

REFRAMING RACE

How the public talk about 'race', racial equality, and racism

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1. Introduction

From the abolition of the slave trade to the fight for civil rights, advocates have had to make and remake the case for race equality. That work continues today, and whilst much work is being done, it is still an uphill struggle to shift the public narrative, let alone the more insidious structural inequalities that exist.

A wealth of data lays bare the sustained racial abuse that BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) groups experience to this day. Many of us are also aware of the structural inequalities that have severe, long-lasting impacts on BME groups, from access to employment, housing opportunities and treatment within the justice system. In the spring of 2020, as a result of the killing of George Floyd in America, Black Lives Matters protests were organised around the world to march against the continued discrimination BME people face. It is clear that more needs to be done to affect change.

Reframing Race is a two-year programme, from Runnymede Trust and Voice4Change England, to come up with a new advocacy story to call a wider audience to the cause of race equality. Reframing Race will:

- a) develop a ‘movement story’ that captures how race equality activists think about the problem of racism and what is their vision of race equality
- b) better understand how people across England think about racism and race equality
- c) to use framing and messaging techniques to ‘bridge’ between the movement story and public thinking in ways more likely to generate wider public support against racism and for race equality.

This report contains findings from research conducted by ICM Unlimited that contributes to the second aim of better understanding *how* the general public in England think about ‘race’, race equality and racism. It is important to re-state that this report explores *how* people think about race equality. That is not to say that understanding *what* people think about race equality is not important, it is just not the remit of this research. Why do we want to understand the ‘how’? The ‘how’ tells us what sits behind what we think, and by understanding how we think about ‘race’, racial equality and racism we can inform framing and messaging techniques for future advocacy.

From understanding ‘how’ people think about racial equality we developed cultural models. Cultural models are the dominant, shared assumptions and patterns of thinking that sit behind the way that people process, conceptualise and rationalize their beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions. By exploring the commonality across how the general public think about ‘race’, race equality and racism we can understand how to create communications that resonate with the public, as we learn the common aspects that drive the way we think.

The report will firstly detail the cultural models that the general public in England use to think about ‘race’, race equality and racism. Then, the report will delve into the narratives that are at play amongst the general public, firstly via the lens of emotions and values and then examining the broad narratives that the general public use to explain their thinking around ‘race’, race equality and racism.

2. Methodology

We conducted sixty two-hour interviews with people in England to understand how they think about 'race', race equality and racism. These were one-to-one, semi-structured interviews based around how people define racism; who is affected by racism; why racism exists; and what can and should be done to end racism and deliver race equality.

This project was originally conceived in early 2020 and was meant to be conducted face-to-face. Due to the CV-19 pandemic, fieldwork was postponed and re-launched in July 2020, with two main adaptations to the methodology. The first of these was that the interviews were moved online, and because of this change the interviews were split into two one-hour sessions, conducted over separate days. The main thinking around this was that a two-hour online interview can be incredibly tiring for both the interviewer and moderator and requires access to a reliable internet service.

As the interviews were semi-structured the approach to interviewing was open. Questions were purposively written to be open for participants to respond to them in the way that made sense to them, thus uncovering their way of thinking about each of the topic areas. This also meant that the interviews were participant-led and the topics could be covered in an order 'led' by the participant, or one topic area was explored in more detail.

As researchers we were very aware of a number of considerations before starting the interviews and thus took a slightly iterative approach to interviewing, which meant that the discussion guide was adapted over the course of fieldwork. Our first consideration was around the topic area itself which could be triggering, controversial, or disconcerting for some and we maintained an element of awareness and caution throughout all the interviews. Secondly, with the change to the methodology we wanted to ensure that moving the interviews online did not hinder participants from opening up to the discussion, and again we monitored this throughout fieldwork.

Further details on our methodological approach are in the corresponding Technical Appendix A report.

We spoke to sixty participants in total. We undertook a balanced approach to the sample, to ensure that we spoke to a good spread of people across England. Participants were recruited by a professional recruitment firm and selected on a sample specification of demographic and attitudinal attributes to ensure that we accessed people broadly representative of the majority. There were some groups of people that were over-sampled due to the topic of the research. Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) people were boosted to represent 33% of the sample. Given that this research covers the topics of 'race', racial equality and racism we wanted to ensure that we spoke to a large enough sample of different 'races' to gather a more balanced perspective.

Interviews were conducted in six locations across England (London, Newcastle, Leeds, Birmingham, Bristol, Southampton) to ensure availability to a good geographical spread. We also set quotas on gender, ethnicity, age, education, political ideology, disability, marital status, family, location, sexuality and religion.

Demographic	Quota	Achieved
Total		60
Gender	Female	30
	Male	30
Age	18-29	13
	30-39	10
	40-49	14
	50-59	13
	60+	10
	Locale	Urban
	Rural	12
Ethnicity	White British	40
	BME	20
Religion	Muslim	4
	Christian	21
	Other religion	4
	No religion	30
Education	Level 1	20
	Level 2	9
	Level 3	9
	Level 4	13
	Post grad	6
	Other education	3
Political leaning	Left leaning	18
	Middle	21
	Right leaning	21
Disability	Disability	10
	No disability	50
Marital status	Single/ Divorced	37
	Married	23
With children	Have children	28
	No children	32
Sexuality	Straight	53
	Not straight	7

Further details on our recruitment approach are in the corresponding Technical Appendix B report.

Our analysis was focused on *how* participants thought about ‘race’, race equality and racism rather than *what* they thought. That is not to say that what they thought about ‘race’ and racism is not important it is just that it is not the focus of this research. In short, we undertook a systematic approach to the analysis, identifying common patterns amongst the language, terms and themes used across the interviews. This involved both examining what people had said and how things were related to one another. Particular attention was paid to what was said, as equally what was not said across the individuals to discern patterns.

Cultural models are built on the shared patterns and understanding, and therefore they reflect the common ways of thinking across the participants. Thus, anomalies or outliers were noted but were not focused on to build the cultural models. The cultural models we discuss in the next chapter can contradict each other, and some are stronger cultural models than others – that they are used more consistently by participants or were easier to call to mind than others. Specifically, for this piece of research we do note where cultural models are stronger amongst White or BME

groups. We have over-represented the BME audience to ensure that we spoke to a large qualitative sample of BME people to be able to pull out differences between the two audiences.

Further details on our analysis are in the corresponding Technical Appendix C report.

3. Executive Summary

Overview

The public in England draw on a number of cultural models when thinking about 'race', racial equality and racism. These models have been taken from interviews with both white and BME participants, and remarkably, the cultural models used were relatively consistent across both audiences, although they may have been employed in slightly different ways.

Some models are strong, in that they are used consistently across many of the participants we spoke to, whereas others are weaker, not employed by as many participants or are 'thinner' in that participants cannot easily explore their thinking when using the model.

We have presented the cultural models in five fields: what racism is; the impacts that racism and racial inequality has; the causes; and who has the responsibility for addressing the issues of racism and the solutions for these.

The models

What racism is

Racism as stereotypes, with a grain of truth: 'Race' was often thought of as the various stereotypes that exist within society. These are based on what is presented in the media as well as what people see or experience around them. The act of stereotyping is thought of as a natural thing to do, so can be relatively blameless. As long as the media presents 'races' in specific ways, and people act similarly, then this cultural model will continue to exist.

Racism is universal: Racism was assumed as something that has always existed in society, and something that continues to exist across the world today. It is something that can happen to anyone as well as the idea that it is 'within us all'. A slightly reductive example of what racism is, this cultural model is easy to fall back on as the reason as to what racism is and why it exists.

'Race' as genetics: This is a weaker cultural model but is the assumption that there are genetic differences in different 'races'. These are largely seen as physical characteristics, but some can go further and connect this with intellectual characteristics.

The impact

Racism as the cards are stacked against you: Participants widely considered racial inequality as part of a broader inequality conversation, noting it is harder for some groups of society than others. There are lots of different types of inequalities that exist in Britain today, and racial inequality is just one of them. By extension, inequality is not seen to be something that solely applies to 'race'.

Racism is personal: Racism is assumed to be something that occurs on an individual level. It happens to people, by people. It was largely thought of as name calling, verbal abuse and physical

attacks. At an intentional level, this is largely thought of as being conducted by a minority of people, although it is easy for name calling to be misconstrued and unintentional.

Racism is institutional: There is an assumption that racism exists within institutions, most notably within hiring practices. It is a systemic issue, that is deep-rooted and embedded within society. The media, particularly, has responsibility for perpetuating this type of racism.

The causes

'Race' is who you share an affinity with: 'Race' was understood as a complex mix of origin, heritage, parentage, values etc. The colour of skin is seen as the most obvious identifier of someone's origin and 'race' and these groups are likely to have a sense of commonality with each other. In Britain, this is bound up with migration as those with different 'races' are likely to be migrants.

Racism as difference: People saw racism as something natural and part of human nature. It is human nature to bond with those who are different to you and to be fearful of those who are 'different'. It is something that has always existed. In British society today, there is a natural majority and minority when it comes to ethnicity, and it is natural to be biased towards the majority.

Racism is what you know, or don't know: A widely held assumption was that racism is learned and modelled. It also stems from a lack of knowledge or understanding of what racial inequality or racism is. As such, racism can be excused because it is based on something learnt or from ignorance, often developed at a young age. Parents play a key role in this model.

Where responsibility lies

A 'bottom-up' approach: There is a near general belief that everyone can play their part in tackling racism, and responsibility should be shared amongst everyone. It is not only the responsibility of white people to listen and learn, but also the responsibility of BME groups to take action.

A 'top-down' approach: Within this model, responsibility lies at an institutional level, and the media, government and businesses are all part of this. The assumption here is that onus is proportional to the power and influence that these institutions have to affect real change.

The solutions

We're making progress on racism: People viewed racism as an issue on which Britain has made progress, The reference points to this are that we are less racist than we used to be, and are felt to be less racist than the United States.

A sense of fatalism: Participants showed a remarkable sense of fatalism when considering the future of racism. There is a belief that racism cannot be eliminated; it has always existed and will continue to exist. There are significant barriers to overcome, which may compete with British ideals of free speech.

We can be taught not to be racist: Learning and education play an integral role in trying to solve the issue of racism, as this model is the belief that we can learn to be less racist. Parents and the formal education system will be important in educating people.

The values and emotions

Underlying the interviews were a set of values and emotions that cut across the way that participants thought about 'race', racial equality, and racism.

- **Fairness:** Perceptions around racism are based on the concepts of what is fair and what is not.
- **Community:** A sense of community is integrated with the ideals of integration and segregation.
- **Honesty and transparency:** This was a value not felt to be present in the media, which is seen to be biased and sensationalist.
- **Power:** Power structures exist and maintain inequality in today's society.
- **Acceptance:** Part of the journey to an equal society is an acceptance of diversity and different cultures.
- **Incomprehension:** An emotion mainly present in white participants, there was a sense of incredulity around why racism happens.
- **Detachment:** Again, amongst white participants, some showed an element of detachment with the topic area.
- **Fear, fault and frustration:** The fear of difference that is felt to present when thinking about 'race' and racism, drives feelings of fault and frustration especially amongst white participants.

4. How the public think about ‘race’, racial equality and racism

Overview

This chapter of the report outlines the cultural models that we have identified as being the shared, durable ways of thinking. They are broken down into five sections to help explain how the cultural models are employed. The first section explores what racism is and how people think about racism as a concept. We then move on to examining how participants think about the impact that racism and racial inequality has; and following this, the causes for racism and racial inequality. The last two sections are more forward-facing. These concern how participants think about responsibility for addressing the issue of racism and the solutions.

Each model is broken down into what the model is, and then how the model is employed by people. By doing this, we hope to give more context to the models as well as clearly outline the cultural model as an entity.

A. What racism is

There are four cultural models that people assume when thinking about what racism is. The first of these is a *model of progress*, and that Britain has made advances on the issue. There is also a model around the role of stereotyping and the impact this has, as well as a model that draws on the universal nature of racism. The final model was less frequently used, and is more specific than the other models in this section, focusing around the idea of genetics.

i. Racism as stereotypes, with a grain of truth

Key features of the model

- Stereotypes of lots of different ‘races’ exist in society today.
- These stereotypes are perpetuated by the media, but they also come from personal experiences so they can, in part, be based on the truth.
- Stereotypes can also be subconsciously held, and people shouldn’t be blamed for that.
- This was a strong model across both white and BME participants.

Explaining the model

People understood racism as the stereotyping of an individual based on generalisations about the group of people of the same ‘race’ as them. The stereotypes themselves are seen to come from two sources: the news media and people’s own experiences.

When using this model, there are numerous tensions in how people think about stereotypes. The first of these is that people are critical of the news media's role in building and perpetuating stereotypes, and yet they are much less critical and reflective of the harmfulness of people in general – including themselves – subscribing to certain stereotypes. While people blame the news media for its role in perpetuating stereotypes, they are much less likely to blame themselves or other people for their own role in maintaining stereotypes. People subtly justify stereotyping by either saying that they are at least partially grounded in truth or that everyone does it subconsciously and therefore it can't be helped because it is innate to human beings. In this way, people don't hold themselves accountable for stereotypes in the same way that they hold the media accountable.

Equally, while people acknowledge that they take their experience with one person and apply it to a whole 'race', this is not necessarily viewed as something that they need to make a conscious effort to counteract as such stereotyping is seen as 'natural' and therefore somewhat blameless. Put another way, even though people recognise the unjustness of tarring everyone with the same brush based on their experience in a small number of cases, they don't take the next step of criticising and challenging this. Instead, they fall back on the justifications and observations for why stereotyping exists and leave it at that.

This leads on to the second tension when people think using this model. While people recognise stereotypes for what they are, there is a lack of explicit understanding of the harm that they can cause. This is particularly true for those stereotypes that are borne out of personal experience rather than those that are predominantly seen to be fuelled by the media. Stereotypes based on actual experience and on what people see around them – for instance, off licences are normally run by Asian people, Chinese people have a strong work ethic, Black people are better athletes than white people – are viewed as relatively benign, while stereotypes that are seen to emanate from the news media (for example, the association between Black people and crime, and between Muslims and terrorism) are viewed as more pernicious.

Overall, while this model enables people to recognise that stereotypes exist and that stereotyping involves tarring people in a group with the same brush based on actions of individuals, it does not lead people to go beyond this observation to challenge their own stereotypes. Instead, it ends up with people subtly excusing and justifying stereotyping, and therefore failing to take the step of problematising the issue and, ultimately, tackling and challenging the stereotypes.

ii. Racism is universal

Key features of the model

- Racism has always existed in the world and continues to exist across the world today.
- Racism is something that is 'within us all'.
- The issues or challenges with racism are universal.
- Racism can be used as a survival mechanism.
- This was a relatively strong model across both white and BME participants.

Explaining the model

This model is the assumption that racism is a universal concept. Its universality can be applied as a spatial concept; that racism has existed over time as well as a concept that applies globally in today's society. It is also universal in where it lives: it is something that is 'within us all' and is something that can happen, or impact everyone. Essentially when using this model, the broad thinking is that it is universal, and the issues or challenges associated with it are pervasive.

Participants employ this model particularly around the reasons for why racism happens. The historical nature of racism, which is felt to be something that has always existed in society, is a clear explanation of the continuing nature and prevalence of racism. Examples are given of various points in history where racism existed, but with many referencing that it goes as far back as to when tribes subsisted. The reasoning behind this is that on first encountering another tribe or other people, it is a survival mechanism to react to another group. There is underlying assumption that what racism 'looks like' has changed over time, and it may not always have been 'labelled' racism, but the fundamental idea of being fearful of difference has always existed. It is a concept that appears to be pervasive.

The global nature of racism is another example of how this model is used. Britain is not the only place where racism occurs, and participants call to the fact that racism also happens in other countries around the world. There is a sense that this is not a phenomenon that just applies to Britain but is a universal concept that is applicable everywhere. The United States is the most mentioned example of the universal nature of racism, with few other countries mentioned specifically. An extension of this thinking, but one that takes on a similar but different theme, is that racism is 'everywhere' and is therefore not a local phenomenon. It is something that is around people, wherever they are, reinforcing it as a universal concept.

Across the board there is acknowledgement that racism in Britain is predominantly white 'on' BME, however when referencing this model, the notion of who racism happens to is broadened to an understanding that it can happen to anyone and can impact everyone. Concrete examples are rarely given, rather it is the idea that racism is more multifaceted than how it is generally portrayed in our society: it is conducted by people of various 'races' against people of other 'races' (not just white 'on' Black). It is something that can impact everyone in different ways and at different levels; racism is something that can happen to us all.

iii. 'Race' as genetics

Key features of the model

- There are genetic differences between people of different 'races'.
- This can either be physical differences, or seen by a few, to impact intelligence.
- This is a relatively weak model across both white and BME participants.

Explaining the model

This model is only drawn upon infrequently by people, although equally across white and BME participants. The model centres on the idea of 'race' as genetics. At its most basic level, people use this model to make the claim that genetics explain why people look different in terms of the

colour of their skin. Often, people will take their thinking using this model no further than this basic claim. However, people sometimes do take further steps when thinking about 'race' as genetics. One further stage that people sometimes take is to consider physical differences between the different 'races', whether this be in terms of the ratios and proportions of physical features or in terms of specific 'races' being better/worse at certain sports. Differences in health outcomes and health risk factors are also sometimes cited when people think of 'race' as genetics, with the notion floated that different 'races' have different susceptibility to diseases for genetic reasons.

When using this model, another step that people sometimes take is pondering whether genetic differences explain perceived differences in academic ability across 'races', with a sense that there must be 'something' behind the perceived differences in intelligence and educational attainment. This idea that there must be 'something' behind the differences across 'races' highlights the wider point that people find it difficult to go into detail explaining the role of genetics, and struggle to go beyond simply giving observations or examples. As people move further away from the basic claim that genetics explain why people look different, they become increasingly less certain and precise in their belief, less likely to be able to explain their reasoning, and more likely to express doubt in the claims they make.

Even when stretching the idea of 'race' as genetics to discuss physical and intellectual differences between 'races', people do not make explicit references to notions of white superiority. In the eyes of those using the model, when thinking about 'race' as genetics they do not see themselves as making value judgements that certain 'races' are 'superior' to others. Instead, they see themselves as using the model in a benign way, simply to test whether it helps to explain and understand perceived differences in people of different 'races'.

On the whole, people don't appear to make connections between genetics and any stereotypes they may discuss, with stereotypes being more likely to be seen as linked to culture. In this way, the '*race as being tarred with the same brush*' model is generally used at different times to the '*race as genetics*' model. There are, however, a couple of exceptions to this. Firstly, there is an overlap between the stereotype that black people are better athletes and the 'race' as genetics way of thinking that different 'races' are better/worse at different sports. This is therefore one of the few stereotypes that people think is grounded in genetic, physical differences. The second exception comes in the fact that there is a tendency to view stereotyping itself as 'genetically programmed' or as something that is natural to human beings. In this sense, it is not just 'race' that is genetic, but also people's propensity to make generalisations about a certain 'race' and to categorise people.

B. The impact that racial inequality and racism has

Within this section we outline the cultural models that concern the impact that racial inequality and racism have. The first of these is very much focused on the impact of racial inequality, whereas the second and third models are built around the impact of racism. Inherent within people's thinking is that impact is associated with type of racism, so these latter models also somewhat explain what racism is, but the effects of these cultural models are what are most interesting to understand.

iv. Racism as the cards are stacked against you

Key features of the model

- Britain is an unequal society.
- This inequality is cyclical so is continually perpetuated for some groups of people. Therefore, it is harder for some groups of people than others.
- Race is one of the groups that experience inequality.
- This is a relatively strong model across both white and BME participants.

Explaining the model

Inequality is, on the whole, an accepted concept applicable and prevalent to Britain today. There was consistency across interviews as to who inequality impacted and which BME groups most experienced inequality. Discussions were focused on the unequal access to opportunities and the impact of this. The general notion was that it is harder for some BME groups than others, and that the cards are stacked against some at various stages life whereas there are specific groups or a certain profile of society that is not touched by inequality.

Before discussing how this cultural model is used by participants, it should be noted that ‘race’ is not the only determinant for experiencing inequality, and that this is part of a broader conversation around systemic inequalities that exist within society around poverty and the class system (for instance, the white working class in the North were also mentioned). Thus, should be seen as a *relatively* strong model.

Participants hold a general assumption that specific groups of people start from birth in an unequal position in society. This is mostly linked to those born into poverty, those with upbringings or parental structures that do not have access to opportunities or encourage aspiration or ambition in their children. Sometimes inequality is associated with a level of blame, in that this inequality is a product of action or inaction, but it was mainly thought of as being something that just happened. When drawing on this model, there is a sense of sadness or lack of understanding as to why this exists and continues to perpetuate. This type of inequality is cyclical, and it is difficult to break out of, and thus is inherited over generations and will continue to exist in the future. Participants often reference these groups as the ‘have nots’ in contrast to the ‘haves’ – who are seen to be white, rich and privileged.

Inequality can also be experienced during someone’s life, with access to jobs and access to networks of people and knowledge the most mentioned examples. These are seen to be key drivers to whether someone can succeed in life. Whilst never articulated in such words, this model hints at this inequality to opportunity as a systemic issue; one that has existed for a long time and which continues to allow those in ‘power’ to maintain their positions in life.

The model can be counter-argued by the notion that anyone can succeed in life. Specifically, in Britain where education is free and accessible to all, the notion is just if you work hard enough to get it, you can achieve whatever you want.

v. Racism is personal

Key features of the model

- Racism is something conducted by individuals on individuals. This type of personal racism includes name calling, verbal abuse and physical attacks.
- This is the most likely type of racism that occurs but is only conducted by a minority of people.
- Sometimes racism is ‘felt’ by the recipient and may not actually exist.
- This is a strong cultural model.

Explaining the model

Discussions about what racism looks like and the impact of racism widely focused on the idea that racism is personal and is experienced at the individual level, both in terms of perpetrating racism and in terms of suffering from racism. That is, racism is seen as something that is conducted by individuals on individuals. It is a very strong cultural model, with people frequently drawing upon it when thinking about the manifestations and impacts of racism.

Moreover, people slip easily into thinking using this model. Examples of ‘personal’ or ‘person on person’ forms of racism are easily accessible in people’s minds, with people able to cite name-calling, verbal abuse, and physical attacks as examples of what racism looks like. In this way, as with the ‘we’re making progress on racism’ model, people are more likely to think of overt forms of racism when using this model, and less about more hidden forms of racism. Additionally, given that this is a model that people find very easy to use, it is also the case that once people start thinking with this model, it is hard for them to move beyond it and think either outside of the model or use different models when considering the impact of racism. It is for these reasons that the ‘racism is personal’ model is much stronger and drawn upon more frequently than the ‘racism is institutional’ model; it is both easier to access and exerts a strong hold when it is used – an almost blinkering effect.

As this model entails people focusing on racism at the individual-level and on the more overt forms of racism, there are a number implications for where this model takes people’s thinking. The first of these is that the model very much leads people to those examples of racism that are ‘conscious’ – that is, those forms of racism where individuals make an active choice to do something (for instance, to carry out a physical or verbal attack or to choose not to hire someone from another ‘race’). This focus on the individual as the perpetrator obscures from view those forms of racism that are not the result of conscious decisions by individuals.

When people thought about the more overt forms of racism – particularly physical forms of racism – they were also more likely to focus on how racism is on the decline and only exists within a small element of society. This was further strengthened by the fact that many of concrete examples of visible racism that people mentioned were from when they were younger (examples from school or university or experiences of their parents). There was, however, a threat to this assumption that overt forms of racism were on the decline and only existed among a small minority of people. This was the perceived rise of online racism which, while not necessarily about or aimed at a specific person, still comes from an individual and has individual-level impacts.

Generally, the combination of these factors – that racism is carried out by individuals, that only a minority of people carry out blatant racist acts, and that such racism is perceived to be on the decline – meant that, when using this model, people were more likely to be of the mind that racism could be overcome and was more of a soluble problem. There was another side to this coin, however; taking an ‘individual-level’ view of racism also somewhat diminished the perceived scale of the impact of racism. When using this model, the impact of racism is ‘just’ on individuals, and therefore is seen as less insidious and less widespread as it might otherwise be.

In this model, the focus on the individual as the direct recipient of racism could also sometimes lead people to assume that the onus was therefore on the recipients not to take offence. Indeed, this model of racism as personal is closely associated with the idea that much of what is thought of as ‘racist’ is just where people have taken what is said the wrong way and have derived offence where none was intended. When used in this way, the model of racism as personal leads people to shift the responsibility away from the person using the language and onto those people interpreting the language.

vi. Racism is institutional

Key features of the model

- Racism is institutional and systemic.
- This form of racism is deep-seated and embedded in society.
- This is a strong cultural model.

Explaining the model

When thinking about what racism looks like, another model that people draw upon is the ‘racism is institutional’. This is the idea that racism exists at the level of institutions and is therefore systemic. Using this model, people understand racism as something that happens to people when they come into contact with systems and institutions, and that the result of this is that not everyone gets the same treatment or opportunities afforded to them. Some people use the terms ‘institutional’ and ‘systemic’, but most people just give examples of where people are systematically disadvantaged because of their ‘race’ or specific institutions that they perceive to be racist. Regardless of the terms people use, in this model there is a sense that this form of racism is embedded or deep-rooted, and that institutional racism is something that has existed for a long time. Indeed, it is sometimes the historical legacy of institutions and systems that is seen as one of the main reasons why this form of racism is so engrained. In comparison to the ‘racism is personal’ model, people use the ‘racism is institutional’ model less frequently and find it harder to use.

The main way that people use the ‘racism is institutional’ model is via giving examples of where racism exists within systems or examples of institutions that they perceive to be racist. Indeed, when thinking with this model, there are three main sites of institutional racism that people most commonly refer to. The first of these is the hiring practices of companies, which are seen to disadvantage those people who are of a different ‘colour’ or ‘race’ to the (individual) employer or who do not have a ‘British sounding name’. Secondly, the police are the most frequently mentioned example of an institution that is perceived to be racist. With regard to both the police

and the hiring practices of companies, people often struggle to explain *why* the racism exists. It is at this point that people will sometimes slip back into the 'racism is personal' model, saying that racism exists in the conscious acts of racist police officers or racist employers actively choosing not to hire someone based on their skin colour or name. For those who are more comfortable with using the model, when asked to think about *why* institutional racism exists, they can introduce the idea of subconscious racism and bias as reasons why people of different 'races' do not get equal opportunities or equal treatment.

The final most mentioned example of an institution that is perceived to be racist is the 'media'. Unlike with employers and the police, reasons for why the media is institutionally racist come much more freely to people. People often suggest that the media has a strong incentive to create divisions and sensationalise stories that can stoke up racism, either for financial gain, because of their political ties, or because they want to pander to their readership. Once again, those who are able to draw upon the 'racism is institutional' model more easily are able to make more subtle points about how the racism of the media is often subconscious and borne out of implicit biases. This could be in the form of mentioning the 'race' of perpetrator of a crime when it comes to a BME person and not when it is a white person, or in the form of the lack of representation of BME people in the news media industry (e.g. newsreaders).

Thinking of 'racism as institutional' leads people into a train of thought in which the media in particular has a responsibility to counteract racism. On top of seeing the media as institutionally racist, people ascribe significant influence and reach to the media. This combination of factors leads people to consider the role that the media must play in any efforts to tackle racism.

C. The causes of racial inequality and racism

In this section we examine the three cultural models that people assume when thinking about what causes racism and the drivers behind it. These are cultural models on 'race' as well as 'racism'. *'Race' as origin*, is the assumptions around what 'race' means and signifies to us all. The following two models are distinct in their thinking, the first is around the notion that racism is as a result of difference, predominantly because it is in human nature to find or create difference, and the *Racism is what you know, or don't know* model centres around the premise that racism is learnt, taught or a result of ignorance.

vii. 'Race' is who you share an affinity with

Key features of the model

- Affinity within 'races' comes from a sense of shared heritage, parentage, values etc.
- Skin colour is the most obvious identifier of 'race' and thus people of the same 'race' are likely to share a sense of commonality or affinity
- 'Race' is inherently bound up with migration
- This was a very strong model, employed across the majority of participants across both white and BME participants.

Explaining the model

People understood 'race' as a complex mixture of components, including heritage, parentage, country of birth, language, values, beliefs, religion, cultural practices and norms, the food you eat, and the clothes you wear. In this model, all these various factors are seen to come from and to be explained by someone's origin and a sense of affinity that someone of the same 'race' has with someone else of that same 'race'. In this model, skin colour is seen as the most obvious identifier of 'where someone is from' and is seen as an indicator that someone is in some way 'different' in terms of their beliefs, behaviour, and background. In this way, there is an assumption therefore that people of the same 'race' have at least some of these factors in common.

This notion of people of the same 'race' having things in common as a result of their perceived common origin is seen as one of the main reasons why people of the same 'race' group together and live in segregated communities. Combined with the assumption that a different 'race' means different values, different clothes, different heritage, etc., this generates a feeling of unease and a lack of understanding. It is this mutual lack of understanding that is seen as one of the causes of racism. It is for this reason that, when using this model, people will consider integration and assimilation as one of the solutions to racism, with the onus typically on those people of non-white 'races' to drive this. Moreover, people make a rough bifurcation between those people who do make an effort to adapt and those who do not.

Given the emphasis that this model puts on 'race' as 'where someone is from', using this model also often leads people into making a link between 'race' and migration. This linking of 'race' and migration can strengthen the hold of certain assumptions in people's minds. It can strengthen the link in people's minds between 'race' and the country you come from, which in turn can slip into people making a subconscious (or sometimes conscious) linkage between being white and being British.

When people make the link between 'race' and migration, this can also lead to people equating 'migrants' and people of a different 'race'. This conflation can lead people to wrapping their concerns about migration into their thinking about 'race'. These concerns about migration – migrants not fitting in, having a different language, living in segregated communities – can reinforce existing concerns people have about different 'races' and can reinforce the sense of not being comfortable with or understanding the cultural differences they perceive.

viii. Racism as difference

Key features of the model

- It is human nature to see difference and to bond with people who look like you.
- This sense of difference is often driven by a fear of the unknown.
- In Britain, difference is seen as a 'majority' and a 'minority' when it comes to 'race', and rightly or wrongly, it is natural that society is biased towards the majority.
- This is a strong cultural model across both white and BME participants.

Explaining the model

People saw it as 'human nature' for people to see difference between themselves and others, and to view this difference as something that is negative. This difference between groups is seen to lie behind people's fear of the unknown; in this model, suspicion and fear of people who are

different to you is seen as something that is innate to human beings. The other side of this coin is that humans are seen to have a natural impulse to gravitate towards people who look like them and to group together with them. Put another way, within this model, it is viewed as a natural human trait to seek the safety and security that comes with being around people who look like them, and to avoid as far as possible those who are perceived to be different.

In this model, the human characteristic of seeing difference and judging it as a bad thing leads to fear and grouping. This, in turn, reinforces and exacerbates the perception of difference seen as the underlying cause of racism. Racism, in this model, lies in the fear of the unknown, the fear of the 'other', and in the creation of an 'us' versus 'them' mentality. Given that this fear is seen as resulting from a natural human trait, racism itself is seen as something that is very natural – a part of human nature.

This model makes use of the idea of visibility, or lack of, as evidence of how difference exists in society. In essence, the idea of visibility is strongly related to the notion of difference or distance, in that what is not visible is felt to be remote and therefore in some way different.

When thinking with this model, people often subconsciously make the small step between seeing racism as something that is natural to seeing it as something that is blameless (i.e. as something that people do not do on purpose). Those who make this step often do so via thinking about how humans have perceived and been fearful of difference since the start of civilisation ('tribes', 'Neanderthals'). When thinking about this deep history, people tend to view that what happened back then could not be described as 'racist' as such. When people enter the train of thought that 'racism' is just a modern label for what is a fact of human nature, they will often implicitly minimise the importance of racism in current society and downplay its impact.

Some people are able to take a different step which is to recognise that, even though they may perceive the 'fear of the unknown' to be a natural phenomenon, the scapegoating that can come with 'othering' a minority group is less defensible. That is, the people who take this step are able to recognise that those who are seen as different become an easy target for blame and that this is one of the sources of racism. It is those who are most obviously different and unfamiliar that are often scapegoated.

Given the fear and mistrust that perceived difference and unfamiliarity can cause, the lack of integration between different 'races', while seen as understandable and 'natural', is viewed as a barrier to overcoming racism. Segregated communities are seen to reinforce and exacerbate difference, and it is this that is perceived as one of the causes of racism. When using this model, the solution to the problem of racism is therefore often viewed as increasing integration and thereby working to reduced perceived difference – to make the 'unknown' known.

Difference also exists in the visible difference, or duality, of society. Racism was thought of as the prevalence of two different groups of people or 'races' in a society. One of these groups will be in the majority, purely based on the physical number of people, and the other group will be in the minority. In Britain, this was often thought of as people born here, the majority, versus people had come to Britain, who were in the minority. Although there is an acknowledgement that racism 'happens' to various BME groups, this notion is thought of in relative duality: the majority, or white British people, and the minority, or migrant groups. As this difference occurs, the undercurrent of thought is that society is (rightly or wrongly) biased towards the majority and thus racism happens to those who are less visible in society. Historically, this difference has always existed and thus

this dynamic of white majority versus migrant minority is part of our history and has been inherited down through generations. It is part of the system of the UK that we have always known. Another way in which this can be conceptualised is in the current climate where the Black Lives Matter movement has brought visibility to this difference which is challenging to longstanding beliefs.

Skin colour is also a difference that is easily identifiable and distinguishable. At its most basic premise, this is the idea that those with the most visible skin colour, Black people, as distinct to white people, are the most likely to receive racial abuse because they are the most visibly different. More broadly, 'race' as skin colour was most thought of in terms of anyone who was 'non-white', reflecting perceptions of who racism happens to – that it happens to anyone who is not white. Thus, the idea of 'race' and racism are relatively distant to the majority as they are concepts and actions that do not impact them.

i. Racism is what you know, or don't know

Key features of the model

- Racism is modelled and learned; often this is via parents.
- It can also stem from a lack of knowledge and understanding.
- This is a strong cultural model across both white and BME participants.

Explaining the model

At its heart, this model is based around 'knowing'. On one hand, participants widely believe that racism is learnt, and as such this is a strong model across both BME and white people. Racism is not something that you are born with, but something that you learn. On the other hand, racism is also based on thoughts or actions that stem from a lack of knowledge or understanding.

Taking this idea of 'knowing' in turn, firstly, examining the idea that racism is something learnt, or something gained. The model centres around the notion that at a young age, children are vulnerable to what is around them. They do not know what they are learning, or really, recognise it, and it is therefore through no fault of their own that they can have racist thoughts or carry out racist actions later on in life. This idea focuses heavily on the influence and impact of parents, family and upbringing, as it is really only at a young age, either as a child or a young person, that this learning occurs. It is rarely thought of as something that is learnt later on in life, but if that were to occur, more blame would be apportioned to the individual themselves.

Most often it is considered as something learnt from the structures around children and young people, whether that be parents, wider family or friends. It is thought of as learning through osmosis; it is not taught formally by parents or family, it is just something that children and young people learn through what they hear and to a lesser extent, see. Thus, as they learn at a young age, they grow up thinking it is 'right' or the 'norm'. These views are then not challenged as they grow older and they in turn pass it down to future generations. It is a cyclical process of learning and re-learning over time, and impact can only be made when someone is young. In fact, the older generation are often dismissed as being too set in their ways to be able to change their thinking.

The idea also is that racism is what you do not know. Under this model, racism is seen to be a simple lack of understanding or knowledge, which has an underlying value judgement against it; there is nothing more untoward or inherent about it, it is just because someone knows no different. As such it is therefore seen as a product of ignorance. Most often the role of the formal school system contributes heavily to this, most notably the lack of perceived education around equality, diversity and inclusivity. Some will go further to specifically explain that Black history is ignored by the current education system.

This lack of awareness or knowledge can be interpreted as ignorance, especially amongst BME participants, and a lack of engagement with the concept of racism. This audience are likely to believe this model of thinking as lazy biases that can be overcome and 'unlearned', it is just that this does not happen.

D. Who is responsible for addressing the issue of racism?

The idea of responsibility is thought of across two cultural models which are largely contradictory to each other. The first is the *bottom-up approach* model, that it is within all individuals to take responsibility for the issue of racism, whereas the *top-down approach* model comes at responsibility from the other direction. To address the issue of racism requires a more structural, system-led approach.

ii. A bottom-up approach

Key features of the model

- Everyone can play their part in tackling racism.
- Individuals carry responsibility to address racism.
- This is a strong cultural model across both white and BME participants.

Explaining the model

A model drawn on frequently by participants, the assumption being that it is in us all to be more responsible for addressing the issue of racism. One of the ways in which this is thought of is action carried out by individuals. Responsibility sits within people at an individual level, either to act or not to act. At its most fundamental, this model draws on the idea that we are all human beings who can create difference, which leads to racism, so it is in us all to address the issue.

For some, the individual action undertaken by everyone then contributes to a greater movement; that if every individual acted in specific ways the whole of society would therefore change. With this assumption is an underlying belief that there is 'buy-in' from society as a whole to this greater purpose, but that it begins with individual action. Responsibility does not solely lie with one group of individuals; therefore, it is shared amongst society.

This is a relatively simple model in participants' minds and one that comes to mind easily. To stop racism happening, 'action' can be thought of taking action as an individual, such as speaking out against something that you see, or through the lens of promoting integration and inclusivity via

community engagement or making new friendships or connections. On the other hand, action is thought of as a lack of action e.g. a perpetrator of racism not acting in a racist manner.

When using this bottom-up model, participants point to the idea of integration. Segregation on the one hand is an example of where difference exists in society and is potentially a challenge to a multiracial society. Integration, on the other side of the coin, assumes a sense of tolerance and acceptance. When pointing to the idea of integration as a way in which to build a more tolerant society, integration is placed on the onus of individual themselves, rather than as a structural change that comes from the top-down. It is within individuals to make active choices as to where they live, who they associate and how they live their lives so that it is not viewed as segregated. To take this thinking to its next step, there is an assumption that responsibility lies with BME groups to integrate and then for white participants to be accepting of this.

It is though, understood why segregation or pockets of communities occur, as it is comfortable to live around those who are like you e.g. those who have the same cultural or religious identity to you or come from the same country of origin.

Whilst using this model participants assume an element of self-awareness or self-reflection; that people are aware of their actions and the impact that they have. It also assumes that the general public are aware of their own thinking and biases around the topic of 'race' and racial equality and can act to change this. So, whilst in participants' eyes this is a relatively simple responsibility to take on, behind their thinking sits a broad set of changes that need to happen.

Over the course of their interviews, it does appear that participants do not feel that this currently happens, but they rarely go on to state why this is this case or that there are any challenges with people taking on this responsibility. One key challenge to this is the thinking amongst some participants that as the world has become more aware of 'race', racial inequality and racism it has become more a contentious topic to talk about. People can become afraid to speak out against the issue for fear of reprisal or being called a racist when they feel they are just starting a conversation on the topic.

iii. A top-down approach

Key features of the model

- Responsibility is institutional as onus on addressing the issues of racism is proportional to power and influence.
- The media, government and businesses are the most responsible.
- This is a strong cultural model across both white and BME participants.

Explaining the model

In contrast to the *bottom-up approach* model, the *top down approach* assumes that responsibility sits at an institutional level. At this level participants assume responsibility sits with those who have greater influence, reach and ultimately greater power to affect change. Participants point to three predominant institutions when using this model: the media; government; and organisations or businesses more generally.

This model was employed less frequently than the ‘we all have a role to play’ model in that more prompting and probing was required by interviewers and can therefore be seen as a slightly weaker model.

The news media is strongly associated with this model because of its current perceived role in creating or maintaining racism. All news media outlets participate in this activity, regardless of ideological or political leanings. There was a general distrust of the media in its reporting, as all believe that the media will tend to sensationalise reporting around racial inequality or racism to provoke disagreements and bolster their sales. Sometimes this was described as more obvious or blatant reporting styles, which are easily identifiable, but there is also an awareness that there is a more subtle undercurrent in how this reporting shapes people’s opinions without them realising. It was seen as intentional action on behalf all news media outlets, and as something intentional there was an assumption that it was something that could be changed. Participants often pointed to the media as a source of required change, because the media is seen as a key influence on the public’s opinions, with huge reach across society to shape public perceptions.

The responsibility of government is also clear within this model. Most notably, participants ask for a change in laws and legislation, often in terms of prosecuting racism more stringently. It appears that this sense of the legality around what is racism and what is the impact of it is important for participants in not only there being a clear impact of perpetrating racism but also this will make it clearer where the line of what is right and what is wrong is. Whilst the police can be mentioned as an example of racism, sometimes in the UK but most often in America, there is less reference to the police in this model, however it could be that the police and policing of racism is subsumed into participants ideas around laws and legislation.

Providing a greater sense of clarity over what racism actually is and what happens when it is carried out could go some way to some of the confusion shown in the interviews. Overall, this hints at a greater sense of visibility of government on the topic and possibly action. There are limitations on how far government can go, though, to forcing change, behaviours or the way people think, and some note current work government is already undertaking around this issue.

Government also has responsibility for setting educational policy which is assumed as one of the key solutions to the issue of racism and covered later in the *we can be taught not to be racist* model.

‘Organisations’ as an undetermined entity are also assumed to have a role in addressing racism, particularly in the processes they employ. This is most clearly articulated as a restructure of recruitment processes to ensure inclusivity and to begin to halt ‘white bias’. In turn this will increase representation at higher levels of employment, such as CEOs and on boards, ensuring visibility of BME people in positions of ‘power’ beginning to turn the tables on the issue of lack of representation.

E. What are the solutions?

This final section covers assumed thinking about the solutions to racism and racial inequality. The first model is an assumption that racism is something that cannot be solved, or if so, will require

serious hurdles to be overcome. The second model in contrast is a relatively clear and simple model around the positive role that education and learning can have.

i. We're making progress on racism

Key features of the model

- We are less racist in Britain than we used to be.
- We are less racist here than in the United States
- Our progress on racism is connected to migrants being more integrated.
- This is a strong model across both white and BME participants.

Explaining the model

People viewed racism as an issue on which Britain had made progress. This progress was understood in relation to Britain's history and in relation to other countries. Historical comparisons were drawn between the current time and Britain's recent history and between the current time and the country's more distant history. Specifically, people compared the level of racism now to the level of racism in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s in order to evidence the progress that has made. The 1960s-80s were described as a time when racial slurs were widely and openly used and were generally considered acceptable. This was contrasted with the current time, where such terms are only openly used by a very small minority of people. Related to this, people contrasted TV shows and advertising in the 1960s-1980s, with their racist content and lack of diversity, with current TV shows and advertising.

Some people were able to take this a step further and draw a distinction between overt and covert racism. This allowed these people to distinguish between the progress made in terms of overt racism on the one hand and covert racism on the other. Among the people who were able to make this distinction, they were able to reflect on whether the levels of progress had been different depending on the type and forms of racism in question. Generally, it was suggested that progress on the visible forms of racism had been more substantial than progress on the more hidden forms of racism.

The other historical comparison that people made was between now and the UK's colonial past and involvement in the slave trade. With this comparison in mind, people were able to make the basic claim that Britain had improved on racism since then. As with the examples of overt racism in the 1960s-80s, people used Britain's colonial history and slavery as a concrete reference point against which they could judge the country's progress on racism. Thinking about progress in reference to these tangible reference points meant that people generally did not take a very expansive view of racism, but instead looked for signs of progress in the more blatant and visible forms of racism.

Not only did people make these historical comparisons to underpin the view that we are making progress on racism, they also drew comparisons with other countries, most notably the United States. Racism in the US was seen as a larger problem than in Britain, with more brutal and overt forms of racism cited as key differences between the two countries. By comparison to America, Britain was seen to be further along in terms of progress, with racism therefore being seen as a

less pressing issue in Britain. The US was an easily accessible and frequently mentioned point of comparison for people when thinking about Britain's own progress on racism.

Brexit is seen as a challenge to this way of thinking, with people suggesting that it may have slowed down or even reversed Britain's progress on racism over the last five years. Brexit was seen to have emboldened those with racist views and to have given them a platform in the media, thereby legitimising them. Given the tendency among people to assess progress by looking to a decline in overt forms of racism, the fact that Brexit was perceived to legitimate more obvious forms of racism meant that it was seen as a threat to the progress that had been made.

When using this model, people are led into alleyways of thought that are not particularly productive and, in this sense, the model is somewhat limiting. First of all, thinking about racism as 'progress' can lead to the salience of racism diminishing as an issue. People think that there have been improvements and that there are therefore bigger issues than racism that are thought to affect more people and have a greater negative impact. This idea of progress is further supported by the association between racism and migration. More specifically, in this model, that as migration has progressed over time, third or fourth generation migrants living in Britain are more integrated into society and thus do not experience the racism that their parents or grandparents did generations ago.

Secondly, thinking with this model can reduce the criticism and evaluation that people direct towards current society and themselves. When looked at in opposition to Britain's recent (1960s-80s) or more distant (colonial era) history and in opposition to other countries (the US), people are somewhat reassured that things are better in the Britain of today and see less need to take the difficult step of looking deeper into racism as it exists in current society.

iv. A sense of fatalism

Key features of the model

- Racism cannot be eliminated; it has always existed and will always continue to exist.
- We may try hard to reduce racism but there are insurmountable barriers to overcome (like our competing ideals of free speech).
- This is a strong cultural model across both white and BME participants.

Explaining the model

This model reflects many participants belief that racism cannot, and never will, be totally eliminated or that if society is capable of doing so, there are significant challenges and barriers to overcome, that can feel overwhelming or potentially insurmountable.

One strand of thinking around this can be seen as a continuation of the idea that it is human nature to be racist; that it is a human trait or inherent within us all to find difference in people, to be fearful of those who are not like us and to be mistrustful of them. Another way this is conceptualised is the idea that we will always find difference. This may not be associated within something inherent within human nature, rather it appears more as an active choice – that we as humans choose to find difference.

When racism is seen as a 'mindset', slightly different to the idea that is innate within us, there is an unspoken belief that people have the capability to change their thinking, but there is a resignation to the fact that this does not happen and/or is unlikely to happen in the future. This is further compounded by a feeling of history around the notion of racism: it is something that has existed in society for years, decades or even centuries and if it has not changed before, why would it change now. It can be thought of as engrained into our psyche as part of our history.

There is also a group of society who 'will always be racist'. As there exists a group of the population who are racist now, even though it could be a very small minority, there is a belief that this will always continue. This group are slightly separate from the previous ways of thinking about the pervasive nature of racism. These people are likely to choose to be racist and are likely to act on it, so this is associated with the racism is personal model.

At a much broader level, the concept of equality is a challenge in society, and thus when thinking about racism, participants will draw on a belief that equality will never exist in society. Inequality in its various forms, including racial inequality, will always exist because as human beings we are not made to be equal.

For some, there might exist a time when racism could be eradicated but it is spoken about as something distant, and with significant barriers to overcome. These would involve an almost re-structure of society and would likely impinge on British ideals of fairness and free speech. Positive discrimination can be viewed as something in favour of the minority and is therefore not fair, as it continues to create difference and division in society; and as much of racism is thought of as language or what is said, any policing of this will encroach on the value of free speech. The restructure of society is a much more opaque notion, but hinges around the idea that it would be a complete change for society as it has always been this way, compounded by the fact that it does not feel like society currently could make that change.

v. We can be taught not to be racist

Key features of the model

- We can learn to be less racist.
- Parents and the formal education system can help educate others, especially children and young people.
- This is a strong cultural model across both white and BME participants.

Explaining the model

As a continuation of the *racism is what you know* cultural model, participants widely believed that education, an increase in understanding, or a greater propensity for learning is a solution to addressing the issue of racism. This viewpoint is built around the concepts of openness and honesty; that as we build a more inclusive and open society that is aware of diversity and inclusivity, we will reduce racism.

In its most definite sense, education was thought of as actively teaching children and young people in the formal education system about what racism is, what equality and diversity is, what different cultures are and the positive aspects of living in a multiracial and multicultural society.

This tied in with their thinking that racism is often learnt at a young age and that if this is addressed, there should be a significant decline in racist thinking.

Parents are also required to participate in this learning, as they were often seen as a source for racism. Whilst this could be thought of as parents themselves learning more about the concept of racism and the values of a multicultural society this was sometimes dismissed as it is often hard to change the minds of those where racism is already engrained. However, if their children are being taught these concepts in school, they can act as a conduit to reach their parents and start to affect change in that way. More generally though, by tackling the origins of racism through education now, the ultimate aim is that in future generations we, as a society, can 'grow out' of racism.

In its broadest sense, participants suggested as a society we should listen and learn from one another. Onus is either placed on BME communities to share their experiences and understanding of racism or on white people to listen and learn more from BME audiences (although these distinctions were often made with prompting from the interviewer). Regardless the end result is an ideal where more people are open-minded and there is a change of mindset to move to a society where everyone is treated equally.

There can also be a role for government here, both in delivering educational policy change to incorporate teaching about racial inequality and racism in the system, but also that the government should reach out to groups of society and listen and learn from them.

5. What are the narratives?

Overview

This chapter of the report outlines some of the broader themes and narratives that arose from the interviews. It is broken down to initially examine the values and emotions present when participants were thinking about the topics of 'race', racial equality and racism. Then we go on to define the three main narratives that were present during the interviews, in hopes of giving some more concrete understanding of how cultural models were employed.

What are the values and emotions at play?

Whilst our analysis focused on how participants thought about 'race', racial equality and racism, the interviews did capture what people thought about these topics, and the emotions and values present during the discussions.

Fairness

Perceptions around racism are based on the idea of fairness. How people should be treated or how people should act is based on what is perceived to be 'fair' in society. This is thought of in terms of equality: it is fair to treat anyone of any 'race' equally; or the idea that racism is people being treated unfairly; or it is a fair expectation that people should integrate. As such Britain could be seen as a fair or unfair country, depending on a participants' viewpoint.

Participant: "Britain is 100% better than it used to be. It's pretty fair."

Participant: "[Racism is] treating people unfairly."

Participant: "I think most people think like me. They're generally decent people...you see everyone fairly."

Participant (BME): "The idea of White trash even, White Irish are singled out, in Britain for example... There is an unfairness of things."

Community

Community is equally seen as something to strive for and a barrier within society. Community, in the sense of people of different 'races' living together harmoniously, is almost the ideal and one of the ways in which racism could be reduced. But on the other hand, pockets of communities that are segregated within society and do not integrate are a challenge to living in a multi-racial society. These groups or communities are an example of where difference exists. Taken further, this idea of community feeds into stereotypes as communities of people are seen to act in similar ways.

Participant: "The Jewish community are insular, whereas the Asians mix more with the community."

Participant: "Those doing it [racism] – they're righteous, they're doing what's best for them and their community."

Participant (BME): “Poles and Romanians seem to stay within their community, the integration is lacking”.

Honesty and transparency

These were used to explain issues with how the media reports on the topic of racism and how the media ‘interprets’ the truth. Nearly all participants referenced that the media sensationalises the issue of ‘racism’ – either to promote their own political interests or to rile the public up to cause interest and engagement with the issue and thus increase their readership.

Participant: “The media needs to be impartial, be fair, not racist. Everyone bases their ideas and thoughts around the media.”

Participant (BME): “In the news, the reporting on riots. That’s what the media chose to focus on, to present it as a bad thing rather than explain the root, the cause, the explanation”.

Power

This is most often referenced as the power structures that cause or maintain inequality. A few white participants will acknowledge this as ‘white privilege’ but across both white and BME interviews it is seen within a historical context and something that is continued today.

Participant: “White people tend to favour themselves. They are in positions of power.”

Participant: “The status quo of white male power exists, and they don’t want that to change.”

Participant: “Ethnic minorities still aren’t in positions of power. People are stereotyped into particular job roles.”

Participant (BME): “The powers that be decided that’s what they want to do, since slavery, and it’s been perpetuated.”

Participant (BME): “There’s a lack of representation and diversity. It means there is one type of people in power.”

Acceptance

Part of the journey to an equal society is that we need to develop acceptance of diversity and of different people’s cultures.

Participant: “There is a lack of acceptance for people being different. We don’t teach tolerance and respect in schools.”

Participant: “For white British people it is all about acceptance. We need to be making the effort to ask the questions and stop fearing the unknown about certain groups.”

Participant: “[Racism is] the intolerance of someone who’s different to you – you tend to think of it as colour, beliefs, culture, nationality.”

Participant (BME): “The UK is a multi-racial society. It enhances diversity, it increases people’s tolerance; there are opportunities to learn from other cultures.”

Participant (BME): "Children are not being taught Black history. They are not learning about other cultures. Education is not opening minds or teaching children tolerance."

Incomprehension / lack of understanding

Feelings of incomprehension cut across many of the white interviews. White participants often have a sense of incredulity around why racism happens or what makes someone act in a racist manner. On the other hand, there is a lack of understanding amongst some of why racism is 'perceived' to be such a big issue in society today.

Participant: "I don't get how people can't be racist to white people. They can call you what they like and never get pulled up on it."

Participant: "Racism is made to be a problem. We can't let things go."

Detachment

A number of white participants were relatively detached from the concept of 'race' or racism. They had little understanding of either concept, and had top-level responses when asked what racism is, why it happens and the impact it has. The general feeling behind this was that racism wasn't something that they 'saw' in their lives, either because of their upbringing or the area they lived in and wasn't something that happened to them.

Participant: "It's happening nowhere as much as we are led to believe. It's in inner cities. It's just the media actively looking for it."

Participant: "I don't think the UK is racist. I don't know many racist people."

Fear, fault and frustration

Fear is ultimately bred from the idea of fear of difference or a fear of the unknown, which is felt to part of human nature. Through this fear, blame or fault can be assigned to those that we are fearful of because they are different to us and it is easy to blame something that we don't understand.

Some white participants feel that as a society we are becoming too politically correct which means they cannot say what they want to say without fear of reprisal, which leads to frustration around the way society is headed. Similarly, many reference the changing goalposts around what is deemed to be 'racist' especially around language and terminology. Again, this leads to feelings of frustration and resentment as they feel that racism is often unintentional.

Participant: "We're scared. It's fear of difference."

Participant: "It's fear that your beliefs are at threat. If your country doesn't look like it used to. Threatening their lives, taking their jobs."

Participant (BME): "White people feel insecure."

Participant: "There could be a genuine fear that Britain's history will be swept under the carpet and forgotten about."

Participant (BME): "Racism can result from fear of other races. From propaganda and media reports that show other races in a negative way."

What are the broad narratives at play?

Whilst this report has focused on the cultural models at play, we feel that it is helpful as a summary to relay back the overall narratives of participants throughout the interviews, outlining the general themes from the interviews.

The three broad narratives we outline are generalisations or stereotypes of views. There are of course, participants who buck the trend or who do not quite fit into such neat categories. This is especially pertinent to this topic: whilst these interviews have unearthed broad narratives and key cultural models, the topics of 'race', race equality and racism are complex and difficult for some participants to explore in great detail.

It is also worth noting that there are some cultural models that are employed across all narratives and in remarkably similar ways. For instance, the use of stereotyping or *tarring someone with the same brush* was common across many interviews. There were not certain groups of people who were more likely to be aware of it, use it more or think that it was based on truth or lie. The most common stereotype of Black people and a sense of fear or nervousness was just as likely mentioned across white and BME participants as it was narratives. The only place of disparity may be amongst the 'Racism is wide of the mark' narrative where this stereotype may be more likely pointed to as truth.

'Race' as origin, 'race' as difference and *racism is what you know, or don't know* are all also likely used across all narratives. In this sense, the way that people conceptualise and think about 'race' can play little part in the way they can go on to consider the broader ideals of racial inequality and racism. Therefore, in the below three narratives, we highlight the cultural models that show some distinctness in thinking.

The 'Racism is Relevant' narrative was likely to come from both white and BME participants. The 'Racism is Distant' narrative was drawn on more strongly by white participants, although some BME participants did also discuss 'race', racial equality, and racism along this narrative. 'Racism is "wide of the mark"' was predominantly likely to be a narrative employed by White participants and rarely seen amongst BME participants.

Racism is Relevant

Racism is a big issue in today's society, as is inequality, and there are specific groups in society, including BME people, who definitely have to work harder than others to get where they want to go and achieve what they want. This is something that we should all be paying attention to and focusing on. Although there has been progress over the years this doesn't mean that the problem of racism or racial inequality has been solved.

On the whole racism may have got 'better' – because instances appear to have declined over time and, more bluntly, people aren't in slavery – but this is partly because the nature of racism has changed from overt, visible racism to racism that is hidden and something that is more insidious. Racism can constitute both personal and systemic racism. When we look at it overall, in the last five or ten years, racism has actually been getting worse because Brexit and the far-right has politicised and normalised more racist thinking.

Racism is Distant

Racism is a problem in society, but we also have other problems and issues to deal with as well. People have always experienced inequality over the years, racism is just a part of this. Racism is something that feels quite distant to me, it isn't something that comes up in my day-to-day life; it doesn't happen to people like me or only happens in (other) certain areas, but there are people that say it does exist. It could be something due to genetics, but this is a very general, vague idea.

I know racism is bad and it is something that should be dealt with. Racism rarely exists at a systemic issue, that really isn't on my radar. It's mainly acts carried out by individuals who are deliberately racist, but a lot of racism is just a result of misunderstandings around language and ignorance, so it's rarely intentional.

Racism is 'wide of the mark'

Everyone thinks racism is a big problem in society today because that's all we hear about. It's such a focus in the media and society, but the media just makes it look much worse than it is. In fact, though, by talking about 'race' and racism we create division and difference between 'races'; it calls attention to something that shouldn't even be talked about.

We have made great strides around racism, and today, everyone is equal in society. But we're almost tipping the balance too much in the other direction, and we've become too politically correct and it feels like we're tipping the scales in favour of minority groups. We need to be aware of this because some of the generalisations that exist in society are based in truth, and we need to be careful about protecting Britain and its' people.

Racism did exist in the past, but you hardly ever see it now, so if it does exist it's amongst a very small minority of the population, and this is likely to be instances of personal racism that are one-off events (systemic racism does not really exist).