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Murji, Karim ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7490-7906> and Afridi, Asif (2021) One step beyond: examining diversity frameworks for equalities policy and practice. Discussion Paper. brap, Birmingham, UK.

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# ONE STEP BEYOND

EXAMINING DIVERSITY  
FRAMEWORKS FOR  
EQUALITIES POLICY AND  
PRACTICE

brap



**One step beyond: Examining diversity frameworks for equalities policy and practice in public service delivery**

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**July 2021**

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# INTRODUCTION

A common theme in almost any discussion of social policy is the idea of ever increasing demographic complexity. Whatever field this is discussed within – education, health and social care, families and social security – there is a view that the patterns and variety of social groups present severe challenges for policy making as well as public service delivery. To a significant extent, these discussions have focussed on issues such as an ageing population and sustaining social welfare. While this is obviously important, another key aspect of demographic complexity arises from discussions of ethnic or racial identities and the meanings of that for both policymaking, social identities as well as equality frameworks as they have developed in the UK since the 1960s.

This paper identifies and then assesses a number of ways in which this landscape has been conceptualised. We delineate four distinct but intersecting approaches that help to illuminate different aspects relating to social policy. These are:

- superdiversity
- mixedness
- intersectionality
- post-race

While all of these can be seen as sharing the same problematic - problematizing the accuracy and relevance of racial/ethnic categories to contemporary society - they differ quite markedly in their approach to inquiry. Some are more applicable to policy; some are more conceptual or critical. Thus while there are overlaps, they are also distinct. For each approach, we identify its main theme, what is known about it on the basis of applied research, and some reflections on what it could mean for social policy. We suggest that the evidence base for a number of different ideas and policies is variable and patchy, and that those ideas challenge but do not supplant the need to address the impact of racism.

## *The challenge of social policy 'beyond race': the example of covid-19*

Concerns about unequal access to and delivery of public services to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities are of long standing across a range of social policy areas (Byrne et al 2020). The acceptance by the government of the Macpherson (1999) inquiry's view of institutional racism provided a comprehensive basis for public service bodies to reconsider and reframe their policies to address racism and unequal outcomes. One of the key aims of Macpherson was to ensure greater proportionality in outcomes based on data collected by public agencies. In that process they were supposed to draw on the ethnicity/race categories developed in the 1991 UK Census [White; Black-Caribbean; Black-African; Black-Other (write in); Indian; Pakistani; Bangladeshi; Chinese; Any other ethnic group (write in).]. After two additional decennial censuses, data reveal that patterns of racial and ethnic inequalities persist and that these are systemic and in some cases have worsened in the UK (Cabinet Office 2018). In the austerity years of British government, for example, people from BAME backgrounds were more likely to be worse off as a result of tax and benefit changes compared to people from a White background (Women's Budget Group 2017).

Alongside these patterns of persistent race inequality there has been an on-going debate about the value of social policy responses to race equality. Post-multicultural scepticism about group identity-based policy-responses to promote race equality as failing to capture the diversity and aspirations of modern Britons (Ashcroft and Bevir 2017) has contributed to arguments for more attention to 'mixed' groups, as well as more 'robust' forms of multiculturalism (Brahm Levey 2018). In addition, while it has long been recognised that race/ethnicity categories themselves are problematic and of questionable efficacy in addressing inequalities (Brown 2016 also highlights this double-edged nature of categories and statistics), contemporary migration flows, intra-EU and white migrations have also led to calls for greater recognition of the 'superdiverse' nature of modern populations when planning social policy (Vertovec 2019).

These positions tend to indicate that thinking in terms of race in the UK is no longer adequate and that new concepts and approaches are required that go beyond 'identity politics'. Yet what emerges from this is a patchwork of approaches to thinking about race equality in social policy and these newer approaches to conceptualising and describing difference have not removed or displaced arguments for anti-racism in its conventional form (see Ono-George 2019, Byrne et al 2020). The rise of Black Lives Matter protests across the world in 2020 attest to continued public interest for direct action on racism. The result is that there is not any consensus but a variety of arguments and positions that overlap and are sometimes incommensurable. Equally, there is limited insight into what they mean in practical terms and what is known about their application to policy.

The patchy nature and inconsistency of social policy on race equality has also been thrown into particularly stark relief in 2020 in the response to BAME people's experiences during the Covid-19 crisis. Concerns about the disproportionate mortality rates of BAME people and indecision in response from Government has demonstrated the challenges the UK still faces in responding to race equality in social policy terms. As an example, during the Covid19 pandemic the issue of whether BAME people – both NHS staff as well as in the general public – were more at risk and more likely to die could not be answered simply because the data was not properly collected and classified by ethnicity. The chair of the BMA highlighted a lag and a gap in recording ethnicity data for covid19 (*The Guardian* April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020). ONS data that appeared a few weeks later indicated that Black males and females were 4.2 and 4.3 times more likely to die from a COVID-19 than people of White ethnicity; it also noted that people of Bangladeshi and Pakistani, Indian, and Mixed ethnicities had statistically significant raised risk compared to the White group. A related viewpoint emerges from the Kings Fund (Bailey and West 2020) in pointing to the higher levels of co-morbidities for BAME people. The IFS pointed to a wider range of social factors that influence the risk factor as well, such as household structure, occupational structure and levels of savings; likewise the ONS risk figure is modified downwards when age and disability are included (Platt and Warwick 2020).

While these labels reflect the use of the Census categories created in 2001, throughout this period we have seen arguments that 'BAME' is too general and there are significant variations within it (ONS 2020, CRED 2021). These claims underscore the view that more granular approaches are needed. Approaches based on superdiversity, intersectionality and/or mixedness offer that, but do they address the policy and service delivery issues? This paper

seeks to explore this further, although discussions around Covid-19 have made at least two issues clear. Firstly, while race/ethnicity factors and differences can be explained in more depth and detail when considered alongside other factors (such as socio-economic background, limiting long-term illness and so on), for many, racialization and systemic inequality associated with this is still the prime issue. The call for a public inquiry by 70 BAME figures stresses this point (BBC 2020). Indeed, the Government was accused of censoring participants in a recent Covid-19 review who stressed that racism and discrimination experienced by communities and more specifically BAME key workers were a root cause to exposure risk and disease progression (The Guardian June 14<sup>th</sup> 2020).

Secondly, even as there is a close but far from clearly established relationship between ethnicity categories and risk and outcomes, the issues that arise from complexity and intersectional analysis for service delivery and planning are little understood and challenging to say the least (Science Media Centre, May 7<sup>th</sup> 2020). The Race Disparity Unit's Quality Improvement Plan for Government Ethnicity Data (2020) indicates that monitoring of ethnicity across public services does not happen consistently and in some areas does not happen at all. Arguably, a focus on the quality of ethnicity data over the preceding decade (and indeed currently - see Race Disparity Unit 2020), has detracted from the relatively scant attention of the extent to which different ways of 'measuring' or 'describing' difference is supporting our understanding of the causes of systemic race inequality in society, and what can be done to address it. It is in this spirit that this mapping exercise aims to explore the application of various approaches to describing difference. How do these approaches help in addressing contemporary inequality challenges, particularly ones linked to race?

### *Approach*

In setting out a range of approaches the aim of this narrative review is to raise questions about the adequacy of any of these frameworks in conceptualising and responding to inequality and discrimination, as well as responding to the complexity, transnationalism and inter-connectedness that would be required to address the service delivery needs of 'new', 'changing' and 'settled' populations – each of these terms being open to investigation. The four approaches set out here are the ones that seem to us the most widely discussed and/or researched ones. We comprehensively searched databases such as Web of Science, JSTOR and SCOPUS to identify research papers drawing on these themes. These results were bolstered by a web-based search for 'grey literature' from policy and research papers from relevant think-tanks and NGOs. While we mainly looked for empirical studies, in some cases there are few and so sometimes the discussion focuses more on the conceptual issues. We focused on UK-based papers, though sometimes bolstered this with relevant material from North America and Europe to provide context; and secondly on recently published material as far as possible. We aimed to limit this to the past five years but as this was too restrictive we had to expand the dates in some places to locate enough material.

## SUPERDIVERSITY

Recognition of new migrations around the turn of the century shaped the view that government policies have been dominated by an understanding of immigration and multicultural diversity based on new commonwealth/ former colonial countries. Vertovec (2007) instead noted a demographic situation consisting of smaller, scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified migrants. His analysis argued for a move beyond viewing diversity mainly in terms of ethnicity or country of origin. In arguing for this 'superdiversity', it maintains that policy-makers need to recognise the 'multiple identifications and axes of differentiation, only some of which concern ethnicity' (Vertovec 2007, p.1049). However the direct implications of this for the delivery of public services are not considered in detail.

Yet the debate about what superdiversity is and whether it is a concept or a descriptor continues. In a 2019 review of 325 papers using the term Vertovec notes it is used in a variety of ways – as a version of diversity, a methodological tool, another way of referring to or moving beyond ethnicity, or as a way of thinking about new social complexities. He favours the last of these and suggests that reformulations of what it means to be a resident from a particular 'ethnic' group in policy terms are turned on their head. Contemporary migration patterns have changed, beyond recognition, what we understand a 'migrant' or a 'resident' in a locality to be (Van de Vijver et. al. 2015). Such literatures challenge a variety of assumptions about 'difference' and demographic context that have informed previous debates about responses to integration and race inequality. Yet, despite some focus on social policy, much of the superdiversity literature is concerned with linguistic diversity (Toivanen and Saarikivi 2016, Creese and Blackledge 2018), belonging, place making and urban multicultural. (eg. Bennett et al. 2018). Vertovec (2019) sums up his overview by saying a lot of research talks *around* rather than *about* superdiversity.

Notwithstanding analysis of the conceptual and definitional challenges of categorising migrants in the UK, there are relatively few examples of empirical research that directly explore the implications of superdiversity for addressing race inequalities in social policy, with a few notable exceptions. As an example Phillimore (2014) points to the need for new approaches to monitoring and managing complexity in health services due to new migrant groups. The challenges this raises include: the relatively high speed and pace of migration associated with globalisation and increased interconnectivity across the globe; changes in the scale of migration; changes in the spread of migration (with immigrants coming from a more diverse range of 'new' countries not associated with previous patterns of migration); changes in the heterogeneity and complexity of migrants arriving in the UK who, arguably, are characterised by a more diverse range of backgrounds and experiences than previous post-Commonwealth migrants; and associated fragmentation with migrants arriving in relatively low numbers and having little previous connection with their destination.

Yet what is different or 'new' about migrants that may be preventing communities from integration or from accessing established public services? Bradby and Brand (2015) note that in health policy-making, compared to the UK, other countries have recognised the 'newness'



associated with recent migration in a more purposeful way. In Canada, for instance, the state of being a new arrival or 'newcomer' is described as resulting in 'less effective use of preventative services' on the grounds that linguistic, religious or cultural factors can cause social isolation. Boccagni (2014) too suggests that superdiversity can be a useful framework for understanding how agencies work with new migrants. Phillimore's (2014) work on maternity services in the West Midlands suggests that 'newness' associated with new migrants in a superdiverse society can mean there is limited collective knowledge within migrant groups about how the maternity and other welfare systems work. Similarly, professionals are encountering service users with new cultural and linguistic needs that they may know little about. Isakjee (2017) suggests that new and different groups may have differing expectations of how to access services based on their origin countries, but the empirical evidence to flesh out this view is simply lacking.

The implications of superdiversity for race equality and public policy are still underdeveloped (Boccagni 2015, Aspinall 2012). Understood as a kind of 'post identitarian' view such work tends to point to the need to respond to diverse social groups' needs due to the complexity and heterogeneity of superdiverse societies. Yet analysis of what exactly is lacking and how 'different' or similar the needs of communities are still remains an issue. While Vertovec (2007) called for a substantial shift in the assessment of needs, planning, budgeting and commissioning of services there has been little progress on what these new forms of administrative data collection might look like practice (Vertovec 2019). More importantly, what will this new information help to achieve? How should it be used? It is here where more research is required to understand what, if anything, superdiversity understood as a concept and as a method can contribute, in practical terms, to our understanding of the utility of ethnic and racial categories in progressing equality in public policy and public service provision. The work to date has not offered practitioners and policy makers a clear line of sight on *how* it can be used in their work (other than to describe demographic complexity with a greater degree of sensitivity and granularity), or why it would produce better outcomes.

## MIXEDNESS

Attention to 'mixed' groups is of longer standing than superdiversity; though there are many terms in use - as well as 'mixed race' or dual heritage, a range of other terms are in evidence across Europe, including 'biracial', 'mixed faith', 'mixed parentage' or 'transcultural' (King O'Riann et al 2014). Sociological studies of mixedness offer a more theoretical account of the boundaries of identity associated with race and ethnicity by considering the significance of 'mixed' and 'inter' racial and ethnic backgrounds, as both a global as well as national/international process (King-O'Riann et al 2014).

However the main policy attention arises from demographic analysis. It was not until 2001 that the UK census included categories for people from mixed heritage backgrounds. That found that some 677,000 people in Britain identified themselves as 'mixed' (1.2% of the population). Just less than half of those who called themselves mixed race were under the age of 16 and the mixed category was set to become one of the fastest growing ethnic populations. The reasons why people choose to identify as 'mixed' are under-explored in the UK compared to the US. A study by Mok (2018) suggests that higher socioeconomic status was found to predict Mixed rather than White identification for British adults with one White and one non-White parent. Mok notes that the effect was particularly prominent for those of Black and White descent. Whereas older age and having a minority parent from neither Black nor Asian descent were the strongest predictors of White identification.

Yet, it has taken much longer for social policy-makers to respond to this changing nature of identity and experience in the UK. The census is primarily designed to serve the needs of government that struggles to cope with social change and where particular groups outside of the traditional 'categories' may cluster. There have been various efforts by ONS to respond to demands to address demographic complexity through the data it captures. As an example, the most recent Census White Paper (ONS 2018) describes the introduction of a 'search as you type' capability on the online census that will make it easier for respondents to self-define their ethnic group (when a specific response option is not available). However, the White paper also acknowledges that it will not be possible to provide a specific response option for all groups that would like one. Indeed, analysis of ethnic and racial categories used in UK policy-making reveals a broad picture of administrative systems that are struggling to keep up with the rate and scale of demographic and social change in migration and mixedness (Valles et. al. 2015). Platt and Nandi (2018) show, in their analysis that greater attention to ethnic heterogeneity is required and this has important policy implications. Aspinall (2010, 2018) suggests that the low reliability and quality of ethnicity data from censuses in UK and other countries requires further research and testing to identify optimal strategies

Official classification systems have a dual effect, both reflecting and shaping discussions about ethnic and racial differences (and the presumed overlap between these and other aspects of difference) (Morning 2014). The UK singles out certain kinds of mixed racial categories for scrutiny and ignores others. Whilst the relative size of mixed groups is likely to be one reason for this, Morning (2014) argues it also reflects deeper beliefs and values about racial difference. The conceptual frameworks offered by engaging with mixedness do have

the potential to support responses to the contested field of creating new administrative categories for the census. The Office for National Statistics received a large volume of feedback on the categories for the coming census of 2021, with a number of groups (such as Sikh and Cornish people) arguing for inclusion (or not) of single and mixed categories on the basis of a range of factors such as nationality, colour, race, ethnicity and so on (ONS 2016).

The view that mixedness requires attention by policy makers has been around for some time, with Song (2015) arguing that the sheer diversity of mixed people's combinations and experiences is insufficiently understood. In particular, she suggests that policy-makers need to be careful when making assumptions about what being 'mixed' means (p.90) and ensure they account for a range of disparate kinds of mixed experience. In both Platt and Nandi (2018) and Peters (2017) it is evident that a substantial proportion of people with mixed parentage choose not to describe themselves as 'mixed' when filling out social surveys, and that for mixed heritage children in foster care, categorisation is often inadequate and fails to take into account internal variation between identities that are formed outside of birth families / and the ethnic and racial categories of birth.

If mixedness is to be used as a framework to determine the public service needs of the population in the future through more granular analysis of service outcomes, then understanding the factors that shape decisions to identity as 'mixed' will be an important line of inquiry for policy makers. In particular, there are opportunities to explore, in more empirical detail, the nature of underlying beliefs and choices that policy-makers, analysts and mixed people make when defining people as 'mixed'. How do existing patterns of racialisation and structural inequality shape the process of defining and responding to the public services needs of particular parts of the population? How do these beliefs apply to decisions made about administrative categories employed by public authorities to monitor difference? Mixedness would also require a more intersectional approach to racial identities (acknowledging the social construction of race in conjunction with other aspects of identity such as gender and class) and while this is apparent in youth and cultural studies its implications for and in social policy to address race inequality are still much less understood.

# INTERSECTIONALITY

Intersectionality has only been used in the UK social policy lexicon in recent years where it has been associated mainly with specialist equality issues and legal matters (Atrey 2018, Solanke 2017) where one form of discrimination is 'added' on top of another. However it has been proposed as a more dynamic alternative to equality approaches based on more static, one-dimensional forms of identity and inequality such as age or sexual orientation (Dustin and Held 2018). Intersectionality emerged as a critical concept from black feminism to stress the interconnections of multiple forms of identification. In this light it provided a critique of left and feminist theories that theoretically erased multiple identities, instead stressing that recognising that identities are multiple and contextually produced, as are experiences of discrimination across various forms of identity (Collins and Bilge 2020). This critical edge, or what the ECU (2018, p.2) calls 'a political orientation interested in transformational social change' are though largely missing in social policy.

There are signs of the need to apply this analytically in key policy concerns within the USA (Mena and Bolte 2019) wider Europe (Fredman 2016), as well as the UK too, recently including covid-19 in both 'additive' (ONS 2020) as well as 'critical' forms (Hankivsky and Kapilashrami 2020). The Equality Challenge Unit (ECU 2018) developed a guide to using intersectionality as a tool in higher education while warning that is not a straightforward process. Other instances of this include a report (Women's Budget Group 2017) that stressed the cumulative disproportionate effect on BAME women of changes to taxes, benefits and public spending since 2010. Arifeen and Syed (2019) demonstrate the application of an intersectional lens to support employment practice and challenge inequitable organizational norms and practices that affect ethnic minority women. Similarly Woodhams et al. (2014) illustrate the importance of intersectional analysis in tracking the inequalities faced by ethnic minority men who work in low-level and/or part-time work (which in the UK is predominantly undertaken by women).

Yet, despite a range of academic analyses of the role of intersectionality in rethinking the dynamics of inequality through social policy in the UK, there are relatively few examples of application in legal remedies, policy making or appropriate data collection (Moon 2009, Schieck 2016), in spite of the ambitions of the 2010 Equality Act. In practice terms, despite providing a nod to complexity and intersectionality, policy makers often continue to treat gender, ethnicity and disability as separate processes that produce particular kinds of social inequalities. Hence it can be argued the concept has been denuded of its radical edge and just come to mean that race and gender identities overlap in a Venn diagram way. In adopting a 'siloes' approach to equalities, this disregards the aims of the Equality Act in offering a more 'mainstreamed' and intersectional approach to anti-discrimination legislation (Hankivsky et al. 2019). Hence there is limited exploration of the application of intersectional analysis in evidence in a range of other public policy-related fields (McBride et al. 2015, Sang 2018). Within civil society too, a number of authors have described how the UK has been slow to embrace the application of intersectionality in women's rights movements and it has revealed differences of approach with UK feminist movements (Christofferson 2020).



There appear to be continued conceptual and practical barriers to the application of intersectionality in policy and practice. It currently has limited currency in UK policy-making, and is generally associated with international development policy. The term is used descriptively rather than critically, and even then is seen as requiring a relatively high level of investment of time and resources to work at a level of granularity required – understanding the complex relationships between gender, race and class for instance. In other words, the widespread recognition of the need to understand the intersectional identities and experiences of those using public services, the practice of policy analysis and public service planning has not caught up with how to address these multi-dimensional aspects of inequality

## POST-RACE

Finally, we think it is important to include a fourth strand of thought - post-race. This has a number of meanings that are often confused. Used as a descriptor of the state of ethnic/racial diversity it shares a number of features with the approaches above in contending that racial categories do not helpfully capture experiences of inequality and discrimination in contemporary society. Yet, in a departure from superdiversity, post-racial viewpoints have also been drawn on ethical and ontological propositions to questions of social justice. This racial 'eliminativist' perspective maintains that, even though racism has not been overcome, we should still eliminate race from our ontologies, political discourse and scholarly inquiry due to the negative, reifying effects that arise if it is retained (St Louis 2015). Thus it too aims to move beyond identitarian politics. However, post-race is also used to a critique of 'race blind' viewpoints, that deny race and racism as an issue for political and policy attention. The election of President Obama in 2008 was taken by some to mean it is self-evident that societies have finally moved beyond race. Such race or colour-blind claims has been seen as one of the central achievements of post-raciality (Bonilla-Silva 2015 calls this 'racism without racists').

In this section we focus on the 'race blind' notion of post-race as it could be linked to policy. In the UK this comes mainly from commentators particularly Goodhart (2014) and Phillips (2015). Both assert that race and racism have become a 'bandwagon' for activists just as demographic and social change indicates that race is a declining variable in contemporary inequality, while an over-focus on racism has overlooked the needs of 'left behind' white working class communities. These views call into question the whole framing of anti-racism in UK legislation and policy, or affirmative action in the USA. They suggest either that 'race has been done' and is no longer a key social division. As an example, in Phillips' 2015 television documentary "Things we won't say about race that are true" he proposed that actions on race equality under the banner of 'multiculturalism' had actually been counter-productive for both racial minorities who had been 'ghettoised' and white communities who had been alienated by 'political correctness' and special treatment for non-whites. Critics of this, such as Craig (2018) note a rolling back of programmes and declining funding for BAME and community projects in the UK, while Redclift (2014) links pronouncements of 'the end of race' in policy terms to other trends of neo-liberalism and the shrinking of the welfare state.

What are the implications of post-race for policy and practice? A reluctance or refusal to count by race makes counting racial inequalities a particular challenge as is known from mainland Europe (Simon 2017) as well as beyond that. From a UK perspective, racialisation of groups and associated race inequalities problematise the adoption of race-blind forms of equality policy frameworks. Contemporary arguments about sovereignty vs. security, as in Brexit debates in the UK, or about alleged cultural incompatibility of Islam reveal the intersections of racism, nationalism and populism with migration issues and religious minorities. This would underline arguments that race categories and identities are still needed given the fact that racial inequalities are still so clearly evident across a range of policy fields (Byrne et al 2020). Thus a key challenge in this area is about identifying a balance between acknowledging that race categories are imperfect and heuristic, whilst at the same time resisting the post-racial view that denies racism, or limits it to the past or an extreme fringe

A core problem then is how can administrative forms of categorisation that capture historical and contemporary patterns of race inequality be retained whilst at the same time acknowledging that racial categories can reify the needs and interests of those individuals they seek to describe? There is ample data on race inequality (Cabinet Office 2018, Byrne et al 2020), with the majority of references made to groups such as 'Black British', 'Asian British', Black Caribbean, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Chinese and Indian people. Yet while the use of these terms is a product of categorisation, the data also reflects an historical focus on long-established categories of minority groups, and a lack of data on and attention to newer forms of racism and intersections with other characteristics, including religion. This tension meets a number of different responses (Brown 2016), such as debates on the applicability of the language of racism and racialization to newer migrant groups in the UK, including white migrants (Erel et al 2016, Rzepnikowska 2018). Thus, post-race offers no more of clear path than any of the other approaches. There are those who argue that we should not 'see' or count by race at all, while many others point to the extent to which race still matters. While government, NGOs and academics both reproduce racial thinking and inequalities there are on-going arguments about the relevance and applicability of administrative categories, with, in 2020 in light of covid-19, even a petition calling for the abolition of the term BAME, as it seen to homogenise a range of experiences and not illuminate the particular experiences of 'people of colour'.

## CONCLUSION

We have outlined and assessed a range of approaches that attempt to address social change and demographic complexity, reflecting changes in population, identifications as well as new migrations in the UK. While the frames in this paper are at different levels, conceptually and empirically they usefully shed light on some aspect of each of these areas. They all critique identity-based public service provision associated with traditional models of multicultural service provision, but have very different application in and implications for policy, particularly concerning race. Some can be viewed as calling for more nuanced ethnicity categories, others to the abolition of race monitoring altogether. Yet going 'one step beyond' race is far from straightforward. Just not counting by race or treating it as part of something else will not work in societies deeply marked by race, as both covid-19 and the BLM movement have demonstrated.

Moreover, there is limited firm evidence of how these alternatives provide better policy outcomes for all and any minority communities. While just ignoring race in a post-race way would clearly be the wrong response to covid-19, taking a superdiverse or mixed 'lens' to it would help to bring out some granularity. But the unanswered question of such granular analysis is what and how the needs of a migrant of, say, Polish origins or a person of mixed ethnicity differ from others. This is still an empirical matter. Intersectional analysis is more helpful in pinpointing the range of identities and factors involved but, as with the evidence of covid-19 co-morbidities around diet and hypertension for example, it offers middle to longer-term interventions, some of which are already established in the health sector in any case.

While it is disappointing to see the overall picture around race and policy still so unsettled, this is at the same time not wholly surprising when a significant UK government response to race inequalities highlighted by covid-19 (Public Health England and Race Disparity Unit 2020) was to set up an inquiry panel with sceptics of race-based policy remedies (The Guardian 11 August 2020). The resulting report (CRED 2021) was widely criticised for downplaying racism and has been rejected by all the major race bodies in the UK. Indeed, as the 2021 Census data emerges the social and political issues of race for public service delivery and equality frameworks will not simply wither away. Policy makers as well as scholars will have access to newer but still incomplete data and we conclude by setting out three main implications for policy and practice that require more attention.

First, with regard to data collection, the ONS (2016, 2018) discussion papers show that there is no simple answer to the administrative categories issue. Hence nationally as well as at local levels, the monitoring of social patterns of inequality that relate to race and ethnicity will still be out of step with contemporary demographic patterns. There would be benefits in using more nuanced, qualitative forms of ethnic and racial monitoring such as 'open response' survey questions which allow people to describe their own complex and intersectional identities (though these methods are largely un-tested in the UK). In this regard the 2021 Census will provide some more granularity without being able to capture every possibility. Data will not by itself address the causes of inequalities and more it is still needed to understand if interventions are effective or not. A way forward, we suggest, is that more



longitudinal and experimental research should be used to explain the causes of differential outcomes experienced by BAME groups and to better target specific public policy interventions to improve race equality.

Second, to help inform local planning, budgeting and commissioning better instruments are needed. The changing patterns of migration and transnationalism have raised doubts about the reliability of established approaches to defining minority groups' needs in the public policy-making process. Even in post-Brexit Britain more information is required about the experiences of different categories of migrants (e.g. workers, students, asylum seekers and refugees and irregular migrants). But there also a need to better reflect the heterogeneity of experiences of people from existing 'mixed' and diverse identities too, while at the same time recognising the continuing racialised experience of the Windrush generation who thought they were settled migrants (Williams 2020) and the existence of a hostile environment in public policy (SSAHE 2020).

Third, there are still conceptual as well as practical problems that are issues for scholars as well as policy makers. While all the approaches discussed critique identity-based models of public service delivery, none of them satisfactorily addresses the demographic complexity of modern Britain. Whether seen as alternative or additive approaches to identity-based policy none appear to have captured the imagination of policy-makers and practitioners who are tasked with designing public services.

The gaps in both theory and practice raise questions about 'alternative' approaches to equality frameworks, just as much as they do about established racial and ethnic categories. The four frameworks set out in this article help, to differing degrees in conceptualizing how to describe difference but, as we have explained, there is also merit in examining how the frameworks go beyond description to respond to inequality with practical application in social policy fields. This second step is often lacking and it is rare to consider differing approaches alongside each other and their impact in addressing inequality. Through our review, the lack of empirical data of each framework's application is clear. When set against a backdrop of continuing and widening ethnic inequalities (particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic) and changing demographic patterns, the need to understand what approaches reduce racial and ethnic inequality is palpable. Deeper analysis to link patterns of social inequality with public services delivery is still required.

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