groups (Glasgow Centre for Population Health 2008). However, almost all of the asylum seekers live in NASS accommodation within the high-rise blocks so there the proportion is much greater.

Due to the nature of asylum settlement in Glasgow, and the understandable wariness of vulnerable asylum seekers and refugees, access to informants was to prove even more difficult than in the Pakistani Muslim community. A level of trust needed to be established before I could interview people effectively about the anthroponymicon in their home culture and their experience of names since immigrating to the UK. I needed to conduct a more ethnographic study which allowed me to establish my own contacts.

Initial contact was through a friend who introduced me to workers at the area's community centre. Access took months to negotiate and I was introduced at the centre specifically as a researcher. After working at the centre for three months as an employee without carrying out research, I began working there on a voluntary basis and commenced the study. This continued for over a year.

The opportunity to work with local people allowed relationships to be built up between myself as researcher and members of the asylum seeker and Glaswegian communities. This meant that although I had needed an initial introduction to the area, once there I could recruit

informants for interview using my own social networks, which was particularly important in the asylum seeker community. Without a high level of trust it would have been virtually impossible to have convinced people to be interviewed, particularly given that they were expected to volunteer information about their lives in their home countries. The relationships that I had created with them allowed the interviews to take place on what could have been an overly sensitive topic. However, the ethnographic fieldwork prior to interview also fulfilled another important function within the data collection. Field-notes, on aspects of their naming system or members of their family that had been mentioned in conversation, could be drawn upon in the interview and this helped to provide a fuller account of naming practices.

## 5. Summing up

Data on naming practices within the Pakistani Muslim community in Glasgow was obtained through extensive qualitative interviews. The results showed some continuity with Pakistani Muslim tradition alongside fundamental changes to naming structures to fit with British norms. The methodology adopted for this study is supplemented and contrasted with that used to investigate the naming practices of other nationalities which comprise an asylum seeker community in the city. The social structure of this multi-ethnic and less established immigrant community is looser, more diverse and more transient than that of the firmly established, culturally homogeneous and close-knit Pakistani Muslim community. Its study required a different approach in gaining access to informants.

There were advantages and disadvantages to both approaches. An ethnographic element to the research, as in the asylum seeker study, allows for an in-depth knowledge of the informants before the interview takes place. This allows for more insightful discussion and ensures answers are likely to be less guarded. Field-notes mean that prior knowledge of naming practices can be used to question how informants use names. However, adequate access to informants was negotiated in the Pakistani Muslim study, despite there being no ethnography prior to interviews. This meant that the fieldwork process took a much shorter time to complete yet still resulted in good quality data. Had ethnographic research been attempted the results may have been improved, but this would not necessarily have been the case. Similarly, it might have been possible to gain access to enough asylum seeker informants to complete that study without working with them beforehand. However, this would very likely have resulted in willing informants being impossible to find and those that agreed to take part being hesitant in talking about their homeland in interviews. Methodology should be dictated by the problem under consideration. These two separate but connected studies have demonstrated a need for careful consideration and flexibility in empirical socio-onomastic research.

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