



Invisible Difference and 'Race Equality' in Scotland: Problems, Challenges and the Way Ahead

Executive Summary by BEMIS

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Introduction

This document offers a summary of the joint research effort between BEMIS - Empowering Scotland's Ethnic and Cultural Minority Communities and the University of Glasgow as part of Glasgow Refugee, Asylum and Migration Network's (GRAMnet) Collaborative Masters Initiative. The central aim of this study is to critically discuss and debate current approaches to 'race equality' in Scotland as well as to look at how ethnicity is employed and understood with specific reference to 'invisible minorities' and 'invisible difference'. The key argument is that in order to advance equal social justice and to work towards social cohesion among all our diverse communities, it is of utmost importance that a dynamic and inclusive understanding of ethnicity is promoted which accounts for all of Scotland's communities without homogenising, essentialising and/or racialising their identities and experiences.

Methodology

This research employed a mixed methods approach in order to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the issues at stake. Firstly, a focus group discussion was conducted with six individuals from different ethnic minority backgrounds aiming at gaining an insight into how the issues are interpreted on the ground. Secondly, semi-structured interviews were carried out with representatives of five different organisations working in the field of ethnic minority rights involving a total of eight individuals aiming at shedding more light on the practitioners' and stakeholders' understandings of issues around 'race equality' in Scotland. Finally, content analysis was also used to explore relevant publications by the Scottish Government in order to gain an understanding of the various policies and approaches currently in place. However, more needs to be done on this topic in order to arrive at a holistic understanding and to continue to promote an inclusive and all-encompassing approach to social justice and equality, making sure that all communities are recognised.

Key Findings

Firstly, it was found that by using generic and all-encompassing ethnic categories (such as 'Asian', 'East European' and 'Black', for example) the real diversity that exists within these categories is being disregarded and diluted. The fluidity and multifaceted nature of 'ethnicity' is thus reduced to a mere tick-box option and often conflated with 'race' leaving many individuals with little to relate to.

Secondly, it emerged from the data that ethnicity is still very much understood and approached in simplistic colour terms – as a black/white dualism – thus, again, concealing much of the diversity that exists among ethnic minorities. This kind of thinking is problematic as herein lurks the danger that racism and discrimination faced by certain groups can get played down or not taken into account by stakeholders.

Thirdly, and finally, there seems to be a ‘single-lens’ focus on individuals’ identities thus overlooking the intersectionalities, diversities and complexities that exist. While this has to do with the issue of an individual’s personal identifications, therefore having an impact on their self-image, it has also to do with how an individual who is a member of multiple subordinated groups (e.g. an LGBT+ member of an ethnic minority) becomes invisible compared to those who only belong to one subordinated group.

Conclusion

Currently, members of ethnic minorities are being relegated invisible due to various factors. The dominant understandings of ethnicity *homogenise* (through the use of generic ethnic and racial categories), *essentialise* (through emphasising ethnicity over other attributes in the process of identity formation) and/or *racialise* (through the continued use of ideas around black/white dualism with regard to ethnicity, and through the conflation of ethnicity with ‘race’) ethnic minorities and their identities. Rather, it is crucial to arrive at an inclusive and broad understanding of ethnicity which accounts for *all* minority groups and enables us to resist all forms of discrimination and the different racisms that exist. Only through such an approach can social justice and equality be truly advanced. This research aims at making a critical contribution to the on-going debates by highlighting some of the shortcomings, problems and challenges evident within the field, as well as at offering some insights into the way ahead. It seeks to stimulate debate, and the thoughts presented here are meant to provide a platform for further discussions which should have future research and policy as a central focus.

Policy Implications

- The way ‘ethnicity’ is understood and employed needs to change. Rather than people being labelled, they should be allowed to self-define and self-ascribe an ethnic identity, should they wish to do so. The fluidity and complexity of ethnicity need to be embraced rather than it being reduced to a pseudo-racial descriptive tick-box term.

- Furthermore, while ethnicity continues to matter to people and continues to shape social relations and opportunities in society, it is by means not the only descriptor affecting people's identifications or equality issues. Thus, intersectional identities and their implications on equality need to be taken seriously.
- The Scottish Government is yet to revise its '*Race Equality Statement 2008-2011*'. However, they have signalled that the new Statement is to be published in spring 2014¹. It is of utmost importance that this document is made available as it lays down the approach to equality and social justice with regard to ethnic minorities for the future.
- The future Statement should be followed by action points that are to be taken; the previous Statement and its follow-up reports remained rather descriptive with little practical input.
- Equality issues relating to ethnic minorities need to be brought under one ministerial portfolio in order to advance a more concentrated and coherent approach.²
- Most importantly, the new 'Race Equality Statement' should advance a dynamic, modern understanding of ethnicity which accounts for *all* of Scotland's minority communities and addresses all the different forms of discrimination that exist.

Further Research

There is scope for conducting more interviews and getting more state actors and third sector organisations involved. The geographical area of the study is limited to Glasgow and Edinburgh, thus leaving room for further research to be done in other parts of Scotland. Furthermore, it would be useful to look at the issues again in a different context following the release of the new 'Race Equality Statement' by the Scottish Government in 2014 as well as after the Scottish Independence Referendum in September 2014, regardless of the result of the vote.

¹ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Equality/18934/historyofstatement>

² Currently, general equality issues fall under the 'Commonwealth Games and Sports' portfolio, while sectarianism and faith issues fall under the 'Community Safety and Legal Affairs' portfolio.



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Problems, Challenges and the Way Ahead**

An Outline Review by BEMIS

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1. Background to Review

This document offers a summary of the joint research effort between BEMIS - Empowering Scotland's Ethnic and Cultural Minority Communities and the University of Glasgow as part of Glasgow Refugee, Asylum and Migration Network's (GRAMnet) Collaborative Masters Initiative. The central aim of this study is to critically discuss and debate current approaches to 'race equality' in Scotland as well as to look at how ethnicity is employed and understood, with specific reference to 'invisible minorities' and 'invisible difference'. The key argument is that in order to advance equal social justice and to work towards social cohesion among all our diverse communities, it is of utmost importance that a dynamic and inclusive understanding of ethnicity is promoted which accounts for all our communities without homogenising, essentialising and/or racialising their identities and experiences.

The original text for the study can be downloaded in full from the BEMIS website:

<http://www.bemis.org.uk/publications.html>

1.1. Introduction

Unlike elsewhere in the UK, it was not until fairly recently that Scottish politics started engaging more with 'race'¹ issues (Hampton, 2010:20). Miles and Dunlop (1986) argue that because the English were framed as the 'significant other' due to the dominance of the national question, 'race' as a political issue remained rather absent. However, following the developments in the aftermath of the Stephen Lawrence Enquiry, the 'race' issue gained prominence in Scotland (Williams and de Lima, 2006:499). In 2000, the (then) Scottish Executive published its 'Working Together for Equality' policy document, followed by 'Working Together for Race Equality' in 2002. Since then, there have been regular publications by the Scottish Executive or, as we now know it, the Scottish Government looking at how to achieve 'race equality' in Scotland. The public discourses on ethnicity,

¹ 'Race' will be referred to in inverted commas throughout this report in order to highlight that it is "a socially constructed category, based upon a problematic idea, instead of something that is self-evidently real in the world" (Meer & Nayak, 2013:6).

emigration and immigration have mainly taken place in the context of growing concerns regarding demographic trends such as ageing population, skill gaps and shortages in labour force (Williams and de Lima, 2006:508).

More recently, in 2008, the Scottish Government launched its new Race Equality Agenda that was to serve as an official approach for the next three years. According to the 'Race Equality Statement' (2008b), the agenda is "placed within the context of fast changing demographics, the current economic and global challenges facing Scotland and its communities, and the shifts in the equality landscape". The Government aims at eliminating racism, discrimination and prejudice, tackling significant inequalities, guaranteeing that "diversity of backgrounds and personal characteristics are positively valued and respected", and that everyone feels "safe to live free from fear, harassment, abuse or threats". Their vision is "for a more equal Scotland that is fair and just", that "embraces diversity whilst also fostering a sense of common purpose and goals", where everyone can "achieve their potential", and where "all of our communities are recognised".

In addition to the Government's growing efforts in the field of ethnic minority rights, we also have a vibrant and extensive network of organisations working to improve, promote and safeguard the rights and responsibilities of the diverse ethnic minorities resident in Scotland. However, approaches to ethnic minorities and what is understood by 'ethnicity', as well as how the concept is applied in practice, still remain rather patchy and incoherent both at the level of government policy as well as among the agencies and organisations working on the ground, thus running the risk of disregarding or diluting the true diversity that exists and relegating certain groups invisible.

1.2. Past Research Limitations

Although the issues surrounding ethnicity have been theorised and debated extensively and with passion in academic writing, little has been done to tie those debates in with policy and practice in the Scottish context. As Hampton has noted, "understandings of race and the role of government in addressing racial inequality remain patchy and incoherent", and that because "political understandings of ethnicity and race equality tend to be shaped by

legislation rather than academic research” there is “a tendency by all parties to view race equality through dated colour-coded lens” (2010:24). Furthermore, a systematic evaluation of the Scottish Government’s ‘Race Equality Statement’ and ‘Race Equality Agenda’ (with the exception of e.g. Williams and De Lima, 2006) as well as of the approaches evident among practitioners, has remained rather absent. Thus, such an evaluation is long overdue and this research aims at making a critical contribution to the on-going debates by highlighting some of the shortcomings, problems and challenges evident within the field, as well as at offering some insights into the way ahead. It seeks to stimulate debate, and the thoughts presented here are meant to provide a platform for further discussions which should have future research and policy as a central focus.

1.3. Methods and Methodology

This research was carried out in different stages and it employed a mixed methods approach in order to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the issues at stake. The first stage involved library based research in order to build a broad understanding of the relevant academic debates. For the data gathering, a content analysis was conducted of various key publications by the Government and third sector organisations, most notably the Government’s ‘Race Equality Statement 2008-11’. Further data was obtained from a focus group discussion which was conducted with six individuals from different ethnic minority backgrounds aiming at gaining an insight into how the issues are interpreted on the ground. In addition, semi-structured interviews were carried out with representatives of five different organisations working in the field of ethnic minority rights involving a total of eight individuals aiming at shedding more light on the practitioners’ and stakeholders’ understandings of issues around ‘race equality’ in Scotland. However, more needs to be done on this topic in order to arrive at a holistic understanding and to continue to promote an inclusive and all-encompassing approach to social justice and equality, making sure that all communities are recognised.

2. Key Findings

The three key findings, each of which will be discussed in detail, are as follows:

- When using generic and all-encompassing ethnic categories (such as ‘Asian’, ‘East European’ and ‘Black’, for example), the real diversity that exists within these categories is being disregarded and diluted. The fluidity and multifaceted nature of ‘ethnicity’ is thus reduced to a mere tick-box option and often conflated with ‘race’ leaving many individuals with little to relate to.
- Ethnicity is still very much understood and approached in simplistic colour terms – as a black/white dualism – thus, again, concealing much of the diversity that exists among ethnic minorities.
- There seems to be a ‘single-lens’ focus on individuals’ identities thus overlooking the intersectionalities, diversities and complexities that exist.

2.1. The Problem with generic ethnic categories

The first problem with how ethnicity is understood is to do with the use of generic and all-encompassing ethnic categories that goes against the fluidity usually connected with the concept of ‘ethnicity’. By employing fixed categories for recording ethnicity we often conceal difference while imposing a (possibly unwanted) identity on an individual, especially when, more often than not, ethnicity is conflated with dubious ‘race’ categories. As an interviewee noted, “when we club everything together, we dilute what we are trying to get to” (Female, MSP, Labour). All the many equal opportunities monitoring forms include questions on ethnicity as well as, most notably, the census. The Scottish Government (2008a) notes its statutory duty under the Race Relation Amendment Act 2000 to collect information on ethnic groups in order to tackle discrimination and promote equality. According to the Government, the information offers the private and voluntary sector an opportunity to monitor discrimination and inequality while also guiding resource allocation, policy formulation and service delivery. Certainly the majority of practitioners I interviewed agreed with this. The Government (ibid.) also acknowledges the complexity, changeability and fluidity of ethnicity, and that there is no existing consensus over what constitutes an ethnic group, though it encompasses aspects of ‘identity, race, ancestry, history and culture’.

Nonetheless, for monitoring purposes ethnicity has been reduced to a tick-box model. While it is perfectly understandable that for logistical and data analysis purposes this model offers

a way of easily gathering information on people's ethnic affiliations, and while the Government has published various guides and has conducted various consultations regarding the ethnicity question (2008a and 2008c, for example), as Williams and Husk (2013:294) highlight, decisions on which categories to include and exclude are never ideologically or historically neutral. Indeed, many authors have noted ethnicity's highly politicised nature: naming and categorising people are fundamentally political endeavours. At times the establishment of boundaries admits individual choice and self-determination, at other times the boundaries are enforced by the dominant culture – be it a colonial power or the ruling government (Spencer, 2006:32). Furthermore, the meaningfulness and accuracy of the categories was highly contested by the participants in the focus group and, for example, in the focus groups ran as part of the Scottish Government's consultations (Scottish Government Social Research, 2008).

It was pointed out during the focus group that ethnicity as a concept was currently 'blurry' and 'badly defined'. At the moment, an 'irrational' mix of geography, geopolitics, and colour are used "in the vain hope of capturing 'ethnicity'" (Borowski, 2010:26), all of which come with their added problems. Furthermore, ethnicity was not something that the individuals would use to describe themselves – rather, their identity was more complex. Moreover, constantly having to answer questions about their ethnicity made one of the participants feel that "it is kind of excluding you somehow" (Leila², Persian) when she spoke about having to fill in forms that include a question on ethnicity. She felt that people were forcefully divided up into groups and the differences were pointed out. She went on to say that:

"...they want to exclude although they are saying it's a way of equality and that 'we want to include you somehow. But I think it has another meaning, you know, in exactly the opposite way."

Therefore, while the meaning of such questions is to supposedly guarantee equality, Leila feels that by making you aware of the differences, you feel excluded. Indeed, as one of the interviewees pointed out, a sense of inclusion and belonging happens when "no one sees what [is] different about you, the differences have all escaped" and when you are just seen as you (MSP, Labour). However, this is not to say that we should turn a blind eye to

² Pseudonyms will be used for the participants in order to guarantee anonymity. Their ethnicity is based on the participants' own self-ascription.

difference completely, but it is to do with *how we understand it* as well as being mindful of *how and why we refer to it* at a given situation.

Humza Yousaf (now an MSP and a Minister) notes in the SNP's contribution to a Runnemede Trust publication on 'race equality' in Scotland that "attempts to categorize people's identity ignore the reality of a multi-ethnic UK and Scotland, where ethnicity is far more mixed and fluid than is often presented" (2010:13) and that "far too often, minority communities in Scotland are treated as one homogenous group, without the recognition that there is much to learn from the internal diversity that exists within" (Ibid.:15). Similarly in academia, Modood and Salt (2011:9) point out how migrants are marked out as 'racial' groups and understood as racialised ethnicities: instead of regarding them as individuals, citizens, colleagues etc., migrants are conceived as collectivities and labelled in terms of specific groups, whether they approve of such categorisations or not. Indeed, Stuart Hall wants to reclaim the process of construction of 'ethnicity' and to avoid ready-made labels, thus indicating that ethnic identity is a process of becoming and not a final state (Spencer, 2006:48).

2.2. The problem with the continued black/white dualism

The second problem that emerged from the data is that ethnicity is still commonly thought of in colour-terms – as a black/white dualism – thus, again, concealing much of the difference and diversity that exists among ethnic minorities. In order to make sense of this tendency, it is helpful to think of the historically influential 'race relations' paradigm and, by extension, the 'race equality' paradigm, in the UK (which was inherited by Scotland following the devolution) that refers exclusively to 'black/white' social relations or social relations between 'people of colour' and 'white people' (Miles and Torres, 1999:26) This kind of thinking is problematic as it suggests that there is only one racism while, in fact, there are a plurality of historically-specific racisms, not all of which employ explicitly the idea of 'race' (Ibid.).

Although the Scottish Government has signalled that "the term Black and Minority Ethnic Groups (BME) should not be used, as it is a very general term, offensive to some people and

inaccurate (because some categories under the White section are also small in number)” (Scottish Government, 2008a), not only is the term BME still very much present, but so are the ideas about ethnicity that are implicit within it. An interviewee felt ‘uncomfortable’ with the term because it means that “you’re ‘black’ or you’re anything else” and went on to ask if we mean that when we “club” everyone who is ‘black’ together, we are saying that everyone “is the same”, whether from Malawi or the Caribbean (Labour MSP). One of the organisations involved in the research had a policy in place of not referring to ‘BME’ but rather to ‘minority ethnic groups’ which the interviewee, a community youth worker at a charity working with ethnic minorities, “agreed with” and “felt good about”.

Kay Hampton, in her reply to the views introduced by the major Scottish political parties (Conservatives, Labour, Liberal Democrats and SNP) on ‘race equality’ featured in the aforementioned Runnymede Trust publication, points out that:

...all parties fall foul of notions of Black–White dualism (us and them), perceiving racial inequality and racism as sole concerns of small colour-coded groups or foreign ethnic minorities (so-called BME). None, for example, mention major concerns relating to ‘White’ or ‘White’ racism in the form of sectarianism in Glasgow, anti-English sentiments in the north or negative experiences of Gypsy–Travellers across Scotland.” (Hampton, 2010:20)

Although she acknowledges the SNP government’s positive commitment to addressing inequalities evident in its ‘Race Equality Statement’ (2008b), she criticises the inconsistencies that are apparent in practice. According to Hampton (2010:21), “statistics relating to inequalities are not analysed in a consistent manner” while “at times, reference is made to a collective interest group (so-called BME)”, at other times reference is made “to ‘Asians’, ‘Chinese’ or ‘Muslims’”, thus leading to the “benchmark for measuring progress” being unclear. Finally she poses a question of whether comparisons are “to be made with an undefined, homogeneous ‘White’ majority despite the presence of a significant number of different ethnicities within this majority group?”

Similarly in the interviews, there was criticism of the continued focus on colour. For example, a CEO of an organisation working with ethnic minorities concluded that people “tend to think of [ethnicity] in terms of colour when [it] is much broader – it’s not just a colour thing” and if it

is so understood “you can actually (...) really exclude some other groups”. As Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1993:2) poignantly note, it is important to bear in mind that racism and discrimination does not come in one shape or form: there is neither a unitary system of racism nor a unitary perpetrator or victim. Rather, there are *racisms* that function as modes of exclusion, inferiorisation, subordination and exploitation in different historical and social contexts, and they are all experienced in different ways by various class, ethnic and gender categories. Thus, a group of people can go through a process of racialisation whereby dominant groups transform them into a subordinate social category through a combination of ideological, cultural and legislative practices (Garner, 2010:29), and therefore bring the subordinated group into the realm of, for example, racist stereotypes and discrimination. Therefore, ‘race’ is a socially structured contingent outcome of processes and practices of exclusion (Fox et al, 2012:681). Even a putatively shared whiteness cannot guarantee escaping the effects of racism as can historically be seen from the experiences of Irish and Jewish migrants, for example (ibid.), and Central and Eastern European migrants more recently (Dawney, 2008; Garner, 2010; Fox, 2012; Fox et al, 2012; Poole, 2012).

This is not to ignore the differences in experience as reported by those regarded as ‘black’ or, as the CEO of an organisation working with ethnic minorities pointed out, “there are issues to do with the way that visibly different communities can be treated”. However, as Garner argues, “it is not an attempt to take focus away from the dominant racialised groups’ constructions of alterity but to stress continuity and change in the way the Other is represented and dealt with” (Garner, 2004:108). During the focus group, a participant (Chata, African) noted, addressing the other ‘more white’ participants, that “you people, you have the same colour as Scottish people here” and that “they can’t see if you’re (...) a foreigner in this country” thus leading him to say that “you see, you and me – we are different, okay”. Therefore, while some minorities could ‘pass’ as locals – the group agreed that Scottish ethnicity is still very much understood as ‘white’ – Chata highlighted that for him this was not an option. However, another participant (Talya, Turkish) replied to Chata by saying that she did not “get that a lot” (‘passing’ as a Scot) and her accent was a definitive give-away, just like for Karina (Polish). For Leila (Persian), it depended “on the person who sees you” how that person regards your ethnicity, suggesting that even if for Chata she looked like she could ‘blend in’, for native Scots she was still a foreigner. When interviewing three members – one of them being the founder – of a Polish community organisation, ‘blending in’ posed a problem as they felt they were not taken into account by policy makers and found it hard to receive funding. However, through their organisation and different clubs

and events, for example, they were seeking to raise their profile and make people more aware of them.

2.3. The problem with side-lining people's multiple identities

The third problem is to do with the 'single lens' focus on individuals' identities, thus overlooking the intersectionalities, complexities and diversities that exist. Intersectionality as a framework for understanding inequalities focuses on the multidimensional nature and complexity of people's experiences, and takes into account the many categories of social differentiation (Lutz et al, 2011:1-2). Furthermore, it looks at forms of inequality that are routed through one another; indeed, they cannot be untangled to reveal a single source (Grabham et al, 2009:1). While perhaps identifying with one identity category, grouping or collectivity, any given individual's "social location is concretely constructed along multiple, if mutually constitutive, intersected categories of social power" (Yuval-Davis, 2011:161). The Scottish Government acknowledges the idea of intersectional identities in its 'Race Equality Statement' (2008b) by saying that their "work will continue to explore the complexities of people's multiple identities and the links between the other equality strands". More recently, Minister for Commonwealth Games and Sport, Shona Robison MSP, answered a parliamentary question and assured that they "recognise that people from minority ethnic communities may also experience issues as a result of their gender, age, faith, sexual orientation or disability, compounding the disadvantage or discrimination" and, following a direct quote from the 2008 Equality Statement seen above, went on to say that it "has long been an issue of concern and we acknowledge that there is still much to be done" (Scottish Government: Motions, Questions and Answers, 2013).

The focus group clearly showed the complexities of people's identifications. At the very beginning, for example, the three African participants each introduced themselves as a father of five children, a father of two children and as a mother of a baby, thus prompting Karina to later point out that them referring to themselves as parents "shows that ethnicity is not the first thing that people hold on to that much". Furthermore, Karina continued to say that she viewed ethnicity as an 'imposed' and 'artificial' category that is seen to "define who you are" – yet, it misses the "multilevels of (...) definitions of who they are" and the different

'layers' that constitute them. Therefore, the quote from Humza Yousaf (see above section 2.1, p.6) about the tendency to treat minority communities as homogenous entities thus missing their internal diversity resonates well here.

According to Purdie-Vaughns & Einbach (2008), membership in several subordinated groups makes a person 'invisible' compared to those who only belong to one subordinate group. Because of our society's androcentric, heterocentric and ethnocentric ideologies, people with multiple subordinate identities are perceived as non-prototypical members of their respective 'identity group' which leads them to experience intersectional invisibility (an example of this being an LGBT+ member of an ethnic minority) (Knapp, 2011:189). In the past, UK policy makers used a mono-focus approach on one social group at a time which, in turn, reflected the demands of mono-focused social movements (Bagilhole, 2009:5). However, according to one of the interviewees, this might not yet be a thing of the past. Public authorities' tendency of looking through a "single issue lens" was identified whereby each equality strand is focused on in turn, yet "of course people come with all these things, don't they" (CEO of an organisation working with ethnic minorities). However, an idea of overcomplicating things was also suggested, noting that "if your policies, frameworks (...) have a sensitivity of these issues in general, then people who fall into one or more categories you would've thought should be covered" (Ibid.).

Grabham et al (2009:2-3) argue that the various lawmaking or law-enforcing bodies or policy initiatives show inadequate recognition of the complexly situated subject. Thus, intersectionality can be used to indicate the inherent limits of law and policy initiatives, as "they can only ever work through fetishising categorical constructions of identity and experience that never respond to the material circumstances of individuals' lives". Consequently, an individual's experience is incompatible with the categorised representations of identity that are mobilised in anti-discrimination law, human rights law and discourse and in government equality initiatives. Although it is understandable that law and policy makers look for solid, unambiguous categories that will make their work easier, the real life experiences of people do not fall neatly into these compartments. Therefore it is crucial that the intersectionality debate is taken seriously and ways to accommodate its claims are being actively debated.

However, it is important to keep the potential problems and shortcomings of advancing identity politics based on the ideas of intersectionality in mind. By highlighting the fluidity, instability and multiplicity of identities, it becomes very difficult to construct coherent policies as there is no apparent, unitary or unambiguous 'object' to focus on. If this is the case, one could argue that by abandoning our – even if simplistic, nonetheless – uniting identities, we succumb to complete individualism thus giving up our strength and power that derives from collective action based on a shared identity and unity.

3. Recommendations for Further Research

There is scope for conducting more interviews and getting more state actors and third sector organisations involved. The geographical area of the study is limited to Glasgow and Edinburgh, thus leaving room for further research to be done in other parts of Scotland. Furthermore, it would be useful to look at the issues again in a different context following the release of the new 'Race Equality Statement' by the Scottish Government in spring 2014 as well as after the Scottish Independence Referendum in September 2014, regardless of the result of the vote.

It is of utmost importance that the debate and research continues into the ways in which the 'race equality agenda' is advanced in the Scottish context in order to arrive at a balanced and nuanced understanding of the issues at stake, as well as to promote social justice and equality for all.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1. Conclusion

Currently, members of ethnic minorities are being relegated invisible due to various factors. The dominant understandings of ethnicity *homogenise* (through the use of generic ethnic

and racial categories), *essentialise* (through emphasising ethnicity over other attributes in the process of identity formation) and/or *racialise* (through the continued use of ideas around black/white dualism with regard to ethnicity, and through the conflation of ethnicity with 'race') ethnic minorities and their identities. Rather, it is crucial to arrive at an inclusive and broad understanding of ethnicity, which accounts for *all* minority groups and enables us to resist all forms of discrimination and the different racisms that exist. Only through such an approach can social justice and equality be truly advanced.

A more nuanced approach seeing ethnicity as a “complex interacting variable rather than either a casual or explanatory factor” (Williams and Husk, 2013:297) is needed as, firstly, people do not solely identify themselves through ethnicity and, secondly, there are major differences in the experiences between and, importantly, within ethnic minority communities that result from other attributes such as age, gender, sexuality, disability and faith/religion which need to carefully be taken into account. It is crucial to advocate a broader understanding of ethnicity, which reflects its fluidity as well as leaves room for each individual's self-reflection and self-ascription.

While ethnicity most likely will continue to carry a deep and an important meaning with regard to an individual's identity alongside other personal attributes, hopefully, along the line, attitudes and ideas around ethnicity will not continue to guide the organisation of social interaction between individuals in negative ways through discrimination, abuse and racist ideas (whatever form they take, whoever they target) – that is, through processes which contribute to inequalities. Perhaps, in the future, we will move beyond ethnicity so that people will be regarded as citizens, neighbours and colleagues whose differences have escaped or have become neutralised in the sense that those differences are not accorded negative meaning or that they are not automatically taken to define a person. Although we are not there yet, it is something to keep in mind. Thus, as Eriksen (2002:178) argues,

...we ought to be critical enough to abandon the concept of ethnicity the moment it becomes a straitjacket rather than a tool for generating new understanding.

4.2. Policy Implications and the Way Forward

- *The way 'ethnicity' is understood and employed needs to change.*

Rather than people being labelled, they should be allowed to self-define and self-ascribe an ethnic identity, should they wish to do so. The fluidity and complexity of ethnicity need to be embraced rather than it being reduced to a pseudo-racial descriptive tick-box term. In practice, this means revisiting especially the census and critically debating whether the current categories reflect an appropriate practice of recording ethnicity. Certainly, BEMIS is firmly of the opinion that the colour categories should be scrapped.

- *Furthermore, while ethnicity continues to matter to people and continues to shape social relations and opportunities in society, it is by means not the only descriptor affecting people's identifications or equality issues.*

Thus, intersectional identities and their implications on equality need to be taken seriously. Although important features of intersectionalist thought have been successfully 'mainstreamed' with regard to law and policy (Meer and Nayak, 2013:10-11), it is crucial to make sure that this process carries on. It is important to develop and fine-tune our understanding of how intersectionality affects public policy and how it can be most optimally applied to practice.

- *The Scottish Government has yet to revise its 'Race Equality Statement 2008-2011'. However, they have signalled that the new Statement is to be published in spring 2014³.*

An updated version should have been made available immediately following the previous one, as this would have signalled the government's active and on-going commitment to equality issues more strongly. However, even if delayed, it is of utmost importance that this document is made available as it lays down the approach to equality and social justice with regard to ethnic minorities for the future. Furthermore, the future statement should be followed by action points that are to be taken as the previous Statement and its follow-up reports remained rather descriptive with little practical input.

³ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Equality/18934/historyofstatement>

- *Equality issues relating to ethnic minorities need to be brought under one ministerial portfolio in order to advance a more concentrated and coherent approach.*

While general equality issues (including racism and ethnic inequalities) fall under the 'Commonwealth Games and Sports' portfolio, sectarianism and faith issues fall under the 'Community Safety and Legal Affairs' portfolio. It is widely argued (see e.g. Miles and Dunlop, 1986; Hussain and Miller, 2006) that such phenomena as Islamophobia and sectarianism need to be studied with reference to racist discrimination. Thus, faith issues should be brought under the same portfolio as other equality strands that have an impact on ethnic minorities in order to guarantee a coherent approach in the fight against any kinds of discriminatory or racist practices.

- *Most importantly, the new 'Race Equality Statement' should advance a dynamic, modern understanding of ethnicity which accounts for all of Scotland's minority communities and addresses all the different forms of discrimination that exist.*

There should be a move away from the 'race relations' paradigm which advances a black/white dualism which threatens to ignore the broader and more fluid aspects of ethnicity. Policy makers and academics should engage in close discussion with one another in order to promote an updated and more nuanced understanding of issues pertaining to 'race' and ethnicity, and how they can be best accommodated in different policy areas.

Scotland has come a long way in advancing the equality of all of its residents, irrespective of their ethnicity, gender, sexuality, faith, disability or age, for example. Nonetheless, with regard to ethnic minorities, more remains to be done. The above points highlight some of the issues that arose from this research and which need to be addressed. The forthcoming new 'Race Equality Statement' offers a great opportunity to put some of the recommendations into practice. The main goal should be to enable and encourage the diverse ethnic minorities in Scotland to actively participate in societal processes, employ their rights and tend to their responsibilities as citizens of Scotland. Furthermore, we should be striving for a Scotland where ethnic minorities are not only passively recognised, but where they are actively incorporated into the way Scotland is imagined to be now and in the future. Only through such goals can we foster a culture of inclusiveness, belonging and shared rights and responsibilities.

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6. Appendices

6.1. Project Outline by BEMIS

PARTNER ORGANISATION	
Name and address of Project Partner Organisation	BEMIS (Scotland) / 38 Queen St, Centrum Offices, Glasgow, G1 3DX
Contact Person Name, Email and telephone no.	Tanveer Parnez tanveer.parniez@bemis.org.uk
Brief description of Organisation's core business	BEMIS (Scotland) is the national umbrella organisation for the Ethnic and Cultural Minority Voluntary Sector & the communities that this sector represents. As a strategic national infrastructure organisation, BEMIS are committed to promoting inclusion, democratic active citizenship, recognition of diversity, human rights education, and wider representation. Our vision is of a Scotland that is Equal, Inclusive, and Responsive: A society where people from the diverse communities are valued, treated with dignity and respect, have equal citizenship, opportunities and quality of life, and who actively participate in civic society. (www.bemis.org.uk)

RESEARCH PROPOSAL	
Proposed project title	Research Title: Race Equality between Visible & Invisible approaches to diversity: a comparative study of social exclusion and invisible difference.
Proposed project purpose and aims Why is your organisation interested in having this research done and what are the main aims you envisage for the research?	The Race Equality agenda in Scotland has been advanced dynamically in Scotland over the last few years. However, consistent inequality continues to pose challenges in certain areas and with certain communities. The issue of stakeholders, including EM themselves, acknowledging only visible minority within their approach to race equality has been a factor in undermining the core and spirit of equality impacting on community cohesion and equal social justice. This issue has been, unconsciously, often overlooked in research pertaining to race equality, social inclusion and discrimination. However, it can significantly influence social dynamics.

	<p>Therefore this project will aim to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify the impacts of ignoring invisible difference on social inclusion; • explore the extent to which invisible minorities are acknowledged both by stakeholders and the race equality agenda; • investigate the link between recognition of cultural and ethnic diversity and invisible difference. <p>Possible research questions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the impact of excluding invisible minorities within the race equality agenda in Scotland • Does invisible difference entail a lack of acknowledgement of the community's diversity? • Other suggested questions can be considered with potential candidates.
<p>Proposed project research process</p> <p>How would you envisage that the research will be undertaken. What support can you offer to the student for example in facilitating access to relevant participants, documents, other sources of information etc.</p>	<p>The research will entail several phases. The first one would be library based research to draw a specific theoretical framework. Invisible social identity invokes a set of distinct issues that cannot be analyzed within traditional research pertaining to diversity and race.</p> <p>The second step of the research will involve semi-structured interviews and focus groups, facilitated by BEMIS, with members of the diverse communities and relevant stakeholders in Scotland. This data collection process will seek to engage with individuals' experiences of social inclusion/exclusion and invisible difference. Points that might arise could be: psychological challenges and the fine line between 'passing' and 'revealing'; cultural performance and manipulation of social identity; social reactions.</p> <p>The research could be conducted by adopting innovative methods of action research: indeed, the interviews and focus groups can be a means to actively involve individuals in setting up the research agenda. The participatory role of this process can be taken further with restorative methods of engagement with the diverse groups.</p> <p>BEMIS will be able to assist the student by facilitating access to potential research participants. BEMIS premises might be used for conducting focus groups and interviews. In collaboration with GRAMNet (Glasgow Refugee Asylum and Migration Network), BEMIS will also assist the student in developing the use of participatory restorative methods if they wish to do so.</p>

Proposed project outcomes

What kinds of outcomes would your organisation find most useful from the research?

The final stage of the research will entail a one month internship at BEMIS during which the candidate will compile a report of the research findings in a format which is functional for the Third Sector. BEMIS will assist the student in identifying priorities and in 'translating' the research findings in ways and modes suitable for the sector. An additional outcome could be to provide a toolkit which assists the Third Sector and policy makers in understanding and addressing invisible difference within race equality; a set of recommendations to influence policy in support of communities which lack wider recognition of ethnic and cultural diversity.

6.2. Example Interview Questions for Practitioners

- How would you define ethnicity?
- Are there any problems or challenges with regard to the term 'ethnicity'?
- Are ethnic categories or classifications useful? Why (not)?
- A Government publication from 2008 states that the term 'black and minority ethnic' (BME) should not be used as it is 'too general', 'offensive to some' and 'inaccurate'. Do you agree or disagree with this? Why?
- The Government published its 'Race Equality Statement' ('RES') in 2008. Are you familiar with the document? What are your views on this document – what was good about it; was there anything to improve?
- The 'RES' says that "our work will continue to explore the complexities of people's multiple identities and the links between other equality strands". Has enough been done around this issue?
- The 'RES' mentions recognition. What do you understand by term; what does recognition entail?
- Where does a sense of inclusion or belonging come from? What can be done to achieve that feeling?
- What are the next big challenges in the near future with regard to 'race equality'?

6.3. Focus Group Themes and Demographics

Themes

The focus group took a rather open form whereby the researcher had identified some themes that were to be covered, but the onus was on the participants' contributions to the discussion.

- Ethnicity/ethnic identity (How would you describe your ethnicity/ethnic identity? Are ethnic categories useful? Why/why not?)
- Diversity and the policies addressing it (Do you think that policy makers are aware of the existing diversity in the society? Are there any groups that are being overlooked?)
- Belonging/Inclusion (What gives you a feeling of belonging?)
- Improvements/Suggestions (What has been done well so far regarding ethnic minorities and equality; what remains to be improved?)

Further themes arose from the actual discussion itself, which were then probed further.

Demographics

Gender	Ethnicity	Age
Female	African	25-35
Female	White other	25-35
Female	Persian	25-35
Female	Turkish	18-25
Male	African	25-35
Male	African	25-35