

Racially-Marginalised Men's Experiences of Prison in the United Kingdom: A Systematic Literature Review

Race and Justice

1-26

© The Author(s) 2025



Article reuse guidelines:

sagepub.com/journals-permissions

DOI: 10.1177/21533687251332245

journals.sagepub.com/home/raj

Rachael Floyd , Rachel McKail,
Adonis Akra, and Tessa Saunders

Abstract

Research has continuously demonstrated social disadvantage, racial inequality, and institutional racism within a broad range of domains including, socio-economic status, education, healthcare, and the criminal justice system. This has led to racially-marginalised men being over-represented within the prison population. The aim of this systematic literature review was to consider: What are racially-marginalised men's experiences of prison in the United Kingdom? A systematic literature search was conducted to review papers relevant to the research question. The review brought together the findings of 10 studies and used thematic synthesis to examine the current experiences of racially-marginalised men. From the synthesis there were three main themes: i) feeling powerless in a powerful system, ii) racism and iii) feeling disconnected from cultural identity. The racially-marginalised men experiences of these three aspects led to isolation and alienation, and impacted on the support they received in prison, with this directly linked to rehabilitation. Recommendations are provided including the dismantling of racist policies and practices to embed antiracist practices and meaningfully co-producing solutions for reform.

Keywords

racially-marginalised, men, experiences, prison, qualitative, racism

Department of Health and Human Sciences, University of Hertfordshire, Hatfield, UK

Corresponding Author:

Rachael Floyd, Doctorate of Clinical Psychology, Department of Health and Human Sciences, University of Hertfordshire, College Lane, Hatfield, Hertfordshire, AL10 9AB, UK.

Emails: r.a.floyd@herts.ac.uk; r_daniels123@hotmail.com

Introduction

In the United Kingdom, as in many other nations, it has long been recognised that there is entrenched racial inequality and institutional racism within the criminal justice system at multiple levels (MacPherson, 1999). Following the murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1993, the Macpherson Report (1999) was one of the first formal documents stating that the criminal justice system, particularly the police service, was institutionally racist. There were over 70 recommendations for the criminal justice system, including defining a “‘racist incident’ (p. 376), introducing ‘racism awareness and cultural diversity training’ (p. 380), and an overall aim to ‘increase trust and confidence in policing amongst minority ethnic communities’” (p. 375). However, 30 years later most of these recommendations are still relevant (Dhaliwal, 2023) and there continues to be great inequality for racially-marginalised people within the criminal justice system. A focus on police brutality has entered public consciousness more recently, partly due to the murder of George Floyd in the United States, which triggered global protests led by the Black Lives Matter movement for racial equality (Centre for Social Justice, 2020). The shooting of Chris Kaba by the Metropolitan Police, and the deaths of Oladeji Omishore and Godrick Osei, both of whom are Black men who died after police restraints, demonstrate the ongoing institutional racism within the criminal justice system (INQUEST, 2023).

Racially-marginalised people are disproportionately represented in most areas of the criminal justice system (Lammy, 2017). Racially-marginalised is a term used to show that people are actively disempowered (Gunaratnam, 2003) due to social processes shaped by power (Predelli et al., 2012), where people are intentionally subjugated from economic, socio-political, and cultural participation based on race (Multicultural Affairs, 2016). The term racially-marginalised includes individuals who have experienced racial inequality and oppression, and have not gained white skin privileges (Di Angelo, 2011). Race does not exist as a biological reality (Phinney, 1990), but is socially constructed and linked to power and positioning (Smedley & Smedley, 2005). Race exists as an ideology with components from social policy (i.e., physical characteristics, racial hierarchies) used to create and enforce differential opportunities and racial inequality (Smedley & Smedley, 2005). The term *race* will be used in italics to show that *race* is socially constructed and linked to power.

In the United Kingdom, racially-marginalised people are three times more likely to be stopped and searched than white people (Lammy, 2017), they account for 23% of the people arrested and 21% of the people convicted of a crime (Yasin & Sturge, 2020), and are significantly more likely to receive a prison sentence (Lammy, 2017). Focusing on the prison system itself, it is acknowledged as an “...institutionally racist organisation, which reflects an institutionally racist white society” (Narey, 2001, p. 7). As of March 2022, there were 84,372 people in prison in England and Wales, with men significantly overrepresented and accounting for 96% of the population (MOJ, 2023). Racially-marginalised people make up approximately 11% of the population in England and Wales (ONS, 2021), but 26% of the prison population (Prison Reform Trust, 2021).

The criminal justice system does not operate in a vacuum and those who receive criminal convictions have often experienced multiple forms of disadvantage, exclusion, and racism (Wilson, 2004). The overrepresentation is heavily rooted in wider structural racism and social inequalities (Bromley, 2011), and reflects the social, cultural, and political structures found in wider society, as well as issues of power (Bromley, 2011). In the United Kingdom the history of slavery, colonialism, patterns of migration and global conflicts have led to economic and social marginalisation and structural racism within a broad range of domains including, socio-economic status (Butler, 2022), social care (Owen & Statham, 2009), education (C. Alexander & Shankley, 2020), and healthcare (Hamed et al., 2022).

Examining the available evidence through the lens of critical race theory (Crenshaw et al., 1996) is useful to explore this disparity and inequality in prison and helps focus attention on the social construction of *race*, consider the relationship between *race*, racism, and power, and allow for a deeper intersectional consideration of how one's socio-political positionality intersects with their experience with the criminal justice system (Creswell, 2007). Through the lens of critical race theory, the racial assumptions, biases, institutional racism, and differential treatment within systems (i.e., education, health, employment) have led to the social disadvantage, oppression, and racial disparity within the criminal justice system, and ultimately has led to the disproportionate number of racially-marginalised people in prison (Bromley, 2011). Laws, criminal justice system policies and prison infrastructure were created using white Eurocentric knowledge and were written by and in favour of white people, which therefore maintain racism (Kendi, 2019) and consequently racism, racial stereotyping, and discrimination, are ordinal and embedded throughout the criminal justice system (Clinks, 2021). Laws, oppressive political and social environments, and public bias have continued to target racially-marginalised communities and affixed blame on them for criminality (Goff et al., 2014), rather than acknowledging and addressing the racial and socio-economic disparities and systemic inequalities (McGee et al., 2021).

The over-representation of racially-marginalised men in prison is complex, and requires systemic changes on multiple levels, including dismantling structural racism, racial inequality and biases within the criminal justice system, and wider society. One of the main reasons why significant changes have not materialised within this area is because the capitalist and neoliberal United Kingdom society is set up to benefit the privileged, and exploit people who are marginalised and oppressed (Reynolds, 2012). Therefore, exploitation creates a system that perpetuates class differences and is maintained in a dominant white British society.

Though racial inequality in prisons is evident in available literature, much of this has relied on statistics to evidence overrepresentation of racially-marginalised men in the prison system, and the experiences of communities affected by institutional racism in the prison system have not been platformed. If racial disparity and institutional racism within prisons are going to be dismantled and prisons are to be reformed, there is a need to understand the racially-marginalised men and their experiences in prison. This would centralise their ideas and decisions and enable systemic change. Thus, a systematic literature review was conducted to explore and identify gaps in

the available literature on racially-marginalised men's experiences of prison, to gain a qualitative perspective on the statistics published on racial inequality in prisons and bring together the collective experiences. This is a critical step towards addressing systemic injustices, empowering and platforming racially-marginalised experiences and promoting positive social change from those voices which have the expertise and knowledge of what needs to change.

Author Positionality

In qualitative research it is important to be transparent about one's interests and stance (Emerson & Frosh, 2004), as the researchers' lens will impact on all aspects of the research. The first author has experience working in prisons, meaning there were some pre-existing views of what prison is like for imprisoned racially-marginalised men. The first author has witnessed racism in prisons and seen racially-marginalised men disadvantaged and unfairly treated in areas such as sentences, incentives, and the use of restraints, which has driven the interest in this research.

The first, second and fourth authors are white British females, which means they have been part of the white dominant group, experienced 'taken-for-granted' white skin privileges (Di Angelo, 2011, p. 62) and the associated power that this provides (McIntosh, 2015). The authors' position, knowledge, experiences, beliefs, biases, and white identity will impact on the review process (Finlay, 1998), which can result in a failure to capture the nuances of racially-marginalised people's experiences. The third author is a young Black man with lived experience within the research area, which helped shape ideas, provide a platform, and empower those with the lived experiences to be heard.

Aim of the Review

A systematic literature review is a method of reviewing literature, to identify, appraise, synthesise, and critique the current literature (Shaw, 2012), to understand what is known about a particular topic, answer a specific question and allow for future recommendations (Fink, 2019). The question this review sought to answer is: What are racially-marginalised men's experiences of prison in the United Kingdom? This review is registered with the International Prospective Register of Systematic Reviews (PROSPERO; CRD42022384441).

Methodology

Search Strategy

A systematic search was conducted to review papers relevant to the research question, in three electronic databases in August 2023: PsycARTICLES, CINAHL Plus, and Scopus. These databases include a variety of allied health, clinical and social psychology, and social care, and overlap with the criminal justice system. Databases were searched for the terms shown in Table 1. The search strategy was adapted for databases

parameters, where key terms were mapped onto subject headings. A snowballing process was used to further consolidate the search, with forward and backward citation searches of the included studies to identify any additional relevant studies, contacting two authors of relevant articles, and searching The Howard Journal of Crime and Justice and Prison Service Journal.

Grey literature is a field of information not controlled by commercial publishers (GreyNet, 2013), and includes reports produced by government departments, policy documents and theses. Peer-reviewed databases often favour articles from Western educated authors and therefore knowledge is underpinned by colonial and Eurocentric knowledge (Dudgeon et al., 2014), which perpetuates institutional racism. Although searching for grey literature can be a lengthy process, it can reduce publication bias, and provide a more comprehensive review (Paez, 2017). Grey literature searches were conducted using Ethos (doctorate thesis), Wordcat, Social Care Institute for Excellence, Google, ResearchGate, and Government websites. Due to large number of results returned on Google, only the first 10 pages were searched, as after this point studies became less relevant.

The initial search of the three databases yielded 903 papers. The Covidence online software tool was used to screen the papers. Titles and abstracts of returned articles were reviewed by the principal researcher, and full text articles were obtained for papers likely to meet the inclusion criteria (see Table 2). An additional five studies were sought for review from the snowball and grey literature strategy. All screening was completed by the principal researcher. However, the principal researcher and second author met regularly to discuss the screening process and coding of the studies. After reviewing the full text of 36 articles, the principal researcher coded each article as ‘yes’, ‘no’ or ‘uncertain’ for meeting the inclusion criteria. The second author verified the codes of the 36 articles. A final list of 10 studies were included in the review. A full breakdown of this process is shown in Figure 1.

Quality Appraisal

The goal of quality appraisal in qualitative research is to assess whether the studies address their aim, determine whether the process and context are appropriate, and

Table 1. Search Terms.

Key Term	Search Terms
Racially-marginalised	BAME OR BME OR Black OR Asian OR ethnic* OR African* OR AFRO* OR Caribbean OR racial* OR Minorit* OR marginali* OR 'Mixed-race' OR 'Mixed race' OR 'Mixed heritage' OR 'Dual heritage' OR *racial OR *ethnic
AND	
Males	Men OR Man OR Male* OR Boy* OR Masculin*
AND	
Prison	Prison OR Custody OR Incarcerat* OR Imprison* OR Jail OR 'HMP'

Table 2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria.

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Published in the English Language	Not published in the English Language
Primary studies using qualitative design i.e., individual interviews or focus groups	Quantitative design, or using survey information or questionnaires
Published since 1999	Published before 1999
Experiences of racially-marginalised men who had lived experiences of prison in the United Kingdom	Experiences of non-racially-marginalised or undefined males
	Prisons experiences outside the United Kingdom

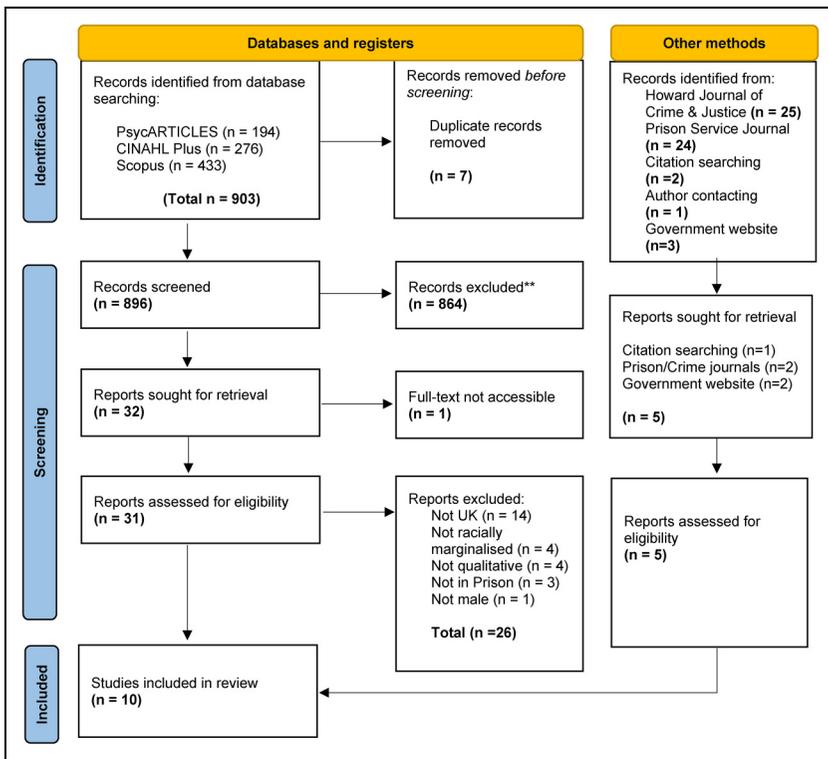


Figure 1. PRISMA flow chart.

evaluate the trustworthiness and value of the findings (Hannes, 2011). The Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (2018) checklist was used to examine the range of quality across studies in this review. The checklist consists of 10 items: aims, appropriateness of qualitative research, study design, recruitment, data collection, relationships, ethics, analysis, findings, and value of the research. The first author reviewed all

papers against the checklist, and two colleagues reviewed 50% of the 10 articles ($n = 5$). There was a 94% concordance rate between the three reviewers.

There is limited validity to excluding relevant qualitative studies based on quality alone (Thomas & Harden, 2008). Instead, the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (2018) checklist was used to examine and acknowledge the range of quality across studies. The studies mostly gained a moderate to high quality rating. All provided clear statements of aims and were suited to qualitative research. All studies used an appropriate design and data collection methodology to meet the research aims and provided a clear statement of findings. However, some studies did not provide information on researcher-participant relationship or ethical considerations. The decision to include all studies was based on the recognition that the quality is scored on the written article, however processes such as ethics and reflexivity are often considered but not explained (Barroso & Sandelowski, 2002), especially given journal word limits.

Study Characteristics

Key information from the 10 eligible studies was extracted and input into a summary table (Table 3). Studies were published between 2004 and 2022, from eight different authors, including three studies from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP). All studies except one (HMIP, 2005) provided the exact number of participants, meaning the experiences of approximately 474 racially-marginalised men are represented across the 10 studies. In terms of participant demographics, only six studies identified the *racial* identity of the men. All studies were conducted in prisons in England.

The 10 studies used different sampling methodology, including purposive ($n = 3$), random ($n = 2$), snowball ($n = 1$), convenience ($n = 1$), and the sampling methodology was unclear in three studies (HMIP, 2005, 2020; Irwin-Rogers, 2018). For data collection, seven studies used interviews, two studies used focus groups (HMIP, 2005; Irwin-Rogers, 2018), and one study used both interviews and focus groups (HMIP, 2022). For data analysis, seven studies used thematic analysis, two studies used grounded theory (Brookes et al., 2012; Wilson, 2004), and the data analysis approach was unclear in one study (Chistyakova et al., 2018).

Synthesis Methodology

A thematic synthesis (Thomas and Harden, 2008) was used to analyse the data, using NVIVO (version 12) software. Following review and familiarisation with the data, this involved i) coding the text line-by-line, ii) developing descriptive themes, iii) generating analytic themes. This approach allowed for combining the 10 studies, to explore the repeated patterns and reoccurring themes, to provide a general understanding of racially-marginalised men's experiences of prison.

All coding and data analysis was completed by the principal researcher. However, the principal researcher and second author met regularly to discuss the process and coding of the studies. The principal researcher coded each line of text according to

Table 3. Summary of Studies Included.

Author(s) & Date of Publication	Aim(s) of Study	Sample size & Race	Prison(s) & Sampling	Data Collection & Analysis	Summary of Findings	Strengths & Limitations
Brookes et al. (2012)	Explore the experiences of Black prisoners	11 Black	HMP Grendon Random	Semi-structured interviews Grounded Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feelings of isolation, difference, invisibility, and powerlessness, which were barriers to engagement - Cultural identity being insufficiently recognised, which led to suppressing their identity - Concluded a need for change in the prison regime 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + In-depth, rich data + Identified as Black researcher + Recommendations based on findings - Does not offer limitations or areas of future research
Chistyakova et al. (2018)	Explore the experiences of 'BAME' prisoners	Pakistani (3) Indian (1) African (2) Caribbean (2)	Category B prison Snowball	Semi-structured interviews Unclear analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Experiences of racism, in overt and subtle ways - Not being treated with respect and feeling vulnerable as a result of racial discrimination - Participants had little faith in the prison complaints system, which led to feeling silenced and disempowered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Identified the heritage of the participants + Stated topics in the interviews + Identified the location and type of prison - Method of analysis not stated - Does not offer limitations or areas of future research

(continued)

Table 3. (continued)

Author(s) & Date of Publication	Aim(s) of Study	Sample size & Race	Prison(s) & Sampling	Data Collection & Analysis	Summary of Findings	Strengths & Limitations
HMIP (2005)	Explores prisoners' direct experiences of racism, and victimisation	210 'Visible minorities'	18 prisons Unclear	Focus groups Thematic Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Experiences of racism, which was in overt and subtle ways, and being treated differently because of racial bias and stereotypes - A lack of cultural and racial respect and awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Large sample size + Offers tools for change and areas for development + Questions on racism - Demographics of participants not discussed - Sampling strategy and types of prison unclear
HMIP (2020)	'BME' prisoners' experience of rehabilitation	56 'BME'	6 prisons Unclear	Semi-structured interviews Thematic Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Experienced being judged and treated differently based on racial bias and stereotypes - Little faith in the prison complaints systems and insufficient understanding on racially-marginalised cultural needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Large sample size + Recommendations given - Recruitment not detailed - Demographics of participants or researcher not discussed
HMIP (2022)	Experiences of adult Black	100 Black	7 prisons Purposive	Semi-structured interviews &	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Experiences of racial bias, stereotyping, and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Large sample size + Focus on Black men

(continued)

Table 3. (continued)

Author(s) & Date of Publication	Aim(s) of Study	Sample size & Race	Prison(s) & Sampling	Data Collection & Analysis	Summary of Findings	Strengths & Limitations
Hunter et al. (2019)	male prisoners Explore experiences of 'BAME' offenders and barriers to engagement	Caribbean (6) British African (1) African (2) Mixed (1) Kurdish (1)	YOI Purposive	Focus groups Thematic Analysis Semi-structured interviews Thematic Analysis	persistent racial discrimination - The prison system lacked insight into their culture, which led to feeling disconnected - Feeling powerless to challenge - Feelings of judgement, alienation, difference, and hopelessness which impacted on engagement - The service being for white individuals and staff not understanding them	+ Suggestions for promoting positive change - Demographics of researcher not discussed + Clear rationale, aim and procedure + Recommendations given + Discussed impact of researcher's location and job - No Asian participants - Small sample size for TA
Inwin-Rogers (2018)	Explore experience of racism and racial discrimination	15 'BAME'	1 prison Unclear	Semi-structured Focus Groups Thematic Analysis	- Racial discrimination in several areas (i.e., harsher sentences, incentives, visits, money, and access to personal items) - Feelings of being unfairly	+ Good rationale for focus groups + Discussed impact of researcher's work +/- Covered all the criminal justice

(continued)

Table 3. (continued)

Author(s) & Date of Publication	Aim(s) of Study	Sample size & Race	Prison(s) & Sampling	Data Collection & Analysis	Summary of Findings	Strengths & Limitations
Jones et al. (2013)	Explore 'BME' male prisoner experiences and cultural sensitivity	8 'BME'	HMP Grendon Random	Semi-structured interviews Thematic Analysis	treated by officers and a level of dehumanising treatment - Feelings of marginalisation due to a 'white middle-class' prison system and a lack of cultural sensitivity - Feelings of being unable to express their emotions and a lack of belonging overall. - Feelings of relatedness to those from similar cultures	system. Breadth, but compromises on depth + Explored cultural sensitivity + Aims and methodology explained well + Recommendations given - Demographics of participants not discussed - Does not offer limitations or areas of future research
Sullivan (2007)	Explores experiences of applying to and being resident of HMP Grendon	British Asian (1) African (1) Caribbean (1)	HMP Grendon Convenience	Semi-structured interviews Thematic Analysis	- Racial stigmas and feeling culturally different - Feeling unsuitable, and not fitting into the 'western' therapy - Discriminatory and racist attitudes and fear of overt racism	+ Some co-production + Acknowledgement of white-British researcher + Recommendations given - Very small sample for TA

(continued)

Table 3. (continued)

Author(s) & Date of Publication	Aim(s) of Study	Sample size & Race	Prison(s) & Sampling	Data Collection & Analysis	Summary of Findings	Strengths & Limitations
Wilson (2004)	Explores the experience of young Black men coping with incarceration	Black (34) Mixed-race (6) Pakistani (5)	YOI Purposive	Unstructured interviews Grounded Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participants experiencing overt racism and unfair treatment - Prisons officers exercising control - Feelings of being silenced about racism as it would affect their privileges - Struggling to conceal their feelings of frustration on unfair treatment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Large sample size + Identified ethical issues + Discussed researcher co-constructing the reality - Sampling was completed by the prison - No recommendations

its meaning and content, for all 10 articles. This process created a total of 27 initial codes. The principal researcher and second author met to look for similarities and differences between the codes, and these were grouped. This process resulted in seven descriptive themes. Following this, the principal researcher generated analytic themes to synthesise the 10 articles and go beyond the original studies. Through discussions between the principal researcher and second author more abstract and analytical themes emerged. This process was repeated until the analytical themes sufficiently explained all initial descriptive themes. Each sub-theme and theme included extracts from at least six of the 10 studies, to ensure the themes were encompassing over 50% of the studies.

Results

The thematic synthesis identified three main themes: i) feeling powerless in a powerful system, ii) racism and iii) feeling disconnected from cultural identity. There are an additional seven sub-themes, shown in Table 4.

Feeling Powerless in a Powerful System

This theme summarises experiences of powerlessness in the powerful prison system. Of significance is the evidence of an 'us and them' environment (Brookes et al., 2012, p. 19), founded on an imbalance of power between officers and prisoners, which participants were powerless to challenge, due to limited faith in complaint procedures.

Us and Them. In nine studies (Brookes et al., 2012; Chistyakova et al., 2018; HMIP, 2005, 2020, 2022; Hunter et al., 2019; Irwin-Rogers, 2018; Jones et al., 2013; Wilson, 2004) the participants discussed feeling a power imbalance within a binary opposition

Table 4. Themes Identified Through Thematic Synthesis.

Major theme	Sub-theme
Feeling Powerless in a Powerful System	'Us' and 'Them'; (Brookes et al., 2012, p. 19) Powerless to challenge
Experiencing Racism	'You are judged straight away, for your colour'; (Brookes et al., 2012, participant C, p. 21) 'I've been treated differently'; (HMIP, 2020, Caribbean prisoner, p. 30) 'Blatant racism'; (HMIP, 2022, Black prisoner group, p. 12)
Feeling Disconnected from Cultural Identity	Cultural relatedness 'Have some insight into our culture'; (HMIP, 2022, Black prisoner, p. 55) Suppressing cultural identity

with the prison officers (Perea, 1997), which Brookes et al. (2012) described as ‘us’ and ‘them’ (p. 19). This was rooted in prison officers having power, authority, and control, such as keys and using physical restraints to exercise control. In contrast, the prisoner’s space, privacy, freedom, and ultimately their power, was removed in the prison environment. The participants discussed how the power dynamic would be different in the community: “they [prison officers] have power, and give you stress but only in here” (Wilson, 2004, participant, p. 326). Participants felt powerless due to being a prisoner and further disempowered due to constructed racial hierarchies and associated biases and stereotypes. The participants spoke about the prison system having very few racially-marginalised prison officers, which ultimately impacted on the men’s trust and relationship with officers. They discussed underlying prejudice, lack of cultural sensitivity and racism, and how this led to a lack of trust and barriers to meaningful relationships with prison officers, which perpetuated an overriding experience of powerlessness.

Powerless to Challenge. In seven studies (Brookes et al., 2012; Chistyakova et al., 2018; HMIP, 2005, 2020, 2022; Jones et al., 2013; Wilson, 2004) participants discussed feeling like a single voice, which could easily be “drowned out” (Jones et al., 2013, participant, p. 152), resulting in having no voice in the prison system. There was an embedded narrative that one does not make complaints as you would be seen as a “grass” (Chistyakova et al., 2018, participant, p. 14), and one should deal with problems yourself. The participants generally had low expectations and little faith in the prison complaints system, which led participants to “keep quiet” (Wilson, 2004, participant, p. 323) and not challenge wrongdoing or racism. The participants felt there was no benefit to making complaints about prison officers, as officers would think they were “playing the race card” (HMIP, 2022, participant, p. 19), and it would perpetuate the differential treatment they already received.

Racism

This theme summarises the experiences of racism, which permeated all 10 studies. Racism manifested in immediate judgement and differential treatment which was in operation in both covert ways through stereotyping, biases, and microaggressions, as well as overt experiences of racial discrimination.

“You are judged straight away, for your colour” (Brookes et al., 2012, participant, p. 21). In nine studies (Brookes et al., 2012; Chistyakova et al., 2018; HMIP, 2005, 2020, 2022; Hunter et al., 2019; Jones et al., 2013; Sullivan, 2007; Wilson, 2004) the men discussed feeling judged, often as soon as they entered the prison. The experiences of racialised judgement were heavily linked to feeling like the minority, both in the number of racially-marginalised prisoners and staff. In Brookes et al. (2012)’s study, participants discussed being “the only black person” (participant, p. 19), and the “only West Indian” (participant, p. 19). Consequently, participants expressed that prison was “not a

place for minorities” (Jones et al., 2013, participant, p. 151) and they felt like an “outcast”. (Hunter et al., 2019, participant, p. 19).

Across seven studies, (HMIP, 2005, 2020, 2022; Hunter et al., 2019; Irwin-Rogers, 2018; Jones et al., 2013; Sullivan, 2007) racialised judgements were highlighted as operating through biases and stereotypes. For example, participants experienced staff and other prisoners automatically labelling them as part of a gang, a drug dealer, or viewing them as “difficult” (HMIP, 2022, participant p. 39), “scary or unapproachable” (HMIP, 2022, participant, p. 26), “threatening” (HMIP, 2005, focus group, p. 13) and “aggressive if we are animated or loud” (HMIP, 2020, participant, p. 48). One participant in HMIP (2022)’s study discussed feeling that “the darker you are, you get treated more like a criminal” (participant, p. 26). Brookes et al. (2012)’s study linked this racialised judgement to the ethos of the prison system and regime itself, “ethos of the place was... middle class white people” (participant, p. 19), the consequences of which were participants felt “lonely and lost” (participant, p. 19).

“I’ve been treated differently” (HMIP, 2020, participant, p. 30). Associated to racialised judgement, were the ways in which implicit racism, racial discrimination and microaggressions led to differential treatment within prison (Chistyakova et al., 2018; HMIP, 2005, 2020, 2022; Irwin-Rogers, 2018; Sullivan, 2007; Wilson, 2004). Participants reported racism often being in subtle, unconscious, and difficult to identify ways, which “you can feel” (Chistyakova et al., 2018, participant, p. 235), and “in ways they [staff] can get away with” (HMIP, 2005, focus group, p. 13). They discussed experiencing microaggressions and being treated differently in prison, identifying that there are “different rules for different people” (Chistyakova et al., 2018, participant, p. 13), based on racial assumptions, biases, and stereotypes. This included being on lower incentive levels for longer and/or more often than white men, being subjected to a disproportionate use of force, and more heavily medicated. The participants reported they were treated with less respect, and not supported with visits, healthcare needs, education, and job opportunities, and were less likely to be released on temporary licence or moved to less restrictive conditions. They identified that it was hard to prove that they were treated differently based on racial assumptions, which led them to feel sceptical about raising the racial discrimination: “when a Black guy says something, there’s scepticism... when a white guy says something, there’s truth to it...” (HMIP, 2022, participant, p. 11). This led the men to question themselves and the racial discrimination, “was that because I am black?... Am I being paranoid?” (HMIP, 2022, focus group, p. 11), and led to an overall narrative that they should just learn to “live with the systemic racism” (HMIP, 2022, focus group, p. 27).

“Blatant Racism” (HMIP, 2022, focus group, p. 12). In addition to the covert manifestations of racism, participants described overt racism in six studies (Brookes et al., 2012; Chistyakova et al., 2018; HMIP, 2005, 2022; Sullivan, 2007; Wilson, 2004). The men experienced “racial harassment, racist verbal abuse, and non-stop hustling” from other prisoners (Chistyakova et al., 2018, participant, p. 235). In two studies (Chistyakova et al., 2018; Wilson, 2004) the men told stories of seeing racist graffiti on the prison wall, which included racially discriminative, derogative, and abusive names, and was

not removed for weeks. This led them to feel uncared for, hated and discriminated against. In three studies (HMIP, 2005, 2022; Wilson, 2004) participants experienced overt racism from staff, including jokes about their skin tone, their name, and calling them racist and derogative names. This led to feeling distressed and frustrated, and there was a sense of powerlessness that they just had to accept it, try to “forget these people are racist” (HMIP, 2022, focus group, p. 12), and put up with the racism, as if they complained they would not be listened to, people would be defensive, and/or they would get in trouble.

Feeling Disconnected from Cultural Identity

The final theme relates to the importance of cultural identity and connection, and the ways in which the absence of cultural awareness in the prison system leads people to suppress and be disconnected from their cultural identity.

Cultural Relatedness. The importance of cultural relatedness and seeking support from people from a culturally similar background was evident in seven studies (Brookes et al., 2012; HMIP, 2020, 2022; Hunter et al., 2019; Jones et al., 2013; Sullivan, 2007; Wilson, 2004). The racially-marginalised men expressed missing familial networks in the community, and an increased relatedness with prisoners and prison officers who were from a similar heritage and could understand their cultural identity. One participant discussed spending time with culturally similar people, “...the lads on my Hindu service on a Monday”, which led him to feel “relaxed”, and finding a sense of “belonging” (Sullivan 2007, participant, p. 13). This was important in the prison system, where participants often felt like the minority. The culturally similar people “stick together” (Wilson, 2004, participant, p. 324), and comfort each other, and this led to shared understanding and experiences, and mutual trust. This is in contrast to their difficulty in relating to the mostly white prison officers, who lacked insight into the men’s cultural identities, leading to a lack of trust within these relationships.

“**Have some insight into our culture**” (HMIP, 2022, participant, p. 55). In eight studies (Brookes et al., 2012; Chistyakova et al., 2018; HMIP, 2005, 2020, 2022; Jones et al., 2013; Sullivan, 2007; Wilson, 2004) participants talked about how white staff and prisoners lacked the understanding of how it feels to be a minority. One participant in Brookes et al. (2012)’s study stated, “they are not letting me still be Black” (participant, p. 21), whilst another participant felt stripped of their cultural identity while in prison. There was evidence that staff and the system inadequately recognised participants’ cultural identity and subsequent needs. This included, a lack of cultural food, reading materials and black literature, “no Black hairdressers” (HMIP, 2005, focus group, p. 7), poor religious facilities, and a lack of understanding of the importance and routines of praying. It was reported that prisons adopted a ‘colour-blind approach’ (Brookes et al., 2012), which led the men to feel a blatant disregard for their cultural identity. This led to mistrust and feeling invisible in many areas of the prison environment. Participants wanted a prison regime which recognises and respects “colour and culture” (Brookes et al., 2012, p. 23), where they would not feel invisible, or experience racism. This highlighted

the intersections of race and religion, where participants experienced multiple layers of discrimination.

Suppressing Cultural Identity. Participants' active suppression of cultural identity was evident in six studies (Brookes et al., 2012; Chistyakova et al., 2018; HMIP, 2020, 2022; Jones et al., 2013; Sullivan, 2007; Wilson, 2004). The men talked about feeling like they had to change the way they talked, use a "softer" voice, use "good English", and change the words they used to "sound white" (HMIP, 2022, participant, p. 28), biting their tongue, keeping their head down, and hiding their cultural identity. The participants felt they had to suppress their cultural identity to try and avoid feeling or appearing different, and ultimately avoid racism. The participants were unable to develop a cultural identity and sense of self within prison, which led to isolation and loneliness, and perpetuated feelings of powerlessness.

Discussion

This systematic literature review aimed to understand racially-marginalised men's experiences of prison in the United Kingdom. The findings do this by platforming studies focused on the lived experience of people in prison and provide a nuanced understanding to support the existing quantitative data evidencing an overrepresentation of racially-marginalised men in prison, alongside other evidence of institutional racism within the prison system. Specially the review examines the operation of racism, in connection to access to power, differential treatment and access to basic rights, cultural practices and support structures that contribute to 'rehabilitation' and successful transition from prison.

Feeling powerless in prison is a longstanding experience which operates through an "unrelenting imposition of authority" (Scraton et al., 1991, p. 63) in contrast to the autonomy of people in prison being "reduced to the barest minimum" (p. 48). The review highlights the distinct ways which authority and powerlessness are experienced for racially-marginalised men. There is an obvious power imbalance in prisons, due to the lack of freedom of prisoners, and prison officers being in a position of authority, which has been recognised globally for decades (Scraton et al., 1991). This review highlights how power imbalances are exacerbated for racially-marginalised men due to them being in the minority, due to the dominance of white prison officers, and this led to barriers in creating meaningful and trusting relationships. Research has consistently shown the value of positive relationships between prisoners and prison staff for rehabilitation (Mann et al., 2018). Therefore, this review suggests racially-marginalised men are further disadvantaged due to poor relationships with prison staff as they are based in a system which is designed for and centralises "middle class white people" (Brookes et al., 2012, participant, p. 19). Moreover, the study highlights how racially-marginalised men in prison are powerless to challenge or complain about wrongdoing or racism, due to their lack of faith in prison officers and the complaint procedure. Through the critical race theory lens, this supports evidence that

shows how marginalised communities often lack trust and confidence in complaint processes, as procedures are written and implemented by, and complaints resolved by white people in power (Edgar & Tsintsadze, 2017). The review suggested that the participants were fearful of racial gaslighting, and that this further functions to prevent people from raising concerns as they would likely not be believed.

Racism is clearly evident across the research reviewed, which operates covertly via bias, stereotyping, microaggressions and racial gaslighting, as well as overtly from both staff and prisoners. Through the lens of critical race theory, the findings from the review indeed highlight that racism is ordinary in prison. Similarly, to experiencing powerlessness, racism was linked to being a ‘minority’, both in the lack of racially-marginalised prisoners and staff, and the whiteness of the prison system (Brookes et al., 2012). Whilst racially-marginalised men are over-represented in the prison system compared to their overall population in the United Kingdom, they are often still the minority in the prison population and experience marginalisation due to a prison system that was created using white Eurocentric knowledge, and written by and in favour of white people, which therefore maintain racism (Kendi, 2019). This also links to research which shows that over 90% of prison officers in England and Wales are white (MOJ, 2021), and highlights the effect of such reality, in that not surprisingly this contributes heavily to the racism people experience in prison, and the lived experiences of alimentation, isolation and not belonging, which are detrimental for rehabilitation (Van Harreveld et al., 2007).

Moreover, such embedded racism within the prison system showed how the deeply engrained racial stereotypes have material effects on those in prison supporting existing findings (e.g., Cunneen, 2006; MOJ, 2016). Specifically, racially-marginalised men in prison experienced different rules, more use of force, lower incentives and earned privileges, were less likely to be released on licence or to be supported with visits, and were more likely to be heavily medicated compared to white prisoners. Factors such as moving to open conditions and being released on licence, can hinder reintegration into society (Alexander, 2010). Through the critical race theory lens, the review highlights directly how deeply engrained institutional racism operates to maintain the overrepresentation of racially-marginalised men in prison by functioning to prevent ‘rehabilitation’. Of significance is the implications of how institutional racism obscured access to basic rights of people in prison, including healthcare, education, employment and right to exercise cultural and religious practices. The violation of basic human rights is a systemic issue in prisons globally, with dehumanising prison systems which focuses on punishment rather than rehabilitation (Berger, 2016).

Finally, the review found that via the operation of institutional racism, racially-marginalised men are disconnected from their cultural identity. A critical race theory lens is helpful to understand this disconnect, as the prison system is built on systems of whiteness and has evidently adopted a ‘colour-blind’ approach in regimes and programmes (Brookes et al., 2012), people’s cultural needs are not supported. This conflicts with Ministry of Justice guidelines which suggest that treatment in prisons should be “culturally aware, sensitive and inclusive” and “delivered by culturally aware and sensitive staff” (Shingler & Pope, 2018, p. 2). The suppression of

cultural identity increased the feelings of powerlessness, alienation, isolation, and a disconnect from their culture. The participants wanted a prison system which recognises and respects their cultural identity, so they do not feel invisible, as this can lead to feeling excluded, having low self-worth, and impact on progress (Franklin, 2004), again highlighting how prison practices directly contribute to the ongoing overrepresentation of racially marginalised men in prison.

Strengths and Limitations and Future Research

This is the first systematic literature review that brought together research which studied how racially-marginalised men experience prison in the United Kingdom. A strength is including qualitative research and including voices of those usually excluded from research. Another strength is the attention given to the search terms and strategy, in particular, individual criminal justice system journals, grey literature, snowballing from reference lists and contacting authors, which all enhanced the comprehensiveness, depth and breadth of the search. However, the findings should be considered in relation to its limitations. This review only included 10 studies after extensive searching. It is possible that some studies were missed due to the search strategy, and the author's knowledge of search avenues for grey literature. Studies were only included if the prison was in the United Kingdom, and all the studies used data collected in England. Future research could address this limitation by considering data collected in other countries. Studies were only included if they were written in English, due to time constraints and restricted budget for translation. This limitation meant that the voices and experiences of racially-marginalised participants and authors who do not speak English were not included.

This systematic literature review has identified a potential lack of research within this area, within the realms of the search strategy. Most of the studies ($n=8$) focused on racially-marginalised males in general, which is problematic because individuals from different *racialised* groups will encompass a range of different cultures, languages, and nuances experiences. Grouping *racialised* people together can lead to their unique experiences and intersectional experiences being overlooked, inaccurate generalisations and stereotyping. Further research needs to gain the individual stories and experiences of people from specific *racial* identities, to understand their unique *racialised* experiences, address the root causes of inequality and injustice and allow for tailored implications and recommendations.

Implications

Firstly, this systematic literature review suggests that the current prison system is ineffective and engrained in systemic and institutional racism. Eliminating the overrepresentation of racially-marginalised people in prison should be the primary aim, and whilst wider prison abolition is a long-term solution, it requires sustained resourcing and efforts. Some shorter term recommendations are apparent from the findings, to

dismantle the systemic and institutional racism in prisons, and allow for a more effective, humane, and culturally sensitive prison system.

At the very minimum, prison services need to accommodate people's access to basic rights including healthcare, education and employment, and cultural and religious practices. To move beyond the basic rights of all, prisons should ensure people have access to resources that support their cultural practices and identities while in prison. Several studies argued that there is a need to raise cultural awareness, increase cultural understanding and sensitivity from staff (Brookes et al., 2012; HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2022; Hunter et al., 2019), which was also a recommendation from the MacPherson report over 25 years ago. Increasing cultural awareness may go some way in increasing staff knowledge and cultural sensitivity, helping the prisoners to talk about culturally sensitive topics (Hunter et al., 2019; Jones et al., 2013) and empowering them to challenge racism. This review supports previous research which suggests that the prison system needs to fully recognise and respect cultural differences so that these are visible (Steele & Aronson, 1995). There is a need to hear from the racially-marginalised men how they would like to connect with their culture, in order to avoid generic awareness training. This would go some way towards allowing prisoners to connect with their cultural identity, rather than suppressing it, and therefore reduce feelings of isolation and alienation (HMIP, 2022). This could lead to improved mental health and allow for connection with oneself and others, which are skills needed for rehabilitation.

The review aligns with Brookes et al. (2012) argument that “a prison regime that does not see, acknowledge, or understand the impact of *race* and processes of racialisation on Black men will only serve to perpetuate the difficulties that some Black men experience” (p. 24). Through a critical race theory lens, it is not enough to just highlight racism, there is a need to promote social justice and make changes, including questioning where knowledge comes from and how it perpetuates racism.

The review found that the dominance of white prison officers contributes to the ongoing systemic racism within prisons, with many of the studies reviewed suggesting a need to diversify prison officers (Hunter et al., 2019; Irwin-Rogers, 2018; Sullivan, 2007). This supports Lammy's (2017) report that states the prison staff need to reflect the community they serve. This could lead to the racially-marginalised men feeling more connected to, listened to, and trusting of prison officers, which could reduce the “us and them” culture (Brookes et al., 2012, p. 19), and in turn support their rehabilitation into the community (Mann et al., 2018). However, it would not be enough to just increase the number of racially-marginalised officers to ‘reflect’ the prison population or wider communities. The systems of whiteness in operation within the criminal justice system are as much a risk to people in prison, as those working within them, with evidence already suggesting Black prison officers often feel undermined, lack support from white colleagues, and experience racism in the workplace, which impacts on their mental health (HMIP, 2022). Moreover, there is ongoing evidence of discrimination in operation with regards to people in position of power, maintaining a dominance of white prison officers within positions of power. Evidence suggests that currently racially-marginalised officers report a lack of encouragement, guidance and

mentoring, and racial discrimination when applying for promotions (HMIP, 2022). Therefore, in reality, prison reform to embed antiracism is not only aimed at provision for people in prison, but also in recruitment, staff training and infrastructure at all levels.

The review aligns with Brookes et al. (2012) suggestion for a need to abolish ‘Black invisibility’ (Ellison, 1947), embed anti-racist practices and fully recognise and respect cultural differences so that these are visible, respected, and supported. Across the board, a more culturally attuned and antiracist system is needed. The prison service, and wider interconnecting systems, needs to dismantle racist policies, embed anti-racist practices, and build a system which is culturally aware, understanding, and sensitive. Anti-racism is about in-depth analysis, and dismantling the structural racism, racist attitudes, beliefs, systems, and practices (Minnesota Education Equity Partnership, 2022). Moving towards anti-racist values and practices is a continuous direction to move in, and the process involves listening, unlearning, re-learning, and responsive action (Reid, 2021). It would include listening, believing, and trying to understand the experiences of racially-marginalised men, acknowledging, and apologising for racism and wrongdoings, offering support, and building and keeping trust (Reid, 2021). Furthermore, policies, procedures, and programmes would be reviewed from an antiracist perspective (Reid, 2021) to ensure they produce or sustain racial equality, through action or expressing an anti-racist idea (Kendi, 2019), and to ensure they are suitable and designed alongside racially marginalised communities and staff. In turn, staff and people in prison would have the infrastructure in place to feel supported and empowered to make changes in prisons.

Finally, this review has highlighted that the failings of prisons, and the ongoing institutional and systemic racism has clearly been documented, both from historical and current reviews showing quantitative evidence and the findings from this review provide a synthesised understanding of racially marginalised men’s own experiences. What is underrepresented is the voice and ideas of racially marginalised men who have experience of prison, who are excluded from decision making and service design, but ultimately have the expertise and first-hand knowledge of what needs to change. This supports the notion that, “those closest to the problem are closest to the solution, but often the furthest from resources, influence and power” (Martin, 2017, p. 2). For changes to prison which support racially-marginalised men, the changes need to be co-produced with them, as they are the experts (Harriott, 2021). Therefore, research, policy, regime, and programme changes need to be led by the racially-marginalised men in meaningful ways that are adequately resourced and mutually beneficial.

Conclusions

The aim of this systematic literature review was to understand racially-marginalised men’s experiences of prison in the United Kingdom. The findings go beyond the existing statistics by exploring the lived experiences of racially-marginalised men, whose voices have often been excluded. Overall, the findings highlighted the ways in which institutional and structural racism operate within prison to maintain the

powerlessness of racially-marginalised men, and the material effects on access to basic rights and support structures in prison, and connection to cultural identity. Such experiences not only lead to isolation and alienation, but also factor that link to rehabilitation and ultimately function to maintain the overrepresentation of racially marginalised men in prison.

For the prison service to change and support the needs of racially-marginalised men and address the institutional discrimination, a whole system approach is required to dismantle racist policies, embed anti-racist practices, and build a system which is culturally aware, understanding, and sensitive. More research is needed to gain racially-marginalised men's experiences and ideas on prison reform, as ultimately they hold the expertise and first-hand knowledge of what needs to change.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ORCID iD

Rachael Floyd  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2980-4219>

References

- Alexander, M. (2010). *The new jim crow – Mass incarceration in the age of colorblindness*. The New Press.
- Alexander, C., & Shankley, W. (2020). Ethnic inequalities in the state education system in England. In B. Byrne, C. Alexander, O. Khan, J. Nazroo, & W. Shankley (Eds.), *Ethnicity, race and inequality in the UK* (pp. 93–126). Policy Press.
- Barroso, J., & Sandelowski, M. (2002). Reading qualitative studies. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 1(1), 74–108. <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690200100107>
- Berger, R. (2016). Kriminalomsorgen: A look at the World's most humane prison system in Norway. *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2, 1–42.
- Bromley, K. (2011). *Bromley Briefings Prison Factfile: December 2011*.
- Brookes, M., Glynn, M., & Wilson, D. (2012). Black men, therapeutic communities and HMP Grendon. *Therapeutic Communities: The International Journal of Therapeutic Communities*, 33(1), 16–26. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09641861211286294>
- Butler, P. (2022). *Black and minority ethnic people in UK twice as likely to be in 'deep poverty'*. The Guardian.
- CASP. (2018). *CASP qualitative checklist*. Critical Appraisal Skills Programme.
- Centre for Social Justice. (2020). *Facing the facts: Ethnicity and disadvantage in Britain: Disparities in education, work and family*.

- Chistyakova, Y., Cole, B., & Johnstone, J. (2018). Diversity and vulnerability in prisons in the context of the equality act 2010: The experiences of black, Asian, minority ethnic (BAME), and foreign national prisoners (FNPs) in a northern jail. *Prison Service Journal*, 235, 10–16.
- Clinks. (2021, May 12). *Racism exists in the criminal justice system: Why the Sewell report falls short*. Clinks.
- Crenshaw, K., Gotanda, N., Peller, G., & Thomas, K. (1996). *Critical race theory: The key writings that formed the movement*. The New York Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Cunneen, C. (2006). Racism, discrimination and the over-representation of indigenous people in the criminal justice system: Some conceptual and explanatory issues. *Current Issues in Criminal Justice*, 17(3), 329–346. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10345329.2006.12036363>
- Dhaliwal, P. (2023, April 25). *30 years on from Stephen Lawrence: What now?* Revolving Doors.
- Di Angelo, R. (2011). White fragility. *The International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, 3(3), 54–70.
- Dudgeon, P., Rickwood, D., Garvey, D., & Gridley, H. (2014). A history of indigenous psychology. In N. Purdie, P. Dudgeon, & R. Walker (Eds.), *Working together: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and well-being principles and practice* (2nd ed, pp. 39–54). Kulunga Research Network.
- Edgar, K., & Tsintsadze, K. (2017). *Tackling Discrimination in Prison: still not a fair response*.
- Ellison, R. (1947). *Invisible man*. Penguin.
- Emerson, P., & Frosh, S. (2004). *Critical narrative analysis in psychology*. Palgrave Macmillan UK. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230000674>
- Fink, A. (2019). *Conducting research literature reviews: From the Internet to Paper* (5th ed.). Sage publications.
- Finlay, L. (1998). Reflexivity: An essential component for all research? *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 61(10), 453–456.
- Franklin, A. (2004). *From brotherhood to manhood – How black men rescue their relationships and dreams from the invisibility syndrome*. Wiley.
- Goff, P. A., Martin, K. D., & Wilde, V. K. (2014). Dehumanization as a distinct form of prejudice. *Methodology in Applied Psychology*, 21, 301–307.
- GreyNet. (2013). *GreyNet: Grey literature network service*. GreyNet.
- Gunaratnam, Y. (2003). *Researching race and ethnicity: Methods, knowledge and power*. Sage.
- Hamed, S., Bradby, H., Ahlberg, B. M., & Thapar-Björkert, S. (2022). Racism in healthcare: A scoping review. *BMC Public Health*, 22(1), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-022-13122-y>
- Hannes, K. (2011). Critical appraisal of qualitative research. In J. Noyes, A. Booth, K. Hannes, A. Harden, J. Harris, S. Lewin, & C. Lockwood (Eds.), *Supplementary guidance for inclusion of qualitative research in cochrane systematic reviews of interventions* (pp. 1–14). Cochrane Collaboration Qualitative Methods Group.
- Harriott, P. (2021, January 18). *Blog: Prison - a place for co-production*. Prison Reform Trust.
- HM Chief Inspector of Prisons. (2022). *The experiences of adult black male prisoners and black prison staff*.

- HM Inspectorate of Prisons. (2005). *Parallel worlds: A thematic review of race relations in prisons*.
- HM Inspectorate of Prisons. (2020). *Minority ethnic prisoners' experiences of rehabilitation and release planning*.
- Hunter, S., Craig, E., & Shaw, J. (2019). "Give it a Try": Experiences of black, Asian and minority ethnic young men in a prison-based offender personality disorder service. *Journal of Forensic Practice*, 21(1), 14–26. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JFP-07-2018-0026>
- INQUEST. (2023). *I can't breathe: Race, death & British policing*.
- Irwin-Rogers, K. (2018). Racism and racial discrimination in the criminal justice system: Exploring the experiences and views of men serving sentences of imprisonment. *Justice, Power and Resistance*, 2(2), 243–266.
- Jones, L., Brookes, M., & Shuker, R. (2013). An exploration of cultural sensitivity. *Race and Justice*, 3(2), 144–158. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2153368713483324>
- Kendi, I. X. (2019). *How To Be an Antiracist*. One World.
- Lammy, D. (2017). *The Lammy Review; An independent review into the treatment of, and outcomes for, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals in the Criminal Justice System*.
- MacPherson, W. (1999). *The Stephen Lawrence inquiry*. Report of an Inquiry.
- Mann, R., Fitzalan Howard, F., & Tew, J. (2018). What is a rehabilitative prison culture? *Prison Service Journal*, 235, 3–9.
- Martin, Glenn. E (2017). Testimony on Policies Relating to Bureau of Prisons Reentry, Fair Chance Act, and Ban the Box Delivered to the Committee on Government and Oversight Reform: Wednesday, December 13, 2017, Page 2.
- McGee, B. S., Germany, A. F., Phillips, R. L., & Barros-Lane, L. (2021). Utilizing a critical race theory Lens to reduce barriers to social and emotional learning: A call to action. *Children & Schools*, 44(1), 39–47. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cs/cdab026>
- McIntosh, P. (2015). Extending the Knapsack: Using the white privilege analysis to examine conferred advantage and disadvantage. *Women & Therapy*, 38(3-4), 232–245. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02703149.2015.1059195>
- Ministry of Justice. (2016). *Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic disproportionality in the Criminal Justice System in England and Wales*.
- Ministry of Justice. (2021). *Ethnicity and the Criminal Justice System, 2020*.
- Ministry of Justice. (2023). *Offender Management Statistics Quarterly: October to December 2022 and annual 2022*.
- Minnesota Education Equity Partnership. (2022). *Race equity glossary*. Minnesota Education Equity Partnership.
- Multicultural Affairs. (2016). *Building equity & inclusion through the power of language*. A Division of Utah Department of Heritage and Arts.
- Narey, M. (2001). *HM Prison Service Annual Report and Accounts: April 2000– March 2001*.
- ONS. (2021). *Ethnic group, England and Wales: Census 2021*.
- Owen, C., & Statham, J. (2009). *Disproportionality in Child Welfare: The Prevalence of Black and Minority Ethnic Children within the 'Looked After' and 'Children in Need' Populations and on Child Protection Registers in England*.
- Paez, A. (2017). Gray literature: An important resource in systematic reviews. *Journal of Evidence-Based Medicine*, 10(3), 233–240. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jebm.12266>

- Perea, J. (1997). The black and white binary paradigm of race: Exploring the normal science of American racial thought. *California Law Review*, 85, 1213–1258. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3481059>
- Phinney, J. S. (1990). Ethnic identity in adolescents and adults: Review of research. *Psychological Bulletin*, 108(3), 499–514. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.108.3.499>
- Predelli, L. N., Halsaa, B., Thun, C., & Sandu, A. (2012). *Majority-minority relations in contemporary women's movements: strategic sisterhood*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Prison Reform Trust. (2021). *Prison: the facts Bromley Briefings Summer 2021*.
- Reid, N. (2021). *The Good Ally: A guided anti-racism journey from bystander to changemaker*. Harper Collins Publishers.
- Reynolds, V. (2012). Bridging the worlds of therapy and activism: Intersections, tensions and affinities. *The International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work*, 4, 57–61.
- Scraton, P., Sim, J., & Skidmore, P. (1991). Review: Review essay on “Prisons under Protest.” *Social Justice*, 18(3), 225–229.
- Shaw, A. (2012). Identifying and synthesising qualitative literature. In D. Harper, & A. R. Thompson (Eds.), *Qualitative research in mental health and psychotherapy: A guide for students and practitioners* (pp. 9–22). John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Shingler, J., & Pope, L. (2018). *The effectiveness of rehabilitative services for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people: a rapid evidence assessment*.
- Smedley, A., & Smedley, B. D. (2005). Race as biology is fiction, racism as a social problem is real: Anthropological and historical perspectives on the social construction of race. *American Psychologist*, 60(1), 16–26. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.60.1.16>
- Steele, C. M., & Aronson, J. (1995). Stereotype threat and intellectual test performance of African Americans. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69(5), 797–811. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.69.5.797>
- Sullivan, E. (2007). Straight from the horse's mouth. *Prison Service Journal*, 173, 9–14.
- Thomas, J., & Harden, A. (2008). Methods for the thematic synthesis of qualitative research in systematic reviews. *Biomed Central Medical Research Methodology*, 8(45), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2288-8-45>
- Van Harreveld, F., Van der Pligt, J., Claassen, L., & Van Dijk, W. W. (2007). Inmate emotion coping and psychological and physical well-being. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 34(5), 697–708. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093854806298468>
- Wilson, D. (2004). ‘Keeping quiet’ or ‘going nuts’: Strategies used by young, black, men in custody. *The Howard Journal*, 43(3), 317–330. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2311.2004.00330.x>
- Yasin, B., & Sturge, G. (2020). *Ethnicity and the criminal justice system: What does recent data say on over-representation?*

Author Biographies

Rachael Floyd is a Clinical Psychologist working in the Specialist Community Forensic Team, in the National Health Service. Her research interests include understanding the societal injustices, biases and marginalisation within the criminal justice system and working in practice and within research to reduce racial inequalities and improve the justice system.

Rachel McKail is a Principal Lecturer on the clinical psychology programme at the University of Hertfordshire. Her research interests include understanding the effects of societal marginalisation on mental health and working to collaborate to ensure research influences policy and practice to reduce health inequalities.

Adonis Akra is the Head of Governance and Co-Lead at MAC-UK. He has over 10 years of experience working with young people and has a strong passion for value-based governance. He recognises the importance of equitable, inclusive processes and approaches governance through a lived experience lens.

Tessa Saunders is a Clinical Psychologist working at MAC-UK, a third-sector organisation based in London working to ensure excluded young people inspire and lead solutions to inequalities. Her research interests include co-produced and participatory methods with socially marginalised young people that aim to influence meaningful changes to mental health provision and reduce health inequalities.