**Social Inequality and Ethnicity**



**WALT: What is the relationship between ethnicity and inequality?**

Learning targets:

* There are ethnic differences in life chances in the UK.
* Some ethnic minorities appear to be the victims of racism and discrimination in the UK
* There have been strict laws to prevent racism and ethnic inequality in the UK.
* There are those who believe that the social changes that have come about because of legal controls are more cosmetic than deeply embedded into our social structure.

**Key questions**

(AO1) What evidence is there of ethnic inequality in UK?

(AO1) How are ethnic inequalities being challenged by government policies?

(AO2) To what extent is British culture racist and ethnically unequal?

(AO2) What are social implications of racism in our society?

**Summary of Key Points**

### *What is racism?*

Racism is the belief that some ethnic groups are superior and others inferior. This belief is often associated with notions of skin pigmentation or the minor physical differences that are sometimes apparent between different groups of people. However, racism is not always associated with skin colour, but also with culture, ethnicity, with religious belief or language differences.

The notion of racism itself is also a very recent idea in our society. In the past, the idea that people from certain ethnic groups were superior to and different from others was so deeply ingrained into much thinking that it was not seriously questioned. There is a long and deep history of racism in European culture. We often ascribe negative characteristics to people of different ethnicities and nationalities so that they are used as terms of abuse. Many jokes rely on negative assumptions about people's national characteristics.

Ethnocentrism is the tendency to see the world from the perspective of your own culture and to assume that one's own culture is the only correct way to think. Racism is a step beyond ethnocentricity because it implies that people of different cultures are not equal with each other. Franz Boas developed the concept of cultural relativity to suggest that whatever one culture believes to be correct and moral, another would find disgusting and immoral.

There are various forms of racism. Racism can be individual distrust of people from a particular ethnic, religious or racial group. It can also be institutional whereby social institutions operate in such a way as to exclude people from certain backgrounds from fully taking part in the institution. Overt racism is increasingly rejected by society, but few people would deny its existence. Barker (1981) for instance, has suggested that the direct racism associated by rejecting people on the basis of skin colour has been replaced in recent years by a marginally more sophisticated form which he terms as New Racism where commentators reject those of different ethnicity on cultural grounds. Muslims, for instance, are rejected for their 'failure' to adapt to British cultural traditions.

### *Why is Britain multi-cultural?*

Britain has always been a multicultural society. There have been many waves of immigrant groups into the British Isles. All of these groups have left their mark on British culture and the English language in particular. Most of these groups were white and thus the racial diversity of Britain would not have been obvious. However, even in the 18th century, there were sizeable groups of Black people in London and other sea ports.

Reasons for migration into Britain include invasion. Many people arrived for reasons of trade or commerce, some of those people as slaves so that Bristol and Liverpool built great wealth on the trafficking of Africans. The Irish arrived to escape starvation as a result of the potato famines. Many people arrived for work; during the great boom time of coal mining in the valleys, Italians opened cafes and there are still many Italian families in Wales.

After World War 2, there was a labour shortage in Britain. People, who lived in areas of the world governed by the UK, many of whom had fought as soldiers, came to live in Britain. It is estimated that half a million migrants came from the West Indies, attracted by advertising by British companies. Many of them arrived expecting wonderful new lives, only to be met by racism and discrimination. West Indians were not the only migrants. People of Asian heritage came directly from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh to work in the factories in the North of England. They also came from Africa where many had lost their jobs and businesses as African countries gained independence from British rule. The new rulers of Uganda and Kenya both expelled British Asians from their countries in the 1960s. These people came to Britain.

More recently, there have been migrants from Eastern Europe. When Eastern European countries joined the EU, their citizens were entitled to live and work anywhere in the EU. Many have come to Britain to learn English and improve their job prospects at home. At least 7.3% of the British population was born abroad. Not all of these people are migrants. The figure includes the children of British citizens who were working abroad when the babies were born, for example Army children. Migrants are not equally distributed throughout the country. Most settle in London and the South-East. In and out migrants tend to be both young and male.

### *What has been the experience of ethnic minorities in the job market?*

The experience of many ethnic minority people arriving in Britain has not always been pleasant or positive. Many have experienced prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping. Some of this has been direct. In the 1960s and 1970s, until the law changed, it was possible to see shops and hotels with notices saying 'No Blacks, no Irish'.

It is in the job market that the effects of disadvantage and discrimination remain most obvious. This is not equally true for all ethnic minorities. There are variations, so that Hindus are well represented in the highly paid medical profession. In general, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black African men, are very low paid or underemployed when compared to White British men. UK figures showed that in 2004, taken as a whole ethnic minority workers earned only £18,044 on average compared with £19,552 for white employees, however, the average Bangladeshi salary was only £12,220 a year.

The first annual report from the government's Ethnic Minority Employment Taskforce showed that the employment rate among ethnic minorities was 59.4% compared to 74.9% for the general population. The figures also showed that minority employees earned less than their white counterparts. Although minority employment has risen, mainly due to more ethnic minority women securing jobs, there is still government concern that the pay gap is not closing fast enough.

Different social groups may have differing educational backgrounds. In general, Indians and African-Asians were very highly qualified people when they arrived in Britain. Although many found themselves in bad jobs, their children have generally been successful in making the transition to highly paid occupations. Nevertheless, research by JRF suggests that when qualification levels are taken into account, there is still some difference between the earnings of White people and Indian or Black African people. Block (2004) suggested that recent immigrants generally experience significant disadvantage, with refugees earning 79% of the pay of ethnic minority groups in general, despite being well qualified and highly educated. Sometimes the issue is one of language difficulties, but many overseas qualifications are not recognised in the UK.

There is evidence of workplace discrimination, probably institutional. People who are trained in different environments may not understand the British workplace culture and be passed over for promotion. Ethnic minority work is often seen as low status and low paid. Lucinda Platt (2007) found that ethnic minority workers do not have access to informal social networks. Clark and Drinkwater (2007) suggested that many Asians in particular prefer self-employment in relatively low paid sectors of work such as taxi-driving and catering, rather than face discrimination in the wider employment sector

### *How does ethnicity affect educational attainment?*

At GCSE, Chinese and Indian pupils are most likely to achieve five or more GCSEs. The groups who under attain are Black Caribbean boys, Black Africans. Mixed ethnic groups tend to under attain the most. Similar patterns are found in Universities, ONS statistics show that in 2004 people from the Bangladeshi, Black Caribbean and Pakistani groups were less likely than White British people to have a degree (or equivalent). The groups most likely to have degrees were Chinese (31 per cent), Indian (25 per cent) and White Irish (24 per cent). These compared with 17 per cent of White British people. However, a relatively high proportion of Chinese people had no qualifications - 20 per cent, compared with 15 per cent of White British people.

A Department for Education and Skills team found in 2007 that Black and Asian undergraduates are less likely to get a first class degree than white students. This has serious implications for ethnic minority students given the very strong relationship between educational qualifications and future life chances

Lee Harvey (2008) in a study for the Higher Education Academy and the Equality Challenge Unit, suggested the issues are not just issues of racism but that more complex social factors also affect the attainment of ethnic minorities. The top three reasons that BME students surveyed gave for differential attainment were the need to undertake paid employment while studying, social class and prior family background of university students.

In 2003/04 pupils from Black Caribbean, Other Black and Mixed White and Black Caribbean groups were among the most likely to be permanently excluded from schools in England. These were up to three times the rate for White pupils. Chinese and Indian pupils had the lowest exclusion rates. with boys representing around 80 per cent of the total number of permanent exclusions.

### *What is the relationship between ethnicity and criminality in the UK?*

 According to the British Crime Survey, people from ethnic minorities are over-represented in crime statistics as the victims of crime. This is often more a question of their age, their social class and their locale than their ethnicity, but ethnicity alone can make people vulnerable to hate crime.

Pakistani people are more likely to be the victims of crime and to report this crime as being racially motivated than African Caribbeans or Indians. African Caribbeans are often unwilling to report racist crime to the police in the belief that this may not be taken seriously or acted upon. There is evidence to support their case, because more racial crimes are reported to the police than are recorded in crime statistics. There has been an increase in recorded instances of race crime, but this is probably because more people are more likely to report incidents and the police are morel likely to take accusations seriously.

People from some ethnic minorities are more likely to be represented in prison statistics than others. In June 2005, there were 18,750 people in prison establishments in England and Wales from Black minority ethnic groups, representing 25 per cent of the total prison population. This is an over representation of non-White prisoners. 15% of prisoners were Black or Black British, whereas 6% were from Asian heritage backgrounds.

This poses a problem for sociologists because there are two plausible conclusions that can be drawn. If the figures are an accurate reflection of criminality, then it is possible that people from some ethnic minorities are more criminal than others. Note, however, that some of this over-representation of ethnic minorities may be related to the age and social class of the populations. On the other hand, it may be that the criminal justice system itself is unequally applied and that ethnic minority criminals are treated more harshly.

There is a strong argument to suggest that the police themselves can be racist in their approach. In 2002, ICM research conducted a poll for the BBC and found that 33% of Black respondents and 30% of Asian respondents said they have been made to feel like a criminal because of the colour of their skin. The same research discovered that 18% of black and 15% of Asian respondents said they had experienced racism by the police or in the criminal justice system.

Home Office statistics for 2005 showed that members of black and minority ethnic (BME) groups were more likely to be arrested, or stopped and searched, than white people. The total number of 'stop and searches' conducted by police increased by 14% in 2005, with terrorism-related searches increasing by 9%. Black people were six times more likely to be stopped and searched by police than white people and there were nearly twice as many searches of Asian people than white people. This supports claims by sociologists such as Muncie and Heidensohn that the police operate a 'canteen culture' that is both racist and sexist.

### *Are there ethnic inequalities in the experience of health?*

The main factor affecting health inequality in the UK is social class. Some of these health inequalities are due to patterns of poor life style so that obesity and smoking related illnesses are also diseases of poverty and deprivation. As certain ethnic minorities are often located within the lowest social classes, then they will be especially vulnerable to diseases of poverty and deprivation.Among Asian populations 23.2% of males smoke compared to 5.3% of women.

There are particular issues associated with ethnicity. In 1998, the I***ndependent Inquiry into Inequalities in Health*** highlighted some of the variations between ethnic populations. People in Black (Caribbean, African and other) groups and Indians have higher rates of limiting long standing illness than white people. Those of Pakistani or Bangladeshi origin have the highest rates. There is excess mortality among men and women born in Africa and men born on the Indian sub-continent. Among mothers who were born in countries outside the UK, those from the Caribbean and Pakistan have infant mortality rates about double the national average. Premature, newborn and stillbirth rates have also been consistently higher for babies of mothers born outside the UK. The differences between groups have not decreased over the last twenty years.

In 1999, the White Paper S***aving Lives: Our Healthier Nation*** focused on "the main killers": cancer, coronary heart disease and stroke, accidents, mental illness. Again, inequalities in health between ethnic groups were highlighted. Death rates for coronary heart disease for those born in the Indian sub-continent are 38 per cent higher for men and 43 per cent higher for women than rates for the country as a whole. Stroke death rates in people born in the Caribbean and the Indian sub-continent are one and a half to two and a half times higher than for people born in this country. Women living in England born in India and East Africa have 40 per cent higher suicide rates than those born here.

The 2001 Census showed that Pakistani and Bangladeshi men and women had the highest rates of long-term illness or disability - around 1.5 times higher than their White British counterparts. Chinese men and women had the lowest rates. In Asian and Black groups, women had higher rates than men. In the White and Mixed groups men had higher rates than women.

The ***Count Me in Census*** of all patients in mental hospitals in 2007 has shown that there are statistical differences in the experience of mental health. The research showed that 22% of people hospitalised for mental health problems were from minority ethnic groups. Bhui (2004) found that African-Caribbeans with mental health problems are more likely than other ethnic groups to be compulsory detained, with national data showing higher rates in psychiatric institutions and prison populations. They are also more likely to receive anti-psychotic medication and less likely to be offered psychotherapy.

*What is the relationship between ethnicity and poverty?*

Research from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and others shows that there are clear links between ethnicity and poverty. Lucinda Platt did a review of studies and found that all identified minority groups had higher than average rates of poverty. Rates of poverty were highest for Bangladeshis, Pakistanis and Black Africans, reaching nearly two-thirds for Bangladeshis.

Rates of poverty were also higher than average for Indian, Chinese and other minority group households. Around two-fifths of people from ethnic minorities live in low-income households, twice the rate for White people. For all ages, people from ethnic minorities are, on average, much more likely to live in low-income households than White people. For example, almost half of all children from ethnic minorities live in low-income households compared to a quarter of White British children.

Kenway and Palmer (2007) in a report for the JRF point out that one of the main reasons for poverty is worklessness, or low incomes when in work. Low pay is widespread among Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Black families. Up to half of Bangladeshi workers, a third of Pakistanis and a quarter of Black Africans were paid less than £6.50 per hour in 2006 compared with a fifth of the other ethnic groups. The 2001 Census showed that ethnic minorities work in low pay sector employment, 35 per cent of Bangladeshis work in the hotel and catering sector compared with around 5 per cent of those from other ethnic groups.

However there are cultural differences that contribute to poverty, so that Bangladeshi women are not expected to work outside the home and they may also have relatively large families. Large families who rely on a single, possibly low income will experience poverty. In contrast, African Caribbean families are often single parent families and whilst African Caribbean women are usually active in the job market, the reliance on a single income is a problem for their families.

Theoretical explanations of racial inequality

taken from a post on the Student Room Website – highly recommended

Marxist

1. **Legitimisation:** Ethnic Minorities are viewed as second class citizens, so capitalist employers can justify giving them lower pay.
*Evaluation:* New legislation preventing this and society is less racist, so companies doing this will acquire a bad reputation.

2. **Divide-and-rule:** It is within the interest of capitalist ideologies to keep the white and black working class separate so they do not unite and advocate a communist revolution. A sociologist called Miles referred to these divisions as "Racialised class fractions".
*Evaluation:* The workplace is becoming much more integrated. Also, other factors such as "false class consciousness" are more likely reasons as to why a revolution has not taken place, not the divisions within the working class.

3. **Scapegoating**: Ethnic Minorities receive the blame for social and economic problems, so the bourgeoisie do not receive direct criticism.
*Evaluation:* It is wrong to apply to this to ethnic minority groups. It would be more accurate to apply it to black people, bur Indian groups are just as successful as white people in terms of average economic position and income and wealth.

(You could also refer to ethnic minorities being used as a reserve army of labour to prevent white people demanding higher wages)

Weberian

1. **Black Underclass - Rex and Tomlinson**: A black underclass has emerged containing people who have experienced severe racism, resulting in them being unable to get jobs, so they end up in poverty.
*Evaluation:* New legislation prevents employers discriminating in this way.

2. **Dual-Labour Market - Barron and Norris** Ethnic minorities are located in the secondary sector where pay is low, conditions are poor, jobs unstable etc.
*Evaluation:* Ethnic minorties are being increasingly represented in the primary sector.

3. **Status inequality** - Lower status, making it difficult for them when competing for jobs, housing, criminal justice system, education etc.
*Evaluation:* Society's attitudes are changing towards ethnic minorities.

Post-modernism
Racial disadvantage is impossible to discuss as ethnic disadvantage is not fixed and people can choose from an array of hybrid identities.
*Evaluation:* Ignores obvious nature of racial inequality

What should you have in your folder of notes on this topic? (AO1)

**Key concepts**

Define the key concepts and ideas.

BME - Black Minority Ethnicity

Emigration

Ethnicity bias

Ethnicity sensitive

Hate crime

Immigration

Institutional racism

Internal migration

Racism

Recorded crime

Refugees

Reported crime

Stop and search (SUS)

Xenophobia

Prejudice

Stereotype

Race

ethncity

Independent study

**Compulsory**

* Make separate revision cards for each of the researchers, reports and theories mentioned in these notes
* Use textbooks to research two different studies in two different areas of inequality and make detailed examination notes from them.
* Practice writing short examination answers with four paragraphs based on these areas of inequality.
* Revise theories to explain ethnic inequality from a textbook – use Haralambos or any of the other A level texts in the LRC

**Extension work**

* Create revision cards for the studies and evidence that you could use to demonstrate ethnic inequality.
* Find notes about areas of life where there is evidence of ethnic inequality so you can create a balanced essay plan.

Rally Coach 

1. Suggest reasons why some people hold racist beliefs and fears
2. What is New Racism?
3. Suggest reasons why people migrate.
4. What benefits have migrants brought to British culture?
5. What was the experience of the post war non-White migrants to Britain?
6. List the various reasons for migrating.
7. What evidence is there to suggest some ethnic minority groups may have experienced discrimination?
8. How effective have Equality Laws been in changing attitudes towards members of ethnic minorities?
9. What impact will low pay and unemployment have on the life chances of members of ethnic minorities?
10. What is the ethnicity gap in terms of attainment at GCSE?
11. What is the pattern of attainment at degree level?
12. Suggest reasons why educational attainment is important for children of ethnic minorities.
13. Why are people more likely to report hate and racist crime now than in the past?
14. Why is the over-representation of some ethnic minorities in criminal justice statistics a problem for sociologists?
15. What single social factor is most significant in terms of health equality in the UK?
16. What differences are there in the experience of health by ethnicity?
17. Why might some ethnic minorities be vulnerable to mental health problems?
18. What cultural factors may make ethnic minority families vulnerable to poverty?
19. What social factors make a person vulnerable to poverty?

Outline and explain two areas of life where there are ethnic inequalities. For each, give two different types of evidence to support the view that inequality is significant.

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| One area of life isand the first piece of evidence is |
| One area of life isand the second piece of evidence is |
| The second area of life isand the first piece of evidence is |
| The second area of life isand the second piece of evidence is |