Audit of Research on Minority Ethnic Issues in Scotland from a ‘Race’ Perspective

Gina Netto, Rowena Arshad, Philomena de Lima, Fernando Almeida Diniz, Martin MacEwen, Vijay Patel & Rana Syed

This audit was commissioned to identify and review research relating to minority ethnic people in Scotland in order to inform the development of a new Scottish Executive research programme in this area. The study discusses key themes arising from the identified research, highlights significant research gaps and makes recommendations for future research. The construction of an electronic database of relevant research material, capable of being updated and extended, has formed an integral element of this study.

Main Findings

- There were few national, regional or longitudinal studies relating to the minority ethnic population and few comparative studies between the majority and minority ethnic population. Instead, there was a predominance of small-scale qualitative studies that were restricted to local areas.
- Many studies articulated the views and experiences of service users and potential users. Few studies evaluated the extent to which lead organisations had mainstreamed race equality into their organisational structures and processes.
- Research activity tends to have concentrated upon housing, education, social care and health issues. Less attention has been paid to access to justice or employment and enterprise; and even less to poverty, rural issues and issues related to identity or involvement in the democratic process.
- Cross-cutting themes emerging from research identified by the audit include the need for public service design and delivery to reflect individual needs, including cultural and religious requirements; low levels of knowledge and use of services by minority ethnic people and evidence of institutional and structural barriers to accessing public services. Identified research also provides evidence of racial disadvantage, discrimination and harassment in some policy areas.
- The audit highlights a lack of research on issues of identity, involvement in the democratic process, diversity within and between minority ethnic groups or the nature and impact of multiple discrimination. The audit also identifies a lack of evaluation of the implementation of equal opportunities policies and a relative absence of a rural dimension to minority ethnic research studies.
- The audit suggests that cross-cutting research is required to support the development of ethnic monitoring systems, to evaluate the impact of race equality policy and practice in key policy areas, to explore issues of diversity, identity and active citizenship and to provide a rural research dimension to national research studies.
Scope & Focus of Audit

The main purpose of this audit was to document research relating to minority ethnic people in Scotland from 1990 onwards. The main focus of the study was upon ‘visible minorities’, (those born in the African and Asian continents and their descendants), although research relating to other minority ethnic groups, in particular refugees and asylum seekers and Gypsy Travellers, has also been included in the study. A key concern of the audit was to maximise the information available about minority ethnic communities in Scotland, and therefore a broad definition of ‘research’ was adopted, with particular care being taken to include the work of voluntary sector community-based organisations. This definition of research encompassed studies identifying ‘need’ in local areas, evaluations of policies and projects, studies written on the basis of work experience by practitioners as well as academic research. References cited in the audit have also been entered into an electronic database.

The term ‘race’ was adopted in this audit in a broad political sense. This approach makes explicit the social inequalities which impact on minority ethnic communities as a consequence of institutional and personal racism in relation to a wide spectrum of areas including housing, education, social care, health, employment and enterprise, poverty, rural issues and access to justice. The diversity that exists between and within minority ethnic communities was also recognised.

Patterns of Research

The audit revealed a dearth of robust, statistical data on minority ethnic people, with the 1991 Scottish Office Survey and 1991 Census continuing to provide the basis for analysis. Large-scale studies were few, as were comparative studies between the minority ethnic and majority population or longitudinal studies capable of tracking change. There were few national or regional studies: instead, there was a predominance of small-scale qualitative, local studies. Many studies articulated the needs and experiences of users and potential users of services, calling attention to existing gaps and mismatches in service provision.

Very few studies were concerned with evaluating the extent to which lead organisations had mainstreamed race equality in their organisational structures and processes, or been effective in implementing policy and meeting targets in these areas.

The main areas in which research activity had been concentrated were housing, education, social care and health. Less attention had been directed towards access to justice or employment and enterprise, and even less towards poverty or rural issues. Issues related to identity and participation in the democratic process remained under-researched.

Many studies were broadly concerned with the experiences of minority ethnic people as one group although there were some attempts to reflect diverse ethnic backgrounds. Where studies focused on a particular ethnic group, this tended to be either the South Asian or the Pakistani population. The coverage of existing research across minority ethnic groups was uneven.

The majority of studies were Glasgow-based, reflecting the uneven distribution of the minority ethnic population in Scotland. Some studies had been undertaken in Edinburgh but very few studies were identified in the other cities and hardly any at all in rural areas.

While a large number of organisations and individuals had commissioned or undertaken studies of relevance to the audit, the research interests of a few organisations and individuals had strongly influenced the pattern of research. There was little evidence of strategic planning of research within an overall agenda that seeks to challenge racism and eliminate racial discrimination and disadvantage within Scotland.
Cross Cutting Themes

Invisibility of Minority Ethnic People in Statistics

Minority ethnic people are all but invisible in official statistical data sets, particularly in relation to service use. This rules out the possibility of quantitative analysis of what services they contact, where and how, comparisons with the majority population or monitoring of change. Further, their invisibility in the key strategic documents of public bodies across the policy spectrum perpetuates this ‘colour-blind’ approach.

Institutional and Structural Barriers to Access

Substantial evidence in the areas of housing, social care and health indicates low levels of knowledge and use of services among minority ethnic people as compared to the majority population. The lack of a coherent picture of their access to a range of educational services covering nursery, compulsory and post-compulsory education is a key issue. A recurrent finding is the need for service providers to improve consultation and communication with minority ethnic communities.

Structural factors such as the role and decision-making processes of ‘gate-keepers’, including the criteria which are used to facilitate or restrict entry to a broad range of services, have generally been found to inhibit minority ethnic people's access to these services. For example, in housing, evidence suggests that allocation criteria limit the extent to which minority ethnic people are able to access accommodation in the social rented sector. Their entry to the labour market is also restricted and awareness of government training programmes low. Rural studies suggest that the minority ethnic population in these areas face additional difficulties in accessing services, due to a greater lack of understanding and awareness of their needs and circumstances by service providers.

Importance of Greater Flexibility in the Design of Services

Despite current policy developments which emphasise a needs-led approach to service provision, there is little flexibility in the services offered to minority ethnic communities. Hence, in housing there is a shortage of a wide range of accommodation which takes into account the diversity in size and composition of minority ethnic households, and a lack of recognition of the importance of ensuring protection from racial harassment. In education, the inclusion of multicultural education within the curriculum has not been systematic across all schools, education authorities or curriculum areas. The need to design and develop social care and health services that take into account particular preferences is also a key issue. Related to the latter, a priority area is the effective design and transmission of health promotion messages to minority ethnic communities.

Lack of Culturally Appropriate Services

The extent to which services are culturally appropriate is closely related to their level of use by minority ethnic people, and their satisfaction with these services. Key issues here are effective communication and the extent to which the design of services takes into account particular preferences, including cultural and religious requirements.

In the areas of housing, social care, health and access to justice, difficulties in communication between minority ethnic people and service providers are well documented. A recurrent theme is the inadequacy of interpreting services in public institutions, including the courts. Such limitations inhibit the ability of professionals to understand the circumstances of minority ethnic people and the extent to which the latter can make informed choices. In the courts, the potential inability of minority ethnic people to understand proceedings undermines the principle of equality before the law. In the field of education, differences in language resources point to the need for teacher education courses to prepare teachers to adequately support the bilingual learner.
Racial Disadvantage, Discrimination and Harassment

One of the notable findings of this audit is that minority ethnic people are racially disadvantaged in several key policy areas. In the area of housing, their disproportionately low rates of occupation of local authority housing has led to a low take up of Right to Buy. Their route into owner-occupation through other means is also more difficult, and their access to the social rented sector severely restricted. In relation to social care services, the lack of culturally sensitive services leads to low uptake and levels of satisfaction, and a reliance on the black voluntary sector or on informal sources of support where available.

In the area of employment, although there is upward mobility among certain minority ethnic groups, there is also a concentration of economic activity in a narrow range of occupations and industries, which tend to be characterised by low pay and poor working conditions. There is conflicting evidence as to whether self-employment (five times higher than in the majority population) is the result of choice or the lack of it. Support for the latter possibility is found in evidence of discrimination in the private sector; the extent of discrimination in employment in the public sector is unknown. However, statistical evidence has consistently shown that unemployment rates of the minority ethnic population are higher than in the majority population. Further, it is clear that discrimination is an important additional variable to the poverty experiences of minority ethnic communities. It affects housing circumstances, access to social care and health services, entry into the labour market, as well as psychological wellbeing.

The increasing incidence of racial harassment in Scotland needs to be understood against the wider context of racial disadvantage and racial discrimination. Safety from racial harassment is a key factor influencing minority ethnic people's choice of housing. It also affects the lives of minority ethnic young people in schools and on minority ethnic people in schools, on the streets and in workplaces.

A significant aspect of minority ethnic people's experience of racial harassment is their lack of trust in the ability and willingness of public authorities (including housing authorities, teachers and police) to take appropriate and effective action against perpetrators of harassment and to fully support them. The need for co-ordinated action between the criminal justice system, local authorities and voluntary agencies in tackling the phenomenon has been highlighted. There is some evidence to suggest that this is particularly lacking in rural areas.

Impact of Multiple Discrimination

Multiple discrimination is evidenced to a varying extent in a number of areas. At the level of service planning and delivery, lack of information and understanding about the circumstances of minority ethnic people is compounded by an even poorer understanding and knowledge of the extent to which their requirements for services might be influenced by, for example, disability, gender, age and sexual orientation.

Gender

Few studies have examined the experience and support available to women from a minority ethnic background who face domestic violence. Limited research indicates that the acts of violence faced by these women are not necessarily perpetrated by men but include other members of the family, and that there is a lack of housing and social care provision for such women and their children.

Difficulty communicating in English is a greater problem among ethnic minority women than it is for men, for example in relation to accessing health services. Research has highlighted the importance of disentangling the effects of racism from other effects such as gender, class or the power of professionalism, while suggesting that the experience of racism characterises minority ethnic women's contact with health services.

Minority ethnic women also have lower levels of economic activity compared to minority ethnic men and white women. Lack of fluency in English is a greater barrier to participation in the labour market for these females than for their male counterparts.
Age
Studies on older people have tended to focus largely on South Asian people; hence less is known about the circumstances of older people from the Chinese, African-Caribbean and African and other communities. Research suggests that older minority ethnic people have not benefited as much as their white counterparts from a growing volume of sheltered housing. Social care services for older minority ethnic people have also been revealed to be inaccessible and inappropriate, and unmet need is likely to increase as this population increases. Older minority ethnic people may be particularly susceptible to poverty since they may not be entitled to pensions due to their pattern of employment.

Disability
In housing, special needs provision has largely failed to accommodate the requirement for specially designed or adapted housing in minority ethnic communities. Key aspects of special needs education (SEN) policy and practice relating to the social inclusion of minority ethnic disabled children and their families have also received little attention. The few studies on social and health care related to disabled people in minority ethnic communities tend to have been community-based projects, and this may suggest unmet need in this area.

Importance of a More Representative Workforce
The need for a workforce that is ethnically representative of the population has emerged as a cross-cutting theme in key policy areas. The main issues are the lack of information on employment practices, the proportion of minority ethnic people who are employed, the grades at which they are employed, and the lack of information on their experiences within the workplace.

Complementary Benefits of Mainstreaming & Specialist Provision
The benefits of mainstreaming as opposed to specialist provision in implementing equal opportunities policies emerged in a number of areas. Among the factors considered are the estimation of costs against benefits and users’ preferences. A key consideration has been the role of the black voluntary sector and its ability to adequately provide specialist services in the face of limited funding and lack of political power. The strengths of the sector are its intimate knowledge of needs, cultural background, awareness of race equality issues and extensive experience of working with this population. Some of its limitations are the lack of a political voice and the inability to plan strategically due to limited and short-term funding. The development of both mainstream and specialist forms of provision appears desirable, and would allow greater choice and flexibility.

Importance of Multi-Agency Working
The desirability of multi-agency working has been highlighted, particularly in the potential for collaboration between mainstream statutory or voluntary projects and black- and minority ethnic-led voluntary agencies. Such collaboration would enable agencies to draw on the complementary strengths and expertise of all those involved, and facilitate access to services through the co-ordination of effective systems of referrals. The need for stronger links between providers in housing, social care and health has also been highlighted in the context of community care policies. Multi-agency working has also been advocated as a means of countering racial harassment and supporting victims of domestic violence.

Experience of Refugees and Asylum Seekers
Most recent research has drawn attention to the implications of the provisions in the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, including the voucher system and the role of the National Asylum Support System - the agency negotiating arrangements with local authorities and private contractors. Among the concerns raised in relation to housing are that block tender arrangements may result in the provision of sub-standard accommodation and inadequate support. Education providers appear uncertain about entitlements to educational and employment opportunities. Other concerns include the racial harassment and hostility experienced by these groups. Further, although a high proportion of refugees have been in professional or white-collar work in their own countries, there is a high rate of unemployment amongst refugees in this country. Clearly, it is important that the situation of asylum seekers and refugees is closely monitored.
Experiences of Gypsy Travellers

A recent study of Gypsy Travellers found both a reduction and changing pattern in travelling. The experience of discrimination was reported to be a daily experience by many Travellers. Housing was seen as one of many options for accommodation, and was sometimes used temporarily. The study identified a need for appropriate site location, design and rules. Access to and use of public services, in particular accommodation, advice and information was an emergent issue, as was the need for culturally appropriate service delivery. Difficulties faced by Scottish Gypsy Travellers in accessing health services include their inability to register with a health service, the low use of health visitors and low rates of immunisation. Research that monitors the extent to which the requirements of Gypsy Travellers are mainstreamed in a wide range of service provision is needed.

Gaps in Research

In addition to the lack of current, robust statistical data relating to the minority ethnic population across all subject areas, the relative absence of evaluative studies of equal opportunities policies is striking. Diversity within and between minority ethnic groups has also received little attention.

The impact of multiple discrimination, on minority ethnic women and disabled people, for example, has also not been fully considered. Despite evidence of higher unemployment rates and poverty among the former, little is known about their access to, and experiences in, the labour market or their educational and career aspirations. The latter have received little research attention across a broad spectrum of relevant policy areas including housing, education, social care, health and employment. The views and experiences of young people in relation to a broad range of services and the labour market are under-researched.

The relative absence of a rural research dimension is a key concern. Issues of minority ethnic people’s involvement in the democratic process and identity, including religious identity, are also under-researched.

Topics for Future Research

Cross-Cutting Research Topics

The research gaps identified through this audit suggest that cross-cutting research is needed to:

- support evaluation and development of systems for ethnic monitoring across key policy areas
- evaluate the impact of race equality policies and practice in key policy areas
- provide the basis for the development of a national strategy for interpreting and translating services in key policy areas
- explore identity issues, including self-description, religious affiliation, intra/inter-group differences and identification with Scottishness/Britishness
- examine active citizenship issues, including membership of political parties and volunteering
- provide a rural dimension to national studies

Selected Research Topics by Area

The audit report recommends future topics for research at the end of each chapter. Selected topics for future research are shown below.

Housing

- Review of the implications of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 for minority ethnic communities
- Research on special needs housing provision, including the potential provider role of black- and minority ethnic-led housing associations
- Research into the nature and extent of homelessness in minority ethnic communities and the adequacy/appropriateness of existing service provision for minority ethnic homeless people

Education

- Evaluation of the effectiveness of the Scottish Executive, HMI (Education), Teaching and Learning Scotland and education authorities in meeting their duties under Race Relations legislation
- Investigation of the effects of racism on equal access and fairness at all levels of education for minority ethnic learners
Examination of race equality issues in early years provision in terms of access, participation, parental involvement, ethos and curriculum, development of explicit anti-racist approaches and the performance of minority ethnic pupils.

Social Care

- National audit of social work policy and practice in relation to race equality, including scrutiny of equal opportunities policy and practice, information on services, ethnic monitoring, employment and training practice
- Review of accessibility and appropriateness of services for minority ethnic children, including pre-school provision, children in care, fostering and adoption
- Review of research, policy and practice on the experiences of disabled people from minority ethnic communities, including a review of social work department practice and that of national voluntary organisations

Health

- Evaluation of the accessibility and appropriateness of health services for all minority ethnic groups, including a review of mechanisms used to consult minority ethnic communities about service development
- Research into the routes by which minority ethnic people access statutory mental health services, the appropriateness of intervention strategies employed and the level of community-based support available
- Evaluation of health promotion strategies for minority ethnic communities including a review of the relative merits of a targeted approach to health promotion.

Access to Justice

- Evaluation of the response of all aspects of the justice system to the implementation of the Stephen Lawrence Action Plan
- Research on minority ethnic people’s experiences of the civil justice system in discrimination and no-discrimination cases
- Research into the experiences of minority ethnic women and children who are victims of domestic violence and the adequacy of existing service provision

Employment and Enterprise

- Complementary studies of minority ethnic young people’s and minority ethnic women’s career aspirations and access to employment and training, including barriers to, and experiences in, the labour market
- Snapshot study of minority ethnic small and medium-sized enterprises in Scotland, including data on operational sectors, size, scale, turnover and access to finance, business support and advice

Poverty

- Longitudinal study of the impact of anti-poverty strategies on the poverty experiences of minority ethnic people, including those living in rural areas
- Study focusing on the pathways for minority ethnic people into and out of poverty, and the length of time spent in poverty in comparison with the majority population

Rural Areas

- Action research into innovative and effective methods for consulting with, and assimilating the views of, minority ethnic people in rural areas
- Study of models of practice and service delivery appropriate to rural minority ethnic groups, including an exploration of infrastructures for tackling racial harassment
- Exploration of the effects of social/cultural isolation on rural minority ethnic groups

A User-Led Perspective and Ethical Code

The importance of a user-led perspective involving minority ethnic people at key stages of the research process has emerged as a fundamental issue. One of the main implications of adopting such an approach is the responsible exercise of power and accountability by all those involved. It is suggested that an ethical code for researching ‘race’ would support this (SABRE, 2001).
**About The Study**

This study involved desk-based searches of published and unpublished literature and an extensive postal survey to a wide range of organisations, distributed by both the Scottish Ethnic Minorities Research Unit (SEMRU) and the Centre for Education for Racial Equality in Scotland (CERES). The audit was publicised through a variety of newsletters and circulated through electronic networks. An electronically held database of relevant research material, capable of being updated and extended as required was constructed as part of this study.

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**References**


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Scottish Executive Central Research Unit
2J
Victoria Quay
EDINBURGH
EH6 6QQ
Tel: 0131 244 7560
Email: cru.admin@scotland.gov.uk
Web site: www.scotland.gov.uk/cru

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