

Ethnicity, harm and crime:

A discussion paper

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Ethnicity, harm and crime presents data and analysis that raises questions about whether 'Black criminality' and 'Black on Black crime' is presently the locus of the most serious harm to Black people in the UK. The authors apply a social harm perspective to attempt to broaden the debate beyond 'crime' and highlight a range of other social harms.
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Ethnicity, harm and crime: a discussion paper

'What we are dealing with is not a general social disorder; but specific groups or people who for one reason or another, are deciding not to abide by the same code of conduct as the rest of us... The black community – the vast majority of whom in these communities are decent, law-abiding people horrified at what is happening – need to be mobilised in denunciation of this gang culture that is killing innocent young black kids. But we won't stop this by pretending it isn't young black kids doing it.'

(Tony Blair, 2007)

1. INTRODUCTION

The problem

In 1983 the criminologist Bernard D. Headley published "Black on black' crime: the myth and the reality' in the journal *Crime and Social Justice*. He highlighted the striking evidence of the disproportionate range of harms experienced by Black Americans, challenging the widely held assumption that 'Black on Black' street crime posed the greatest threat to the individual safety, well-being and security of Black Americans.

This discussion paper adapts Headley's original structure and argument, presenting data that raise similar questions about whether 'Black on Black crime' and in particular young black men are presently the locus of the most serious harm to Black people in the UK.

The argument set out in this paper is also informed by a 'social harm' perspective (Hillyard et al., 2004; Pemberton, 2007). This perspective seeks to broaden the object of analysis beyond 'crime' to a wider range of social harms. This involves the recognition that the kind of financial, health and state harms we examine in this paper are *socially* mediated. That is, they are in large part the product of political economic processes that determine that harms are concentrated among those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage. The experience of harm victimisation, in other words, is significantly influenced by social forces, rather than merely being the result of individual choice and responsibility, or the lack thereof.

The role of socio-economic processes acknowledged, it is also the case that Black and ethnic minority groups in the UK appear to experience greater disadvantage than White counterparts. In order to understand the processes at work here, we utilise the notion of the 'ethnic penalty' as a heuristic device to help understand the disadvantages which lead to an ethnic group faring less well than similarly placed 'majority' White people (Heath and McMahon, 1997; Heath, Ermisch and Gallie, 2005; Heath and Yu, 2005; Platt, 2007). While this penalty may be brought about by a range of factors, including direct and indirect discrimination, it would appear to permeate a wide area of social and economic experiences such as employment, health, education and punishment. The 'ethnic penalty' includes structural racism and day-to-day discrimination, where particular groups of people are identified as different and experience greater obstructions and barriers than the equivalent 'majority' White population. Such penalties are likely to be cumulative, occurring throughout the course of someone's life, widely manifested, and compounded by socio-economic deprivation and hardship.

In essence, therefore, this paper seeks to adapt Headley's original argument to a UK context, while drawing on more recent social harm and ethnic penalty perspectives. In structure the paper is divided into five sections. In addition to this introduction, section two examines the social and economic harms affecting Black and ethnic minority groups and section three covers state harms. These two sections follow, in rough outline, Headley's original structure. Section four returns to the question of crime in relation to Black and ethnic minority people, using the insights developed in sections two and three to place in context the current, rather narrow, policy preoccupation with certain 'crimes' affecting Black and minority ethnic populations: so-called 'Black on Black crime'.

Section five offers some outline conclusions on the implications for long-term policy making. To anticipate our main conclusion, we argue that policy and political descriptions of the 'crime problem' conflates 'Black' and 'poor' with criminality and reinforces imagery that equates 'young and Black' with 'criminal'. What is more, the apparent threat to social order posed by the actions of young Black men is given much greater weight than the serious, socially mediated harms faced by some ethnic minorities. The practical consequence of the current focus is a greater emphasis on crime and criminal justice solutions. This is not to say that crime victimisation is not an issue that affects, sometimes

disproportionately, Black and ethnic minority people. Indeed, our point is that every early death or serious harm, whatever the source, is worthy of serious policy, political and social consideration. This means that any serious attempt to develop coherent policy responses to the harms affecting Black and ethnic minority people needs to consider a broad range of harms rather than merely fixating narrowly on the 'crime problem'. In our view, an approach that focuses largely on crime distorts and disguises the social harms that ethnic minorities face, focusing instead on the behaviours of young Black men and their 'decisions' to choose criminal paths or exclude themselves from 'normal society'. In this paper, we highlight the risks posed *by* society and the state *to* young Black men, arguing that, in some cases, significant harm is caused.

The politics of 'Black crime'

As shadow Home Secretary, Tony Blair was the architect of Labour's historic repositioning in the crime debate. Early in 1993 he unveiled the 'third way' formula of being 'tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime'. Within weeks of this initiative, two year old James Bulger was killed in Liverpool by two ten year olds. Commenting on this tragic event, Blair described it as 'like hammer blows against the sleeping conscience of the country' (White, 1993), the implication being that the events surrounding the death of James Bulger were both symbolic and symptomatic of a national state of affairs. In February 2007, following the fatal shooting of three non-White teenage boys, all aged under 17, in south London, Blair's approach differed radically. He was keen to combat Conservative claims that Britain was now a 'broken society', arguing, 'this is not a metaphor for the state of British society... it is a specific problem, in a specific criminal culture among specific groups of young people' (Woods, 2007).

Sections of the media amplified the view that specific communities and cultures are to blame. The Times portrayed 'armed police sent out in force on a mission to reclaim the badlands' (Tendler and Ford, 2007), suggesting imagery of a Black 'hinterland' where 'Black on Black crime' takes place. In its headline, the Independent portrayed the areas where the killings took place as 'a swamp' (The Independent, 2007). The Independent editorial noted that 'these latest shootings have fallen under the category of so-called 'Black-on-Black' crime' - and then moved on to a familiar argument - 'it is clear that there is a significant lack of positive role models for young Black boys. Black fathers often play too small a role in the lives of their children. There is also a shortage of Black male teachers.

Gangsters and drug dealers often fill the void in the lives of impressionable and angry young men. This dynamic is reinforced by a popular culture that often irresponsibly glorifies criminality, violence and misogyny' (ibid, 2007).

Because many inner city areas have suffered a significant rise in homicide rates since the 1980s and are home to a disproportionate number of ethnic minority people, the policy debate has a latent 'racial logic'. Indeed, the government has developed specific strategies, such as Operation Trident, for dealing with 'Black on Black' gun crime. Operation Trident, irrespective of government intention, has become a 'signal' policy that has helped create the impression that 'Black on Black crime' is a special and pre-eminent problem and that, as Home Office minister Bob Ainsworth said, 'the black community has a problem. The levels of violence with the black community are quite extraordinary' (Walker, 2002).

In fact, the work of geographer Danny Dorling shows that the rise in murder rates in Britain between 1981 and 2000 was largely due to the increase in the murder of men of working age living in the poorest parts of the country. So, attempts to explain rising levels of violence in society – such as increased gun ownership, drug use or even 'Black on Black crime' – cannot account for this strong correlation between poverty and the risk of being murdered (Dorling, 2005).

In the last decade an average of 25 Black people were murdered with a gun annually (HAC, 2007). Any death in such circumstances is very traumatic, but as Bowling notes in written evidence to the Home Affairs Committee, 'Gun crime remains relatively rare' and citing Dorling and others, argues 'The social geography of robbery and homicide show these crimes are concentrated in poor communities'(HAC, 2007). Phillips and Bowling elaborate upon this point in 2007 Oxford Handbook of Criminology. Citing Home Office gun homicide data showing 'about one in three of both victims and suspects are Black people,' they argue that 'a sense of proportion is also important; the forms of crime in which black people figure prominently are rare and exist alongside other serious crime- such as burglary and city centre violence – in which people from all minority ethnic communities are only slightly over-represented, if at all' (Phillips and Bowling, 2007).

We would concur with this view and in particular the broader perspective that a focus on place and geography offers. The illegal drug trade does figure significantly in inner city gun

homicide as well as a being a source of other forms of harm. The Caribbean is a key route for the importation of illegal drugs; therefore, processes and systems of interception are likely to affect people of Caribbean origin disproportionately. So the gun crime associated with the drugs trade has a specific and particular character, but it is place rather than ethnicity that is a crucial factor.

More broadly, epidemiologist Richard Wilkinson (2005) draws attention to the striking correlation between measures of inequality and a range of harmful experiences such as violence, ill-health, anxiety, insecurity, trust and incivility. He notes: 'There have now been over fifty studies showing a clear tendency for violence to be more common in societies where income differences are larger.' Homicide is at one end of this continuum. At the other end are, for example, workplace or school bullying, neighbour intimidation and the issues of tolerance that are the product of contemporary life.

Both Dorling's and Wilkinson's work highlight the negative consequences of increasing inequality and polarisation – in both the domestic and global context. Their analysis suggests that human agency, whilst important, is fundamentally bounded by structural factors that influences human behaviour and experiences.

To begin to understand the contours of public discourse around 'Black criminality' and the development of interest in 'Black on Black crime' we explored a myriad of political speeches, government sources, media coverage and policy reports. The discussion of the recent gun- and knife-related deaths contained in the Home Affairs Committee report, *Young Black People and the Criminal Justice System* (HAC, 2007), and the Department for Communities and Local Government-funded report, *Reach: An Independent Report to Government on Raising the Aspirations and Attainment of Black Boys and Young Black Men* (Reach, 2007), provide good examples of the nature and shape of the debate.

While the HAC (2007) and Reach (2007) reports cover a variety of perspectives and recommendations, the media coverage and political commentary generally located the problem amongst the 'Black community' and expressed a need for something to be done about Black boys. Headlines such as 'Broken families fuelling Black crime', 'Boys brought up by mother suffer 'father hunger' and end up in gangs, say MPs' (Johnston, 2007) and the BBC website reporting 'Black community in crime 'crisis'' (BBC, 2007) were not untypical of the reportage that followed the publication of the Home Affairs Committee

report. The more nuanced evidenced presented to the Committee that suggested economic and social factors rather than ethnicity as key explanatory variables, did not make the headlines.

In summary, it would appear that references to 'Black crime' and 'Black on Black crime' in contemporary debates mean, by implication, harmful, illegal acts of young Black men. Often referring to a range of phenomena, the tendency is for political commentators and the media to hone in on 'gangsta rap', gun and knife violence, and drugs. While commentators are often cautious in the language they use in identifying the locus of the 'problem', the common thread is that it is 'Black communities' which are experiencing a crisis of poor and single parenting, under-achievement at school, lack of aspirations and opportunities for young Black men, and a pervasive negative and harmful culture, resulting in deprivation, hardship and criminality.

Assumptions

It is not possible, in a paper of this length, to justify all, or indeed any, of our assumptions in any depth. However, we hope that by articulating them clearly at this point we can aid the reader in judging the value or validity of the discussion we wish to engage in.

First, we take seriously that the concern with so-called 'Black criminality' and 'Black on Black crime' has a long history. A key focus for contemporary criminal justice policy and practice is the criminality of young Black men in urban areas and in particular the idea that the problem is located within the 'Black community', as the quote from Tony Blair at the beginning of this paper indicates. A generation ago the concern was more with the perceived menace of Black urban youth. The riots in urban centres in the 1980s, for instance, were in part characterised by confrontations between young Black men and the police. The police were portrayed as containing a problem that threatened to spill over into the 'law-abiding', and white, neighbourhoods. A decade earlier the 'mugging' panic of the 1970s (Hall et al., 1978) condensed visceral fears of the white population under threat into the figure of the Black mugger. So if the earlier fears of the Black menace have been replaced in recent years with the current preoccupation about 'Black on Black crime', said to menace the 'Black community' itself, the association between criminality and ethnicity is not new. This means that concerns about crime and ethnicity have developed over time,

and as a result of distinct historical processes. We explore the implications of this at various points in the paper, returning to it in section four.

Second, we assume that the association of crime with certain ethnic groups is the product of a deeply embedded racial logic. Britain's long history of colonialism and exploitation is, in our view, central to this. The implications for this paper of such an acknowledgement is to place in radical doubt a simplistic association of criminality with any particular ethnic group.

As Paul Gilroy argued, a quarter of a century ago:

'To present 'black crime' as a primarily cultural problem whether forged in the economic 'no man's land' between deprivation and restricted opportunity, or secured in a spurious social biology, is a capitulation to the weight of racist logic... The emphasis on black culture legitimates the idea that any black, all blacks, are somehow contaminated by the alien predisposition to crime which is produced in their distinctive cultures, specifically their family relations.'

(Gilroy, 1982)

Third, and following Worley (2005), we consider the use of the term 'community' when referring to certain groups identified as being racially or ethnically distinct as problematic. Worley suggests that 'talking about "community" negates using racialized language', arguing that 'it enables practitioners and policy actors to avoid 'naming' which communities they are referring to, even though the reference points are clear'. The often used term of 'community' is problematic because it implies a fixed, distinct and perhaps detached group, somehow separate from the rest of 'society', which becomes racialised when the adjective 'Black' is attached. Deployed widely, as it is today, the term 'community' has the effect of legitimising a focus on particular groups and so-called characteristics, seeking answers to 'problems' within the narrow confines of intracommunal interactions at the level of family, neighbourhood and street. What gets lost in such reasoning is any serious attempt to understand the social and economic nature of the problems that people face as members of wider society, affected by structural factors such as gender and class, rather than merely being manifestations of particular ethnic, or other, identities.

Fourth, we acknowledge that 'race', 'ethnicity' and other terms for describing and conceptualising certain perceived and experienced cultural and other differences are complex, contested and problematic terms. Callinicos (1993) defines racism as existing 'where a group of people is discriminated on the basis of characteristics which are held to be inherent in them as a group... What is involved is a complex set of characteristics – for example, inferior intelligence, laziness, overactive sexuality in the case of the traditional Western stereotype of Africans – which are imputed to the oppressed group and which serve to justify their oppression'. He goes on to point out that 'racial differences are *invented*: that is, they emerge as part of a historically specific relationship of oppression in order to justify the existence of that relationship' (ibid). We would agree broadly with this view and also that of Mason (2003) who argues that 'race' should be understood as 'an outmoded relic of past scientific error, and at worst, a strategically manipulated ideological category'.

We also reject the notion that differences identified between 'racial' or ethnic groups across a range of social and economic fields are a product of innate qualities or biologically predetermined traits, or some kind of inherent cultural condition or setting. 'Racial' and 'ethnic' identities or categories must be located as part of broader material, social and historical processes, and understood in terms of the meanings society attaches to particular identities, physical attributes and beliefs. Moreover, the dimension of how people identify with and respond to the labels and identities accepted by or assigned to themselves and others is important. Nazroo (1999) suggests that 'crudely, ethnicity can be said to reflect self-identification with cultural traditions from which individuals can draw strength and meaning. Importantly, these cultural traditions are seen as historically located; that is, they are seen as occurring within particular contexts and as changing over time, place and person'.

In summary, different ethnicities, cultures and identities and the degrees of 'difference' between them are not, in our view, part of a naturally and predetermined biological process. For the purpose of this paper, we will use the terms 'young Black men' and, more generally, 'ethnic minority people', as used in policy discussion as an expression for non-white Black and ethnic minority people, whilst acknowledging the political and ideological nature of these categories.

Fifth, we have adopted a flexible and pragmatic approach to definitions related to 'socio-economic status', 'class location' or 'income deciles'. For some time now, across disciplines, there has been a robust debate in progress about which of these descriptors are, individually or in combination, the most helpful in understanding broad social processes and their impacts on different groups in society. Again, notwithstanding the critical importance of such debates, our view is that, for the purpose of this discussion paper, we report the findings in their own terms to try to present a clear narrative relevant to our focus.

Sixth, many of the wide variety of sources we reference express frustration with the limitations of the availability of specific ethnic minority data. For example, the recent Home Affairs Committee report *Young Black People and the Criminal Justice System* reported concern about eight key gaps in the data including 'The lack of Home Office data on victimisation by ethnicity' and 'The lack of data on the age and ethnicity of firearm offenders' (HAC, 2007). Data limitations are partly due to a lack of data and research – but it also relates to issues around 'ethnic categories' and different approaches to measuring ethnicity. Different sources, whether academic or governmental, use different categories of ethnicity. While we acknowledge the difficulties in using and defining ethnic categories, we have decided to report the findings in the terms used by the original authors rather than fit them into taxonomy of our own. This is done with the understanding that, in relation to ethnicity, 'categories create meaning' (Braun, 2006).

Finally, this paper is intended to stimulate debate about the most serious social harms faced by young Black men and ethnic minority people in the context of a political focus which often conflates 'ethnic minority' with 'Black' with 'poor' with 'criminality'. We would emphasise that the evidence assembled here is not the product of an exhaustive literature review. Nor does it attempt to replicate or supplant the many detailed and important contributions that have been made over the years on various aspects of the ethnicity debate. We also recognise that there are a number of omissions. For example, we do not explore to any depth the differences between and within ethnic categories. Nor do we consider issues relating to women, but we do not assume that women's experiences can simply be subsumed into those of men.

Ultimately, what we offer here is a stimulus for discussion, not the final word. We aim to

open up and stimulate dialogue about the shape and direction of debate about young Black men and the over-emphasis on ‘criminality’ and criminal justice measures at a time when young Black men are experiencing a broad range of social harms which seem to gain comparatively less attention.

2. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL HARMS

In this section, we briefly explore some of the economic and social harms experienced by ethnic minority people in the UK. We look at poverty rates, education and unemployment as well as housing and environment, financial exclusion and finally, health. Much of this data is well documented elsewhere. Our purpose in providing this data here is simply to present baseline figures as a stepping off point for discussion while acknowledging that in most cases further complexity appears under detailed examination.

Poverty

Table A shows poverty rates using income after housing costs. It shows dramatic disparities between ethnic groups with one consistent finding, that the White population has the lowest poverty rates of any other group, whether as children, working-age adults or pensioners.

Table A: Poverty rates by ethnic group, 2002-2003 to 2004-2005, calculated after housing costs (%)

Ethnic group	All individuals	Children	Working-age adults	Pensioners
White	19	25	17	19
Mixed	32	40	28	36
Indian	28	32	25	30
Pakistani or Bangladeshi	59	65	55	48
Black or Black British	38	46	35	27
– of which				
Black Caribbean	30	37	28	26
Black non-Caribbean	46	54	41	31
Chinese or Other	37	44	36	26
All	39	48	46	31

Notes: Figures have been calculated from three year rolling averages for the financial years 2002/03, 2003/04 and 2004/05, and relate to the whole of Britain. Ethnic group is measured at the level of the household and on the basis of the ethnicity of the household reference person. The poverty threshold is calculated as 60% of median equivalised income.

Source: Households Below Average Income data, from the *Family Sources Survey*

Source: Platt, 2007

Poverty and deprivation are even more acutely experienced by ethnic minority children, as illustrated in Table B. One in five children in poverty are from ethnic minority communities, and rates of poverty before housing costs among Black African, Pakistani and Bangladeshi children are more than double the rate among White children (Harker, 2006).

Table B: Child poverty rates and rates of poverty among children by ethnic group, 2002-2003 to 2004-2005, before and after housing costs (%)

	Child poverty rates		Households with children rates	
	Before housing costs	After housing costs	Before housing costs	After housing costs
White groups	18	25	16	24
Black Caribbean	28	37	24	37
Black African	36	56	30	51
Indian	28	32	25	29
Pakistani	56	60	51	56
Bangladeshi	62	74	53	66

Notes: Figures have been calculated from three-year rolling averages for the financial years 2002/03, 2003/04 and 2004/05, and relate to the whole of Britain. Proportions are based on population-weighted data. Ethnic group is measured at the level of the household and on the basis of the ethnicity of the household reference person. Those living in households where the reference person is of an ethnicity other than those illustrated – or of mixed ethnicity – have been excluded from this discussion due to small sample sizes for individual categories. The poverty threshold is calculated as 60% of median equivalised income.

Source: Households below Average Income data, DWP

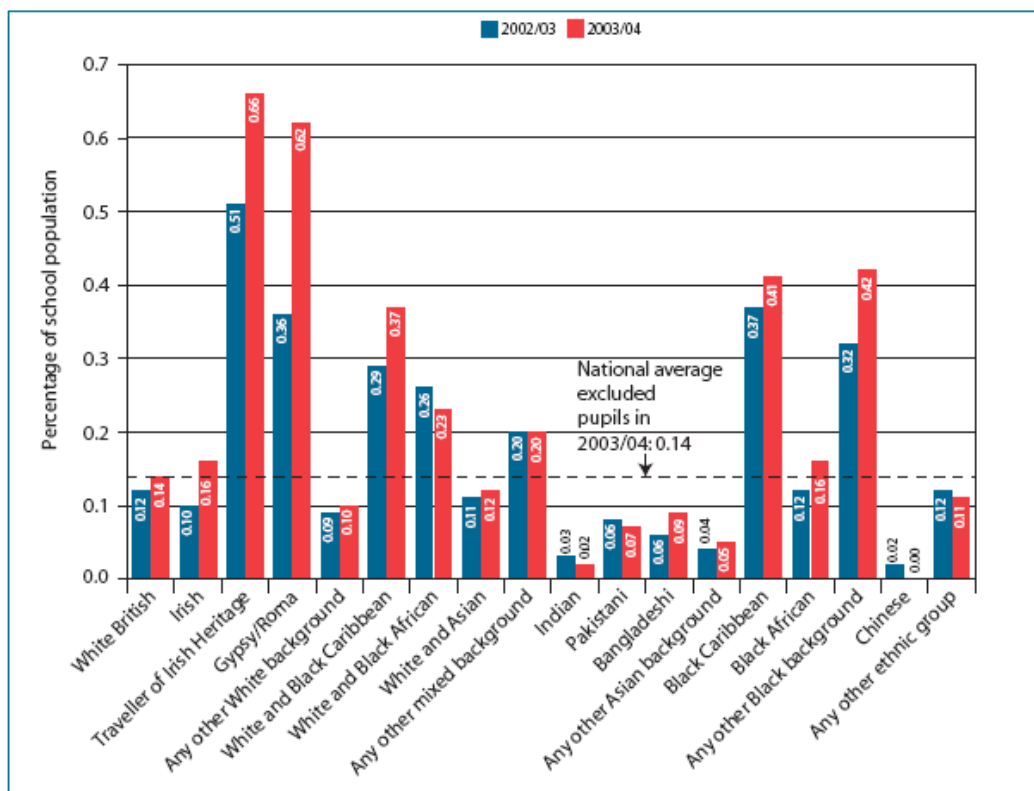
Source: Platt, 2007

Primary and secondary education

Experiences and outcomes in education differ significantly between ethnic groups. Research indicates that while African Caribbean children tend to start off with high ability and show themselves to be capable pupils, as they get older, achievements deteriorate (Christian, 2005). This is further supported by research which indicates: ‘At primary school, the achievement of African-Caribbean children is often higher at Key Stage 1 than other groups but attainment declines in relation to other groups so that, at Key Stage 4 (age 16), it is among the lowest’ (Osler and Hill, 1999, cited in Wright et al., 2005). It is argued that this leads to a ‘labelling’ effect resulting in an increased likelihood of exclusion from the learning process (Christian, 2005).

Of frequent concern is the disproportionately high rate of exclusions among children of African Caribbean background. For boys with African Caribbean heritage, research reveals that they ‘are between four and 15 times more likely to be excluded than white boys, depending on locality (Sewell, 1997; DfEE, 2000a)’ and ‘African-Caribbean girls are four times more likely to be permanently excluded than white girls’ (Osler et al., 2002, cited in Wright et al., 2005). A DfES commissioned study sets the rate of exclusion within an average secondary school for a ‘Black Caribbean’ pupil at 2.6 times more likely to be permanently excluded than another pupil and for ‘Other Black’ background, the figure is 2.2 (Parsons et al., 2004). While there are different ways of measuring exclusions, it is clear that inequalities persist in this particular area, as illustrated by the graph below.

Figure 1: Permanent exclusions from maintained schools by ethnicity, 2002-2003 to 2003-2004



Source: DfES, 2006

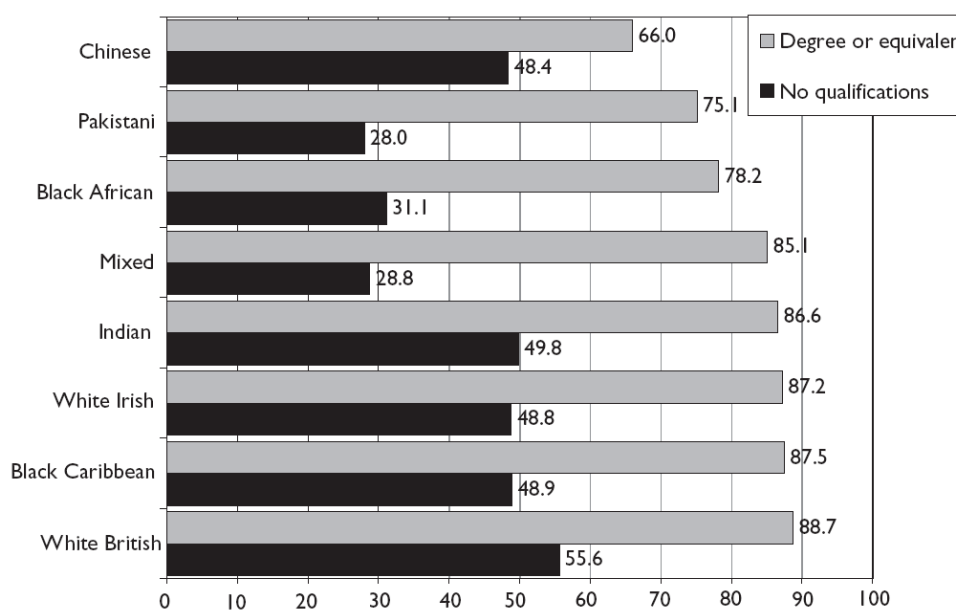
Under-achievement at school and exclusions are related to issues of inequality, poverty and disadvantage. In addition to this, however, there may again be evidence of an ‘ethnic penalty’. Researchers argue that the negative perceptions of young Black people are often reflected in the views and actions of teachers and may lead to more severe punishment

(Modood, 2003). Black Caribbean and Black African people say they expect to be treated in a more negative way by the education system and schools (Kitchen, Michaelson and Wood, 2006). Christian (2005) argues that there are consistent themes in British schooling such as fear and stereotyping, low expectations and teacher harassment of Black males. Christian (citing Majors et al., 2001) points out that 'the exclusions of Black males from schools is merely the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the negative experience encountered by them in Britain' and goes on to argue that 'we cannot divorce what happens in the broader society from what happens in the criminal justice system or the education system' (ibid).

Employment

This systemic discrimination in education is reproduced in the relationship between educational outcome and employment prospects. Figure 2 below shows differences in employment rates by qualification. While the differences between ethnic groups is clear for those with degree level qualifications, the poorer outcomes for ethnic minorities without qualifications, compared to White people, are noteworthy. Research into the New Deal for Young People showed that 25 per cent of ethnic minority people compared to 33 per cent of White people moved 'into sustained unsubsidised or subsidised employment' and that, despite being better qualified, a higher proportion of ethnic minority people go into education and training from the New Deal (COSN, 2001).

Figure 2: Employment rates by highest qualification and ethnic group, 2004



Source: Annual Population Survey, Office for National Statistics

Source: Platt, 2007

In analysing differences in employment rates, Platt (2007) puts forward the argument that while part of the explanation may be related to educational achievement, an 'ethnic penalty' remains. For example, Black Africans are not gaining employment outcomes in a manner which would be expected from the formal qualifications they hold. The Home Office's Citizenship Survey reported that 31 per cent of ethnic minority people who were currently employees or who had sought work over the last five years had been refused a job and 19 per cent had been treated unfairly at work, compared with 17 per cent and 9 per cent of White people. In the view of both Black and Asian respondents, 'race' was most often cited as the reason for job refusal or unfair treatment at work (Kitchen, Michaelson and Wood, 2006).

One of the leitmotifs of New Labour's social inclusion strategy has been to promote labour market participation as a route out of poverty. In the 2001 Cabinet Office Scoping Note entitled 'Improving labour market achievements for ethnic minorities in British society', evidence was presented from a range of academic and governmental sources of a wide variety of disadvantages that ethnic minorities experience (COSN, 2001). It highlighted how ethnic minority people disproportionately occupied low income places in the socio-economic structure of British society and that rates of non-White ethnic minority unemployment were more than double that of the White population. Table C below shows

the comparative unemployment rates between the final quarters of the six years following the publication of the Scoping Note.

Table C: Unemployment rate by ethnic group (%)

Last quarter	White	Asian or Asian British	Indian	Pakistani	Bangladeshi	Black or Black British	Black Caribbean	Black African
2002	4.5	10.1	7.2	15.4	n/a	12.8	13.9	13.2
2003	4.3	10.8	8.4	13.1	18	11.4	11.6	11.7
2004	4.2	8.4	5.6	12.3	16.6	11.4	10.3	12.5
2005	4.5	9.7	6.4	14.3	18.7	12.9	12.2	13.2
2006	4.8	10	7.0	14.7	16.4	14.4	14.2	14.1
2007	4.5	9.4	6.3	13.3	14.4	12.4	11.6	13.2

Source: ONS, 2008b

For Black Caribbean and Black African people, unemployment rates tend to be ‘hyper-cyclical’, meaning that in recessions unemployment rises faster than for Whites and in periods of economic recovery it falls more rapidly, i.e. it is subject to high labour market insecurity and employment churn. Although there is a narrowing of inequalities for some ethnic minority groups, the table reflects a pattern which Mason describes as ‘longstanding and dates back to the 1980s at least, although there are year on year variations’ (Mason, 2003).

Housing and local environment

Table D shows that, over an eight-year period, the number of homeless households in priority need fell by slightly more than 8 per cent, from 102,430 to 93,980. Overall, the improvement in the White homeless household statistics has not been matched by ethnic minority households as a whole. African Caribbean people in particular seem to be making up an increasingly disproportionate number of the homeless. During the eight years covered by Table D the number of African Caribbean households appears to grow by over 40 per cent, from 7,050 to 9,960. Some of the rise in this figure is due to a change in the recording of ethnicity but this is unlikely to account for all of it. By 2006 the African

Caribbean percentage of the overall total is 10.6 per cent, despite making up around 2.2 per cent of the general population.

Table D – Homeless households in priority need accepted by local authorities by ethnicity (England)

Ethnicity	1997-1998		2005-2006	
	Number	Percentage of total	Number	Percentage of total
White	78,180	76.3	69,320	73.8
Ethnic origin not stated	7,070	6.9	4,640	4.9
Other ethnic origin	5,470	5.3	4,880	5.2
African Caribbean	7,050	6.9	9,960	10.6
Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi	4,690	4.6	5,190	5.5
Total	102,430		93,980	

Source: Communities and Local Government, National Statistics, Statistical Release: Statutory Homelessness, 3rd Quarter 2007, England, www.communities.gov.uk/news/housing/583953 (accessed 15/05/08).

Totals may not equal the sum of components because of rounding

Seventy per cent of all people from ethnic minority groups live in the 88 most deprived local authority districts, compared to 40 per cent of the general population (COSN, 2001) and 80% of Black African and Black Caribbean people live in Neighbourhood Fund Renewal areas (HAC, 2007). So it is no surprise that, overall, ethnic minority households are more than seven times more likely to live in overcrowded conditions than White households, that more than half of Bangladeshi children live in overcrowded conditions, or that every ethnic minority group has a higher percentage living in unfit dwellings, ranging from 9 per cent for Asian, 8 per cent for Black, compared to the White population rate of 3.5 per cent (Shelter, 2004). In addition, analysis of the 2001 census by Dorling et al. (2007) shows that, in the UK, more than half of the children living above the fourth floor were ethnic minority children and that 'children living on the fifth floor or above of a building were eight times as likely to be living in overcrowded conditions'. Shelter (2004) also notes

that one factor that generates poor housing outcomes for ethnic minorities is 'direct and indirect discrimination within the housing and homelessness system'.

Environmental factors?

A paucity of research prevents proper examination of how environmental factors impact differently on ethnic minority people in the UK. There are some preliminary indications of an 'ethnic penalty' in relation to hazardous waste sites in the UK. In a study of 'major accident hazards' (places where local people could be seriously affected by a major accident involving hazardous substances), the preliminary analysis showed 'an *apparent* bias in the location of major accident hazard sites on ethnic grounds which merits further investigation', but cautioned about drawing too hasty a conclusion (Walker, Fairburn and Bickerstaff, 2001).

McLeod et al. (2000) argue that, with caveats for regional variations, policies aimed at tackling air pollution would have greatest impact on poorer districts and that 'environmental justice could be seen to be done, especially as districts with higher proportions of ethnic minorities would selectively benefit from legislation'. This finding is reinforced by the Birmingham air quality study by Brainard et al. (2002), which found a 'striking relationship' between the levels of carbon monoxide (CO) and nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) emissions and poverty indicators and ethnicity. While, as in many other areas, the two factors are difficult to separate out, the authors note that there is 'strong evidence' to suggest that they operate in an independent manner.

Following a national ward-level analysis of NO₂, Mitchell and Dorling (2003) claim that the question of income level and NO₂ impact is not necessarily a simple one of the poor bearing the pollution costs of the rich; there are wealthy areas with fewer cars that suffer just as much NO₂. However, the group that suffers greatest from air pollution and the most environmental injustice from NO₂ is that of 'children of the poorest wards in Britain who live in areas of very low car ownership' (ibid.).

Researchers estimate that, following the introduction of the congestion charging zone in London, 'predicted benefits in the charging zone wards were 183 years of life per 100,000 population compared to 18 years among the remaining wards. In London overall, 1,888 years of life were gained. More deprived areas had higher air pollution concentrations –

these areas also experienced greater air pollution reductions and mortality benefits compared to the least deprived areas' (Tonne et al., 2008).

Given that the costs of such pollution can be so high, and that there is some evidence that they are borne excessively by the youngest in the poorest wards in Britain, further research is needed to assess whether or not ethnic minority groups suffer an 'ethnic penalty' from the effects of pollution and other environmental hazards.

Financial hazards

'It can be argued that the daily rip-offs that blacks and other low income groups experience at the hands of ghetto merchants represent an even greater economic and material threat than do 'street' property crimes.'

(Headley, 1983)

It is difficult to find data on the 'costs' of 'financial harm' to ethnic minority communities, despite the abundance of literature illustrating the socio-economic disadvantage and hardship experienced. The financial hazards faced are inextricably linked to problems associated with low incomes and access to basic utilities and goods.

Strelitz and Kober (2007) estimate that low income households are subject to extra costs of up to £1,000 per annum for basic goods and services – a sizeable proportion of annual income for low income families. This includes credit, insurance and other financial products, white goods and utilities. The National Consumer Council has highlighted the lack of access to these services and the disproportionate costs suffered by people on low incomes, describing services as 'absent, inappropriate and expensive' (Klein, Whyley and O'Reilly, 2004). The authors also emphasise how disadvantaged consumers, such as those on low incomes and, in particular, Black and ethnic minority groups, suffer restricted access to financial services.

Earlier research by the Financial Services Authority (2000) concluded that the relation between financial exclusion (access to financial services) and ethnicity vary between different ethnicities. The picture for Pakistanis and Bangladeshis is complex because of language, culture and religion all have an important part to play, but that, 'statistical modelling shows that low income is the main explanation for African Caribbeans being at,

or on the margins of financial exclusion. However, research into the experience of ethnic minority businesses for the British Bankers Association quoted by Atkinson (2006) suggests that some difficulties met by African Caribbeans 'cannot be explained in terms of lower educational or management qualifications' and admitted 'whilst we are unable to prove that discrimination exists, there is clear evidence of disadvantage...which cannot be satisfactorily explained in terms of other characteristics of the businesses or their owners.'

Health outcomes

Randhawa (2007) writes, 'There is a plethora of evidence highlighting that people from ethnic minority groups experience poorer health than the overall UK population', and that large scale surveys 'show that minority groups as a whole are more likely to report ill health, and that ill health among ethnic minority groups starts at a younger age than among the white British'. He cites, among other data, mid-1990s infant mortality rates of 8.4 per 1,000 for Caribbean and 10.1 for Pakistani children compared to the UK rate of 5.8 per 1,000 as measured by the mother's country of birth. The Department of Health's recently published *Review of the Health Inequalities Infant Mortality PSA Target* (DoH, 2007) shows that there does not seem to have been much movement in these rates despite a fall in the overall UK rate of 4.9 per 1,000 live births. It reports that 'in babies of mothers born in Pakistan [the infant mortality rate was] 10.2 per 1,000 live births in 2002–04, double the overall infant mortality rate... for all babies born in England and Wales. The infant mortality rate in babies of mothers born in the Caribbean was 8.3 per 1,000 live births in 2002–04, 63% higher than the national average'.

Nazroo (2003) suggests that in terms of both ill health and mortality rates there is a 'heterogeneity of experience across minority groups' but that 'for most outcomes, Bangladeshi and Pakistanis report the poorest health, followed by Caribbean people and then Indian people, with Chinese and White people having the best health'. He also notes that there is evidence to suggest that inequalities in health between ethnicities increase with age, with relatively small differences in the early years becoming 'larger differences emerging from the mid-30s onwards'.

There may be a temptation to locate the source of these outcomes with causes that are associated within each ethnic minority category because of the differences in outcomes between them. There is evidence to suggest that this might, in general terms, be a

mistake. Using findings from the 1999 *Health Survey for England and the UK Fourth National Survey of Ethnic Minorities*, Nazroo (in press) argues that 'differences in socio-economic position make a key contribution to ethnic inequalities in health'. When the impact of standard of living is accounted for, the inequality in health outcomes for ethnic minority groups is markedly reduced. However, what remains may still be thought of as an 'ethnic penalty' effect that requires explanation. Nazroo suggests an additional socio-economic effect because 'within each class group ethnic minority people had a smaller income than White people'.

It is possible that the ethnic health inequalities which remain after controlling for occupation and income status are simply an expression of additional economic inequalities between Whites and ethnic minorities who occupy the same occupational categories or income brackets. Even if this is the case, it is hard to conceive that such a systematic level of discrimination that leads to inequality within occupational groups and income levels does not itself produce adverse additional health effects. It might be worth considering whether the impact of sustained economic and social inequality as a result of discrimination should be considered as a source of psychosocial harm to ethnic minorities.

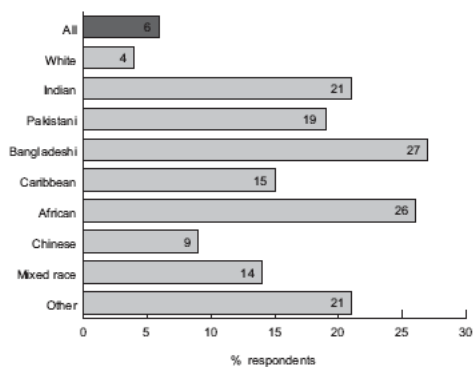
By psychosocial harm we mean an approach that 'emphasizes the subjective experiences and emotions that produce acute and chronic stress which, in turn, affect biology and, hence, physical and mental illness' (Marmot and Wilkinson, 2006). Research indicates that three of the most critical factors related to such psychosocial harms are the effect of high or low status, levels of social isolation and the influence of early emotional and social development (Wilkinson, 2005).

The Fourth National Survey of Ethnic Health finds that ethnic minorities have 'a sense of being a devalued member of a devalued low status group' and experience the stress of being a victim of racial harassment. The survey 'suggests a relationship between experiences of racial harassment, perceptions of racial discrimination and a range of health outcomes across different groups' which are independent of socio-economic effects (Nazroo, 2001).

The 2005 *Citizenship Survey* carried out on behalf of the Department for Communities and Local Government reports that 20 per cent of people from ethnic minority groups

compared to 4 per cent of White people felt very worried about physical attack due to skin colour, ethnic origin or religion (Kitchen, Michaelson and Wood, 2006). Figure 3 shows both the different levels of fear between ethnic minority groups but also gives some indication of the level of psychosocial stress that many in the ethnic minority population face.

Figure 3: Percentage of respondents feeling very worried about being physically attacked due to their skin colour, ethnic origin or religion



Source: Kitchen, Michaelson and Wood, 2006

Studies also report on the widespread experience of racial discrimination. One such study shows that one in five White people report being prejudiced against ‘Afro-Caribbeans’ and one in four being prejudiced against ‘Asians’; ‘... qualitative investigations of experiences of racial harassment and discrimination in the UK have found for many people the experience of inter-personal racism are part of every day life... being made to feel different is routine and expected’ (Nazroo, 2003).

Expressed fears about being attacked and concerns about discrimination reflect the decades long experience of racist violence. This experience only entered the public policy agenda because of long campaigns against such attacks led by Black and ethnic minority people. Partly as a result, from the early 1990’s on, there was a dramatic rise in the police recording of racist incidents from less than 10,000 in 1993 to almost 50,000 in 2000. Rather than a sharp upturn in racist activity, this data, alongside other evidence cited by Bowling and Phillips (2002), revealed a pre-existing state of affairs. They argue ‘We can now say with confidence that racist violence affects a considerable proportion of the ethnic minority communities on an enduring basis, that serious and mundane incidents are

interwoven to create a threatening environment which undermines...personal safety and freedom of movement.’ Such an experience produces the ‘acute and chronic stress’ that is the basis of psycho-social harm and as Bowling and Phillips (ibid) argue, ‘fear of ‘ordinary crime’ among people from ethnic minority communities is fundamentally shaped by their *fear of racist victimization*.’

Irrespective of what policy prescriptions one might offer to meet such an enduring and threatening environment, it does not exist in isolation from but is integral to a pattern of disadvantage as evidenced by an ethnic penalty being present across a wide array of socio-economic fields and through the life course. Of course, one of the groups that feel the impact of this systemic pattern most keenly are precisely the young black men who are a central subject of the black criminality discourse and who appear in disproportionate numbers in the mental health and criminal justice systems.

3. STATE HARM

This section will begin by reviewing briefly how ethnic minorities experience mental health service provision and then go on to look at disproportionate representation in the criminal justice system itself. This is not a definitive investigation of state practices, but offers an insight into areas where harm is inflicted within or by some state institutions.

Mental health

A briefing paper compiled for the Race Equality Foundation usefully draws together the research and data in this area and highlights the experiences of African and Caribbean men in mental health services, arguing that they currently suffer some of the greatest inequities (Keating, 2007). Detailing results from the *Count Me In 2006* census of mental health services, the briefing describes how African and Caribbean people had higher rates of referral from criminal justice agencies and experienced higher rates of control, restraint and detention in medium and high secure wards. The census also reports that Black service users were far more dissatisfied than other groups with the levels of care they received (ibid). Research has also identified that for many African Caribbean men there is a fear that engagement with mental health services could ultimately lead to their death (Keating and Robertson, 2004, in Keating, 2007).

The more recent *Count Me In 2007* census (Commission for Healthcare Audit and Inspection, 2007) highlights further higher rates of admission, detention under the Mental Health Act, seclusion (being locked in a room) and referrals from criminal justice agencies amongst ethnic minorities. For men and women, the rates of admission for ethnic minority people were more than three times higher than average (ibid). In the 'other Black' group, admission rates were ten times higher than average. For detentions under the Mental Health Act on admission, there was an increase from 39 per cent in 2005 to 43 per cent in 2007, with 'overall rates of detention higher than average among Black Caribbean, Black African, Other Black and White/Black Caribbean Mixed Groups'. Seclusions were also higher than average among 'Black Caribbean', 'Other Black men' and among 'Other White' in both genders. 'Black Caribbean', 'Black African' and 'White/Black Caribbean mixed' groups had higher than average rates of referrals from the criminal justice system at 56 per cent, 33 per cent and 33 per cent respectively (ibid).

As Keating (2007) explains, the 'big, black and dangerous' stereotype summarises how black men are often perceived, and when 'mad' is added into the equation there may be an inclination to reach for the more punitive and restrictive treatment methods.

Criminal justice

The criminal justice administrative data show that disproportionate numbers of Black and ethnic minority people – both male and female – are caught up in the criminal justice system. One third of all Black males are currently on the police DNA Database (Human Genetics Commission, 2008; BBC, 2008) and it is predicted that, soon, three-quarters of the young Black male population will be on it (HAC, 2007).

Compared to White people, Black people are six times as likely and Asian people are twice as likely to be stopped and searched by police (Home Office, 2006a). Once in contact with criminal justice agencies, Black people are three times more likely to be arrested and experience a lower use of cautioning relative to arrests compared to White people. In 2005, ethnic minority people, including foreign nationals, accounted for approximately 24 per cent of the male prison population and 28 per cent of the female prison population (ibid). For British nationals, the proportion of Black prisoners relative to the population was 7.1 per 1,000. Mixed ethnicity was 3.2 per 1,000 compared to 1.4 per 1,000 for White people (ibid). Between 1995 and 2003 the ethnic minority prison

population doubled from 8,797 to 17,775 (Home Office, 2006c) – this represented an increase in the ethnic minority proportion of the prison population from 17 per cent to 25 per cent during this period.

In 2004-2005, ten (or 9.4 per cent) of the 106 deaths recorded after contact with the police involved those from ethnic minorities, despite ethnic minorities making up only 7.9 per cent of the UK population (Home Office, 2006a; Teers and Bucke, 2005; ONS, 2008a). In 2006-2007, of the 82 deaths recorded during or following police contact, 9 per cent were ‘Asian’ or ‘Asian British’ and 11 per cent ‘Black’ or ‘Black British’ (Docking and Menin, 2007). Despite a decrease in deaths during this period, the proportion of ethnic minority people with fatal outcomes almost doubled, rising from 9.4 per cent to 20 per cent.

Debate tends to focus on whether inequalities in experiences of the criminal justice system are attributable to racial targeting and discrimination by criminal justice agencies, or whether they are simply a reflection of greater tendencies to commit ‘crime’. Some argue that it is a mixture of the two – increased tendencies for ‘criminal’ behaviour along with greater monitoring and targeting by police and other agencies (for an outline, see: Bowling and Philips, 2002; and Webster, 2007). The Home Office’s Research Directorate has struggled to find an answer, admitting in 2006 that:

‘Data concerning ethnicity and crime needs to be treated with extreme caution because the data may be inaccurate or missing altogether (as many crimes may be unreported or the ethnicity of the perpetrator unknown). However, evidence suggests that the imbalance is not simply the result of people from ethnic minority groups committing a disproportionate number of crimes. There is not, as yet, sufficiently robust data and evidence from which to reach definite conclusions as to the cause, or causes, of the disproportionate representation of ethnic minority groups observed in the data described. What is clear from the data is that disproportionality continues to be a key issue meriting urgent investigation.’
(Home Office, 2006b)

Young Black people aged ten to 17 years old make up 6 per cent of people in the youth justice system, despite representing fewer than 3 per cent of all ten to 17 year olds in the general population (HAC, 2007). A study commissioned by the Youth Justice Board,

examining a selection of cases from youth offending teams, explored the question of ‘discrimination or difference?’ (Feilzer and Hood, 2004). The researchers found that ‘the chances of a black young male’s custodial sentence at a Crown Court being 12 months or longer were 6.7 times those of a white male’. They also found that a ‘mixed’ parentage young male’s chance of being prosecuted was 2.7 times that of a White young male with similar characteristics.

In their conclusions, they claim that there was a differential in-flow of cases between White and ethnic minority young people and that once in the system, in terms of outcomes for them, differences in treatment were observed – for example, the greater use of more punitive community penalties and longer supervision. Again, this might usefully be described here as another example of the ‘ethnic penalty’.

As highlighted here in broad-brush terms, the evidence suggests that on a range of measures – from stop and search, charging, conviction, punishment, imprisonment and deaths in or following police custody – the outcomes seem to be far more punitive and even deadly for ethnic minority people.

4. A PROBLEM OF ‘BLACK CRIME’?

As we outlined at the start of this paper, our goal is, through a process of discussion, to test out the view that in order to understand the serious harms experienced by Black people, it is necessary to look beyond the narrow picture of ‘Black on Black crime’ or more specifically the activities of young Black men. Instead, we favour a perspective and public discussion that attempts to register a broader range of harms that ethnic minority people face.

In one sense, this would include registering, without prejudice, the harms enacted between Black people, just as it would be correct to register “White on White” harm. However, as Phillips and Bowling (2007) argue, ‘Numerous critics have ... pointed out that ethnicity and culture always come to the fore when Black and Asian people commit crime...a point which is re-enforced by the absurdity of describing football violence, child sex abuse, serial killing or corporate manslaughter as “white on white” crimes.’ Phillips and Bowling express sympathy ‘with those who eschew the whole enterprise of classifying crimes according to

skin colour of their perpetrators'. We would agree with this analysis and suggest that to focus debate on popular and racialised descriptions of crime and criminality and an emphasis on the role of criminal justice is problematic for a number of reasons.

First, while legal constructions of assault, theft and homicide should be given the attention any serious harm would warrant, current definitions of crime and the associated activities of the criminal justice system distort and disguise the true range of socially mediated harms. The scope and effects of the social and economic inequalities that Black and ethnic minority people experience, and experiences of state-inflicted harm, produce an ethnic penalty that extends far wider and much deeper than the homicides and robberies committed by young Black men.

So when thinking about what is harmful, criminal justice logic, based on orthodox definitions of crime, diverts attention away from what seems to us to be a far more serious and pervasive range of social harms faced by Black and ethnic minority people. Moreover, it is these harms that set the scene for racist victimisation. It is through understanding the prevalence and causes of such harms that greater gains can be made in terms of 'reducing harm', and thus puts into perspective the actions of the young Black men who are the focus of criminal justice.

Second, in its operations, the criminal justice system is partial and biased. When the Home Office's (2008b) violent crime reduction plan, *Saving Lives. Reducing Harm. Protecting the Public*, professes to be concerned with 'reducing harm', the harms disproportionately addressed are those based on contact harms, with an emphasis on street based harm focused on what are categorized as 'crime hot spots' – the type of harms that young Black men and boys tend to commit. This, in our view, offers a substantial part of the explanation for the disproportionate numbers of Black, mostly young, men in the system and contributes significantly to an amplification of the belief in a 'Black crime problem' with the implication that young Black men are specifically a more threatening and resource-intensive group within society.

Third, current debate obscures the risks that state institutions pose to ethnic minority people. As numerous reports from HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, the Social Exclusion Unit, the Office for the Deputy Prime Minister and the Home Office claim, people in prison,

under criminal justice supervision or coming to the attention of the police are often, in one way or another, in some kind of physical, emotional or financial distress. Beyond incarceration, we find many Black males subject to punitive interventions including school exclusions, high and disproportionate rates of stop and search and mental health interventions. It appears that ethnic minority people often experience an additional array of coercive, painful and harmful measures inflicted and exacerbated by state institutions in what is claimed to be an attempt to protect the individuals concerned and the wider community. Thus, rather than offer sanctuary or security, such interventions may be a source of significant individual and social harm.

Fourth, the utilisation of the 'social exclusion' paradigm further reinforces a racialised approach to tackling and understanding poverty, ethnicity and crime. The 'social exclusion' discourse purports to illustrate the importance of tackling 'crime' *in context* but usually only highlights the proximal issues thought significant for young Black men, such as an absence of male role models, school failure, poor employment prospects, and drug use. These and a mix of other categories are presented as 'community' or individual 'risk factors' that place experiences of harm in terms of individual or 'community' deficits. This reinforces the notion that the major source and cause of the harms experienced lie within poor 'Black communities', located within an algebraic combination of the rational choice of criminal individuals and constrained choices experienced in the context of disadvantage. It is then a relatively small step to making the assumption that there are proportionally more Black people in the criminal justice system because they are more subject to 'social exclusion' and therefore more likely to commit harmful acts.

In our view this approach should be rejected because the criminal justice system is partial in its focus in terms of what and whom it targets. The absence of any focus on the harmful behaviours of those with greater power in society or higher incomes is striking. In legislation, only *some* harmful events are defined as crimes and of those harmful events only a small proportion come to the attention of the criminal justice system (see, for example, Garside, 2006; Karstedt and Farrell, 2007; Tombs and Whyte, 2008 for the summary of this argument and other work on the prevalence of middle class crime and corporate violence). What the system does appear to achieve, for the most part, is to be an unsuitable container for a regular clientele who have a mixture of mental health, drug,

educational and behavioural problems and are from low income backgrounds, i.e. those most vulnerable to capture because of the focus of the system.

Through the prism of 'Black on Black crime' and young Black men, social exclusion perspectives emphasise a racialised analysis that conceives of what is happening as a special problem, rather than as one problem among many for a deeply subordinated and highly harmed social group which actually bears strong similarities with all other groups subject to discrimination and exploitation, irrespective of the colour of their skin or cultural milieu.

In doing so, it fails to consider sufficiently the structural roots of problematic and harmful situations and that 'risk factors and resources are surface causes, the current intervening mechanisms. These may change but as long as the basic causes remain operative the modification of surface causes alone will only lead to the emergence of new intervening mechanisms to maintain the same outcome' (Williams, Lavizzo-Mourey and Warren, 1994).

Fifth, current approaches contract policy options to 'reducing crime' through a mixture of deterrence and punishment or attempting to change individuals and 'communities' through (often coercive) 'support' mechanisms. Public and voluntary services and agencies are increasingly encouraged to view and publicise their activities as *crime reduction* initiatives. In many cases, funding and political support is contingent on crime reduction claims. Haggerty (2008) sums up the process:

'... it is poignant to see the following programmes reduced to being elements of crime prevention initiatives: adult basic education, vocational training, drug treatment, improving the self-esteem of disadvantaged youths, homework instruction, academic tutoring, family planning, mentoring, after-school programming (including music lessons, sports, dance and scouts), job training for disadvantaged youths, litter and graffiti removal, midnight basketball, group counseling for students with alcoholic parents and so on. Many proponents of such programmes only started to appeal to the crime reduction potential of their initiatives when they found neo-conservatives were uninterested in arguments that the value

of such programmes lies in providing disadvantaged people with hope and the prospect of a meaningful existence.'

(Haggerty, 2008)

When viewing this through a broader 'social harm lens', it is possible to consider the socio-economic and historical forces at work and begin to understand the limited role that criminal justice can play. As Haggerty suggests, the challenge is to consider a wide range of social problems without relegating them simply to crime reduction objectives. Through an exploration of wider social harms we raise the question of whether the root causes can be fairly located within the 'Black community' and ask whether there are other factors that require investigation.

Ethnicity and social harm production

This discussion paper has illustrated a range of social harms disproportionately experienced by ethnic minority people in contemporary British society. They are 'social' because central to understanding the harms experienced is that they are neither natural nor inevitable and are largely preventable because they are mediated by forms of social organisation that produce 'injurious social relations' (Pemberton, 2007).

The abundant literature on the complicated relationship between ethnicity and inequality is difficult to explore in a short paper, but it is within this framework that the reality of differentiation, discrimination and inequality takes shape. A number of points emerge that help explain the depth of social harm that Black and ethnic minority people face across a broad range of indicators and which fundamentally undermine the claim that 'traditional crime', and more particularly 'Black criminality' or young Black men, are a particularly significant source of societal harm.

In general, 'it has been shown that within particular class groups ethnic minority people have lower incomes than White people; that among the unemployed ethnic minority people have been out of work for longer than Whites; and that some ethnic minority groups have poorer quality housing than Whites' (Nazroo, 1999). So there seem to be socially harmful outcomes for ethnic minority groups that are influenced by more than initial socio-economic position. The idea of an 'ethnic penalty' offers a general description of a broad range of 'social harms' that the ethnic minority population encounters.

While the 'ethnic penalty' may also have an important additional effect on the social harms experienced, it is crucial not to lose sight of the overall impact of poverty and social inequality. The higher levels of poverty that Black and most ethnic minority groups experience, compared to the White population, frame the outcomes in terms of health, housing and employment. Despite the government's commitment to reducing child poverty, because of its acknowledged life-course effects, Magadi and Middleton's (2005) study of the continuing and persistent poverty of Britain's poorest children since 1997 identifies markers shared by ethnic minority children. If, as Williams (1990) suggests, there is an asymmetrical effect of poor early life experiences, such as low birth weight and poorer nutrition, they may be part of a cumulative process of social harm in the lives of Black and ethnic minority people that is a source of the unequal life-course experiences.

The socio-economic positioning of ethnic minority people within British society is not an accident but the historical product of a series of relationships between the colonial empire established by Britain from the seventeenth century onwards, and the place of the ethnic minorities who, as a result, came to live in its heartland. Davey Smith (2000) describes the post-second world war labour shortage that forced the government to organise immigration from the Indian sub-continent and the Caribbean to meet employer demand. The migrant workers had access only to the unpopular and unpleasant jobs with severely restricted training and promotion. Davey Smith suggests that 'the current form of socio-economic disadvantage faced by British ethnic minority communities, in an age when the 'reserve army of labour' is waiting to meet labour requirements that currently do not exist, can be understood only in the light of their history'.

Entering into the into the lowest income groups in British society has had a fundamental impact over several generations. A general lack of social mobility in the post-war period (Blanden and Machin, 2007), the increasing inequality in British society since the mid 1970s (Brewer et al., 2007) and employment discrimination in UK labour markets (Mason, 2003) have created a socio-economic context in which some ethnic minorities, in particular Caribbeans, Bangladeshis and Pakistanis, have suffered significant social harm. The combination of 'ethnic penalty', class location and socio-economic positioning structured by history is significant in terms of the impact of social harm, not just at the level of the individual but across a whole population's generational life course. It is may be in this

context that the idea of intergenerational cycles of disadvantage has some purchase and that these factors might explain intergenerational transference of poor outcomes, rather than purported 'Black' lifestyles, cultural differences or individual pathways based on 'risk factors' that are simply the representation of the social exclusion discourse with a Black 'spin'.

The economic exploitation of Black people and ethnic minorities through initial integration into the low-wage sector of the labour market created space for racialised explanations for what rapidly became an everyday lived reality – Black and other ethnic minority people tend to end up in the worst jobs and live in the poorest areas. The point here is that economic exploitation and racial discrimination are 'distinct social processes that, nevertheless, reinforce and reproduce one another in contemporary societies' (Oliver and Muntaner, 2005).

5. CONCLUSION: LOOKING THROUGH THE 'CARNIVAL MIRROR'

The US scholar, Jeffrey Reiman, has described criminal justice as a 'carnival mirror', reflecting a deceptive picture of reality:

'If criminal justice really gives us a carnival mirror image of 'crime' we are doubly deceived. First, we are led to believe that the criminal justice system is protecting us against the gravest threats to our well-being when in fact the system is protecting us against only some threats and not necessarily the gravest ones. We are deceived about how much protection we are receiving and thus left vulnerable. The second deception is just the other side of this one. If people believe that the carnival mirror is a true mirror – that is they believe the criminal justice system simply reacts to the gravest threats to their well-being – they come to believe that whatever is the target of the criminal justice system must be the greatest threat to their well-being.'

(Reiman, 2004)

In Reiman's idea of the 'carnival mirror', we find that 'crime' is considered to be the *real* and *important* issue for society, while inequalities in health, financial harms and economic hazards and state inflicted harms are seen as comparatively minor and almost inevitable.

Following Headley and Reiman, we have aimed to broaden the object of analysis beyond 'crime' to a wider range of social harms and stimulate discussion about how to 're-orientate populist debates on crime towards a wider, and more progressive, discussion of harm' (Pemberton, 2007) with regard to Black and ethnic minority people. Our aim has been to challenge popular conceptions about 'Black on Black crime', 'Black criminality' and Black young men as a special and pre-eminent source of social harm to ethnic minority people and society in general.

Finally, and at risk of over-simplification, we would like to reiterate what we are and are not saying. We are not saying that many acts currently defined as 'criminal' are not harmful, distressing or in need of policy attention – although we would stress that in our view the criminal justice processes are a thoroughly inadequate way of addressing these harms (Garside 2006). We are not saying that ethnic minority people are neither victims nor commissioners of acts often defined as 'crime'. Nor are we presumptuously seeking to foreclose a debate about what action Black and ethnic minority people should take to address the harms experienced. We seek to discuss what the nature and sources of the harms are while recognising the long history of Black and ethnic minority social and political advocacy in this field and the social advances made as a result.

What we are saying is that by focusing predominantly on many acts through the narrow framework of criminal justice, there is a tendency to place disproportionate emphasis on particular people – and, in recent times, young Black men. This deflects attention away from far more wide-ranging and pervasive harms, and that political and policy attention unfairly locates 'criminality' and harmfulness at the feet of ethnic minority people and in particular, young Black men.

By drawing attention to the range of harms outlined in this paper, we are not offering an explanation for why some people may commit acts – currently a preoccupation of the criminal justice system, politicians and the media – although this is a legitimate question for researchers to ask. This discussion paper instead attempts to challenge the myopic focus of a 'Black crime problem' and the criminal justice solutions associated with it. We would argue in favour of a perspective that relocates understanding harmful experiences

outside the criminal justice arena, thus broadening the scope and reach of potential solutions.

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