

**Examiners' notes**

When answering a question on ethnic inequalities try to avoid 'lumping' everyone together. The experiences of members of minority ethnic groups vary and so does the experience of men and women in the same group.

**Essential notes**

This was known as the immigrant-host model. Some aspect of this model is embedded in the Britishness test that those applying for citizenship must now take.

**Examiners' notes**

Ensure you draw essays to a conclusion, especially when you have been asked to evaluate theories or explanations. There are similarities between the ideas of the Weberians and the neo-Marxists and you should draw these out in a question on ethnic inequalities.

**Essential notes**

**Racism** takes a variety of forms from bullying to name calling and more violent attacks on individuals and groups. **Institutional racism** is the 'collective failure of an organization to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin'.

**Essential notes**

Status inequality is the idea that people's position in society is more to do with

**Explanations of ethnic inequality****Functionalist explanations**

Functionalists argue that a stable society is based on shared norms and values, and when migrants come to a country they will eventually be assimilated and inequalities will lessen. Patterson (1965) espoused a similar view, adding that any racism from the dominant group was a result of 'ignorance and confusion; it was not deliberate and would eventually go'.

**Evaluation**

- Solomos and Back (1994) argue **assimilation** does not lead to a decline in inequalities.
- Hall (1978) argued the immigrant-host model reinforced racism and inequalities because it defined minority ethnic groups as the problem and ignored structural inequalities.
- Functionalism fails to acknowledge that minority ethnic groups may wish to retain their own cultures and not be assimilated.

**Marxist explanations**

Marxists argue that class is the most significant factor in explaining ethnic inequalities. Traditional Marxists (Westergaard and Resler, 1976) argue that the inequalities faced by members of minority ethnic groups are just the same as the inequalities suffered by the white working class. This is supported by Castles and Kosack (1973), who argue that racial prejudice enables the dominant class to 'divide' those who really have the same class interests.

**Evaluation**

Solomos and Back (1994) argue traditional Marxism is inadequate in explaining contemporary issues of inequalities and power. There is no unified working class that opposes the capitalist class.

**Neo-Marxist explanations**

Neo-Marxists argue that the traditional Marxist view is outdated, it is deterministic and does not take into account the racism experienced by minority ethnic groups.

Miles (1989) argues that the division between the ruling class and the working class is fundamental in a capitalist society, but racist ideology plays an important part in determining the position of minority ethnic groups within classes. He argues classes are racialized.

**Evaluation**

Gilroy takes the view that 'race and class are separate but connected'. He argues inequalities are produced and then reproduced through, for example, the school system.

**Weberian/neo-Weberian explanations**

Weberians argue that racial and ethnic inequalities are linked to economics but status and power are also important.

- Parkin (1979) argued class and status are equally important and the middle classes practise social closure to keep out people from minority ethnic backgrounds.

- Rex and Tomlinson argue there is a racialized underclass. They argue the marginalized position of many black and Asian people in the UK can be understood in terms of an underclass which occupies a disadvantaged position in areas such as employment, housing, education and power to make decisions.
- Barron and Norris argue there is a dual labour market: a primary sector with well-paid, secure jobs, and a secondary sector where jobs are less secure, often part-time, temporary and non-unionized. Minority ethnic groups are more likely to be in the secondary sector.

**Evaluation**

- These views are similar to the neo-Marxist view in terms of **racialized class fractions**.
- New Right theorists such as Murray and Marsland argue many minority ethnic groups do not attempt to engage with the labour market.
- The idea of a racialized underclass is not substantiated by evidence.

**Postmodernism**

Postmodernists argue that we choose which aspects of each other's cultures we wish to have as part of our identity, and so inequalities between ethnic groups are complicated by hybridization.

Modood argues that what we now have is diversity and difference, and explanations for ethnic inequalities should focus on these and on identity. Given this development of hybrid cultures, Modood argues that it is difficult to analyse inequality by ethnic group; rather, it is easier to identify smaller groups to analyse.

**Evaluation**

Marxists argue that postmodernists do not take account of the material deprivation that some minority ethnic groups experience, and that they focus more on culture and identity than inequalities.

their status than with their class. **Social closure** is a strategy used by one social group to exclude another, for example the use of the '**old-boy network**' in recruitment.

**Essential notes**

This view of an **underclass** should not be confused with that of the New Right who take a 'blame the victim' approach to members of the underclass.

**Essential notes**

Hybrid cultures/hybridization is the process whereby people from different ethnic backgrounds choose to take aspects of other people's cultures and hybrid cultures develop. Postmodernists use the concept of super-diversity to describe the cultural and ethnic diversity in the contemporary UK.

**Examiners' notes**

Ensure you use appropriate terminology. Ethnicity is a complex issue and terminology is sometimes controversial. There are competing views as to the concepts that should be used. 'Minority ethnic groups' is currently used by a range of sociologists and government departments.

**Essential notes**

The Equality Act 2010, which covers all forms of discrimination, came into force on October 1st 2010.

**Essential notes**

Researchers at the University of Leeds have predicted that figures for minority ethnic groups will rise after data from the 2011 census is analysed, with some groups such as the Irish growing fairly slowly whilst 'other whites' (people from the EU, US and Australasia) will be growing the fastest.

**Examiners' notes**

The use of the term 'race' is problematic and therefore most sociologists use ethnicity. When collecting data the government also uses ethnicity.

**Examiners' notes**

There are as many differences in terms of power and status between ethnic groups as there are similarities; sweeping generalizations about all minority ethnic groups should be avoided.

**Source:** Bhopal, K. (1999) *South Asian Women Homeworkers in East London* in Gregory et al. *Women, Work and Inequality* (Macmillan, 1999)

**Essential notes**

The term **ethnic penalty** describes the disadvantages minority ethnic groups face in the labour market compared with whites of the same age and with similar cultural and social capital (Yi Cheung, 2006).

**Ethnicity and inequality**

**Ethnicity**

**Ethnicity** refers to a person's cultural background including their values, traditions, customs, and language. The UK minority ethnic population makes up 7.9% of the total (census, 2001).

Minority ethnic groups often experience discrimination in areas such as education, employment, housing and health.

**Employment**

- Chinese and Indian men earn more than any other ethnic group and are more likely to enter the professions. Bangladeshi men and women are the lowest paid (Hills Report, 2010).
- The unemployment rate of black graduates is 24%, worse than any other group of graduates.
- Hills et al. (2005) found there was a high level of unemployment amongst Pakistani and Bangladeshi men.
- Yi Cheung (2006) points out that the proportion of young people entering the labour market from minority ethnic groups is much higher than for the white population because of the younger age profile. However, she argues they can experience the '**ethnic penalty**'.
- Women workers from Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds are sometimes limited by **cultural constraints** (Bhopal, 1999).

Bhopal's study in East London found evidence of the relationship between ethnicity, class and gender in the employment situation of South Asian homeworkers.

**Key study**

Bhopal studied South Asian homeworkers in East London. She used qualitative methods of data collection, interviewing women in their own homes to find out why they had become homeworkers, how they felt about the conditions under which they worked and the choices they had. She defined homeworkers as people working from home on low pay, with few if any rights. She found that all the women had arranged marriages, and they worked at home because either their husbands preferred it or they wanted to look after their children while they worked. Their wages were extremely low, but despite that, some of the women said being a homemaker gave them "... the best of both worlds ... we are working and we are looking after our family" (Meena). On the other hand, some felt isolated and lonely and had become depressed. They also suffered from other health problems such as backache.

**Education**

Education is seen as a means for social mobility, but that has not been the experience of all minority ethnic groups.

- Pakistani and black students do least well in the education system.
- Black students are more likely to be excluded or labelled as troublesome and loud.

However:

- students from most minority ethnic groups remain in education longer than their white peers
- minority ethnic students are entering higher education at a higher rate than their white peers, although they tend to go to the 'new' universities.
- those from poor backgrounds, measured by entitlement to free school meals, do better than their white peers.

**Health**

Members of minority ethnic groups die of the same range of diseases as those from the majority ethnic group. There are some variations, although Nettleton (1995) argues that these must be viewed with some caution, especially when class is taken into account. Field and Blakemore (2003) agree but argue that there are some clear patterns of health and illness which are different from the majority white population.

- The risk of poor health and higher mortality is greater in most minority ethnic communities than in the white majority, with the exception of Indian and African-Asian communities. Both have better health than that of the white majority.
- Most minority ethnic groups suffer less lung cancer and breast cancer than the white majority and are less subject to illnesses connected to the respiratory system.
- Africans and African-Caribbeans have an increased incidence of high blood pressure and strokes.
- Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are more likely to have diabetes, TB and liver cancer.
- Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are more likely to suffer from coronary heart disease.
- African-Caribbeans are more likely to be compulsorily sectioned under the Mental Health Act.
- African-Caribbean and Pakistani babies are twice as likely to die in the first year of life as Bangladeshi and white babies (EHRC 2010).
- People from the Indian sub-continent tend to consume less alcohol and have lower rates of smoking.
- Men and women from the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities as well as African-Caribbean women are more likely to report bad health than any other group.

**Housing**

- Many minority ethnic groups, who are also working class, suffer the same poor housing deprivations as the white working class (damp and overcrowded) and 40% of minority ethnic groups are in non-decent housing compared to 32% of the white majority (English House Condition Survey 2001).
- Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are more likely to live in deprived inner-city areas in poor housing than any other group (Pilkington, 2005).

**Examiners' notes**

When making the link between ethnicity and inequalities remember to point out how, as in Bhopal's study, it intersects with gender and class.