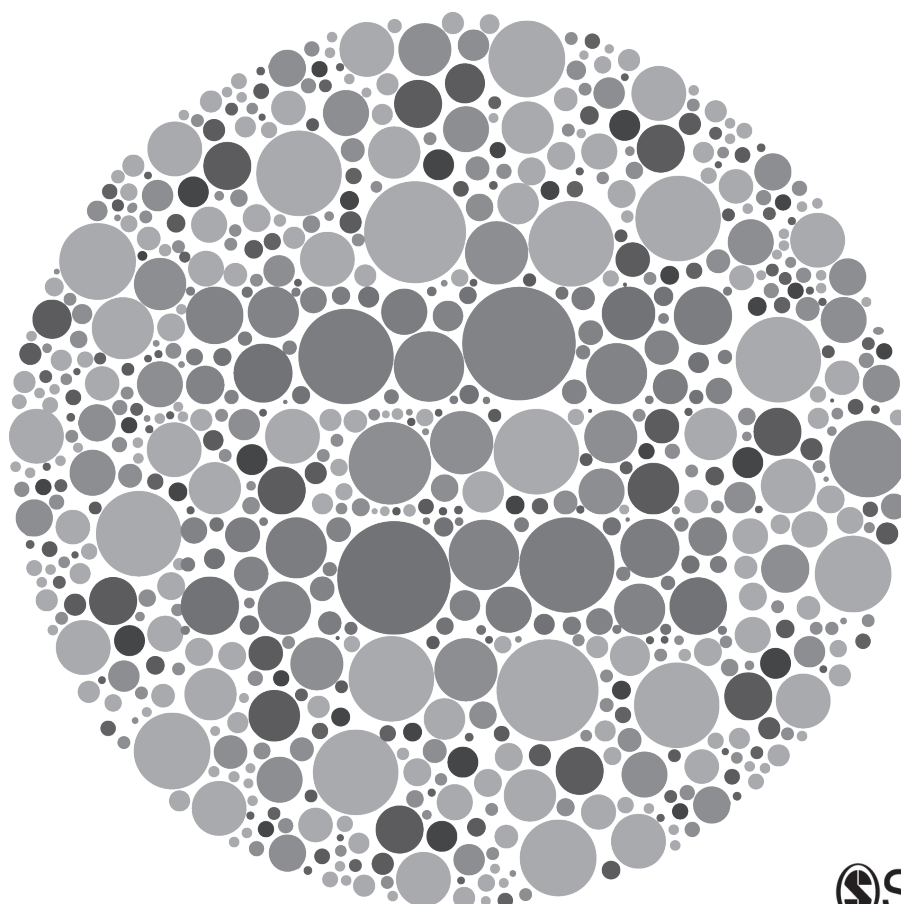


MUZAMMIL QURAISHI & ROB PHILBURN

RESEARCHING RACISM

A GUIDE BOOK *for* ACADEMICS & PROFESSIONAL INVESTIGATORS



 **SAGE**

Los Angeles | London | New Delhi
Singapore | Washington DC

1

THE HISTORY OF RACE

Keywords: *history, Antiquity, Enlightenment, Social Darwinism, eugenics, 'science of race'*

The phenomenon of racism occupies a controversial and powerful position in contemporary societies; it has become embedded in discussions of inequality, oppression and discrimination. The purpose of this chapter is to elucidate the historical concept of 'race' upon which modern racism is founded.

The questions raised are:

- How are such historical events related to our contemporary understanding of race?
- How does the former treatment of colonial subjects influence their current socio-economic positions?
- Are the origins and vocabulary of contemporary racial discrimination traceable to the not so distant past?

Racism and the History of 'Race'

Academics are far from united in their approach regarding how racism is defined; whilst some consider it a reflection of class inequalities in a capitalist society (Miles, 1989), others emphasise a need to evaluate the multiple ways in which racisms have been historically constructed (Goldberg, 1993). Furthermore, for some the focus should be on understanding the concept of 'racialisation', i.e. how some groups of people become socially constructed as 'races' which are biologically or culturally inferior (Back and Solomos, 2000). In order to fully comprehend how such divergent approaches have arisen we must explore the very origins of the modern concept of 'race' itself.

Earliest Notions of 'Race' and Racial Difference

Some scholars have asserted that the roots of racism pre-date the science of race which emerged during the nineteenth century. It has been noted that in Antiquity the Babylonian Talmud construed humankind as descendants of the three sons of Noah. According to certain religious narratives and mythology some of those descended from Ham were 'cursed' by being black. Some of those descended from Ham were cursed by being black (El-Hamel, 2002; Garner, 2010). Furthermore, the Greek philosopher Aristotle, whilst not discussing specific 'races', distinguished between Greeks being free by nature but barbarians being slaves by nature (Lewis, 2003). Scholars have also highlighted the common use of black slaves amongst early Jewish, Christian and Islamic societies despite the absence of any theologically sanctioned differentiation of black people amongst these Abrahamic faiths (Byron, 2003; Schwartz, 1997). Furthermore, the expulsion of Muslim and Jewish populations from Spain as part of the violent *Reconquista* of the fifteenth century was built upon the *cleanliness of blood doctrine* which sought to establish a firm demarcation between those within white Christian Europe and barbarians outside its fold (Lacey, 1983).

Such conceptions of the world had a profound impact upon European expansion, colonisation and the consequent subjugation and indeed destruction of native peoples in Africa, Asia, Australasia and the Americas.

It is important to recall these historical contexts for they arguably shape the discourse about race which permeated the subsequent eras. However, the modern concept of race can be traced to the European Enlightenment, although as discussed below, distinctions must be drawn between pre-Enlightenment prejudice, the universal commonality of humankind principles of early Enlightenment thinkers and the subsequent overturning of this position following the expansion of European capitalism.

The European Enlightenment and 'Race'

Jurists applaud the intellectual inroads made by Enlightenment thinkers such as Locke, Beccaria and Rousseau with regard to checking the vagaries and harshness of European legal systems of the time. However, there are other less explored consequences of Enlightenment scholarship which arguably compounded discriminatory beliefs of this period. The scholar Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze asserts that the modern concept of 'race' can be traced to the Enlightenment during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Eze, 1997). The assertion made by Eze, and others such as Said (1978) and Gilroy (1993), is that the Enlightenment scholars, including Hume, Kant and Voltaire, blended populist and early scientific notions of 'race' to articulate an 'Age of Reason' which was essentially racially constructed. Whilst humankind was free to use reason, this reason was the preserve of white Europeans within the fold of a civilised Europe; those lands outside Europe were deemed void of reason and consequently marked by savagery and barbarism (Eze, 1997).

A closer examination of Enlightenment scholarship, however, reveals a series of complex intellectual developments which confirms that early thinkers such as Rousseau, Locke and Degerando conceived a common humanity devoid of racial hierarchical divisions between Europeans and non-Europeans. Whilst some Enlightenment thinkers did espouse what could be deemed racist views, it is important not to wholly judge their writings with twenty-first-century eyes. For example, assertions of racism in Hume's work may be contested since his work contains both a footnote to a text which ranks white Europeans above black people but also a subsequent text which is diametrically opposed to this ranking. Similarly, Buffon accepted the existence of distinct races of humans and slavery but also claimed that human differences were determined by environmental and cultural factors (Malik, 1996).

A clear distinction can be made between the universality of humankind principles articulated by the first architects of the Enlightenment such as Rousseau, Locke and Degerando and the racialised discourse and thoughts of others inspired by Enlightenment thinkers one hundred years later such as Thomas Huxley in Britain. Kenan Malik asserts that *'belief in reason, espousal of the scientific method and a universalist conviction do not of themselves imply a racial viewpoint'* (Malik, 1996: 41). According to Malik, the Enlightenment is a useful starting point for understanding racism but *'not because Enlightenment discourse was imbricated with the concept of race, but because through Enlightenment philosophy humanity had for the first time a concept of a human universality that could transcend perceived differences. Before the modern concept of race could develop, the modern concepts of equality and humanity had to develop too'* (Malik, 1996: 42).

The assertion, therefore, that the modern concept of race is simply a continuation of age-old prejudices is contested. The early common humanity view, espoused by thinkers such as Locke, was overturned with the arrival of capitalism. An expanding bourgeoisie in Europe were emboldened by the equality principles of the Enlightenment aiming to dismantle the feudal system and ultimately culminating in the French Revolution. However, the social and political upheaval also gave vent to a backlash against the Enlightenment amongst some sections of the bourgeoisie. A particular contradiction arose amongst thinkers about equality and more particularly towards the ownership of property. How could the belief in equality be reconciled with defending the inequality of private property? Rousseau had argued that there were differences between natural and artificial inequality, the *'modern concept of race arises from the attempt to attribute to nature the inequality that Rousseau rightly regards as the product of the moral or political domain'* (Malik, 1996: 60).

The 'Science of Race'

In the mid-eighteenth century the discipline of biology was making significant progress in terms of classifying the natural world. Carl Linne (Linnaeus) established a classification system for plants before establishing a racial taxonomy for his 'homo sapiens' construed within an hierarchy based upon skin colour with white humans on top (Eze, 1997). Linne described the white race as:

... *'inventive, full of ingenuity, orderly and governed by laws' whereas 'negroes were endowed with all the negative qualities which made them a counterfoil for the superior race; they were regarded as lazy, devious and unable to govern themselves'*. (Mosse, 1978: 20)

In 1775, Johann Fredrich Blumenbach developed his physical anthropology and the most widely accepted racial taxonomies of the period originating from skull measurements. He divided humanity into five types based on geographical factors and representing gradations: I. Caucasian, II. Mongolian, III. Ethiopian, IV. Malay and V. American (Blumenbach, 1969 [1775, 1795]). It is worth noting that Blumenbach did not assert any physical hierarchy or ranking amongst humans although he did erroneously claim that the earliest humans were most likely to be white rather than black. Blumenbach established humans were a distinct species (monogeny) and that there was no evidence of cross-species of humans as a result of breeding with animals. Perhaps most importantly, Blumenbach recognised heterogeneity amongst populations living in one geographical location; the classifications represented gradations rather than distinct races (Bhopal, 2007).

The early 'scientific' view of races as fixed and determined buttressed the birth of racist ideology with the writings of Joseph Arthur Gobineau in his essay of 1853 entitled 'The Inequality of Human Races' (Gobineau, 1853). Gobineau is often attributed with the infamous title of 'father of racist ideology' since his work asserted a belief that the decline of civilisation was due to the disease of 'degeneration' of 'racially superior' stock which was 'inbreeding with inferior stock' (Bowling and Phillips, 2002: 2). This work was subsequently translated into German and English providing fuel for the development of white supremacist ideologies in Europe and America.

The absurdity of some early genetics research is particularly well demonstrated by the proponents of polygenesis which asserted that the varied 'races' of man reflected their origins in different animal species. The work of Nott and Gliddon in 1854 entitled *Types of Mankind* included elaborate pictorial examples of how, according to the theorists, contemporary racial attributes could be traced to their distinct evolutionary paths. The theory of polygenesis, therefore, enabled theorists to assert that one race may have originated from bison, whilst another could be traced to the giraffe or ox (Nott and Gliddon, 1854).

Although economic utility rather than racial ideology has been asserted as underpinning slavery (see Malik, 1996), perceptions of humankind divided biologically were instrumental in the expansion and perpetuation of the Atlantic slave trade as well as in the eradication of native peoples in the Americas, Australasia and South Africa during European colonial expansion. This was made possible in part by the ability of white Europeans to view such expansion as part of the natural order of events whereby racially superior races superseded those deemed racially inferior (Fryer, 1984). Similarly, such reasoning was expanded to include beliefs that white Europeans were empowered via divine guidance and endorsement to civilise the

world and this eventually led to the development of moral trusteeship and paternalism towards colonial subjects (Bowling and Phillips, 2002).

It was the psychologist and son-in-law of Charles Darwin, Francis Galton, who asserted his objections to the existence of natural equality among humans. In his text of 1869 entitled *Hereditary Genius* Galton developed his theory of 'racial hygiene', which essentially founded the eugenics movement. Galton also founded the use of intelligence testing and in the same text asserts, '*The mistake that the Negroes made in their own matters were so childish, stupid and simpleton-like, as frequently to make me ashamed of my own species*' (Galton, 1869: 339). Galton influenced the birth of psychometry, which was particularly popular during World War II in Britain initially for military recruits and subsequently in the sphere of education. The reduction of human behaviour into testable units was reflective of the essentially anti-democratic nature of the Galton paradigm, centred upon determining why certain people in society should be excluded from decision making (Daniels and Houghton, 1972).

More profound was the development of the eugenics movement which was essentially founded upon Social Darwinian ideology. Advocates for eugenics believed that the state should actively encourage certain populations to breed whilst others should be restricted from doing so, policies extended to the taking of lives if society as a whole would benefit. Such concepts of racial hygiene were actualised most destructively during Nazi rule in Germany from 1933 to 1945. The Nazis resurrected the fictional notion of a superior Aryan race and legislated for the preservation of an assumed German racial purity via the Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honour (1935). This law, *inter alia*, prohibited persons deemed to have German or kindred blood from marrying Jews on the basis that such prohibition would safeguard the future of the German nation. The Nazi racial purification programme included research, experimentation and sterilisation of people designated racially impure, criminals, homosexuals and 'mixed-offspring' of German women and French North African troops based in the Rhineland (Bowling and Phillips, 2002).

Manipulating Racial Identity: Historical Examples

Indentured Labour

Taking into consideration the preceding overview, the following examples demonstrate how notions of race have been socially constructive for 'political' purposes at key moments in the nineteenth century. History has presented many examples from which to demonstrate the creation, maintenance and utilisation of constructions about race; for the purposes of this text the examples are largely, though not exclusively, from British rule in India.

The Emancipation Act of 1833, whilst abolishing slavery, had created the need for the cost-effective provision of labour on plantations. One of the solutions came in the form of indentured labour as part of the nineteenth-century coolie system

of Indian and Chinese labour. Between 1834 and 1927, 30 million Indians left India as part of this global division of labour (Davis, 1951). The indentured labourers went to colonies which were governed by Europeans to work on plantations, railroads, canals and in mines. The coolie system was a hybrid system somewhere between slavery and free-waged labour (Banaji, 1933). Scholars have identified evidence, for example in correspondence between plantation owners and British recruitment agents as well as Parliamentary and Royal reports, which illustrates the construction of racial stereotypes by Europeans to entice and govern indentured labourers from Asia (Mahmud, 1997). Indian recruits were deemed useful in disciplining and controlling black labourers who had been labelled as 'lazy, unreliable and dishonest' (Mahmud, 1997: 644). In contrast, an initial stereotype emerged of Indians who were praised for their industriousness, loyalty and respect for authority. The latter shifted once indentured labourers experienced the harsh conditions in plantations and construction sites in the Caribbean, Kenya and East Africa. As resistance and self-preservation movements developed amongst them, the indentured Indians were to become labelled as 'avaricious, jealous, dishonest, idolatrous and filthy' (Mahmud, 1997: 644). Such dissatisfaction with Indian labourers prompted plantation owners to shift their strategies to the Chinese, who for a short time at least were viewed in a positive light.

Martial Races Theory

A further example of racial identity formation and manipulation during European colonial rule is found within the policies and practices of recruitment for the Indian colonial army and the promotion of the martial races theory by the British following the uprisings of 1857. Martial races theory asserts that certain races and people are inherently more martial than others. Martial in this sense was to imply a capacity for warfare, not in a barbaric sense but rather as possession of a military instinct. White Europeans, including the British, were deemed to be martial but this was not extended to all 'races' in India. Until the Indian Mutiny of 1857, the Indian colonial army relied heavily upon soldiers from Bengal who had been compared to the finest Prussian soldiers (Heathcote, 1974). Following the Mutiny the British prohibited recruitment from Bengal and instead developed an elaborate recruitment strategy based on the notion that races in the north of India and from the Punjab were more martial. Simultaneously, Bengalis were now construed as feeble, effeminate and lacking constitution (Mahmud, 1997).

The British went to considerable lengths to identify, document and photograph the ideal and most martial army recruits. Caste and tribal affiliations were often equated to race; Rajputs for example were praised for preservation of their Aryan racial purity through strict adherence to caste. It was not without design that most of the new recruits were from rural peasant populations whilst the Bengalis had included members of the emerging urban middle classes more likely to challenge imperial rule. The legacy of such practices should not be understated since they have arguably influenced

not only the current ethnic composition of the Pakistani and Indian military but also reflect the origin of certain stereotypes about contemporary populations in the Indian sub-continent (Cohen, 1971; Quraishi, 2005).

Box 1.1 The British Obsession with Martial Races

Recruitment to the Indian army in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was restricted largely to the following groups:

*'Pathans from the NW Frontier districts and the independent tribal regions;
Baluchis and Brahuis from Kalat and British Baluchistan;
Sikhs, Jats, Dogras and Muslims from the Punjab;
Garhwalis, Kumaonis and Gurkhas from the Himalayan regions;
Rajputs, Brahmans and Muslims from the Delhi and Hindustan regions;
Rajputs, Jats, Mers and Muslims from Rajasthan and central India;
Marathas and Deccani Muslims from Western India;
Christians, Untouchables, Tamils and Muslims from Southern India.'*

(Heathcote, 1974: 94)

Criminal Tribes

In addition to the examples above, the British in India also passed specific legislation which deemed sections of Indian society criminal by birth. The legislation had been preceded by a lengthy campaign against 'thagi' or 'thugs' by the Thagi and Dakaiti Department from the 1830s to the 1840s. The thagi campaign reflected ideas about hereditary criminality amongst groups considered hierarchically subordinate to the British both in terms of morality and physiology (Brown, 2001). The British passed the Criminal Tribes Act (Act XXVII) in 1871, in part influenced by the emergence of determinist biological theories about crime in Europe during this period. Under this Act, the colonial authorities in India designated approximately 13 million people as belonging to a criminal tribe (Yang, 1985). Once a local government had designated a group of people as members of a criminal tribe they were subject to registration, surveillance and control which required compulsory reporting at identified police stations as part of a complex pass system. There was no right of appeal to being defined as belonging to a criminal tribe and local officials were empowered to resettle tribes or remove them to a reformatory. Furthermore, it was assumed that criminal genes could be transmitted between criminal tribe members and so inter-marriage within a criminal tribe was prohibited. It was not uncommon for children to be separated from their parents and kept in custody. Breaches of the pass system were met by punitive measures including imprisonment, fines and whipping. It has been argued that a key motivation for the legislation was the control and reclamation

of nomadic communities who were deemed unproductive within a colonial economic agenda (Mahmud, 1999; Nigam, 1990).

Ethnographic Showcases

Between 1851 and 1930, European colonial powers were keen to display their advances in industry, agriculture, science and culture via large exhibitions including the Great Exhibition 1851, Colonial and Indian Exhibition 1886, World's Colombian Exposition 1893, Greater Britain Exhibition 1899, Paris World Fair 1878 and Imperial International Exhibition 1909. These events were typically very large affairs and provided opportunities for ritualised competition amongst the social and economic elites of the period. They also reflected an obsession amongst colonial powers with the identification, classification and 'displaying' of 'savage' native tribes and people who had been 'tamed' and subjugated by the white coloniser (Corbey, 1995). The Paris World Fair of 1878 marks the first event where people from non-western cultures were exhibited. Four hundred natives from the French colonies of Indochina, Senegal and Tahiti were displayed in elaborate village sets. The tribes on 'display' were often presented as brutal savages who had been 'tamed' triumphantly by civilising white Europeans. Once more, scholars have argued that these practices reflect the origins of contemporary notions of racial hierarchies and white supremacy (Corbey, 1995; Mahmud, 1997).

The first question you may have of approaching the topics explored above is to ask how do these historical contexts help my understanding about race in the twenty-first century? Surely, are not such misdeeds and outmoded ways of thinking about humans confined to dusty history? Whilst this would be an admirable approach, it would fail to acknowledge the complex legacy that such practices and history have left in their wake. The practices outlined above are simply a fraction of the exchanges between the powerful and powerless over the centuries. They represent the ways in which human populations have been classified and categorised in pseudo-scientific ways based on unsustainable biological categories of race. Any cursory examination of an official form (passport or driver's licence application, crime report, marketing questionnaire) will demonstrate that classifying difference is still very much on the agenda of governments and agencies around the globe. We will now demonstrate some of the ways in which the history discussed above has impacted upon how ethnic minorities in Britain have become criminalised.

Impact of History upon the Contemporary: The Policing of Ethnic Minorities in Britain

The legacy of the events outlined above should not be underestimated and we seek to demonstrate the pervasiveness and impact of the early notions or scientific concepts of race upon contemporary practices. No discussion about racism in contemporary society

would be complete without engagement with the ways in which ethnic minorities have become criminalised and over-represented in official criminal statistics. The following discussion outlines the history of conflict in Britain between visible ethnic minorities and the police which perpetuates the myth about racial differences and negative traits being attributed to non-white populations.

The ethnicity and crime debate is based upon the largely consistent over-representation of black and minority ethnic (BME) populations in each stage of the criminal justice system of England and Wales. Simply put, this means that more BME people are stopped and searched, arrested, charged, convicted and sentenced to prison, than is proportionate to their percentage representation within the whole British population as recorded by the Census (Ministry of Justice, 2013a).

The first public concerns aired regarding immigrant populations and crime followed significant in-migration from Britain's former Commonwealth nations following the postwar re-building efforts in the 1950s. Initial migrants were encouraged to come to Britain from the West Indies and Indian sub-continent. Prompted by public concerns about immigration and crime levels, a Parliamentary Select Committee of 1973 concluded that incidents of crime amongst the immigrant population were lower than amongst the white population. However, this initial conformist representation shifted to one of suspect populations following a series of exchanges between black populations and the police during the 1970s and 1980s (Bowling and Phillips, 2002).

The work of Hunte in 1966 demonstrated that black people had become the subject of over-policing within the urban locations where they had tended to settle following the demand for employment and affordable housing (Hunte, 1966). By the 1970s in Birmingham, for example, one report concluded that black people were over-policed by a police force amongst which racist views were widespread (All Faiths for One Race, 1978).

Reports of this period by the Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure 1979 and the Institute for Race Relations 1987 concluded that there was little regard from the police for the human rights of black people. Black people were targeted, repeatedly stopped and searched, the subject of hostile and racially insulting language and often subject to violence upon arrest (IRR, 1987). The character of policing minorities in the inner cities of the UK during the 1970s and 1980s is best described as militaristic, with the deployment of mass stop and search, raids, riot squads and continuous surveillance. The tensions between the police and the black communities during the 1980s is marked by the eruption of public disorder in the predominantly black residential areas of cities across England which included Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham and London (Bowling and Phillips, 2002).

The policing of criminal offences coincided with the policing of the immigration status of black suspects coupled with the misrepresentation about the extent of drug-related and violent crimes attributed to black males (Gilroy, 2002; Gutzmore, 1983; Hood, 1992). The concept of mugging as a socially constructed moral panic best illustrates exaggerated fears amongst the white British population of violent crime

committed by black males (Hall et al., 1978). Academics studying this period point towards the confluence of a number of factors which created a myth around black criminality. Black males were being brought into the criminal justice system by proactive policing methods which targeted symbolic inner-city locations buttressed by myths perpetuated in the media about inherent criminal and anti-authoritarian traits amongst the black population (Gilroy, 2002; Hall et al., 1978).

Therefore, the black community came to know the police and criminal justice system as oppressive forces, whereas the police viewed black neighbourhoods as suspect populations.¹ Research about attitudes held by the police during this period reveals that officers thought black people were 'behaving like animals' or 'bestial' and therefore 'should be shot' (Gilroy, 2002: 132). This rhetoric, in jest or otherwise, is reflective of the dehumanisation of black people and an echo of the colonial discourse outlined at the start of this chapter. Whilst widespread explicit racism amongst the police has now passed, incidents in each decade since the 1980s are clear reflections of the corrupting legacy of the categorisation of humans into distinct races and attribution of deviant traits to visible minorities.

Whilst the over-representation of black people in the criminal justice system has persisted, since the 1990s a new discourse around Asian and more recently Muslim criminals has emerged. Certainly Muslim populations were a constituent part of the black communities targeted during the 1980s, but the trajectory of the discourse about them has taken a distinctly different path whilst illustrating the intersection of identities of faith and ethnicity (Quraishi, 2005).

The construction of Muslim populations as deviant and criminal pre-dates the attacks in the USA on 11 September 2001, although the terrorist events certainly acted as a catalyst for formal surveillance of Muslim populations. Scholars of Islamophobia note that Muslim populations have been depicted in disparaging terms for many centuries, as fundamentalists, book-burners or wife-beaters (Runnymede, 1997). In terms of the criminal justice system, the discourse has emerged as a result of a rising British Muslim prisoner population as well as perceived threats from amongst indigenous Muslims following terrorist offences in London in July 2005. As with black populations before them, British Muslims are presently the subject of disproportionate surveillance by the police and military intelligence pursuant to counter-terrorism measures (Fekete, 2009; Patel and Tyrer, 2011). It brings with it media and political debates about the loyalty of Muslims to Britain against a projected clash of civilisations between Islam and both British secular and Christian values (Kundnani, 2007).

In both of the sample populations discussed above, 'black' people and 'Muslims', the categorisation may give the mistaken impression of distinct homogeneous populations. As we will see later in this text, the formal categorisation of human beings into such groups tends to deny the true diversity within any given group as well as any intersection between them. The historic processes of categorisation, division and dehumanisation have served to perpetuate myths of difference between 'races' rather than emphasise the complexity within and commonalities between what are actually socially, rather than biologically, constructed categories.

Summary

In summary then, in Europe, the historical period known as the Enlightenment initiated various processes of racialisation. These sought to categorise and typify particular races. This was underpinned by scientific aspirations and political dogmas. We focused in large part on the British context, in particular as part of colonialism. However, again, by looking at the UK in particular, we showed how such activities continue in contemporary society, in the way races and racial types are both policed and how popular discourses are constructed around notions of racial types and racial identities. We drew attention to the way the media has fuelled negative stereotyping of racial groups, and a particular point we emphasised was the ‘criminalisation’ of particular racial groups. Two particular examples we gave in the UK context were the moral panic surrounding Black African, Black Caribbean males in the 1970s, and more recently with the notion of Islamophobia that has developed in the last decade or so. Fundamentally, we have argued that the notion of race is socially constructed. This is something we want to focus on more closely in the following chapter.

Note

- 1 For a parallel discussion in the USA see Bolton and Feagin (2004).