Race Discrimination in the Construction Industry: A Thematic Review

Andrew Caplan, Amir Aujla, Shelagh Prosser and June Jackson

Equality Research and Consulting Ltd

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report reviews the literature on racial discrimination and racial equality in the construction industry in Great Britain. It has been prepared to inform the Equality and Human Rights Commission's Inquiry on Race Discrimination in the Construction Industry. The review considers literature published on all aspects of the construction industry workforce, focusing on non-white ethnic minority workers.

In the 1990s a combination of factors resulted in increased interest in the perceived lack of equality and diversity in the construction industry: the 1994 Latham Review, the Committee on Women in Science, Engineering and Technology (1994), the Macpherson Report (1999) and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000). The Royal Holloway Report (1999) on the under-representation of ethnic minorities in the construction industry was the first in a body of research that accumulated over the next 10 years. Given the numbers of ethnic minorities in the population and the numbers of pupils and students training and studying construction and the built environment subjects in further and higher education, their relatively low representation in the construction industry was recognised as a problem.

INITIAL BARRIERS
Image
The construction industry is perceived as a relatively low-status industry with hard and inflexible working conditions and a persistent 'laddish' culture in a white, male-dominated environment. The negative image it carries from its identification with stereotyped male values and building site mythology adversely affects recruitment to the construction industry.

Careers advice
There is little consistent evidence that pressure to reject a career in construction is any stronger in the ethnic minority communities than in the general population. Schools and the careers service generally lack awareness of the sector's career opportunities. Chance and word of mouth play the main role in informing pupils and trainees of possible employment opportunities. These failings by the careers counselling and education services seem to disproportionately disadvantage ethnic minority students.

Racism
There is a strong perception that ethnic minorities will face rejection at the recruitment and contracts offices of construction firms due to ingrained racism and exclusionary practices.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Despite public statements of positive intent, equal opportunities policies and diversity action plans, the construction industry has been unable to effect major change in relation to equality and diversity.

Leadership

There is broad acceptance of the case for diversity by industry leaders but the implementation of equality and diversity policies, when it occurs, is on the whole restricted to large companies.

Workforce monitoring, targets and compliance

Construction firms misunderstand the importance of, and therefore hesitate to set, equality targets. Monitoring of ethnic origin has been accepted and attempted by some organisations, but monitoring practice is still very far from being effective.

Race Equality Duty

The Race Equality Duty requires public bodies to promote equality. However, it does not yet appear to have had a major impact on the procurement of construction projects for the public sector.

The business case

The business case argument points to an industry which is under-utilising the skills and talents of the UK population, could increase organisational efficiency and effectiveness, should become more innovative and adaptable, and needs to draw closer to and satisfy its customer base. The claims of the business case, however, have not been totally convincing and as yet have not shown marked results in addressing the under-representation of ethnic minorities across the construction industry.

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Courses

There is a far higher proportion of ethnic minority people in college training than in employment, reinforcing the recurring theme of an under-utilisation of talent. Ethnic minority students are, in different proportions, well represented in most of the built environment professional subjects and courses at further education and higher education levels.

Teaching and curriculum

Significant numbers of ethnic minority students on university and college construction-orientated courses either fail to complete their course or seek employment outside the industry. Overt examples of racism are rare in both higher

and further education settings. There could, however, be a case for giving greater prominence to non-Western approaches to design and construction in the curriculum; this would benefit ethnic minority home students who want to draw on their community backgrounds.

Staff attitudes, expectations and support

Staff in colleges and universities can fail to understand the level of antipathy or even antagonism and hostility faced by ethnic minority students in their encounters with the construction industry. Without sufficient care, this failure can turn into an under-estimation of students' competencies. Ethnic minority students cite difficulties in finding work placements and a lack of faculty help in overcoming this difficulty. Ethnic minority students emphasise the importance of mentoring schemes and positive role models.

RECRUITMENT

Exclusion

The low level of ethnic minority representation in the industry compounds the cultural perception of an unwelcome environment for ethnic minority people, resulting in lower ethnic minority recruitment than might otherwise have been the case. White-dominated firms continue to replicate a white workforce, but ethnic minority people lack the networks to overcome the barriers to their applications for work experience placements, jobs and contracts.

Recruitment procedures and practices

There have been some examples of positive initiatives to tackle the issue of under-representation, although these have not yet resulted in increasing representation in the workforce. Official paths and procedures in both recruitment and securing contracts are undermined by word-of-mouth recruitment and the use of approved lists of potential contractors.

Procurement

Although public bodies have a legal duty to promote race equality, there has been little change in procurement arrangements. Traditional procurement methods and the use of approved lists have been cited as discriminating indirectly against ethnic minority contractors.

EXPERIENCES IN THE WORKPLACE

Racial discrimination

Ethnic minority workers report examples of racial discrimination. These range from name-calling to physical intimidation. Professional staff have referred to the

withholding of professional benefits or opportunities such as training opportunities, promotion prospects and overtime.

Progression

Ethnic minority professionals perceive a 'glass ceiling' to progression, and companies do not have strategies to bring about change in ethnic minority representation at senior levels, or even beyond entry at graduate level. Ethnic minority people have a strong perception that they need to work harder than their white counterparts to obtain recognition and progress in their organisation.

While levels of support and guidance for ethnic minority staff have gradually improved over the last decade, ethnic minority professionals still find that they are not supported by their managers to develop and progress to the same degree as their white colleagues.

Failure to promote good race relations

It is common for pressure to be put on ethnic minority staff to conform to a white 'norm'. Although much has changed, the 'culture' of the construction workforce still amplifies feelings of difference and of being 'other' for those who do not and will never share such a culture. Despite public statements from sections of the industry about equality and their intolerance of racism, jokes and banter, these persist within the construction industry culture.

CONCLUSIONS AND WAYS FORWARD

Research findings

In summary, research into the construction industry presents a picture of an industry which is not doing enough to reduce the restricted opportunities that ethnic minorities have to enter it and progress. Although some movement has been recorded as a result of the recommendations of various studies, this has had little impact to date on the inclusion of representative numbers of ethnic minority people in the industry. Recent research has confirmed that the broad picture that emerged in earlier research is still common across the country.

This review has highlighted some key issues:
- the under-representation of ethnic minorities, including in managerial and professional roles
- low levels of awareness within ethnic minority communities of the wide range of opportunities in construction
- differences in the educational and training experiences of ethnic minorities compared with white people

- high levels of representation in further and higher education are not helping to increase representation in the industry
- prevalence of word-of-mouth recruitment and tendering practices
- a lack of informal information networks within ethnic minority communities about work in the construction industry
- persistent perceptions of racism in the industry
- lack of implementation and monitoring of equal opportunities policies

Ways forward

The research has stressed the need for:
- prominent leadership from industry heads and professional bodies
- promotion of good practice through the Sector Skills Bodies
- diversifying the supply chain to encourage more ethnic minority-led businesses to tender for opportunities
- careers advice in schools with high numbers of ethnic minority pupils
- increased participation of ethnic minority trainees on work-based learning programmes and apprenticeships
- development of an industry standard for equality monitoring
- ongoing evaluation of positive action campaigns, feeding back impact to the sector and the public, with prominence given to ethnic minority role models

Research agenda

There is a need for additional information and research on:
- changes in recruitment practice focused on ethnic minority applicants
- representation of ethnic minority trainees on work-based training and apprenticeships
- removal of exclusionary practices, such as word-of-mouth tendering
- removal of barriers to the progression of ethnic minority employees
- practical strategies for tackling discrimination in the industry
- systematic monitoring and evaluation
- the industry image

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

This report has been prepared to inform the Equality and Human Rights Commission Inquiry on Race Discrimination in the Construction Industry and reviews the existing literature on racial discrimination and racial equality in the construction industry in England, Scotland and Wales, specifically in relation to non-white ethnic minority workers. It considers all aspects of the construction industry workforce, including apprentices and trainees, manual workers, skilled trades and the built environment professions. Where possible, relevant gender differences are commented upon, although sources of such data are limited. Some literature relating to migrants was also considered. It should be noted that this is not a comprehensive review of all literature on the subject. However, it covers key issues relating to ethnic minority people in the construction trades and professions.

After contextualising the construction industry, the review explores the factors that influence or inhibit an individual from entering the construction industry and from progressing once in it. The public image of the construction industry, being important in the initial decision to study or train for a job in construction, is considered first, followed by a section dealing with companies' responses to issues of equality and diversity in relation to leadership roles, monitoring of implementation, and the effects of the Race Equality Duty and the business case for diversity. The issues of training and education are considered next, particularly the curriculum offered to students and trainees, and the methods of delivery. The review then focuses on recruitment, in particular intended or inadvertent exclusionary practices in recruitment and the parallel context of the procurement of contracts. For those entering the industry, the last stage considered is progression within a firm and the barriers to progress or support provided to clear those barriers. The review concludes with an indication of ways forward.

Two qualifications need to be mentioned. The literature reviewed deals with both manual and 'professional' (that is, employment that requires a high degree of qualification) work within the industry. Although there are differences in the experiences of these two groups, most of the generalisations about barriers to access are applicable to both unless specifically differentiated in the text.

1.2 Background

With the Latham Review of procurement and contractual arrangements in the UK construction industry (Latham, 1994) and the Committee on Women in Science, Engineering and Technology (CWSET, 1994) in the 1990s, the general concerns

about equality and diversity in British society which were being voiced by a small but growing number of authorities and people in public life during the 1980s began to have an impact on the construction industry. The focus on the marked under-representation of women in the industry led naturally to a consideration of the representation of ethnic minority men and women in the industry. Further evidence was provided by research produced by the Construction Industry Board (CIB, 1996), stressing the need to attract more women, but the first large-scale study of ethnic minorities in the construction industry was the report commissioned by the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB, now ConstructionSkills) and carried out by the Centre for Ethnic Minority Studies at Royal Holloway University of London (CEMS, 1999). Concurrently, the new Government, elected in 1997, and the Macpherson Report, published in 1999, had the effect of raising concern about the possibility of institutional racism across a wide spectrum of organisations and industries. Adding to the pressure to consider the role of race and racism was the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000). The new Act sought to address the discrimination, harassment and particularly exclusion that had not been fully overcome by the measures put in place by the 1976 Race Relations Act. A small body of new research on discrimination in the construction industry has begun to emerge over the last 10 years.

1.3   Levels of ethnic minority employment in construction

Dainty and Bagilhole (2005) argue that construction is the most white male-dominated of all major UK sectors; an industry segregated both horizontally and vertically by gender and ethnicity. The proportion of ethnic minority people in construction has more than doubled from 1.5 per cent in 1992/93 (Byrne et al, 2005, cited in Clarke, 2006) to 2.4 per cent in 2005 (Briscoe 2005, p 1003; Institute of Civil Engineers, 2007) and 3.3 per cent in 2007/08 (one per cent Asian/Asian British, one per cent Black/Black British, 2007/08, one per cent Chinese, 0.3 per cent Mixed and 0.9 per cent Other) (Office of National Statistics, 2008). However, this is still significantly lower than the 7.9 per cent present in the total active working population (Briscoe, 2005).

The figures above are dominated by English employment statistics. According to ConstructionSkills, in 2004, proportions of non-white ethnic minority people in construction were three per cent in England, less than one per cent in Scotland (ethnic minorities were two per cent of the population in Scotland according to the 2001 Census) and about one per cent in Wales (National Guidance Research Forum, 2004), where they formed 2.2 per cent of the population in 2005 (Duncan and Mortimer, 2007, p 1286). The construction industry in Wales is predominantly white – 97.7 per cent white British, 0.8 per cent white Irish, 0.8 per cent white other

and 0.7 per cent ethnic minority (Duncan and Mortimer, 2007, p 1286) – and compared to their numbers in the population (2.2 per cent), this suggests ethnic minority people are under-represented. In Scotland, the highest proportions of ethnic minority workers are employed in retail and hotel and restaurant sectors, followed by the health and social work sector. Whereas construction is about sixth in terms of the proportion employed for white people, it is 11th for the ethnic minority population (Scottish Trade Union Congress, 2004, p 3).

Over half (51 per cent) of the ethnic minorities in Wales working as self-employed in the industry live in Cardiff, with the remainder from across Wales (2001 Census, cited in Duncan and Mortimer, 2006). Indicating possible barriers to gaining employment in existing companies, the levels of self-employment are higher for ethnic minorities than for the white population – 41 per cent of ethnic minority people within the construction industry in Wales were self-employed, compared to 35 per cent of white people in the industry (Duncan and Mortimer, 2006). We have been unable to locate comparative data in Scotland. However, more widely in the UK, Briscoe (2005) found a low proportion of ethnic minority sole traders or owners of construction micro-enterprises.

Though the effect of new graduate employees takes some time to impact on workforce statistics, there has for some years been a marked discrepancy between the ethnic minority undergraduate population studying construction subjects (10 per cent of the total) and the numbers of ethnic minority people in professional and technical occupations and in management roles, which continues at around three per cent (Briscoe, 2005; Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), 2005). A recent report found that, in 2007, ethnic minority representation in management positions in the construction industry was 2.3 per cent, the same as in 2000 (Race for Opportunity, 2008). This was the lowest representation in the industry sectors named in the report.

There are marked regional discrepancies in the percentage of ethnic minority workers – some but not all of which are explained by the demographics of the local population. For example, in 2004 around 16 per cent of London's construction workforce were ethnic minority people, a proportion well above the UK average. In part, this can be explained by high construction demand and a skills shortage, the high concentration of ethnic minority people in the London area, and the high costs of living deterring white skilled tradesmen (Briscoe, 2005). On the Olympic Park site in London, 17 per cent of the workforce is black, Asian and ethnic minority (Olympic Delivery Authority, February 2009). This is one of the largest construction projects in

Europe and one which, along with the accompanying Stratford City development, accounts for 10 to 15 per cent of all construction in London.

In addition to 'horizontal segregation' (that is, the low percentage of ethnic minorities generally in this industry), ethnic minority people in Britain are in a particularly vulnerable position by virtue of being 'vertically segregated' (that is, concentrated at the bottom of the occupation hierarchy in the least-skilled, less secure and worst-paid positions in construction (Byrne, Clarke and Van Der Meer 2005, p 1027).

2. INITIAL BARRIERS

2.1 Image

The construction industry is perceived as a relatively low-status industry with hard working conditions, strictly defined working hours, and a persisting 'laddish' culture in a white, male-dominated environment. Loosemore et al (2003, p 172) say it has 'one of the worst public images of all industries'. This was initially identified as a specific barrier for women, but it became clear that the experiences of women were to an extent mirrored by those of ethnic minority people (CABE, 2005; Byrne et al, 2005; Hammond, 2006, pp 191–2) – and a dual disadvantage for ethnic minority women in terms of their experiences in the industry, although not in their level of representation which is equally as low as white women. Byrne et al (2005, pp 1031–2) suggest that poor working conditions and long hours are often found on sites with a high proportion of ethnic minority employees, and that the mobility of ethnic minority workers in moving between sites is hampered because of the perception that they have been rejected by colleagues or clients.

The negative image that the construction industry carries from its identification with stereotyped male values and building site mythology, without sufficient career opportunities, is reflected in comments such as that 'the status and image of an engineer in the UK is poor' (Centre for Construction Innovation (CCI), 2008, p 56). This, in turn, adversely affects recruitment (see below) (CABE, 2005).The low level of participation by ethnic minorities is often explained in the industry by 'supply-side factors' such as a lack of interest or commitment by ethnic minority groups and individuals (Greater London Authority (GLA), 2007, p.2). The industry's predominantly white profile has been compounded by its failure to develop awareness among ethnic minority people of the wide range of opportunities in construction. This is particularly true among the 16–34 age group, in which only 30 per cent of respondents said in one survey that they were aware of the variety of types of jobs in the industry (CEMS, 1999, p i). The most recent figures from CITB-ConstructionSkills show an increase in ethnic minority trade trainees in 2007/08 – up to seven per cent from six per cent in 2006/07 and five per cent in 2005/06 (CITB-ConstructionSkills, 2008).

2.2 Careers advice

There is a general lack of awareness, which is particularly evident in schools, about the sector's career opportunities. Although schools increasingly encourage pupils to enter higher education, even students on vocational courses receive little specific information about working in the industry, and ethnic minority students may receive little or no encouragement to progress to a job in the industry (CEMS, 2000).

Chance and word of mouth typically play the main role in informing trainees of possible employment opportunities, and ethnic minority construction employees in manual trades report that their main sources of information have been family and friends, followed by the Jobcentre or Employment Service (ConstructionSkills, 2007, p66; Duncan et al, 2007, p 324). Although some studies report that ethnic minority people are 'generally satisfied with the level of support gained from employment agencies' (CCI, 2008, p 88), the evidence on this issue is not consistent and there have been other studies which have found employment agencies to be on the whole very unhelpful to ethnic minority people, with their secretaries and receptionists acting as gatekeepers and preventing entry into the industry (CITB, 2002).

There is little evidence that the educational system has much influence on the desire of ethnic minority students to obtain a degree in construction (CCI, 2008, p 84). However, the lack of appropriate advice from career counselling and education services seems to disproportionately disadvantage ethnic minority students at vocational levels, thereby impoverishing the industry. 'The overall lack of knowledge about career options available within schools regarding the industry sector disadvantages the UK construction industry in general, even prior to additional barriers [see Chapter 5, Recruitment] that may hinder ethnic minority entry levels' (CCI, 2008, p 121).

Some explain the failure to recruit as being due to perceptions among ethnic minority people that construction is 'a relatively backward industry with dangerous working practices, inadequate levels of training and comparatively poor rates of pay' (Briscoe, 2005, p 1004); or, alternatively, that it is 'non-professional and potentially hostile' (Miller and Tuohy, 2007, p 21). One study found that family influence to enter the construction industry was in fact 16 percentage points higher among ethnic minority people than others: 57 per cent for ethnic minority people and 41 per cent for white people (CCI, 2008, p 84). In a second study, employers in the North West claimed that:

- the Asian community was not enthusiastic about a career in construction because of a perceived focus on manual labour and the lack of professional advancement
- Asian construction apprentices were thought more likely to start their own businesses and work for their own communities
- the construction 'tradition' was stronger in the African Caribbean community (ConstructionSkills, 2007, p 59)

There is, therefore, in the existing literature no clear evidence that pressure to reject a career in construction is any stronger in ethnic minority communities than in the general population. Some research shows interest in the industry and

encouragement from family, while other studies indicate a lack of enthusiasm among some groups: there is thus no overwhelming evidence either way. Given the relatively high take-up of education and training courses in the industry by ethnic minority groups, the evidence on balance points to an interest from that section of the population.

2.3   Racism

There is, however, a strong perception – borne out by actual experience at trade levels – that ethnic minorities will face rejection in the recruitment and contracts offices of construction firms due to ingrained racism (Royal Holloway, 1999; CABE, 2005). In contrast to white people, ethnic minority applicants do not feel that they could successfully approach employers directly on sites for a job or to follow up such an approach with a written application for work. Work experience with an ethnic minority-led firm, however, does help ethnic minority students to gain entry to the industry and, once on the job, to remove pressures such as not having to deal with racial banter (CITB, 2002, p 17).

3.   EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICIES AND PRACTICES

The construction industry has been unable to improve its diversity despite public statements of positive intent, equal opportunities policies and diversity action plans. The explanations for this failure include:

- the fragmentation of the construction industry into complex chains of managing contractors and subcontractors
- competitive tendering, which emphasises tight costs and timescales, has an exclusionary impact on smaller firms, such as those often run by ethnic minorities, and advantages bigger firms with the 'money, the muscle and the banks' (CABE, 2005)
- informal networks of work experience, recruitment and subcontracting which privilege established partners and methods
- inadequate links between training provision and employers' needs
- a prevalence of self-employment and temporary agency workers
- a preference for mobile workers
- the historical dominance of white men
- a lack of coordination and consistency by public authorities in promoting diversity-related measures in the industry (for example, through procurement requirements in tendering), thus limiting their impact
(GLA, 2007, pp 2–3).

3.1   Leadership

In 1998, Sir John Egan's Construction Task Force set the national agenda and framework for improving the performance of the industry. One of the organisations to champion the action points was the Movement for Innovation, which led on non-housing construction and aimed to encourage the construction industry to involve employees to improve its performance on 'people issues'. By 2004, the commitment of this body to diversity and the business case had become more explicit in the 'Respect for People Equality and Diversity in the Workplace Toolkit'. This aims to help construction firms identify issues that need to be addressed and provides links to agencies and information that can help firms respond to the challenge of managing equality and diversity (Constructing Excellence, 2004).

Industry leaders broadly accept the case for diversity (GLA, 2007, p 2), but the implementation of equality and diversity policies is largely undertaken only by large companies (CCI, 2008, p 101). Only a few organisations are clear about the 'racial equality outcomes' they are seeking and have a process for measuring performance against selected indicators (Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), 2007, p 84). Typically, large contractors have written policies relating to equality but these are

rarely monitored and are generally seen as not impacting on the way in which their business operates. The 1999 CEMS study found that only 50 per cent of the construction companies surveyed monitored the impact of their policies, and only 32 per cent had an action plan to implement their programmes (CEMS, 1999). In fact, they frequently viewed such policies as a necessary 'hoop' through which they had to jump in order to gain public sector contracts (Duncan and Mortimer, 2006, p 53).

There are substantial differences between large and small firms. Small firms are less likely to adopt flexible working practices, have equal opportunities policies, engage in diversity training or feel affected by anti-discrimination legislation. This presents a challenge to the sector as it is dominated by small businesses (ConstructionSkills, 2007). In addition, subcontractors lower down the supply chain feel less motivated to pursue supplier diversity objectives, as it may be relatively resource intensive for them (Smallbone et al, 2008, p vi). Research in Wales has found that 'race equality and equality generally within the construction industry appears to be driven by the need to comply with public sector tender requirements. This has the potential to lead to tokenism and to result in a situation where procedures and policies are in place but not implemented in reality' (Duncan et al, 2007, p 324). In response to this general situation, the CRE suggested that the quality of leadership by the Governments in England, Scotland and Wales was linked to inconsistencies in regeneration programmes and policies (CRE, 2007, p 120).

3.2 Workforce monitoring, targets and compliance

Misunderstandings about targets, and hesitation in setting such targets, are evident in the construction industry, as they are in other settings. A lack of clarity about the distinction between targets (that is, positive action) and quotas leads, for example, to limited positive action and a slowness in meeting targets.

ConstructionSkills has in the past set targets for increases in the numbers of women and ethnic minority trade trainees (CITB-ConstructionSkills, 2007a, p 8). The 2007 ConstructionSkills target of 463 women and ethnic minority trainees was not met, despite specific campaigns and funding (CITB-ConstructionSkills, 2007a, p 19). In contrast, the target was met for adult female and ethnic minority entrants through STEP into Construction, a positive action scheme run by CITB-ConstructionSkillls aimed at encouraging employers, for example through support for work placements, to recruit adult ethnic minorities and women into any construction occupations. This programme is reported as being highly successful: a ConstructionSkills STEP information sheet attributes this to it being a positive action scheme with no age barrier (CITB-ConstructionSkills, 2005). Secondly, projects like Building Equality in Construction (which includes research by the Centre for Construction Innovation at

the University of Salford University and UMIST) have been set up to focus on promoting diversity in the industry 'through developing partnership methodology between clients (housing associations) and the building contractors' (KAL Magazine). The research output included some good practice guidelines for building contractors and housing associations on building equality in construction (Gale and Davidson, 2006).

According to ConstructionSkills (press release, November 2005), the Olympics building programme will create 33,500 jobs, including 2,800 for professionals in town planning, civil engineering and architecture. There is a £1 million campaign to attract women and ethnic minority people into the industry, and the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) monitors how many ethnic minority staff are employed by each firm working on the 2012 sites. Staff monitoring figures will be one of the factors taken into consideration in deciding which firms win contracts for work (KAL Magazine).

Monitoring the ethnic origin of those applying to join professional organisations is a recent development, triggered by recommendations in past studies (Building Design, 2006; CABE, 2005), but monitoring practice is still very far from being effective. For example, ODA has policies which attempt to increase supplier diversity, but because a high percentage of businesses on the CompeteFor website – the main vehicle linking small businesses with Olympic Games-related business opportunities – choose not to record equality information about their workforce, the overall data is inadequate to fully evaluate success (Smallbone et al, 2008, p iv-v). However, ODA has instigated monthly monitoring to track the characteristics of the contractor workforce on the Olympic Park (ODA, 2009).

3.3   Race Equality Duty

The CRE stated in 2007 that, 'The race equality duty is the only tool we have today to ensure that … [regeneration] opportunities do not result in missed chances, and disadvantage and divisions between ethnic groups are ignored or deepened' (p 131). However, the CRE found with regard to local government projects that 'local authorities were not always clear as to how they should factor racial equality and good race relations into their strategic plans for physical regeneration'. Many did not always fulfil their role in ensuring Race Equality Impact Assessments (REIAs) were carried out properly: 'Compliance with the duty and, in particular, the REIA process was, at best, a bureaucratic hoop to jump through and, at worst, an irrelevance to be ignored' (CRE, 2007, p 50). In addition, the CRE judged that 'the way physical regeneration is planned and delivered, through various partnerships, makes it extremely difficult for racial equality and good race relations to remain at the heart of the [construction] process' (CRE, 2007, p 71). There has also been some concern,

expressed by Trevor Phillips when Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality and cited in Building Design in the context of discussion of employment in the industry, that the public money being spent on regeneration in the UK was bypassing ethnic minority people (Building Design Online, 2008).

In relation to compliance, the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Housing Action Plan for Wales requires all housing associations to comply with the provisions of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000). Despite this, few housing associations have undertaken any review of their existing policies, hence many social landlords fall short of this compliance (Duncan and Mortimer, 2007, p 1291). In the North West of England, it appears that ethnic minority contractors and consultants, without the widespread support of housing associations and other public sector clients, will remain at the periphery of the sector with an unpredictable rather than obviously sustainable future (Steele and Todd, 2005).

3.4   The business case

The business case for diversity is a relatively new and, to some, attractive argument that could displace the more overtly political and moral arguments of the early 'equal opportunity' years. The claims of the business case are that it brings clear benefits. A report on women in the IT industry, for example, has identified several business benefits of diversity: namely, reduced costs, access to the widest talent pool, improved creativity, innovation and problem-solving, improved commitment and motivation, enhanced reputation with clients and stakeholders, and improved financial performance (Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), pp 8–9). Dainty and Bagilhole (2005, pp 995–996) suggest that the construction industry:

- is under-utilising the skills and talents of the UK population
- could increase organisational efficiency and effectiveness (for example, lower stress; increase retention rates) by projecting a more diverse self-image (thereby attracting applicants and customers)
- could be better informed, more innovative and adaptable, and closer to its customer base (and thereby better able to assess its needs), with a diverse workforce (Dainty et al, 1997)

Loosemore et al (2003, p 171) warn of the danger of the construction industry losing the opportunity to benefit from the 'skills, talents and varied perspectives of a balanced workforce'. The business case for equality and diversity not only addresses the issue of the skills shortage, but also the benefits accruing from a culturally diverse workforce in:

- improved 'production, creativity and decision-making processes' (Kandola and Fullerton, 1994, cited in Steele and Sodhi, 2006)

- creating new business opportunities
- eliminating destructive and expensive discrimination litigation (Steele and Sodhi, 2006, p 203)

De Graft-Johnson refers to there being 'numerous examples of buildings not meeting the cultural requirements and lifestyles of people for whom they are meant to cater' (De Graft-Johnson, Manley and Greed, 2007, p 170). However, the DTI study warned that 'these claims are difficult to substantiate' and it is likely that diversity is only one of a number of factors that need to be taken into account to improve performance (DTI, p 9).

The fact that progress towards achieving a more diverse workforce has been slow may in part be due to scepticism about the validity of any business case. The business need which underlies the business case (that is, in the form of a need for a skilled workforce) has been met by migrant labour, for instance from Eastern Europe, rather than through investing in more training for local people. However, there is another driving force at play which is less open to interpretation – the legislative context. This is a context that is being increasingly prioritised both in the UK and within the European Union, and is easily incorporated into the business case for equality and diversity because non-compliance can potentially bring a company significant problems.

4. TRAINING AND EDUCATION

4.1 Courses

College-based vocational training and work experience have largely replaced apprenticeships with individual employers (Byrne et al, 2005, p 1031). However, a study of employment at Heathrow Terminal 5 found that there was an acute shortage of places for those seeking apprenticeships and work experience, thus making entry difficult for under-represented groups such as ethnic minority people and women who were well represented in further education construction courses in the local area. The proportion of ethnic minority people in college training was much higher than in employment (Clarke and Gribling, 2008, pp 5–6), reinforcing the recurring theme of an under-utilisation of talent.

Ethnic minority students are, in different proportions, well represented in most of the built environment professional subjects and courses at further education (FE) and higher education (HE) levels. The overall percentage of ethnic minority people qualifying in architecture and built environment courses remains higher than their representation in the UK as a whole (CABE, 2002). The percentage of ethnic minority trade trainees fluctuated between three and seven per cent between 1999 and 2008, and the latest figures show that they stand at seven per cent (ConstructionSkills, 2008). This mirrors the five per cent of students starting FE construction courses (ConstructionSkills, 2004) and seven per cent on technician courses; a higher percentage than those in work-based learning (SummitSkills, 2007).

4.2 Teaching and curriculum

However, Briscoe reports that significant numbers of ethnic minority students on university and college construction-orientated courses either fail to complete their course or seek employment outside the industry (Briscoe, 2006, p 1003). Studies in 2000 of the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) Construction and the Built Environment courses in schools and FE colleges found them to be a popular course at Foundation level, but less so at Intermediate and Advanced levels. Ethnic minority students were more critical than white students of their educational experience, complained of neglect, and pointed in particular to a lack of structural systems of support (CEMS, 2000). Students overall were broadly happy with the teaching and relationships fostered on vocational courses, possibly because of the informal atmosphere in the classroom: this emphasised the practical culture of the workplace at the expense of the academic aspects of the course. The informal atmosphere was an apparent effort to attract and retain white, male students, but had the countervailing effect of alienating and disadvantaging ethnic minority and

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female students because it pandered to the work-site expectations of the white male students. Given that it is the culture of the workplace which is so often blamed for the failure of the construction industry to attract ethnic minority and female applicants, the report argued that the intrusion of an informal atmosphere into the classroom was not particularly helpful, and a focus on professionalism, gaining relevant skills, and being rewarded for their application would inculcate more important and relevant values (CEMS, 2000).

In most studies of FE and HE in construction subjects, ethnic minority students express little surprise that their curriculum is Eurocentric but in architecture this has been considered particularly detrimental to a comprehensive education. In HE (again, particularly in architecture), Asian and African students have cited the lack of expertise by lecturers in non-Western topics and sometimes the lack of value placed on non-Western approaches to design and construction as deficits in their study, as they feel they could contribute more to the diversity of the UK population and environment if they were able to draw on their community backgrounds (CABE, 2005). Although FE and HE curricula continue to be Euro- and/or Anglocentric, the gradual introduction of ethnic minority lecturers, who seem to understand ethnic minority students and are able to talk about construction in other countries, is proving to be of some benefit to ethnic minority students (CABE, 2005).

Ethnic minority students have also emphasised the importance of mentoring schemes and the use of positive role models, which has been found to be important in a range of sectors (Building Design, 2007; EPS, 2008, p 39; Miller and Tuohy, p 4). The Society of Black Architects (SOBA) has, for instance, pioneered student mentoring by SOBA members through the framework of the SOBA Black Business Forum.

4.3 Staff attitudes, expectations and support

A study in 2000 into GNVQ construction courses found that tutors and lecturers held deeply ingrained negative views about the competencies of ethnic minority people: exclusionary attitudes and prejudicial assumptions which disadvantage ethnic minority students were common. Many tutors found it hard to differentiate between ethnic minority groups, were unaware of differences between and within 'home' and overseas student groups, and misunderstood the institutional barriers that hampered their students. They were therefore unable to devise support and teaching strategies which were adequate to those students' particular educational needs. They were not always prepared by their training and experience to teach ethnic minority people, students who speak English as a second language, female students and school pupils under the age of 16. They often assigned blame for problems in

communication to 'supply-side' causes, such as the oversensitivity of the students themselves (CEMS, 2000).

Whereas tutors were content that a 'colour-blind' approach to diversity was a sufficient educational tactic, ethnic minority students found there to be insufficient understanding of the barriers that underpinned their experiences. They felt they were regarded not as individuals with particular educational needs but as an undifferentiated part of a uniform ethnic minority group. With a history of under-expectation and lack of support at school, many ethnic minority students were fearful of similar treatment by FE/HE tutors and expected to experience a two-tier system in which white students were preferred to them: they expected to weather such discrimination by developing a degree of mental toughness (Caplan and Gilham, 2007, p 1009).

While few examples of blatant discrimination were found in education, some exclusionary practices illustrated an ignorance of ethnic minority students' experience of institutional barriers and stereotyping, and a lack of self-awareness on the part of tutoring staff (CEMS, 2000). This was particularly significant, for example, in attempts to secure the work experience placements that are key to the progression of ethnic minority people from training and education to work. Practical experience and work placements generally assist integration into the workforce (CCI, 2008, p 112); for ethnic minorities, they can also act as a counterbalance to the family-based organisational and institutional networking that is often missing from ethnic minority backgrounds (CCI, 2008, p 56; Ahmed et al, 2008, p 92). Students with more obviously ethnic minority names thought their easily identified ethnic identity had deterred some prospective employers from offering them placements. Despite this, little help was offered either by individual tutors or their institutions, and few records were kept of where placements might be more successfully sought. The need to persist with a great number of interviews before gaining success underlined the isolation some ethnic minority students felt on their courses (Caplan and Gilham, 2005, p 1009).

5.   RECRUITMENT

5.1   Exclusion

Clarke (CITB, 2005, p 5) has described the construction industry as 'trapped in a cycle of exclusion'. The most important reason cited by the industry for the low representation of ethnic minority staff is an inability to attract sufficient new ethnic minority entrants. This is assumed to be due to construction's unpopular image as tough, heavy and dirty, and therefore a 'macho' masculine domain (Steele and Sodhi, 2006). Its image has also suffered because of an undervaluing of its contribution to the economy, both by the public generally and also within the media. Over time, the low level of ethnic minority representation, coupled with adverse experiences in the industry, compounds ethnic minority people's negative views of construction, resulting in lower ethnic minority recruitment than might otherwise have been the case. Thus, the ethnic composition of the industry remains unrepresentative.

Research has also found that 'barriers to [ethnic minority] entry … include … a lack of support networks and nepotism that tends to favour those looking for jobs with prior existent family-based links' (CCI, 2008, p 56; Ahmed at al 2008, p 90; Royal Holloway, 1999). Having a family member in the industry is a key reason for joining it. As was noted above, potential ethnic minority entrants do not have these links to the same extent as white students: their main sources of information about the construction industry are school careers officers, family and friends, and newspapers.

Ethnic minority college trade trainees are likely to experience exclusion when they look for work experience, a critical step in establishing the professional contacts which will assist them to secure employment after graduation (Byrne et al, 2005; CEMS, 1999). Employer reluctance to 'take a risk' by employing or providing a placement to someone who does not fit the traditional stereotype of a construction worker is a crucial exclusionary practice (ConstructionSkills, 2007). Some employers fear the potential legal consequences of a future accusation of racism or harassment: this may make them reluctant to recruit people from ethnic minorities (ConstructionSkills, 2007, p 59). Similarly, ethnic minority trainees and graduates who apply for work, particularly long-term work, encounter particular difficulties. White-dominated firms continue to intentionally or inadvertently exclude ethnic minority applicants, using subtle discrimination and issues of 'fitting in' to give white candidates the edge over their ethnic minority counterparts, in relation to either recruitment or progression (CEMS, 2002; CABE, 2005).

A number of studies over the years have reported that ethnic minority graduates are less successful in gaining employment in the construction industry than their white counterparts (CABE, 2005; Briscoe, 2005; Minority Ethnic Construction Professionals and Urban Regeneration (MECPUR), 1996). They are twice as likely to be unemployed, half as likely to be offered employment in their year of graduation, and needing to make more applications before attaining interviews, despite being more highly qualified than their fellow graduates (MECPUR, 1996, p 9). White graduates are generally likely to receive a high rate of response to applications from firms and find the interview process positive, whereas ethnic minority people – particularly if they have an easily identifiable ethnic minority name – report a poor experience in terms of response, result and feedback (CCI, 2008, p 57). Ethnic minority candidates report very little feedback from companies and find recruitment agencies unresponsive (CEMS, 2002). Some find that the interview is largely about social interests, which tend to exclude those from minority cultures (CEMS, 2002).

5.2   Recruitment procedures and practices

In one study, employers stated that, while procedures are improving, the interview process itself can be rather 'hit and miss' in relation to equality issues (CABE, 2005, p 54). Official paths and procedures in both recruitment and securing contracts are undermined by informal practices that contradict equality and diversity policies. Word-of-mouth recruitment practices and information about contracts – including the practice of having an 'approved list' (which requires contractors and consultants to apply to be a supplier) – tend to exclude ethnic minority companies (Steele and Sodhi, 2004, p 154; Lockyer and Scholarios, 2007, p 543; Clarke, 2008, p 6). By accessing new recruits through the social and business networks of existing employees, it is much more likely that new recruits to the on-site construction workforce will mirror existing workers (ConstructionSkills, 2007, p 60; Byrne et al, 2005).

Until recent programmes by ConstructionSkills and others, there were few examples of positive initiatives to tackle the issue of under-representation of ethnic minority applicants to the industry. For example, while 32 per cent of construction companies gave recruitment presentations to schools, only 14 per cent made presentations to schools with a high ethnic minority population (CEMS, 1999). Furthermore, recruitment events did not take sufficient account of the views of students or recently appointed employees about the recruitment process. A study of housing associations showed they do not use their economic and social power through investment in construction and maintenance work to promote equality in recruitment or contracting (Steele and Sodhi, 2002). The report found a 'general lack of appreciation among housing associations of the importance of employing BME contractors and

consultants from both an equal opportunity and a business perspective' (Steele and Sodhi, 2002, p 151). Miller and Tuohy (2008, p 7) have identified the need for targeted recruitment for both professional and trade roles, including those at lower salary levels.

Prior to the current recession, there was a perception that ethnic minority employees were losing opportunities within the North West construction sector because of the increased use of experienced migrant labour, particularly in firms requiring entry-level, that is, first job, wages (ConstructionSkills, 2007, p 68). However, there is also evidence of discriminatory practices towards prospective entrants with overseas educational and vocational qualifications which are not recognised within the UK construction industry and which may affect visible minorities as well as overseas white applicants (CCI, 2008, p 56). It is unclear to what extent this has hampered ethnic minority construction workers who are already living in Britain. According to Somerville and Sumption (2009), evidence from past recessions shows that migration flows are only partially sensitive to economic conditions. White immigrants' unemployment rates reduce over time to the level of the white UK population (Somerville and Sumption, 2009, p 13).

There is some evidence that the focus of employment discrimination in the construction industry – in terms of exploitation, disparities in pay, health and safety, and other terms and conditions – has shifted from ethnic minority UK citizens to migrants, especially those from the EU (Migration Advisory Committee, 2008). However, concern has been raised that the recession that started in 2008 will adversely affect ethnic minority employees the hardest, as well as women, disabled people, and younger and older workers (Trades Union Congress, 2009, p 7): it may have particular impact on minority groups in the construction sector, who are often already excluded from word-of mouth information about opportunities.

The significance of the housing market to the construction industry is a key factor to be considered. Housing investment creates jobs in construction. In Wales, for instance, Duncan and Halsell have estimated that 1,000 jobs in the construction industry (and a further 540 in the economy) are created for every £100 million spent on new housing (in Duncan and Mortimer, 2007, p 1283). This research examined the factors affecting ethnic minority contractors and consultants who specialise in the social housing sector: it found that few social landlords included equal opportunity practices in the procurement process.

5.3   Procurement

Traditional procurement methods discriminate indirectly against ethnic minority contractors and consultants. Using approved lists of contractors and consultants is still a standard method of selection, but it is very difficult for new contractors to get onto these lists – and little has been done to update them or ensure greater diversity. In Wales, Construction Line is popular because it is seen to be promoted by the Welsh Assembly Government. Another popular recruiting method is repeat business – contracts are offered to people who have already undertaken work for the organisation (Duncan and Mortimer, 2007, p 1289). This is particularly the case for contracts worth less than £10,000.

Although local authorities have a legal duty to promote race equality, this has not yet impacted on procurement policies. The study of Welsh housing shows that the impact of local government ethnic minority housing strategies on procurement processes has been minimal, suggesting that equality is considered of little relevance to local procurement processes. Respondents to the study felt that the client's role was crucial in ensuring that race equality is promoted (Duncan and Mortimer, 2007, p 1290). However, unless contractors are also willing to promote race equality, it will be difficult to enforce. Only larger projects invoked the formal tendering procedure in an organisation (Duncan and Mortimer, 2007, p 1289). Contracts over specific thresholds have to advertise through the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) to adhere to European procurement rules. Duncan and Mortimer found that contracting organisations expected contractors and consultants to adhere to equal opportunities policies but in most cases did not supply copies of the relevant policies and procedures. Similarly, most organisations did not have equality policies or procedures relating to procurement, nor did they regularly review procurement policies.

6.   EXPERIENCES IN THE WORKPLACE

6.1   Racial discrimination

In the 1999 CEMS study, just over one-third of employed ethnic minority construction staff said that they would describe their working experience as 'different' from white people, and this affected their progression. Examples of racial discrimination that were cited by respondents included name-calling, harassment, bullying and intimidation. This is confirmed by a more recent study in the North West, in which experiences of discrimination ranged from physical attack, harassment and abuse, through to restricted training opportunities and promotion prospects and unpaid overtime, that is, more than was demanded of white colleagues (ConstructionSkills, 2007, p 67). Only a minority (a third to a sixth) of organisations (including construction management companies, trade federations, schools, colleges and unions) admitted awareness of these problems (CEMS, 1999) – although the result of the Essa v Laing Ltd (2004 EWCA CIV 02) judgement, that the contractor on the construction site is liable for discrimination – may in time awaken firms to their liability under the law (Personnel Today, 2004).

6.2   Progression

Once appointed, despite being able to cope with the work, there are likely to be costs for ethnic minority staff when they enter the construction industry (Dainty and Bagilhole, 2005). They are given less responsibility than their white peers for example, denied opportunities for independent working, or relegated to tea-making and acting as the office hand long after comparable colleagues have moved up. White respondents confirmed the lack of progression for ethnic minority workers. Ethnic minority people also felt that opportunities for development within employment are severely limited and that they have to work harder than their white counterparts to obtain recognition, dispel others' doubts about their competency, and progress in the organisation (CITB, 2002). Being 'satisfactory' is not an option for ethnic minority employees, and even less for ethnic minority managers (Caplan and Gilham, 2005, p 1013).

Ethnic minority professionals, too, perceive a 'glass ceiling' to progression, through which it is difficult for even the most experienced of them to break. This is the case in the majority of sectors in the UK (Race for Opportunity, 2008). Progression and promotion are often dependent upon having a 'face that fits' – that is, not a black or brown face; consequently, white professionals obtain more opportunities to progress and to do so more quickly (CABE, 2005, p 60). Companies often do not have strategies to bring about change in ethnic minority representation at senior levels, and even those which have developed and sought to implement equal opportunities

policies struggle to achieve representation of ethnic minority staff into the organisation beyond entry at graduate level (CABE, 2005). Policies for further training and support exist but ethnic minority trainees benefit less from these than do their white counterparts (CEMS, 1999).

While levels of support and guidance for ethnic minority staff have gradually improved over the last decade, ethnic minority professionals still find that they are not supported by their managers to develop and progress to the same degree as their white colleagues (CCI, 2008, p 106). The benchmark for success and competence favours white employees: ethnic minority professionals suspect that they would be taken more seriously if they were white. Prevailing stereotypes and assumptions inhibit or delay trust in ethnic minority professionals. This lack of trust or appreciation by line managers – described by a black project manager as 'the question mark element' – while not in itself tangible evidence of discrimination, is experienced as undermining and patronising (CABE, 2005).

In appraisals, ethnic minority employees feel they are habitually marked down in comparison to their white colleagues due to prejudice on the part of the appraiser, yet are not provided with adequate feedback (CABE, 2005). This in turn means that promotion is harder to obtain, and that the glass ceiling is 'something between preferment and prejudice' (Caplan and Gilham, 2007, pp 1010–11). Although it is not unusual to see senior technical roles performed by ethnic minority people, they are less likely to be in positions which involve managing people, clients and projects. The usual route from success to progression or preferment does not seem to apply to ethnic minority managers. The stifling and depressing effect of being denied advancement and promotion is not always recognised by senior managers as being a result of racism (CABE, 2005).

6.3   Failure to promote good race relations

It is common for pressure to be put on ethnic minority staff to conform to a white 'norm': not just an ability to get on with (white) senior management, but ensuring that their face 'fits' in social situations and events, and dressing according to Western standards and codes (CCI, 2008, p 56). Socialising with work colleagues, recognised as important to career progression and as part of the work ethos, impacts disproportionately on some ethnic minority people, particularly if it involves alcohol consumption (CABE, 2005). Although much has changed, the drinking culture and coarse language that remain common in the construction workforce still amplify feelings of difference and of being 'other' among those who do not and will never, because of colour or gender, share such a culture (Caplan and Gilham, 2005, p 1011). Ethnic minority members of staff may also be assumed to be hypersensitive

should they complain about such issues (CABE, 2005, p 66), yet oversensitivity more often stems from white managers concerned about possible accusations of racism and potential legal consequences (ConstructionSkills, 2007, p 59).

Despite public commitment on the part of sections of the industry towards equality and intolerance of racism, including racist 'jokes' and banter, the latter continue to be part and parcel of the culture of the construction industry (Royal Holloway, 1999; CABE, 2005). One study highlighted that ethnic minority staff were unaware of the rights that protected them from racial or religious harassment in the workplace (ConstructionSkills, 2007, p 67) and resigned themselves to tolerating racial banter or avoided it by leaving the industry (CABE, 2005). Stopping casual racism was usually the result of individual intervention by managers, colleagues or friends rather than company policy.

A study of construction in the North West found that ethnic minority people (particularly those of Asian or Muslim heritage) were seen as the representatives of their community. It suggested that being Asian and Muslim forms the biggest potential barrier – 'above all other ethnic cohorts' – to acceptance by British society (CCI, 2008, p 131). Other evidence indicates that Asian Muslims find it difficult to discuss religion or religious practices (such as fasting) or some news items (such as the Iraq War or terrorist incidents) without attracting criticism (ConstructionSkills, 2007, p 66). Ethnic minority managers often feel the intense pressure of scrutiny not to be seen to show preference to their own ethnic minority colleagues (Caplan and Gilham, 2007, p 1013).

The balance of evidence from research suggests more negative than positive experiences, with ethnic minorities needing to suppress substantial parts of their identity if they want to progress through the system. Challenging the system (for instance, through official grievance or unofficial action) may risk being deflected from one's career aim and sacrificing any gains made thus far (Caplan and Gilham, 2005, p 1013).

7. CONCLUSIONS AND WAYS FORWARD

7.1 Overall findings

In summary, research into the construction industry presents 'a picture of an industry with acute skill shortages, which perpetuates business and procurement practices which are unlikely to widen the pool of labour or contractors and consultants beyond those who are "in the know", and consequently ethnic minorities have restricted opportunities to enter it and progress' (Duncan and Mortimer, 2006, p 52).

Some movement has been recorded as a result of the recommendations of various studies into the representation of ethnic minorities in construction. This has particularly involved the development of some industry equality and diversity panels and positive action initiatives. However, such developments have had little impact to date on the inclusion of representative numbers of ethnic minority people in the industry. Examples of good practice that have made inroads in other industries and professions (for example, in recruitment drives, advertising or appointments training) are the exception rather than the rule in construction. Even when good initiatives or ideas have been developed, ethnic minority employees and contractors have still experienced discrimination which limits their opportunity to benefit from the growth that has taken place in construction.

The available research has identified problems at a range of levels:
- the deleterious effects of the lack of information from school careers services (CCI, 2008)
- the fragmented nature of the industry (CITB-ConstructionSkills) and therefore the impact this has on hampering progress on equality and diversity
- the limited impact of business case arguments, often so effective in other environments
- even the public sector, often at the leading edge in equality policy, is less effective when it comes to construction – as the experience of social housing has shown
- not least, the exclusion of small and medium ethnic minority enterprises from the 'mainstream' construction industry highlights the disadvantage or exclusion faced by such contractors in the tendering and procurement processes

7.2 Key issues

The thematic review has highlighted some key issues relating to the experiences of ethnic minority employees in the construction industry:
- the under-representation of non-white ethnic minority workers at all levels but particularly in managerial and professional roles

- low levels of awareness within ethnic minority communities generally of the range of opportunities in construction
- differences in the educational and training experiences of ethnic minorities compared with white people
- prevalence of word-of-mouth recruitment and tendering practices
- a lack of informal information networks within ethnic minority communities generally about work in the construction industry
- persistent perceptions of racism in the industry
- a lack of implementation and monitoring of companies' equal opportunities policies

These generalisations reflect the findings of the CEMS study in 1999 and we are forced to conclude that the key issues identified 10 years ago still largely remain to be tackled. There has been some progress and evidence of success and achievement at an individual level and in some parts of the industry: for example, the increase in the percentage of trade trainees recorded by CITB-ConstructionSkills and the results of their positive action programme. However, the general picture is still gloomy. Ten years of activity have only produced a small incremental advance in line with the growth of the ethnic minority community in Britain.

7.3   Ways forward

The research has also identified the 'ways forward' for the industry. These include the need for:

- prominent leadership from industry heads and professional bodies, pulling together the different drivers for racial equality in the industry
- promotion of good practice through the Sector Skills Bodies
- diversifying the supply chain – public bodies should monitor their current supplier base and set targets to encourage more ethnic minority-led businesses to tender for opportunities
- increased participation of ethnic minority trainees on work-based learning programmes and apprenticeships
- development of an industry standard for equality monitoring in both the workforce and membership bodies
- ongoing evaluation of positive action campaigns and feeding back impact to the sector and the public, with prominence given to ethnic minority role models

7.4   Research agenda

As far as research is concerned, there is a need for additional information and research on:

- changes in recruitment practice focused on ethnic minority applicants

- the representation of ethnic minority trainees on work-based training and apprenticeships
- the removal of exclusionary practices such as an over-reliance on word-of-mouth recruitment and tendering
- the removal of barriers to the progression of ethnic minority employees
- practical strategies for tackling discrimination in the industry
- systematic monitoring and evaluation
- the industry image

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This report reviews the literature on racial discrimination and racial equality in the construction industry in Great Britain. It considers the factors which contribute to low numbers of non-white ethnic minority workers in different parts of the construction industry and how current under-representation can be addressed.

WHAT IS ALREADY KNOWN ON THIS TOPIC:

- There is substantial under-representation of non-white ethnic minority workers in the construction industry.
- The construction industry itself has taken some steps to address this issue.

WHAT THIS REPORT ADDS:

- The under-representation of non-white ethnic minority workers in the construction industry has not improved significantly over the past 10 years.
- The causes of this under-representation are multiple and complex, ranging across most aspects of the industry. They include the industry's image, the careers advice that is provided, training and education, recruitment procedures and workplace experiences.
- The report sets out ways to help ensure that non-white ethnic minority workers can be fully represented in the construction workforce.