



Race/Ethnicity, Crime and Social Control: An Introduction

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1. Race/Ethnicity, Racism and Exclusion

As [West \(1993\)](#) asserted, ‘race matters’ because it has mattered so much and so significantly in the lives of millions of people. Race is not a harmless classification system ([Patel 2017a](#), p. 21), rather it shapes every aspect of our lives, in terms of access, rights and privileges. Further-more, Critical Race Theory argues that the ‘normative’ nature of racism, results in the common victimization of black and minority ethnic groups at the hands of the white majority ([Delgado and Stefancic 2001](#)). This occurs on an everyday basis that often goes unnoticed and/or is over-looked. Racism thus becomes dangerously ‘ordinary’ and remains insufficiently unchallenged ([Delgado and Stefancic 2001](#), pp. 8–9).

Often, the term ‘ethnicity’ is used in place of ‘race’, with claims about the first being that it describes the cultural, psychological and social characteristics of collectives, as opposed to the sole physical characteristics of the latter ([Gindro 2003](#), p. 94). In this sense, the concept of ethnicity transcends racial boundaries—and for this reason has often been considered a preferable term of reference. However, it is claimed that ‘ethnicity’ is used as a euphemism for race, that consequently permits racism under the illusion of celebrating diversity and supporting multiculturalism ([Moore 2003](#), p. 96). Thus, race/ethnicity can be treated as *real* interlinked concepts, which include socially constructed processes that have meaningful significance in peoples’ lives. Although they are not the same, they often overlap and should not be considered mutually exclusive categories ([Cornell and Hartmann 2007](#), p. 26). In this collection, the terms have been used sometimes interlinked tightly, sometimes not—further clarification on their use is covered by each author. Whatever the adopted term, and that is not to say that this point is not important, race/ethnicity—their similarities, differences and linked associations, are powerful categories by which human beings organise themselves, their ideas and upon which they form (and attach meaning to) social relationships. They are “... among the fundamental organizing concepts of the contemporary world” ([Cornell and Hartmann 2007](#), p. 12). This reason alone makes the social scientific study of race/ethnicity and inclusion/exclusion important.

Race/ethnicity have been used as markers of difference, to categorise and divide populations, giving access, rights, privileges *or not* as may be the case. They have a long and troubled history, especially in Western colonising countries such as the UK, France, Germany and the USA. It has contributed to slavery and human trafficking; violent attacks by right wing extremist groups, ranging from the Ku Klux Klan to the English Defence League; legally permitted inequality such as Jim Crow and segregation in the USA to Apartheid in South Africa; and genocide, including the Final Solution’s Holocaust in Nazi Germany and the Rwandan genocide ([Patel 2017a](#), p. 22). Their social ordering and exclusionary power has deepened in contemporary society, despite the claims that we are living in a post-racial/ethnic society.

The post-race/ethnic claims refer to a deconstructive approach to identity and social relations, in an attempt to move beyond traditional constructions of race/ethnicity to argue that society has

progressed so far with race/ethnic equality, that we no longer need to consider race/ethnic-based remedies. There are a few illustrations held up as indications of this post-race/ethnic state, most notably, Barack Obama's presidential win in 2008 and re-election to office in 2012 (Lee 2013, p. 110). However, taking from the Bonilla-Silva (2015, p. 1363) critique of the post-race state in America, it is argued that racial/ethnic inequality continues to be produced in a systematic way (i.e., there are still racially/ethnically based structures), but that they remain less overt, invisible, and are seemingly racially/ethnically irrelevant. Challenges to the post-race/ethnic claim have also been illustrated with reference to the current post holder of the American Presidential office. Here, President Donald J. Trump's emerging policies have been accused of being based on anti-immigrant and Islamophobic sentiment. Similarly, the UK's run-up to the 2016 Referendum on its European Union membership, saw significant quarters of the Leave camp running with an array of racially/ethnically divisive campaigns—largely around anti-immigrant, refugee, asylum seeker and migrant worker claims.

Alongside the critique of the post-race/ethnic claim, this collection draws on the argument that newer forms of racism (and ethnic discrimination) have replaced the older, uglier (biologically crude) racism of the past (see Fekete (2009) work on newer forms of racism). New racism includes Islamophobia, xenophobia, nationalistic sentiment, and, anti-migrant and anti-asylum/refugee hostility, which all draw on older anxieties about identity, race/ethnicity, place and citizenship. It draws on both colour-coded and non-colour-coded categories (Cole 2009, p. 1677). Newer forms of racism have been popularised, normalised and consequentially reinforced contemporary structures of discrimination. Without the use of overtly racially/ethnically discriminatory language and whilst appearing to fulfil equality measures, new racism/ethnic discrimination is rooted in “discourses about social cohesion, cultural preservation, and nationalism”, arguing that the desire to be among others like oneself is culturally instinctual (Pon 2009, p. 61). New racism/ethnic discrimination then continues to ‘legitimately’ discriminate, with its power and popularity lying in its presentation as something with an ordinary and normative status.

Inevitably, processes of racial/ethnic categorisation serve inclusionary/exclusionary practices. Race/ethnicity is often used to present black and minority ethnic people as “flawed psychologically, morally and socially” not only as individuals, but also more widely in terms of their cultures and family life, and indeed every aspect of their lives (Owusu-Bempah and Howitt 2000, p. 95). We are led to believe that black and minority ethnic people, their families, communities and entire culture, are problematic, and if left unchecked will infest other parts of healthy (‘normal’) society. Part of this narrative sees ‘whiteness’ (or, certain types of ‘whiteness’, given that it is itself a sub-layered hierarchical category) being accepted as the norm against which everything is then measured, although unable to be superior than (Dyer 1997, p. 3). The racialised/ethnically categorised (black and minority ethnic) body not only comes to be excluded from a centralised and normative position, but are presented as the dangerous ‘Other’, feeding the supposed logic of white victimhood, which is then used to justify further discriminatory attitudes and exclusionary measures. These excluded bodies then become subjects of increased surveillance and control measures, whose removal is for the safety of ‘us’ and ‘our’ identity, culture, health, space and land. This was one of the key tenants of both the Trump American Presidential election's tagline of “Make America Great Again” and the ‘protection of national borders’ strategy used by the Leave camp in the UK's European Union Referendum (Patel 2017b, pp. 3–5).

A consideration of race/ethnicity, racism and exclusion is now more than ever in need of social scientific consideration, given that it impacts on peoples' lives and fundamental human rights in numerous reoccurring ways. Worrying is the way in which it does this under the radar of equality and anti-discrimination legislation, which presents the need for attention on race/ethnic-based exclusion as invalid. For some, exclusionary practices based on race/ethnicity literally determine life-chances, meaning the difference between life and death.

2. Race/Ethnicity, Crime and Social Control

So, we can say with some degree of certainty that we do not yet have a post-race/ethnic state. Inequality and prejudice continue to thrive in society, despite attempts to address race/ethnic-based discrimination. This discrimination has been normalised, made respectable, and presented as necessary, especially in terms of crime and social control. Here, crime incidents have been problematically constructed as racially/ethnically-based events. This has been done via the use of an othering 'logic' and reworked notions of 'black criminality'. Thus, some types of criminal behaviour become viewed as more closely associated with particular racial/ethnic groups, and then more widely become construed as being indicative of the racial/ethnic traits of said groups, the result of which is that "whole categories of phenotypically similar individuals are rendered pre-criminal and morally suspect" (Covington 1995, p. 547). This was more recently evidenced with the *browning* of terror (Bhattacharayya 2008), and later in the UK, with the browning of child sexual exploitation (Cockbain 2013; Miah 2015; Patel 2017b), where an array of 'brown bodies' were rendered suspicious, undesirable and subjected to enhanced security measures (Patel 2017a).

The question posed is why is it that some racial/ethnic bodies are so easily rendered suspect, even in the face of contradictory or absent evidence? In exploring this, it is useful to draw on Paul Gilroy's important work in which he argues that views about some racial/ethnic (namely black and minority ethnic) groups as being "innately criminal" became common sensical in the UK during the 1970s and 1980s with the stories about 'muggings' which ultimately led to a moral panic that spread across the region. The construction of, in this case, black African-Caribbean youth as 'muggers' (criminals) was significant to the development the 'black problem' (Gilroy 2002), and was used to justify a rush of legal measures—including the now repealed SUS laws. Crimes, such as the muggings, were identified as expressions of a black and ethnic minority culture (Gilroy 1982, 2002), and played a significant role in shaping public fear and anxiety about crime in general, and in particular a fear that the presence of these groups will ultimately lead to a national decline, via the creation of crisis and chaos (Patel and Tyrer 2011, p. 6).

The result is that attempts to control, regulate, and remove some population groups have become a publicly-backed preoccupation of the criminal justice system and its allied security bodies, and have reached levels of heightened concern for human rights advocates. As suspects, offenders and victims processed through the criminal justice system, as well as for those who work within it, the data tells us that people of certain racial/ethnic groups are disproportionately more likely to have negative experiences and have unbalanced outcomes. A few of the numerous contributions made discussing the levels of racial/ethnic discrimination experienced, include Athwal (2015) examination into the disproportionate number of BME, migrant and refugee communities' deaths in UK detention; Blair et al. (2004) study into the influence of Afrocentric facial features on sentencing in the US; Carr and Haynes (2015) study into what they refer to as, the state's failure to tackle anti-Muslim racism in Ireland; Chigwada (2011) piece on the policing of black women in the UK; Eberhardt et al. (2006) study into the role of race in US capital sentencing; and, Razack (2011) Australian work on Aboriginal deaths in police custody. This body of literature demonstrates how and why experiences within the criminal justice system continue to be determined by race/ethnicity, and highlights the role played by formal, semi-formal and informal structures of power that serve to perpetuate and sustain racial/ethnic inequalities.

However, it is important that an analysis of the racial/ethnic-isation of crime factors other social variables. This would more accurately and critically highlight the complex and varied nature of race/ethnic identity issues in a society obsessed with crime and social control, and how this obsession also draws boundaries around gender, sexuality, age, class, geography and the urban environment. The contributions in this collection discuss these intersectional statuses and evidence their significance in criminalised categories. Crenshaw (1989) originally used the term 'Intersectionality' to address the fact that the experiences and struggles of black and minority ethnic women fall between the cracks of both feminist and anti-racist discourse. Davis (2008, p. 68) later developed the term Intersectionality,

defining it as “the interaction between gender, race, and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power.”

3. Contributions in This Issue

Williams and Clarke (both, Manchester Metropolitan University, UK), in their article ‘The black criminal Other as an object of social control’ ([Williams and Clarke 2018](#)), examine contemporary racialised constructions of and reactions to the ‘gang’. The authors argue that there is a specific way the political and criminal justice system utilises the ‘gang’, which is used to manage black and minority ethnic people, morphing them into the black Other—risky and criminal bodies, which in turn is used to legitimise harmful and intrusive policing and punishment practices of them. Using data from two of their own UK-based studies where the gang collective and crime construct emerged as a significant and powerful device that determined treatment and led to experiences of injustice, the article draws on the direct experiences of racialised ‘gang’-associated/defined subjects. This includes a study in which 241 prisoners serving lengthy custodial sentences for joint enterprise offences completed a semi-structured questionnaire survey, and another study in which 15 young people talked directly via in-depth qualitative interviews, about their experiences of being viewed as a gang-suspect and thus subject to measures of (over)policing. The authors’ insight into the criminal justice system and its allied agencies’ continued use of a racialised Othering process in contemporary society to understanding gangs and violent crimes, highlights not only the gross misunderstanding of this subject, but how that misunderstanding consequently fails to respond appropriately to the contemporary problem of serious violent crime and associated harm. This article makes an important contribution to this edited collection, not only for knowledge generation around racialised constructions of the gang-suspect, but admirably, with its attempt to begin a process of meaningful change in practice—or, what it refers to as ‘redress’ of the harmful practices of the resulting racialised (over)policing and collective punishment measures that are disproportionately targeted at black and minority ethnic people.

De Soto (Texas State University) in his article, ‘Do police officers in the USA protect and serve all citizens equally?’ ([De Soto 2018](#)) examines the ways in which attitudes towards the police and perceptions of policing are influenced by one’s racial or ethnic background. Using survey research, including a US-based original data-set to explore the relationship between policing and race/ethnicity, De Soto argues that there remains a strong perception amongst racial minorities in particular, that the police undertake duties in a biased and discriminatory way that then negatively impacts on members of the racial minority population in the USA. In this respect, the police fail to serve and protect all citizens equally. De Soto’s article makes a timely contribution to the special edition, with its re-evaluation of policing in contemporary ‘post-race’ times. The article tells us about the power of bias—especially its persistent nature, as well as the legacy of bias on the racial minority psyche. The article must be read within the broader context of discussions around those cases which have illustrated the continuous presence of oppression and racial bias in policing practice.

In their article, “‘If your hair is relaxed, white people are relaxed. If your hair is nappy, they are not happy’”: Black hair as a site of ‘post-racial’ social control in UK schools’ ([Joseph-Salisbury and Connelly 2018](#)), Joseph-Salisbury (University of Manchester, UK) and Connelly (University of Salford, UK), critically examine the ways in which Black hair becomes a site for the social control of young Black bodies. In challenging the assertion of a post-racial society, the authors highlight how school policies’ control over the hairstyles of Black pupils acts as a form of white supremacist control of Black presence in white space. The article argues that as a minutiae but highly significant, form of social control, such routing disciplinary measures are maintained and perpetuated—remaining as normalised manifestations of post-race anti-Black measures. In carefully presenting their argument, the authors draw on academic work to date, as well as Critical Race Theory, and meticulously illustrating their analysis with the recent UK case of Rastafarian pupil Chikayzea Flanders, in particular, the headteacher’s application of the school uniform policy to Flanders’s dreadlocked hair, and later the

echoes of colonial desires to control Black bodies, in his response to the mother's claims of racism and religious discrimination. This article is important and timely in its illustration of the continued practices and policies which control racialised bodies in this supposedly post-race era. Significantly, the article highlights the persistent presence of oppressive social control measures that have been informed by colonialism and the mechanisms by which it legacy continues, not only in the lives of Black pupils, but for Black people as a whole.

Poynting and Briskman (both at Western Sydney University, Australia), in their article 'Islamophobia in Australia: From far-right deplorables to respectable liberals' (Poynting and Briskman 2018), critically examine the growing normalisation of Islamophobia in Australia. The authors argue that the vilification of Muslims in Australia has reached a level of such intensity, differing to that experienced by other immigrants, such as the Chinese, Greeks, Italians and Vietnamese. They illustrate how anti-Muslim hostility is being openly legitimised in various aspects of Australian life, culture and politics—so much so that it is not only popular in far-right activity, but also in the ideology of liberal camps too. To work-through their argument, the authors draw on existing work on this subject, including their own, as well as referring to a number of cases/incidents. The contribution made by this article is important, as it highlights how one particular type of racial hatred, Islamophobia, has been normalised, gained popularity and has spread itself widely across the political spectrum, so that it is no longer a feature only to be associated with the far-right. The spreading of Islamophobia in this way means that enhanced processes of social control are reserved for Muslims and will be sustained longer than other groups have experienced.

Barn (Royal Holloway, University of London, UK), Feilzer (Bangor University, UK) and Hardwick (Royal Holloway, University of London, UK), in their paper 'Black and minority ethnic boys and custody in England and Wales: understanding subjective experiences through an analysis of official data' (Barn et al. 2018), explore UK-based black and minority ethnic children's perceptions of their experiences in custody. The authors argue that there are significant differences in the experiences of children from different ethnic groups, especially when comparing the experiences of black and minority ethnic children with their white counterparts. These differences of the young offenders institution include when children enter custody for the first time, in their day to day life, encounters with the institution's staff, access to help, support and services, and, in their perceptions of treatment by staff. Taking into account population hierarchies, bias and reporting differences, the authors highlight the variances within inter-ethnic groups, examining more closely the nuance and complexity of the black and minority ethnic experience. Within their consideration is a careful scrutiny and unpicking of data from inspectorate reports and associated surveys, looking at one particular case study of children from Feltham Young Offender Institution (based in London, UK). This article makes an important contribution to the edited collection by highlighting the varied factors involved in the black and minority ethnic experience of youth custody in the UK, including the contradictions and inter-ethnic differences within that experience. The authors' highlighting of the continued negative experiences of black and minority ethnic children is especially important given the recent substantial and widely hailed fall in youth custody rates. The call for these issues to be examined more closely and furthermore for them to be resolved should not be dismissed given that they have the potential to more fully understand the experiences of black and minority ethnic children in custody, as well as sufficiently respond to their needs as a vulnerable population group.

In their article, 'Housing discrimination and health: understanding potential linking pathways using a mixed-methods approach' (Mehdipanah et al. 2018), Mehdipanah (University of Michigan), Ramirez (University of Michigan), Abedin (National Fair Housing Alliance) and Brown (National Fair Housing Alliance) examine the potential pathways linking housing discrimination and health in the USA. In doing so, the authors evaluate progress made since the introduction of the Fair Housing Act (1968). The authors use 'concept mapping', a mixed methods methodology that combines a qualitative approach with quantitative analysis to produce a conceptual map illustrating the perceptions of a group on a particular subject/situation, with frontline professionals—employees working at Fair Housing

organizations across the top 20 most populous cities in the USA. The article makes an interesting contribution to this special edition by highlighting how segregation in the US housing industry not only persists in the face of equality and anti-discrimination legislation, but how this then impacts negatively on the health and wellbeing of those populations. The article alerts us to the persistent nature of structural inequalities—specifically in the form of discriminatory government policies and illegal practices within the real estate industry.

In examining the impact of social relations on prison experiences, Webster and Qasim (Leeds Beckett University, UK), in their article ‘The effects of poverty and prison on Pakistani young men who offend’ (Webster and Qasim 2018), add weight to the argument that social and economic situations, and not ethnicity, drive criminal activity both before and in some cases, post-prison stays. Whilst Muslim prisoners in their study spoke meaningfully about their (development of and/or commitment to their) Islamic faith and associated ‘friendship networks’, not all prisoners were able to refrain from post-prison offending, largely due to the significance of poorer social and economic situations that they were still faced with in release. The authors’ main argument is that religion, in this case Islam, meaningfully assisted Muslim prisoners in their struggle to cope with imprisonment, both in terms of *being* sent to prison and surviving inside prison, and for some, played a significant role in desisting from crime—more-so in fact than the actual fear of going to prison again. The understanding given by the narratives of nine Muslim prisoners, who were drawn from a wider longitudinal study on poverty and the prison experiences of young Muslim men in the UK, makes an important contribution to this edited collection, with its insight into how faith and religion, even in adverse social and economic conditions can be used to inform self-control and achieve positive outcomes in micro- (prison) and macro- (wider society) settings.

In their paper, ‘Noise Complaints between Japanese Neighbors and Migrants in Rural Japan: From the Perspectives of Noise Makers’ (Mutiaara 2018), Mutiara (Nagoya University, Japan), examines the relationship between ‘sound-to-noise making’ and ‘noise complaint’, looking at intention, impact and consequences, within a deviant framework of analysis. Drawing on empirical data conducted with groups of migrant workers and their families living in 32 households, the author highlights the various ways in which neighbor-noise narratives are presented within a framework of ‘othering’ and deviantization. This presented the migrant workers as undesirable, invasive and as a pollutant of the neighborhood. Mutiara’s paper is interesting, not least because it highlights the normative, seemingly non-racial ways in which ‘othering’ and discrimination is used to push already disadvantaged groups even further to the margins.

What follows is a thoughtful and critically engaging collection of papers, which I hope readers find interesting.

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