

Is there an existence
of equality and
diversity with regards
to race and ethnicit...

[Sociology](#)



The term 'Race' has been used throughout the following essay to discuss a term that is commonly used throughout history with regards to welfare arrangements and government policies. The ambivalence of the term 'race' has been the cause of many tensions and discrimination creating divides between people when in fact we all share a common humanity (Williams 2010). The use of language in this essay such as 'Race, Ethnic Minorities, Immigrants, Black and White,' is only used to demonstrate how social policies may differentiate because of this separation in social identity.

Great Britain is seen as a multicultural and multiracial society. Migrants to Britain have been noted in history as arriving and staying in Britain as early as 43-410AD when Roman soldiers came and settled. As Britain grew in population its identity was largely referred to as White and of Christian faith (McConnachie 2002). The arrival of large numbers of African and Caribbean workers in 1948 and then Indian and Chinese in 1972 formed the growing multicultural nation that was to become diverse Britain.

Policies and Immigration legislation have developed in an attempt to address the growing needs of the population and amended to accommodate the emerging realisation that perhaps there have been disadvantages in the provision of welfare services to ethnic minorities living in Britain.

Unfortunately public opinion surrounding migrants who settle in Britain has been largely negative. Immigrants have been accused of taking advantage of Britain's welfare provisions (Hayes 2000 & Goodhart 2004 as cited in Williams 2010 p 21).

Attitudes such as these are left unchallenged, the fact that the migration of Black and Chinese workforces in the 1960/70's enabled the fulfilment of many emerging public sector jobs which in turn provided a boost to services to the nation, was not always publicised (Williams 2010 p 21). Throughout this essay we will look at how the British government has addressed the issue of racial inequality and if it interplays with the development of Britain's welfare state. Government policies that address equality and diversity.

Following the Second World War Britain was in need of revolutionary new policies. The 1942 Beveridge report paved the way to Britain's welfare state. Welfare provisions were created to address the 5 points made by Beveridge : National Insurance addressed 'Want', National Health Service addressed 'Disease', Full employment to combat 'Idleness', State education up to the age of 15 to address 'Ignorance' and public housing to address 'Squalor' (Beveridge 1942 as cited in Alcock 2008 p5).

The entitlement to the new welfare system was based on flat-rate contributions into a National Insurance scheme and being able to withdraw the same flat rate benefits when in need (Blakemore 2007). This meant that all citizens were entitled to welfare but eligibility was based on how much and how many years you had contributed. It was much later in 1976 following the second National Report that the extent of the disadvantage of Beveridge's ideas showed signs of discrimination (Williams 2010).

The inequality of entitlement to benefits were based on unequal contributions for example; migrants to Britain would have paid in considerably less than someone who had been working in Britain all there

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life. (Alcock 2008 & Paul 1998 as cited in Williams 2010 p20). The inequalities between black entitlement and white entitlement soon took to the streets. Riots took place in Notting Hill, London in 1958 which demonstrated the growing differences and inequality between black and white and it had divided us as a nation.

The Race Relations Act (1976) offered an olive branch; it gave Black, Ethnic Minorities and Immigrants the opportunity to apply for advertised jobs. Additional training courses were encouraged to assist recruitment prospects, jobs where advertised but it didn't mean that they were always successful with their application. This policy still failed to address the growing tension that the Black and Ethnic minorities of Britain felt unequal in society, this was demonstrated in scenes of anger and tension in more rioting this time in Brixton, London in 1981(Kinghorn 2011).

Blacks still felt discriminated against in the provision of welfare services, and placing them in 'ghetto' communities such as Brixton only cut them off more from society. In society there seemed to be confusion with regards to citizenship status and entitlement. Regardless of whether you were an Immigrant, Black or any other Ethnic minority, you were all labelled the same; 'Immigrant', 'Asylum seeker' or 'Refugee'. The difference was that Asylum seekers and Refugee's have no legal position within Britain, no status and rights to claim welfare services (Williams 2010 p9).

This fuelled the belief that anyone who was not white did not belong in Britain. Present day government policies and documents now refer to Black and Ethnic minorities as BME (Black, Minority Ethnic). This new label hopes to

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relate to the need of a minority rather than the ethnicity itself (Wilson 2010 p 9). Over the decades Britain has offered British Citizenship to many Refugees or persons seeking work or education, especially those whose countries have become occupied territories such as the Commonwealth countries.

The Commonwealth Immigrants Act (1968) withdrew Commonwealth migrant's automatic right to settle in Britain unless they had parental ties with Britain. The Immigration Act (1971) made this explicit. These Acts have been subsequently amended, added to or changed over the years of passing governments. The current Act dealing with Immigration is the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act (2009), which encompasses many conditions of entry such as border control, detainee of refugees, application guidelines for applicants and their families etc. (Citizenship Act 2009 as cited on H M Gov 2011).

These policies have often come under scrutiny for allowing too many people the right to enter the UK and seek asylum, but it is often not widely publicised that many Immigrants to the UK have come through no choice of their own, people such as the Kurds, who had no choice but to flee their homes and cities due to the bombardment of chemical weapons by Saddam Hussain during the Iraq/Iran war in 1988 (Time 1991 as cited in Meiselas 1997). . In 2000 the Race Relations Act was amended which looked more closely at public service equality by defining 'public authority' widely to include housing, health and other welfare services (Race Act 2000).

The publication of the Macpherson report in 1999 identified that discrimination exists in institutions such as policing, education and housing.

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The evidence of Institutional discrimination was found apparent in the case of Stephen Lawrence in 1991, the black teenager who was murdered in what was called a racial attack. The family of the murdered teenager felt they had been poorly supported by the police because of their colour (Macpherson 1999). Other examples of Institutional racism can be seen in state housing and education (Macpherson 1999).

In schools Muslim children do not have access to halal meat on the state school menu and the choice of some Muslim females to wear the hijab or headscarf in school has been criticised (Alcock 2008). It is only most recently that legislation in the amended Human Rights Act (1998) (published in 2000) and the recent Equality Act (2010) relies heavily on human civil rights and protection of those rights (article 6 relates to rights for a fair trial), this meant cases such as the Stephen Lawrence trial were brought back to trial and the two of the accused killers have since been found guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment (BBC 2012).

The aims of the Equality Act (2010) in relation to Race and Ethnicity is to address the three major statutory instruments protecting discrimination in employment on grounds of religion or belief, sexual orientation and age by reforming and harmonising equal rights to all citizens regardless of their personal characteristics. It also promises to prohibit victimisation and to increase equality of opportunity (Equality Act 2010). Conclusions

With the creation and amendment of social policies that attempt to address the inequalities expressed by BME, the feelings of inequality still echo throughout society. In 2009 a survey by Ipsos MORI showed that there was

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an increase in opinion that Britain's multicultural state was a threat rather than a gain (Ipsos MORI 2009). The significant rise in results may be because of uncertainty surrounding security in Britain as the world becomes increasingly destructive, for example; faith related attacks on citizens such as 9/11 and the 7th July bombings in London (ETHNOS 2003).

Feelings of inequality are still being heard across the country, last summer's rioting in UK cities left the country feeling a mixture of ashamed and angry that new generation Britain has little regard for its neighbours no matter if your Black or White. How can equality and diversity be achieved in such a society full of indifference? Academics have suggested that the welfare system be people led, democratically with flexible arrangements to meet the changing needs of our multicultural society, creating greater solidarity towards difference and diversity (Williams 2010).

The present coalition government leader David Cameron recently reflected on the 'the slow-motion moral collapse... of our country these past few generations'. His speech also said that embracing certain 'Christian values' would confront this (No 10 2011). Perhaps in order to keep his speech more fitting to the promise of harmony between citizens regardless of their personal characteristics, his speech could have embraced a little more diversity on what it means to be British not just Christian values but Islamic, Hindu, Jewish etc.

Acceptance of difference whether it's because of colour, faith, education or wealth seems to be the underlying problem not just in Britain but in the World. Let's hope that the most recent policy with regards to equality fulfils

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its proposal of harmony between the equal rights of all citizens and equality and diversity begins to shine in Britain even if the sun doesn't always!