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A Critical Evaluation of Diversity and Equality in the UK Construction Sector

By

Christine Pepper

A doctoral thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy of Loughborough University

12th April 2005

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ABSTRACT

Historically, recruitment by the UK construction industry has been homogeneous, with a marked propensity for organisations to attract, recruit and select white non-disabled men. This makes construction the most white and male-dominated of all major industrial sectors. Previous research on women's and ethnic minorities' experiences within construction have shown that the industry reproduces a white male culture in which women and ethnic minorities experience marginalisation, discrimination, disempowerment, prejudice and 'glass ceilings' to their career progression. This, in turn, leads to vertical segregation within construction firms.

Despite the under representation and underachievement of women, ethnic minorities and disabled people within the industry, little is known of the views and experiences of key construction industry stakeholders on workforce diversity and the potential impact that this has on promoting the diversity and equality agenda. Accordingly, this research makes a unique contribution by investigating diversity and equality from the perspective of employers, professional bodies, training organisations and industry policy forums to provide a more holistic understanding of why the industry has failed to diversify its workforce.

The findings of the research develop existing theoretical perspectives on the underrepresentation and underachievement of women and ethnic minorities in the industry through an analysis of the cultural and institutional processes which shape the position of women and ethnic minorities.

To achieve this, a primarily qualitative methodology was employed for the research in which stakeholder attitudes to workforce diversity were explored using in-depth semi structured interviews. The research also critically evaluated the industry's previous attempts to diversify its workforce using desk-top and case study research methods. Collectively, these investigations revealed the necessary challenges for policy makers to overcome in order to promote positive change within the industry. These included the existence of mutually reinforcing industry structures, customs and practices which systematically reflect and produce inequalities for underrepresented groups. Together, they undermine the delivery of diversity and equality policies and practices.
On the basis of the research findings a framework of integrated diversity policy initiatives were developed. These address the need for both structural and cultural change within the sector and behavioural compliance in addition to attitudinal and cultural change. The efficacy of these measures was validated through a high level workshop in which leading industrialists and policy specialists debated and refined the key outcomes of the work. The resulting policy framework has been adopted by the Institution of Civil Engineers as their diversity and equality guidance document.

**Key words:** women, ethnic minorities, disabled people, construction, discrimination, diversity, equal opportunities, policy
Firstly, I gratefully acknowledge the constant and invaluable academic and personal support received from my three supervisors: Dr Andrew Dainty, Professor Barbara Bagilhole and Professor Alistair Gibb. Thank you all for your efforts on this project and for being the model supervisory team.

My gratitude goes to all my informants who gave up their precious time and provided me with such open and honest answers to some difficult and personal questions. Thanks are also due to the ICEfloe committee for the opportunity to develop the ICE diversity and equality code of practice. I am also thankful for their help in organising the final workshop, which was a great success.

I would like to thank Colin Young and John Lambert for keeping me laughing over the years and for making my time as a PhD student a happy one. Thanks also to Kate Sang for listening to me talk about my work and for providing me with words of support and assistance.

Heartfelt appreciation goes to my mum Maggie Pepper, and my nana Jean Pepper, whose faith in me has been a source of continual strength. They have supported and encouraged me endlessly and for that I love them dearly.

Finally, to my loving and devoted fiancé, Stuart, who has given me so much help and support during the course of my research, this thesis is for you.
# Table of Contents

## Chapter 1  Introduction

1.1 The need to examine equal opportunities and diversity in construction ..... 1

1.2 Previous research on women, ethnic minorities and disabled people in construction ......................................................................................................... 3

1.3 Purpose of the study ................................................................................. 4

1.4 Overview of the research approach ........................................................... 8

1.4.1 Rationale for research methodology ................................................... 8

1.6 Industrial collaboration .......................................................................... 8

1.7 Organisation of the thesis.......................................................................... 9

## Chapter 2  Theory and Concepts of Equality and Diversity

2.1 Introduction............................................................................................. 12

2.2 From equal opportunities to managing diversity ...................................... 12

2.2.1 ‘Equal opportunities’......................................................................... 13

2.2.2 Definitions and theoretical underpinnings of gender, race and disability from an equal opportunities perspective .......................................... 15

2.2.2.1 Gender ......................................................................................... 15

2.2.2.2 Race ............................................................................................. 16

2.2.2.3 Disability ....................................................................................... 18

2.2.3 Critical perspectives on equal opportunities ..................................... 19

2.2.4 ‘Managing diversity’.......................................................................... 20

2.2.4.1 Arguments in favour of managing diversity ................................... 21

The business case.......................................................................................... 21

Diversity: a strategic issue ............................................................................ 22

Diversity is inclusive..................................................................................... 22

Managing diversity promotes culture change .............................................. 23

2.2.4.2 Diversity: a critique ....................................................................... 23
2.2.5 A constructive compromise .............................................................. 25
2.3 Drivers of equality and diversity ............................................................... 26
2.3.1 The moral case ..................................................................................... 26
2.3.2 The legal case ....................................................................................... 27
2.3.3 The business case ........................................................................... 29
2.3.3.1 The business case: a critique ....................................................... 30
2.3.4 The role of trade unions ................................................................... 33
2.4 Summary and conclusions ...................................................................... 34

CHAPTER 3 UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS IN THE UK CONSTRUCTION SECTOR

3.1 Introduction ............................................................................................. 36
3.2 Overview of the construction industry ...................................................... 36
3.3 Construction's image ............................................................................... 38
3.4 The experiences of underrepresented groups in construction ................. 40
3.5 Women in construction ............................................................................ 41
3.5.1 The historical exclusion of women from the construction industry .... 41
3.5.2 Women's under representation in construction .................................... 42
3.5.3 Empirical explanations for women's underrepresentation ................. 43
3.5.4 Women's educational experiences ................................................... 45
3.5.5 Women's employment experiences .................................................. 46
3.5.5.1 Sexism, harassment and bullying ................................................. 46
3.5.5.2 Culture .......................................................................................... 47
3.5.5.3 Male orientated structure .............................................................. 48
3.5.5.4 Women's underachievement and issues of retention .................... 49
3.5.6 Breaking down the barriers .............................................................. 51
3.5.7 Reconciliation of work and family in the construction process .......... 51
3.6 Ethnic minorities in construction .............................................................. 53
3.6.1 The underrepresentation of ethnic minorities in construction .......... 53
3.6.2 Empirical explanations for ethnic minorities' underrepresentation .... 54
3.6.3 Ethnic minorities' educational experiences ........................................ 55
CHAPTER 5  STAKEHOLDERS ATTITUDES TOWARDS WORKFORCE DIVERSIFICATION

5.1 Introduction .................................................................................................................. 100

5.2 Methodology .................................................................................................................. 100

5.2.1 The research sample .................................................................................................. 100

Table 5.1 Summary of informants ..................................................................................... 101

5.2.2 Analytical strategy ..................................................................................................... 103

5.2.3 A note on the presentation of the findings ................................................................... 104

5.3 Stakeholder explanations for the current position of women and ethnic minorities in the construction industry ......................................................................................... 105

5.3.1 Self exclusion ............................................................................................................. 105

5.3.2 Poor public image of construction ............................................................................. 108

5.3.4 Assumptions about women’s unpaid work ............................................................... 110

5.3.5 Assumptions about women’s and ethnic minorities’ aptitude for construction work ................................................................................................................................. 113
CHAPTER 6 A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY'S APPROACH TO ADDRESSING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND DIVERSITY

6.1 Introduction ........................................................................................................... 181

6.2 The industry's approach to equal opportunities and workforce diversity 181

6.2.1 Advocacy of the diversity issue within the construction industry ..... 186

6.2.2 The impact of the industry's attempts to address equal opportunities and workforce diversity ......................................................................................................................... 188

6.2.2.1 The composition of the construction workforce ........................................ 188

6.2.2.2 Lip service .................................................................................................... 190

6.2.2.3 Culture and attitudinal change ................................................................. 191

6.2.2.4 Drivers of equal opportunities and diversity ......................................... 191

6.2.2.5 Industry support ....................................................................................... 192

6.2.2.6 Fragmentation ............................................................................................ 193

6.2.2.7 'Best practice' ............................................................................................ 194

6.3 Case study of the Respect for People 'Diversity in the Workplace Toolkit' initiative ........................................................................................................................................ 194

6.3.1 The Respect for People initiative .................................................................. 194

6.3.2 Purpose and justification of the Respect for People case study .......... 195

6.3.3 Methodological approach ............................................................................. 196

6.3.4 Factors determining the use of the diversity toolkit ............................... 199

6.3.5 Perceptions of the diversity toolkit ............................................................... 200

6.3.5.1 Section 1: Diversity Policy and Implementation ................................... 202

6.3.5.2 Section 2: Recruitment/Job Presentation ............................................. 203

6.3.5.3 Section 3: Selection/Promotion ............................................................. 204

6.3.5.4 Section 4: Retention/Exits ...................................................................... 205

6.3.5.5 Section 5: Training .................................................................................. 206

6.3.5.6 Section 6: Management - Procedures and Practice ............................ 206

6.3.5.7 Section 7: Monitoring/Policy & Strategy Review ................................. 208

6.3.6 Summary of the Respect for People diversity toolkit case study .......... 209

6.4 Discussion ............................................................................................................. 210

6.5 Conclusions ......................................................................................................... 211
CHAPTER 7 DEVELOPING A POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY

7.1 Introduction ......................................................................................... 213

7.2 Developing the code of practice .......................................................... 213

7.2.1 Methodology .................................................................................. 214

7.2.1.1 Collaboration with ICEfloe ......................................................... 214

7.2.3 Policy approach ............................................................................. 215

7.2.4 Terminology and language ............................................................. 217

7.3 An overview of the sections of the code .............................................. 217

7.3.1 The purpose of the code ................................................................. 217

7.3.2 The drivers of the code: engaging stakeholders ............................. 218

7.3.3 ICE Policy statement .................................................................... 219

7.3.4 Responsibilities ............................................................................. 219

7.3.5 Implementing the code of practice ................................................. 220

7.3.6 Influencing the supply chain and projects ..................................... 220

7.3.7 Small businesses .......................................................................... 222

7.3.8 Recruitment and selection ............................................................. 222

7.3.9 Retention ...................................................................................... 223

7.3.10 Work life balance ........................................................................ 224

7.3.11 Help with equality legislation ...................................................... 225

7.3.12 Harassment and bullying ............................................................. 226

7.3.13 On-site behaviour ........................................................................ 227

7.3.14 Raising awareness of diversity and equality ............................... 228

7.3.15 Monitoring diversity and equality ................................................. 230

7.3.16 The role of professional institutions ............................................ 231

7.3.17 Positive action ............................................................................ 232

7.3.18 Culture change ............................................................................ 233

7.3.19 Guidance and support ................................................................. 233

7.4 The grounding of the code within the research findings .................... 235

7.5 Validation of the code of practice ....................................................... 239

7.5.1 Perceptions of the code of practice .............................................. 240
7.5.2 Overarching diversity and equality themes ........................................... 242
7.5.2.1 Engaging firms ........................................................................... 242
7.5.2.2 The role of professional bodies................................................... 243

7.6 Conclusions ...................................................................................... 246

CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

8.1 Introduction ..................................................................................... 247
8.2 Conclusions of the research ............................................................... 247
8.3 Achievements of the research ............................................................ 250
8.3.1 The achievement of the research aims and objectives .................. 250
  8.3.3.1 Objective i ............................................................................. 251
  8.3.3.2 Objective ii ........................................................................... 252
  8.3.3.3 Objective iii ......................................................................... 252
  8.3.3.4 Objective iv ......................................................................... 252
  8.3.3.5 Objective v ......................................................................... 253
8.3.2 The fulfilment of the research propositions .................................... 253
  8.3.2.1 Proposition 1 ........................................................................ 253
  8.3.2.2 Proposition 2 ........................................................................ 253
  8.3.2.3 Proposition 3 ........................................................................ 254
  8.3.2.4 Proposition 4 ........................................................................ 254
  8.3.2.5 Proposition 5 ........................................................................ 254
8.4 Contributions of the Research ........................................................... 255
  8.4.1 A contribution to the theoretical understanding of equality and diversity in the construction industry .................................................. 255
  8.4.2 Practical contribution ................................................................ 257
8.5 Limitations of the study and recommendations for further research ...... 257
  8.5.1 Recommendations for further research ....................................... 258

REFERENCES ...................................................................................... 242

XI
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1 Research aims objectives and related research Propositions .................................................. 7
Table 3.1 A comparison of women's and ethnic minorities experiences of gaining employment and working within the industry ............................................................. 62
Table 4.1 Assumptions of the qualitative paradigm .......................................................... 76
Table 5.1 Summary of informants .......................................................... 101
Table 5.2 Multi-Stakeholder perspectives of the espoused business case for diversity ................................................. 137
Table 5.3 Summary of the industry's subcultures .......................................................... 163
Table 6.1 Overview of the construction industry's attempts to address equal opportunities and diversity in construction .......................................................... 182
Table 6.2 A comparison of women's representation in the construction professions in 1993 and 2003/2004 ............... 189
Table 6.3 Summary of companies interviewed who had attempted to use the toolkit ................................................. 197
Table 6.4 Summary of companies interviewed who had not used the diversity toolkit ................................................. 198
Table 7.1 The grounding of the code within the research findings ................................................. 236
Table 7.2 Workshop participants .......................................................... 239
<p>| Figure 1.1 | Structure of the thesis ........................................................ 11 |
| Figure 4.1 | Diagrammatic project model .................................................... 81 |
| Figure 4.2 | Screen short showing the coding process in NVivo ........................ 94 |
| Figure 4.3 | Final coding structure ........................................................... 95 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACAS</td>
<td>Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFC</td>
<td>Architects for Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AWISE</td>
<td>Association of Women in Science and Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BWW</td>
<td>Building Work for Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CABE</td>
<td>Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIB</td>
<td>Construction Industry Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIC</td>
<td>Construction Industry Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIOB</td>
<td>Chartered Institute of Building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CITB</td>
<td>Construction Industry Training Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBPP</td>
<td>Construction Best Practice Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>CRE</td>
<td>Commission for Racial Equality</td>
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<tr>
<td>EOC</td>
<td>Equal Opportunities Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>DLO</td>
<td>Direct Labour Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRC</td>
<td>Disability Rights Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DTI</td>
<td>Department of Trade and Industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRM</td>
<td>Human Resource Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICE</td>
<td>Institution of Civil Engineers</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICEfloe</td>
<td>Institution of Civil Engineers Equal Opportunities Committee</td>
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<td>IStructE</td>
<td>Institution of Structural Engineers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JIVE</td>
<td>Joint Interventions Partners</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lets TWIST</td>
<td>Lets Train Women in Science and Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>M4I</td>
<td>Movement for Innovation</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAWIC</td>
<td>National Association of Women in Construction</td>
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<tr>
<td>NDC</td>
<td>National Disability Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RREAS</td>
<td>Race Relations Employment Advisory Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>RIBA</td>
<td>Royal Institute of British Architects</td>
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<td>RICS</td>
<td>Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors</td>
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<td>RIP</td>
<td>Respect for People</td>
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<td>RTPI</td>
<td>Royal Town Planning Institute</td>
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<td>PWIC</td>
<td>Promoting Women in Construction</td>
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<tr>
<td>SET</td>
<td>Science Engineering and Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>SME</td>
<td>Small to Medium Sized Enterprise</td>
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<tr>
<td>SoBA</td>
<td>Society of Black Architects</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<td>TUC</td>
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<td>WEB</td>
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<td>WES</td>
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<td>Women in Architecture</td>
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<td>WIP</td>
<td>Association of Women in Property</td>
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<td>WISE</td>
<td>Women in Science and Engineering</td>
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

There is a clear body of evidence which shows that the construction industry (as defined in section 3.2) suffers from a lack of workforce diversity and workplace equality (see section 3.5.2). Currently, however, little is known of key industry stakeholders' perceptions and experiences of implementing equal opportunities and diversity. By gaining a greater understanding of the attitudes of relevant industry stakeholders to workforce diversification, informed judgements can be made when developing policy measures to improve the representation of women, ethnic minorities and disabled people in the industry. Accordingly, this thesis proposes a policy framework for diversity and equality, itself based on a thorough analysis of industry stakeholder views on the requirements for change within the sector. This chapter explains the rationale and approach taken in conducting the research and designing the policy framework, and explains the structure of the thesis.

1.1 The need to examine equal opportunities and diversity in construction

The construction industry employs workers in two main categories (Fielden et al, 2000; Employment Service, 1990). The first comprises the managers and professionals who plan, organise, advise on specialist functions or field activities, direct and co-ordinate all activities and resources involved with construction operations. The other consists of the construction trades and crafts who construct, install, finish, maintain and repair internal and external structures of domestic, commercial and industrial buildings and civil constructions. Historically, recruitment across the construction industry has been homogeneous, with a marked propensity for companies to attract, recruit and select white non-disabled men (Dainty et al, 2001). This has led to a demonstrable under-representation of women, ethnic minorities and disabled people. Recent figures suggest that women constitute only 13% of the total construction workforce (DTI, 2004a). This
compares to an economically active female population of 46% of the national workforce (EOC 2004a). Women account for 11.6% of all those employed as professionals and managers (CITB, 2004). However, women make up 20% under-graduate students studying the construction professions (for example, architects, civil engineers, surveyors and town planners). This suggests that once they qualify for a career in the construction professions, nearly half leave the industry. The situation for women in the trades and crafts is even worse where they account for only 1% of the workforce (Ibid.). Indeed, most women in construction work in secretarial and sales where they make-up 81% of those working in this area. There is some anecdotal evidence that the latter contains many women helping their husband or partner to run the business (Ibid.).

A similar situation is also apparent in terms of ethnic minority employment. Only 2% of the construction workforce are ethnic minorities (DTI, 2004a), compared with an economically active population of 6.7% (CITB, 2004). Ethnic minorities make up 3.2% of all managers and professionals (Ibid.). However, like the statistics on women, there is also a disparity between ethnic minority under-graduate students (10%) studying the construction professions, and those employed in construction management and professional posts (3.2%) (Ibid.). Furthermore, only 2% of tradespeople are of ethnic minority origin (Ibid.). This statistical summary defines construction as the most white-male dominated of all major UK industrial sectors.

The case for disabled workers is even more extreme. An investigation of disabled people's representation in the construction industry failed to uncover any relevant statistics. Indeed, Greed (1999) found that the vast majority of professional bodies in the construction industry did not monitor disability. The means that the issue of employing disabled people is not even considered. She concluded that disabled people were often left out and seen as an 'other' category. Furthermore, she suggested that injury from accidents in the industry often results in workers leaving the industry because of disability and that it is not part of the construction culture to employ disabled people.

The academic community have made repeated calls for the industry to urgently begin to address equality and diversity as core business issues if the sector is to avoid the crippling effects of skills shortfalls, demotivated employees, and employment tribunals. Similarly, there has been a gradual recognition of the need
for workforce diversification from within the construction sector. The Latham Report (1994) recognised that equal opportunities must be vigorously pursued by the industry and a working group was set up which explored the value of diversity and ways of developing people effectively (Construction Industry Board, 1996). Although not a specific theme within the Egan’s Rethinking Construction Report (1998), diversity emerged as a key issue within the consequent Respect for People (RfP) working group report. This report outlined a prima facie business case for workforce diversification in the construction industry. However, increasing the numbers of women, ethnic minorities and disabled people in the construction industry is proving problematic.

1.2 Previous research on women, ethnic minorities and disabled people in construction

Previous research on women in construction in the UK has focused on attracting women to the industry (Gale 1994a; 1994b), the experiences of women in the construction education process (Srivastava 1996), and their transition from higher education into paid work (Wilkinson 1993). The poor image of construction, a lack of role models and knowledge, poor careers advice, gender-biased recruitment literature, peer pressure and poor educational experiences have all been cited as militating against women’s entry to the industry (Gale and Skitmore, 1990; Coles, 1992; Johnson et al., 1992; Srivastava, 1992; Bronzini et al., 1995; Wall, 1997). More recently, research has explored the experiences of women within the industry. This work has given insight into women’s career experiences within the construction professions (Court and Moralee 1995; Dainty et al 2000a; 2000b; 2001; Ellison, 2001) and the crafts and trades (Agapiou, 2002; Whittock 2000; Clarke et al, 2004). Research has also examined the reconciliation of work and family in the industry (Duncan 2000; Lingard and Lin 2003).

There has also been some groundbreaking work, which has explored the underrepresentation and experiences of ethnic minorities within the sector (Royal Holloway, 1999; Ansari et al 2002; Steele and Sodhi, 2004;). Cumulatively, these studies have demonstrated that construction reproduces a white-male oriented culture in which non-traditional entrants can face harassment and discrimination
and/or are often not afforded the same career opportunities as their white male colleagues.

A review of the relevant literature highlighted a dearth of research into the representation and achievements of disabled people in construction employment. Nevertheless, Mathiason (1995, cited in Duncan, 2000, pp. 97) found that many misconceptions exist around the suitability of disabled people for work in the construction industry, for example, some employment agencies did not believe disabled people to be suitable for a career in the construction industry (Ibid.).

1.3 Purpose of the study

Few studies have explored the views and experiences of key construction industry stakeholders on employing women, ethnic minorities, and disabled people, and the potential impact this has on promoting workforce diversity. The term ‘stakeholder’ is used to represent individuals responsible for policy formulation and implementation at all levels within the industry. Accordingly, this research makes a unique contribution by investigating diversity and equality from the perspective of potential key industry change agents including, employers, professional bodies, clients, training organisations, unions, campaigning groups and industry policy forums. This is necessary to provide a more holistic understanding of why the industry has failed to diversify its workforce. The study also critically evaluated the industry’s previous attempts to diversity its workforce. Collectively, these investigations revealed the necessary challenges for policy makers to overcome in order to promote diversity in the industry. This allowed the development of a practical framework of policy initiatives which responds to the needs of the construction industry. In this context, the aims and objectives of the study were as follows:

Aims:

1. To explore industry stakeholder attitudes towards diversity and equality and identify their implications for workforce diversification and workplace equality.
2. To construct a framework of practical policy initiatives to tackle inequality and encourage greater diversification of the construction industry labour market.

Objectives:

i. To explore women's, ethnic minorities' and disabled people's experiences within the context of relevant stakeholders' perceptions on diversity and equality.

ii. To explore the impact of the structure and culture of the construction industry on diversity and equality.

iii. To evaluate the industry's attempts to address inequality and to diversify the construction workforce.

iv. To develop a framework of practical policy initiatives to address the factors emerging from the study which have led to the exclusion of women, ethnic minorities and disabled people.

v. To validate and refine the framework of policy initiatives.

These objectives are addressed through the formulation of research propositions which act as a focus for data collection and analysis. These were:

**Proposition 1:** Construction stakeholders hold negative views on women, ethnic minorities and disabled people working in the industry.

**Proposition 2:** Underrepresented groups' experiences in the construction industry are influenced by its culture.

**Proposition 3:** Underrepresented groups' experiences in the construction industry are influenced by its structure.
Proposition 4: The industry's attempts to address inequality are misguided and ineffective in addressing equality of opportunity.

Proposition 5: Opportunities for underrepresented groups can be improved through a set of integrated policy initiatives which address cultural and structural determinants of inequality.

Table 1.1 shows the relationships between the research aims, objectives and propositions.
Table 1.1 Research aims objectives and related research propositions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aim</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Proposition</th>
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<tr>
<td>To explore industry stakeholder attitudes towards diversity and equality and identify their implications for workforce diversification and workplace equality.</td>
<td>To explore women's, ethnic minorities' and disabled people's experiences within the context of relevant stakeholders' perspectives on diversity and equality.</td>
<td>Construction stakeholders hold negative views on women, ethnic minorities and disabled people working in the industry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To construct a framework of practical policy initiatives to tackle inequality and encourage greater diversification of the construction industry labour market.</td>
<td>Underrepresented groups' experiences in the construction industry are influenced by its culture.</td>
<td>Underrepresented groups' experiences in the construction industry are influenced by its structure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To evaluate the industry's attempts to address inequality and diversify the construction workforce.</td>
<td>To explore the impact of the structure and culture of the construction industry on diversity and equality.</td>
<td>The industry's attempts to address inequality are misguided and ineffective in addressing equality of opportunity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To develop a framework of practical policy initiatives to address the factors emerging from the study which have led to the exclusion of women, ethnic minorities and disabled people.</td>
<td>Opportunities for underrepresented groups can be improved through a set of integrated policy initiatives which address cultural and structural determinants of inequality.</td>
<td>To validate and refine the framework of policy initiatives.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

This study represents a contribution to knowledge by attempting to examine women's, ethnic minorities' and disabled people's employment in the construction industry from a new perspective, that of key industry's stakeholders. It has sought explanations for how social and organisational processes reinforce the industry as a white, non-disabled, male domain. Therefore the findings have contributed to the theory of equality and diversity in organisations. The study has also established the factors that prevent the delivery of equal opportunities and diversity in the construction industry in order that their effect can be mitigated through policy initiatives which encourage the development of an equitable work
environment. Thus, a practical outcome of the research has been the development of a framework of policy initiatives aimed at improving the construction industry for underrepresented groups.

1.4 Overview of the research approach

This research represents an ethnographic study utilising a primarily qualitative methodology (Hammersely and Atkinson, 1995). In accordance with the aims and objectives of the research, this work was divided into three broad stages. The first explored a variety of industry stakeholders' attitudes to employing underrepresented groups in construction as well as their perceptions of equal opportunities and diversity. The second stage of the research design identified and critically evaluated the industry's attempts to diversify its workforce. This involved desk based research and case study interviews. The third stage, involved the development of a policy framework for diversity to respond to the findings previously identified.

1.4.1 Rationale for research methodology

Understanding why people behave as they do, demands an ethnographic research approach capable of appreciating individual's perspectives and promoting inquiry into the meanings people make of their experiences. Due to the nature of the research problem, the method utilised for this study draws upon the approaches taken by Dainty (1998) and Greed (2000). It selects an interpretivist methodology within an ethnographic framework of investigation in order to build a holistic and detailed picture of stakeholder behaviour and attitudes, and to find meaning in the words and actions used by them regarding diversity and equality.

1.6 Industrial collaboration

The research received funding from the Department of Civil and Building Engineering at Loughborough University, Higher Education Reach-Out to Business and the Community (HEROBC) and Rethinking Construction.
In-kind support was also provided by the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) Equal Opportunities Committee (ICEfloe). This enabled the development of the policy framework for diversity and equality (outlined in stage 3 of the research design), by means of an iterative process with industry representatives. The ICEfloe committee also provided valuable feedback on the code's emerging content to ensure its alignment with the needs of industry, and assisted with the organisation of a validation workshop attended by industry leaders. The purpose of the workshop was to debate the merits and demerits of the code, explore its practical application to the industry and the role of the ICE in encouraging its future take-up within the industry. That the ICE have agreed to adopt the diversity and equality code of practice is validation of the code supported by the outcomes of the workshop.

1.7 Organisation of the thesis

The thesis is organised into eight chapters and four appendices containing additional information referred to in the main text. The content of the thesis is as follows:

Chapters 2 and 3 review the relevant literature, establishing the context within which the study was undertaken. Investigating equality and diversity in the construction sector brings together two distinct bodies of literature: general literature on equal opportunities and diversity in employment and literature on underrepresented groups in the UK construction sector. Chapter two presents an overview of equal opportunities and diversity theory forming a backdrop for their coverage in subsequent chapters. Chapter 3 investigates underrepresented groups in the construction industry and reviews work which has sought to explain these phenomena from the construction management field. Justification for the study is provided with reference to current and past research.

Chapter 4 presents the research design and methodology employed in the study. Data collection strategies, analysis techniques and interpretation of the data are also presented and justified.
Chapter 5 presents the main findings of the study, the analysis of multi-stakeholder perceptions of diversity and equality. The interview findings are used to present a detailed account of the factors which sustain workforce homogeneity.

Chapter 6 critically appraises the industry's attempts to engage with the equal opportunities and diversity agendas. It also presents the findings of an exemplifying case study which provided a context for assessing the potential impact of diversity initiatives on construction companies, and in generating insight into the practical application of equal opportunities and diversity in the construction industry.

Chapter 7 develops a diversity and equality policy framework to respond to the findings emergent from chapters 5 and 6 and explains how it was developed and refined in order that it accords with industry needs.

Finally, chapter 8 concludes the thesis, highlighting the main findings of the study and the implications these will have upon workforce diversification. The chapter closes with recommendations for further research arising from the thesis.

Figure 1.1 overleaf presents a schematic representation of the thesis indicating how the chapters interrelate so that the reader can establish the logical development of the final recommendations of the study.
Chapter 1 Introduction
The need for a study to address multi-stakeholder perceptions of equal opportunities, diversity and the employment of women, ethnic minorities, disabled people in the construction industry.

Chapter 2 Theory and Concepts of Equal Opportunities and Diversity in Employment
Theoretical and conceptual elements that underpin contemporary perspectives of equal opportunities and diversity in employment.

Chapter 3 Underrepresented Groups in the UK Construction Industry
Existing explanations for women's, ethnic minorities' and disabled people's underrepresentation and underachievement in construction.

Chapter 4 Research Design and Methodology
A strategy for investigating construction stakeholder perceptions of equal opportunities and diversity.

Chapter 5 Multi-stakeholder perceptions of women, ethnic minorities, and disabled people in employment in the construction industry
Detailed representation of stakeholder attitudes.

Chapter 6A Critical Discourse on the Construction Industry's Attempts to address Equal Opportunities and Diversity
Review of industry attempts to diversify the construction workforce, including an in-depth case study analysis.

Chapter 7 Developing a Policy Framework for Diversity and Equality
The development of a diversity and equality code of practice to respond to the findings of the research and the needs of the industry.

Chapter 8 Conclusions
Conclusions, contributions and limitations of the research, recommendations for further research.
CHAPTER 2

THEORY AND CONCEPTS OF EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IN EMPLOYMENT

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion of the theoretical and conceptual elements that underpin contemporary perspectives on equality and diversity in employment. Firstly, it explores theoretical aspects of equal opportunities and managing diversity and formulates a constructive compromise as a focus for the research. Next, theoretical underpinnings of race, gender and disability and concepts of racism, sexism and disablism are explored followed by a review of the continuing need for equality and diversity. Subsequently, the drivers of equality and diversity including legal and social regulation and the business case are appraised. Finally, a succinct review of literature on women in non traditional employment introduces themes and issues central to the research. The chapter is concluded by explaining the need for further investigation of equality and diversity and the associated drivers in order to develop the rationale which underpins the equality and diversity theme and to explore ways in which this can be more effectively communicated.

2.2 From equal opportunities to managing diversity

There has been lively debate on the development of workplace equality policies (Liff, 1997). The following sections clarify the underlying principles and differences between equal opportunities and managing diversity approaches.
2.2.1 'Equal opportunities'

Equal opportunities is a complex, contentious and controversial concept (Bagilhole, 1997). It has different meanings for different people; therefore, those members of society who have already benefited from inequality, usually white, non-disabled men, have perceived it as a threat to their own position and have thus resisted the development of equal opportunities policies and practices (Ibid.). Indeed, there seems to be no dispute among writers that equal opportunities has endured 'bad press'. The emergence of media accusations of political correctness have served to trivialise and demean its underlying concepts (Cassell, 1997).

Nevertheless, some core ideas can be identified which characterise equal opportunity approaches. The underpinning legal framework stresses the importance of treating people equally and individuals should therefore be appointed or rewarded only on the basis of job-related criteria (Liff, 1997). The inclusion within equal opportunities legislation of provisions against indirect discrimination allows that equal treatment may be considered unlawful if it has a disproportionate effect on members of one sex or ethnic group. However, this is modified by the fact that such an unequal outcome can be defended if the criteria can be shown to be justifiable on grounds other than sex or race (Ibid.).

Marshall (1994) defined three main types of equality; equality of opportunity, equality of condition and equality of result or outcome. Equality of opportunity includes the provision of equality of access to institutions and social positions among the relevant social groups. Equality of condition intends to provide support for individuals to compete on equal terms, hence inequality of condition can be said to obstruct real equality of opportunity because all those competing do not start from the same point (Bagilhole, 1997). The most radical approach to equal opportunities is equality of result or outcome, which involves the application of different policies or processes to those who have been disadvantaged by previous and historical discrimination and advantage (Jencks, 1988; Bagilhole, 1997).

The radical perspective of equal opportunities is strongly linked to the concept of positive action. Despite popular myth, legal positive action can be distinguished from illegal positive discrimination (Bagilhole, 1997). Positive action aims to bring
individuals up to a point where they can compete equally with other individuals, for example, through the provision of training or the acquisition of qualifications. It does not constitute preferential treatment at the point of selection, and although group outcomes are the focus, Blakemore and Drake (1996) assert that the emphasis is still upon individual merit or capabilities.

There is much debate on the effectiveness of positive action. Some feel that such actions are unnecessary and unhelpful (e.g. Dickson, 1992), whilst others suggest that if such measures are not taken, issues relating to equality will be neglected (Morris and Nott 1991).

At an organisational level, the differences between procedures (i.e. anti-discrimination policies) and outcomes (the end result) have been classified into three basic approaches, the 'minimalist', 'liberal' and 'radical' perspectives (Jewson and Mason, 1993). The minimalist position is seen as most common in private industry, where it is assumed that market decisions maximise fairness, and only individual irrationality and prejudice introduce distortions (Bagilhole 1997). The liberal perspective produces an equality of treatment approach to ensure equal opportunities in which individuals are enabled freely and equally to compete for social rewards (ibid.). For liberals, the aim of policy is to ensure fairness of procedures and practices and be seen to be doing so. Hence private businesses adopt this approach to guard against potential legal proceedings and to preserve their image and reputation for good employment practices. Finally the radical perspective adopts the equality of outcome approach, intervening in workplace policies and practices to ensure even distribution of reward amongst employees. Cockburn (1989) suggested that in reality, equal opportunities in organisations have either a short or long agenda. The short agenda is synonymous to the liberal perspective in introducing policy to minimise bias in recruitment and promotion. The long agenda recognises the need to transform organisations in terms of culture and power relations and not just undertake a review of the systems. Bagilhole (1997) notes that the long agenda was not widely recognised or adopted in the 1990s, also those who have proposed the long agenda have been most disappointed with the results to date (Cassell, 1996, Cockburn, 1989).
2.2.2 Definitions and theoretical underpinnings of gender, race and disability from an equal opportunities perspective

Although equal opportunities is concerned with all groups in society who experience disadvantage and discrimination, this thesis concentrates on the areas of race, gender and disability as the only three major social and structural divisions in society on which equal opportunities legislation has been based, until very recently. These social categories represent highly visible differences between people and are of significant contrast to the heterogeneous white, non-disabled male construction workforce.

2.2.2.1 Gender

Social scientists have made a clear distinction between sex and gender, the former being of fixed biological nature and the latter as a socially constructed cultural product that refers to the social classification into 'masculine' and 'feminine' (Oakley, 1972). Therefore, subsequent studies focussed on the importance of socialisation and gender-role stereotyping as alternative ways of understanding the difference between men and women's positions in various arenas, such as the labour market and education (Bagilhole, 1997).

As with racism, sexism consists of structures within society, policies and procedures within institutions (institutional sexism) and prejudice among individuals (individual sexism) which maintain and encourage inequality and discrimination on grounds of sex. Cook and Watt (1987: pp.70) define sexism as "a process of systematic oppression directed towards women who are defined as inferior to men".

The picture relating to women's pay and employment position, whilst not static, still portrays unequal pay and horizontal and vertical segregation. Despite nearly thirty years since the Equal Pay Act was implemented (1970), women working full-time currently earn only 81% of the average hourly earnings of men (Perfect and Hurrell, 2003), are disadvantaged in having less access to remuneration packages (Dickens, 1994), and risk losing out in merit and performance pay schemes (Bevan and Thompson, 1993). Turning to employment distribution, women remain segregated on three fronts, sectoral, occupational and contractual
(Dickens, 1994). In addition, women are concentrated in the lower grades of all occupations, even in those where they dominate (Bagilhole, 1997).

Glover (1999) distinguishes between two different types of feminisation of employment. Quantitative feminisation refers to an increase in the representation of girls or women thus, 'getting in'. Vertical/hierarchical feminisation refers to the representation of women at all levels within an occupation, thus 'getting on'. Glover (1999) contends that these concepts act independently of one another, therefore an occupation can contain many women but they are likely to be concentrated in low level positions.

2.2.2.2 Race

Race is a concept which has been refuted on the grounds of scientific reason and is neither natural and biological nor psychological (Guillaumin, 1999). However, the concept of race in the twentieth century remains as a legal, political and historical reality which plays a real and constraining role in a number of societies (Ibid.). Goldberg (1993) argues for the need to situate meanings attached to race in specific political, ideological and cultural contexts. For example, he showed that it had been successfully used by states to 'naturalise differences and normalise exclusions'. Thus, from a sociological perspective, race denotes a particular way in which communal differences come to be constructed.

Within British law, the term race is used as a substitute for ethnic origin, nationality and skin colour. Also, the term Black has been used to denote people from ethnic minorities to promote unity and symbolise the shared experience of discrimination, prejudice, inequality and racism (Bagilhole, 1997). However, it is important to acknowledge that the ethnic minority community is heterogeneous, comprising a number of diverse groupings and individuals who may not necessarily have much else in common than adverse treatment and experiences, and even these may differ between groups.

In general terms, racism is defined as consisting of conduct or words or practices which disadvantage or advantage people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin (Macpherson, 1999). Racist practices may be products of procedures and policies which impact differentially on ethnic minorities serving to
disadvantage or exclude them or, a failure to provide enabling opportunities where issues of conformity and cultural insider knowledge are aspects of inclusion (Anthias, 1999).

Racism practiced at a broad societal level through structural and cultural means has been referred to as institutional and cultural racism (Augoustinos and Reynolds, 2001). Institutional racism refers to the policies and practices that result in systematic racial inequalities or oppression. Cultural racism occurs when those in positions of power define the norms, values and standards in a particular culture and where the ‘powerless’, in order to participate in society, have to surrender their own cultural heritage and adopt new ones (e.g. those of the majority) (Augoustinos and Reynolds, 2001). Carmichael and Hamilton (1969) distinguished subjective or individual racism from institutional racism. The former refers to the racism of overtly prejudiced individuals, and the latter involved the behaviour of the entire white society and its institutions towards “people of colour”. Macpherson (1999) also emphasises that racism can be unintentional or unwitting discriminatory practice in the mode of operation or organisations which are formally non discriminatory. This type of institutional racism, is widespread in British public institutions (Lea, 2000).

Bonilla-Silva and Forman (2000) demonstrate that although Americans believe racism has all but disappeared, new, more subtle forms of discrimination have emerged that help preserve white privilege. This "new racism" has produced a powerful ideology of "colour-blind racism" that justifies contemporary inequities. Colour blind racism allows whites to appear non racist in their support of equal treatment. However, they preserve their privileged status, blame ethnic minorities for their lower status and criticise any institutional approach that attempts to ameliorate inequality (Bonilla-Silva and Forman, 2000). Thus, Bonilla-Silva and Forman argue for a concentration of efforts in fighting the ‘new racists, all the nice whites who tell us ‘I'm not racist but...!’” (2000, pp.78)

Holdaway (1999) argues that occupational culture provides the primary context of racialisation (differentiating or categorising according to race). Hence, investigating institutional racism and sexism in the construction sector requires an in-depth analysis of the structure of the industry and the nature of the construction culture. Solomos (1999) concludes that an important theme in discussions about the concept of institutional racism, its various meanings, and
the ways in which it could be applied to specific institutions, is the importance of providing a clear analysis of the institutional processes in shaping the position of ethnic minorities.

For ethnic minorities in the labour market, there are still high levels of racial discrimination, a pattern of segregation of jobs with ethnic minorities generally in lower paid, less secure positions and with higher levels of unemployment (Owen, 2000).

2.2.2.3 Disability

The social model of disability has its roots in the struggle of disabled people for the realisation of their civil rights (Burchardt, 2004). It provides a way of conceptualising the disadvantage experienced by people with impairments which emphasises the social, economic and environmental barriers to participation in society. Thus, an important distinction made by the social model is between impairment and disability. Impairment is a condition of body or mind, such as lacking a limb or being partially sighted. Disability is the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the community on an equal level with others. It arises from the social, economic and physical environment in which people with impairments find themselves (Burchardt, 2004). Hence, Finkelstein argued that:

"Disability is the outcome of an oppressive relationship between people with impairments and the rest of society" (1980, pp.47)

Definitions of disability have shifted to the social rather than an individual model, in which limitations in functioning or participation in society are seen as the direct result of a medical condition. The individual model focuses on curative or rehabilitative strategies and on changing the individual to fit society. In contrast, by drawing attention to economic, social and physical barriers, the social model leads to a demand for the restructuring of society and the environment to accommodate and empower all citizens (Oliver, 1996). Thus disability is a product of the built environment which is reinforced by social values and beliefs. This leads to a rejection of the idea of disability as a personal tragedy. If the barriers to full participation are not intrinsic to the individual but are social in nature, it is a matter of social justice that these should be dismantled (Oliver and
Barnes, 1998). Indeed the term 'disabled people' has been viewed as being more politically powerful by placing the emphasis on the processes by which society actively oppresses people with a whole range of impairments (Bagilhole, 1997).

In the UK, disabled people of working age are much less likely to be employed than non-disabled people, and those who are employed earn less than non-disabled workers in general (DRC, 2005). An attitudes and awareness survey conducted by the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) indicated that many people, both disabled and non-disabled, believe that disabled people are not treated fairly by employers (DRC, 2003). However, Kitchen et al (1998) reports that higher proportions of disabled women are employed, or employed in low skilled positions and earning less income than disabled men. Furthermore, Oliver (1999) recognised the racism experienced by black disabled people and argues for the incorporation of differing perceptions of disability to ensure the social model of disability is inclusive.

2.2.3 Critical perspectives on equal opportunities

Many authors have commented that despite twenty years of equal opportunities legislation, inequality is pervasive and there is considerable disappointment and disillusionment about the current state of women's, ethnic minorities' and disabled peoples' position at work (Cassell, 1997). Disappointing legislation (Cassell, 1997), a backlash against equal opportunities and positive action initiatives (Faludi, 1992; McDougall, 1996), resentment and resistance (Bagilhole, 1997), lack of policy implementation (CRE, 1989), the prevalence of stereotyping and prejudice in recruitment (Cockburn, 1989; Cassell, 1996) and the imposition of equal opportunities (Ross and Schneider, 1992) are offered as explanations for limiting the effectiveness of equal opportunities.

The alternative approach to equality currently being proposed is managing diversity, popularised by Kandola and Fullerton (1994, 1998).
2.2.4 ‘Managing diversity’

Since the early 1990s the debate on equal opportunities at work has been characterised by the introduction of the relatively new concept of managing diversity. There are a plethora of definitions of the term ‘managing diversity’ (e.g. Bartz et al, 1990; Ellis and Sonnerfield, 1993; Thomas and Ely, 1996). One comprehensive version which captures the essence of ‘managing diversity’ is provided by Kandola and Fullerton:

"The basic concept of diversity recognises that there are visible and non-visible differences between people which will include factors such as sex, age, background, race, disability, personality and work style. Harnessing these differences should create a more productive environment, in which everyone feels valued, where their talents are fully utilised, and in which organisational goals are met" (1998, pp. 8).

Two aspects of this definition differentiate it from equal opportunities: first, the positive emphasis on differences in contrast to the negative emphasis on disadvantage and discrimination within traditional equal opportunities; and second, the inclusion of diversity factors beyond those covered by the law (Maxwell et al, 2001). As a term, managing diversity draws attention to a general problem for the management of human resources – that employees are not a homogeneous group (Liff, 1999).

Maxwell et al, (2001) argued that managing diversity will become a strategic business issue for many organisations due to widespread demographic changes and its potential to complement or supplement traditional equal opportunities approaches.
Managing diversity is depicted as being distinct from equal opportunities in several ways, as is shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Equal opportunities</th>
<th>VS</th>
<th>Managing diversity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Externally initiated</td>
<td></td>
<td>Internally initiated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legally driven</td>
<td></td>
<td>Business needs driven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative focus</td>
<td></td>
<td>Qualitative focused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(improving numbers)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(improving the environment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem focused</td>
<td></td>
<td>Opportunity Focused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumes assimilation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Assumes pluralism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reactive</td>
<td></td>
<td>Proactive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race, gender and disability</td>
<td></td>
<td>All differences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Kandola and Fullerton, 1998 pp.13)

Increasingly equal opportunities approaches are viewed as being outdated and unable to meet future challenges, given that their origins lie in the social and political agendas of the 1960s and 1970s (Maxwell et al, 2001; Wilson and Iles, 1999). Indeed, the question of the relationship between the more traditional equal opportunities and the newer managing diversity has been the subject of debate (Liff, 1997) and a number of conceptual questions have arisen. Examples of which include: is managing diversity substantially different to equal opportunities? (Elmuti, 1993; McDougall, 1996) Is it a step forward in the development of equal opportunities? (Ross and Schneider, 1992; IPD, 1996; Kandola and Fullerton, 1998; Kirkton and Greene, 2000). Do equal opportunities and diversity have to be mutually exclusive? (Liff, 1999).

2.2.4.1 Arguments in favour of managing diversity

The business case

Equal opportunities tends to be driven by external forces such as the need for legislative compliance (Wilson, 1996; Wilson and Iles, 1999); social justice
(McDougall, 1996) and ethical and human rights (Wilson and Iles, 1999). As a result, it is perceived as an issue of business ethics, rather than one of business efficiency (Shapiro, 2000). Moreover, Ross and Schneider (1992) suggest that employers have resisted equal opportunities because it has been imposed upon them, although the evidence for this is questionable (see Cassell, 1997). They argue that the law is not an effective vehicle of change since it encourages a minimalist approach. Rather, equal opportunities needs to be seen as business driven in order to be attractive to employers and thus permeate the organisation (Ross and Schneider, 1992).

Diversity: a strategic issue

Equal opportunities can largely be perceived as an operational issue (Wilson and Iles, 1999) which is likely to be the concern of the human resource management function (Ross and Schneider, 1992; McDougal, 1996; Wilson, 1996; Wilson and Iles, 1999), rather than one that concerns all managers and employees (Shapiro, 2000). Consequently, equality issues are often marginalised by the lack of strategic strength of the HRM function in many organisations (Price Waterhouse-Cranfield, 1991 cited in Shapiro, 2000). On the other hand, managing diversity as conceptualised, can be regarded as a strategic issue which is viewed as crucial to economic and competitive success (Wilson and Iles, 1999; Maxwell et al, 2001) and is therefore of concern to all employees (Ross and Schneider, 1992).

Diversity is inclusive

A further distinction concerns the differing foci of equal opportunities and managing diversity. Equal opportunities is criticised as being seen to be about groups not individuals, and can lead to one group receiving a great deal of attention with others receiving little acknowledgement. For example, women and ethnic minorities at the expense of disabled people or gays and lesbians. There is also some evidence that equal opportunities programmes may create divisions within the workforce where it is viewed as 'special pleading' for minority groups, rather than the appointment of the best person for the job (Ross and Schneider, 1992). Such feelings may reinforce the sexist and racist attitudes that the initiatives are intending to overcome (Kandola and Fullerton, 1998). In addition,
whilst equal opportunities primarily concentrates on issues of discrimination (Ibid.), managing diversity is concerned with ensuring people maximise their potential (McDougall, 1996) and thus represents a more positive approach. Managing diversity suggests that differences between people are an asset (Benest, 1991) to be effectively managed (Kandola and Fullerton, 1998; Cassell, 1996) as opposed to being rejected (Cassell, 1996) or viewed as a liability (Wilson and Iles, 1999).

Managing diversity promotes culture change

The impetus of equal opportunities programmes has been to add special schemes and initiatives to existing organisational and managerial structures (Thomas, 1992) to ease integration of certain groups into the workforce, or facilitate 'catch up' with the 'normal' employees (Shapiro, 2000). Equal opportunities is concerned with helping individuals fit into the white male able-bodied norm (Wilson and Iles, 1999), and has been described as the assimilation model (Hollister et al, 1993). Shapiro (2000) notes that equal opportunities initiatives deal with formal processes and often have little impact on informal processes, which are arguably most influential on behaviour. There is little attempt to change organisational values, culture and systems to accommodate the needs of diverse employee groups (Ross and Schneider, 1992). Instead individuals are expected to suppress their differences and assimilate into the prevailing organisational culture (Mandell and Kohler-Grey, 1990). On the other hand, diversity demands culture change not just a review of the systems to ensure they are 'equal' (Ross and Schneider, 1992). In addition, the targeted groups for equal opportunities, commonly women, ethnic minorities and disabled people are often treated as being homogeneous, showing little regard for other factors that might influence their needs and aspirations (Shapiro, 2000).

2.2.4.2 Diversity: a critique

Managing diversity is not without its critics. It has been argued that a managing diversity approach fails to recognise that groups have collective needs which may be overlooked (Wilson, 1996; Bagilhole, 1997; Liff, 1997). Critics of managing diversity point to a lack of sensitivity to issues of power in organisations which
can result in less credence being given to the voices of individuals or groups who have always been under-represented in the past (Vince and Booth, 1996 cited in McDougal, 1996). For instance, status characteristics theory (Ridgeway, 1988) argues that the effects of membership of particular identity groups, such as race or gender, are produced by the status value society ascribes to those groups. In organisations, status differentials are reinforced when higher status identity groups are disproportionately represented in positions of authority and are challenged when they are not (Lau and Murnighan, 1998). Furthermore, perceptions of an individual's relative status in the organisation influence their expectations and behaviours. Indeed, within managing diversity and the language of difference, it is assumed that all differences are equal, however, this is not the case (Cassell, 1997; Liff, 1996).

There have been concerns expressed regarding the role of line managers in a managing diversity approach where the practicability of their responsibility for managing diversity has been questioned (Maxwell et al, 2000). This is particularly heightened when managers face conflicting priorities, increasing workloads and a lack of accountability for equality issues (McDougall, 1998). There are also concerns which relate to the potential difference between organisational rhetoric on managing diversity and the reality of organisational practices (Paddison, 1990; McKay and Maxwell, 1997; Moore, 1999; Liff, 1997). Moore (1999) notes that diversity is a context dependent, selective and relative concept, which is difficult to define objectively. It is context dependent as no one can be defined as different in isolation, it is only against a background of a variety of contextual factors that it is possible to assess difference. It is selective, in so much that some characteristics are used as stronger indicators than others. Finally it is relative, in that people are often evaluated according to the extent of a particular indicator of diversity. For example, women can be defined as more or less 'feminine' than others. In defining diversity, research has demonstrated that companies tend to reconstruct its meaning to suit their particular situation (Point and Singh, 2003).

The claim that there can be 'soft' benefits of managing diversity in terms of increased morale and job satisfaction are difficult to prove (Maxwell et al, 2000, Hicks-Clarke and Iles, 2000). Jehn et al, (1999) identified three specific types of diversity; informational diversity, social category diversity and value diversity. Informational diversity refers to different knowledge bases and perspectives;
social category diversity refers to explicit social differences such as race, gender and ethnicity; value diversity occurs when members of a workgroup differ in terms of what they think the group's real task, goal, target or mission should be. Consequently, the effects of diversity on performance are difficult to measure, as diversity characteristics are not mutually exclusive. Furthermore, non-visible differences of importance to managing diversity also lend themselves to misinterpretation and resistance, for instance it could be argued that a diverse workforce may consist of all white men. Here, diversity can be seen to impede the very culture change that it promotes. Despite the 'bad press' that equal opportunities has endured it has become well established in comparison to the concept of managing diversity.

Literature on managing diversity (i.e. Kandola and Fullerton 1998; Ross and Schneider 1992) refers to equal opportunities on the premise of equal treatment. This is a very simple and rather superficial conceptualisation, which does not expose the complexity of the social, political and economic issues contained within the concept (Bagilhole, 1997). Ross and Schneider (1992) argue that diversity differs from equal opportunities in that it goes beyond the minimalist compliance with anti-discrimination legislation and aims to challenge the culture of organisations. However, some organisations do this in the name of equal opportunities (Bagilhole 1997). Similarly, it is widely believed that managing diversity is a business issue. However, the business case can be applied to equal opportunities (see Cassell 1997; Dickens, 1994). Finally, it has been claimed that managing diversity provides a less controversial alternative (Agocs and Burr, 1996). The individualistic approach to diversity is advocated simply as a means of avoiding resistance from groups outside the focus of equal opportunities policies (i.e. white men).

2.2.5 A constructive compromise

In assessing the significance of a possible change of approach in equality policies, two issues predominate. First, the consequence of an approach which highlights differences rather than minimises them. Second, the significance of a focus on individuals rather than groups. Liff (1997) suggests that the debate around managing diversity provides a valuable opportunity to rethink the strengths and weaknesses of equal opportunities approaches. She also suggests
that the presentation of managing diversity and equal opportunities as polar opposites is an unnecessary confrontational approach. Both approaches seek solutions to the same types of problems: how can individuals be assessed fairly and how can structures and cultures that work to favour some and disadvantage others be changed? (Ibid.). Consequently, Ford (1996) has suggested that equality and diversity need to be seen as interdependent for them to be successful.

It can be argued that Kandola and Fullerton's (1994; 1998) concept of 'managing diversity' represents a 'utopia', an ideal situation where differences are harnessed, valued and utilised. However, the disadvantage experienced by women, ethnic minorities and disabled people indicate that inequality for these groups is far reaching, which poses implications for the notion of 'valuing all differences'. It is unrealistic to suggest that managers can abandon their prejudices as a result of procedural instructions to make decisions without regard for gender or ethnicity (Uff, 1999). Indeed, within white male dominated organisations white males ascribe the status value of differences. Moreover, the extent of women's, ethnic minorities' and disabled people's underrepresentation within the construction industry, explored in chapter 3 of this thesis, demands a group research focus. However, the heterogeneity within groups is also acknowledged.

'Diversity' comprises the main body of rhetoric in recent construction initiatives (e.g. Rethinking Construction 2000) and should thus be considered if the research is to be reflective of "current thinking" within the construction industry. Furthermore, the business case has been utilised as the driver of diversity in the UK construction sector (chapter 3). As a result the research reported in this thesis has explored both equal opportunities and equality approaches and diversity.

2.3 Drivers of equality and diversity

2.3.1 The moral case

At the root of equal opportunities initiatives are assumptions about social justice, equality and fairness (Cassell, 1996). Hence, the moral case for addressing
equal opportunities and diversity asserts discrimination is indefensible in that it is socially just to treat all people fairly and equally.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is concerned with the relationship between companies and society and in particular with constraining the adverse impact of corporate activity on individuals and communities as a whole (Whitehouse, 2003). Thus, on this basis CSR could form a moral agenda for diversity and equality. However, consensus as to its specific meaning and methods by which to implement it remain elusive (Whitehouse, 2003; Frankental, 2001). Furthermore, Frankental (2001) argues that CSR will only be implemented when it is rewarded by financial markets without which there is no incentive for companies to pursue socially responsible policies. Consequently, whilst CSR may encompass diversity and equality, its implementation rests on a persuasive business argument.

2.3.2 The legal case

The UK has specific legislation on equality that outlaws discrimination and protects employees. The most comprehensive of anti-discrimination law relates to sex (Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and Equal Pay Act 1970), race (Race Relations Act 1976) and disability (Disability Discrimination Act 1995). Recently, the Race Relations Amendment Act (2000) imposed a three-stranded general duty on the public sector to eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and promote good race relations between persons of different racial groups. Similar duties for disability and gender (DTI, 2004a) are imminent. These public sector duties will have a direct impact on construction companies whose main clients are public authorities. It is likely that equal opportunities will form a feature of tender documents and contracts. In addition, under European Union (EU) Directives, national equality legislation has been introduced to protect people from discrimination on account of religion and belief and sexuality. Although there is no legislation at present on age discrimination in employment in the UK, the government has committed to the EU Directive to introduce age discrimination legislation by 2006 (following consultations in 2001 and 2003).

Dickens (1999) argues that legal regulation can play an effective role in setting and broadening employer equality agendas, in shaping the climate in which decisions are made, in providing useful standards, and in generalising and
underpinning good practice and altering the costs of discrimination and employer inaction. Moreover, state intervention is central to an equality agenda because the market tends to produce discrimination, not equality (Ibid.).

The relative stability of the picture of disadvantage (section 2.2.2), despite more than two decades of equalities legislation, testifies to the limits of the 'stick' approach, based on urging compliance with legislation. Dickens (1994) argues that even if action is taken by employers to comply with the legislation, very little is actually required of them. Cockburn (1991) points out that the Sex Discrimination Act (SDA) is seriously limited by its design, it does not give rights to women as a disadvantaged group, but to both sexes. Although, the Race Relations Amendment Act (RRAA) places a duty on public authorities to promote race equality, equalities legislation does not require private employers to do anything to promote equality as distinct from ending present discrimination. Dickens (1994) observes that the model of justice at the forefront of the legislation is focussed on the individual rather than the group. Remedies are on an individual basis, there is no group compensation provision and industrial tribunals cannot order remedial action. Furthermore, there can be no requirements for the discriminatory organisation to take any positive action to help overcome past discrimination. Thus, there is no guarantee that any changes will occur in the organisation after the individual case (Dickens, 1994).

According to Dickens (1994) the legal case offers few incentives for employers to take action given weaknesses in the legal provisions, procedures, remedies and enforcement mechanisms. Furthermore, Dickens (1994) suggests that employers may take the view that if they take no action on equal opportunities they are unlikely to be challenged; or if they are, they are unlikely to suffer adverse legal consequences. Cassell (1996) states that women's experiences of tribunals have been distressing. Indeed, the majority of industrial tribunal cases are either abandoned or settled without a hearing (Dickens, 1994).

Bagilhole (1997) suggests legislation, whilst addressing overt discrimination, may encourage covert and more subtle forms of discrimination which are harder to uncover and eliminate.
2.3.3 The business case

The business case for equality and diversity focuses on the business benefits that employers accrue through making the most of the skills and potential of all employees including women, ethnic minority and disabled people. Failure to recognise and make the most of these skills and potential, usually as a result of mundane discriminatory practices, is very costly (Cassell, 1996). Consequently, the business case is fundamentally linked to principles of strategic HRM where the human resource and its full utilisation are seen to give a company competitive advantage (Cassell, 1996). Key elements of the business case are outlined below:

**Attraction to employers**

Dickens (1994) suggests that once an organisation recognises that it stands to gain from equality and diversity, action rather than lip service could be expected. The business case can be more easily and justifiably embodied and mainstreamed into the corporate aims of the organisation which could result in a change in outcomes. Furthermore, Cassell (1997) observes that business case rhetoric reframes discussions around inequality making them more socially acceptable thus avoiding a backlash against equal opportunities. Hence, Cassell *et al* (1993) found women managers enthused about business case rhetoric because it gave them an apparently neutral language with which they could talk about equal opportunities at board level, where legitimacy is provided for discussions about equality because they are framed in terms of business advantage.

**Demographic drivers**

A key element of the business case is recognition of changing demographic trends and their impact on the make-up of the labour force. These arguments are persuasive when viewed in light of demographic predictions that high numbers of non-male, non-white new entrants will form the bulk of the labour force (Humphries and Grice, 1995). Women account for 46% of the workforce (EOC,
2004a) and by the end of this decade, the proportion of ethnic minorities in the workforce is expected to rise from 6.7% to 8% (Cabinet Office, 2003).

Hence, employers need to make more use of the skills of women, ethnic minorities and disabled people (Cassell, 1997). Ross and Schneider (1992) argue that the case for diversity is: "no longer about being a 'good employer and will instead have everything to do with long-term survival" (pp.51).

Best use of human capital

In addition to the full utilisation of the skills and potential of all employees, managing diversity can contribute to organisational success since it enables access to a changing marketplace and ensures a healthy return from human capital (Maxwell et al, 2001; Gardenswartz and Rowe, 1998). It also contends that it enables the best talent to be recruited and retained (Ross and Schneider, 1992; Kandola and Fullerton, 1998; Wilson and Iles, 1999) and encourages more creativity (McNerney, 1994; Wilson, 1996; Maxwell et al, 2001). Other benefits of diversity strategies are seen to be: a more motivated workforce; better recruitment and reduced staff turnover; a flexible workforce to aid restructuring; a workforce representative of the local community; improved corporate image for potential employees and customers; ability to attract ethical investors; the integration of equality into corporate objectives; and the generation of new business ideas (Cassell 1997).

2.3.3.1 The business case: a critique

At the route of traditional approaches the goals of equal opportunities have been justice and fairness. The implications of the change in goals towards a business case has been a debate in itself (Cassell 1997; Dickens, 1999).

Dickens (1999) notes that the business case strategy places employers, rather than the state as legislator, in the role of key actor. Consequently, she argues that such a 'privatised' approach in leaving equal opportunities to individual organisations taking voluntary action is an insecure foundation for general overall improvement in the position of women and ethnic minorities (Dickens, 1994).
limitations arise from the fact that business case arguments are inevitably contingent, variable, selective and partial, and often underplay the wider context within which business case rationales are pursued (Dickens, 1999). For instance, demographic trends are a key element of the business case, thus what happens when skills shortages decline and demographic changes alter once more? For instance, women were allowed into and trained in the building trades during the two world wars only to be excluded once the wars had ended (Clarke et al, 2004). As Cassell (1997) notes, an economic case is persuasive only within a given economic climate and consequently the impact of the business case in promoting long-term change must be questioned. Indeed, the appeal of a particular business case argument can vary over time as labour or product market change, giving rise to 'fair weather equality action' (Dickens, 1999).

Dickens (1999) argues that business case arguments have greater salience for some organisations than others, thus not all organisations will feel they need to address the equality/diversity issue. Even within an organisation which recognises business case rationales for action, the approach will be selective and partial because by definition, such arguments encourage action only in areas where it is clear that equal opportunities and business needs coincide (Dickens, 1999). There is no guarantee of a match between the needs of disadvantaged groups and the particular business case equality interests of the employer. Furthermore, business case driven equality measures will be in the interest of the employer rather than the needs of a diverse workforce, different groups may therefore receive different treatment. Organisations may benefit from a selective approach to equality, targeting particular groups in certain locations, whereas a more general approach maybe more costly and less relevant to the organisation's interest. Subsequently, attention to equality issues becomes contingent on business goals (Dickens 1999).

It is important to consider whether equal opportunities always makes good business sense. Dickens (1999) argues that use of business language with regard to equality can facilitate a business case against equal opportunities. Organisations can, and do, obtain advantage from, the exploitation of women and some ethnic minorities as a cheap flexible workforce. Also non-cost benefits such as management control can accrue from discriminatory practices such as closed or biased recruitment procedures (Ibid.). Cassell (1997) cites a number of case studies in the service industry which demonstrated that women are selected for
jobs because they are perceived to be physically attractive and therefore more likely to attract male customers. In this context employing only physically attractive women was seen to make business sense, however, this does not align with the principle of equality or valuing differences. Similarly, a crude business case will not generally be concerned with part-time workers rights, the sexual division of labour, power differentials between men and women or revaluing work at the bottom of the hierarchy (Cockburn, 1991:74). Thus business case action on equality is most likely in areas which can be tackled easily, and where business needs are most apparently served by equality measures (Dickens, 1999).

The benefits of equality and diversity are difficult to quantify in terms of hard measures such as profitability. They also have a long-term agenda; there are no set time spans within which business improvements can be expected. Thus, organisations with short-term budgets may avoid addressing equal opportunities to facilitate immediate business improvements (Dickens, 1999).

Dimensions of diversity can be seen as positive or negative. For example, Pelled (1996) predicted that racial diversity, as a source of visible differences, would incite inter-group bias and lead to negative outcomes for workgroups, while Cox and Blake (1991) predicted that racial diversity as a source of cultural differences, would enhance creative problem solving leading to positive outcomes for workgroups. Maznevski (1994) suggested that racial diversity as a source of inherent and immutable differences would provide groups with different kinds of information from which they could potentially benefit, but such differences would be difficult for parties to understand and accept. Moreover, evidence for the business case has been found to be dependent on research into the effectiveness and performance of diverse teams (for example: Maznevski, 1994; Ely and Thomas, 2001; Jehn et al, 1999; Tsui et al 1992; Shapiro 2000). These studies have produced mixed evidence for the effectiveness of diverse teams. It has long been recognised, both in theory and practice, that excessively homogeneous groups can have a negative impact on organisational performance (e.g. Belbin, 1980). Also, that successful management of diversity can have a positive impact on both tangible measures of organisational effectiveness (e.g. costs and resource acquisition) and intangible dimensions such as creativity (Cox and Blake 1991). However, poorly integrated heterogeneous groups can be at
least as damaging for organisations as excessively integrated homogeneous ones (Moore, 1999; Maznevski, 1994).

It has been suggested that employers would benefit from women's presumed 'female' attributes or conditioning which range from a civilising influence to good people skills and regard for health and safety (e.g. Clarke et al, 2004; Langford et al 1995). However, it is important to question the extent to which a focus on women's distinctive skills (i.e. selective celebration of category specific traits) is useful for encouraging their progression at work. Calas and Smircich (1993) state that although these positions are presented as a force to bring about organisational change, they actually restate traditional management approaches which devalue women's contribution.

Finally, Greed (2000) argues that the business case puts tremendous burden and responsibility on women. If, for example, a woman does not perform to expectation, then traditional stereotypes and assumptions about women employees are reinforced. In addition, she asserts that a business case ignores the need for major cultural and organisational change on the part of men.

2.3.4 The role of trade unions

Dickens (1999) highlighted the role of the trade unions in promoting equality action through collective bargaining, the process of negotiating terms and conditions of employment which takes place between an employer, or an employers organisation, and one or more trade unions. Union representation offers workers with a 'voice mechanism'. Thus, collective bargaining potentially enables women and other groups to participate in shaping equality agendas and promoting their own interests through engagement with representative structures rather than employers acting unilaterally (Colling and Dickens, 1998). Unions can also play a role in translating formal legal rights into substantive outcomes, for example, unions have used the law to challenge discriminatory outcomes of compulsory competitive tendering (Colling, 1995).

Although trade unions have historically served to perpetuate rather than challenge inequalities through white, male biased union bargaining (Rubery and
Fagan, 1993), Dickens (1999) believes that labour market change has put increasing pressure on the unions to engage with the equality agenda.

However, Dickens (1999) argued that the business case, legal regulation and collective bargaining should not be viewed as alternative drivers of equality action but should be seen as complementary and mutually reinforcing strategies. She concluded that responsibility for promoting equality in the workplace should be shared rather than leaving employers to bear sole responsibility, and that such an approach is likely to provide a sounder basis for supporting equality action.

2.4 Summary and conclusions

This chapter has highlighted that the last few years have seen the emergence of the concept 'managing diversity' and has addressed the differences between this and the traditional equal opportunities orientation. It has shown that there are differences of focus between equal opportunities and managing diversity approaches, with equal opportunities occupying a more narrowly focused perspective. Indeed the case for diversity is strong in rhetorical terms prompting exploration into its potential for the on-going career development of women, ethnic minorities and disabled people in the construction industry. However, this review has also demonstrated that diversity should not be proposed instead of the equal opportunities approach so that group inequalities become lost in the general search for valuing all differences. Accordingly, this thesis will explore construction stakeholder views on diversity and equal opportunities and examine their applicability within construction organisations.

The associated business case for diversity has been shown to be limited in that it leads to selective, tailored action whereby companies focus on those initiatives perceived to be most obviously in their interests (Dickens, 1994). Thus, Dickens (1999) argues for equality and diversity action to be supported by a broader based approach in which regulation strategies, both legal and social, play a part alongside the business case. This thesis will build upon these ideas by exploring the potential of the business case as a driver of diversity and equal opportunities in the construction industry.
This chapter has served to present the theoretical underpinnings of the research. The exploration of these concepts within the context of the construction industry will engender a more in-depth understanding of women’s, ethnic minorities’ and disabled people’s underrepresentation and employment in the construction sector.
CHAPTER 3

UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS IN THE UK CONSTRUCTION SECTOR

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the problematic nature of introducing effective human resource management (HRM) and equal opportunities in a project based industry (see below). Subsequently, it provides an insight into the position and experiences of women, ethnic minorities and disabled people within the industry, with explanations provided for their underrepresentation. Next, culturally determined factors maintaining the homogeneous white, male workforce are discussed. Finally, the industry's response to growing concerns over workforce diversity are evaluated. Set against this background, the chapter is concluded by discussing the need for a study to empirically investigate industry attitudes to workforce diversity.

3.2 Overview of the construction industry

The construction industry is defined as 'the erection, repair and demolition of all types of building and civil engineering structures' (Druker and White 1995). This consists of a wide range of activities from new-build (including house building and building for commercial use) and civil engineering projects, to the repair, maintenance and rehabilitation of existing structures. The construction process is complex and starts with design and planning through to production and ongoing maintenance and refurbishment. Construction work is almost entirely done on a project by project basis, and contractors draw together teams of people who often work for quite a short period of time and then move on to another location or disperse. Much of this work is managed by a main contractor who deals with the client but also subcontracts out part of the work to smaller firms who specialise in
a particular aspect of the process. Hence the industry differs from others in certain important aspects: the varying nature of the construction product; the immobility of the product and the necessity for a mobile workforce; the labour intensive nature of the industry and the fact that the firm must form a series of temporary organisations at the point of consumption (Druker and White 1995). Other characteristics include the tendency of projects to be awarded at short notice after a period of competitive tendering, which limits opportunities for thorough planning, and an increasingly demanding client base (Loosemore et al., 2003). In addition, despite advances in technology and production management techniques, construction remains one of the most people reliant industrial sectors (Loosemore et al., 2003).

Barthorpe et al., (2000) describe construction as a fragmented and hierarchical industry, typically composed of a large number of privately owned small and medium sized companies with a small number of large companies. The level of fragmentation in the construction sector can be seen as both a strength and a weakness: on the positive side, it is likely that it has the flexibility to deal with the highly variable workloads linked to changes in economic cycles; on the negative side the extensive use of sub-contracting has brought contractual relationships to the fore and hindered team-working, supply chain integration and strategic management (Construction Skills, 2005). Furthermore, the industry is populated by many competitors who are in a weak bargaining position with respect to both buyer and supplier groupings, leading to marginal profitability (Barthorpe et al., 2000). Male and Stocks (1991) add that a disillusionment with the wage structure of the industry forces a move towards self-employment. This is compounded by the perception that directly employed operatives are increasingly marginalised and ill-rewarded for the level of skill possessed (Ibid.).

These features make construction one of the most challenging environments in which to manage people effectively and ensure that they contribute to organisational success (Loosemore et al., 2003). In particular, the complexity and evolution of the industry's project based nature undermine the applicability of many central tenets of HRM strategy that have been applied successfully in more stable sectors (Loosemore et al., 2003). Furthermore, the tendency for construction companies to focus on project and organisational requirements at the expense of human needs contribute to employee dissatisfaction, reduced commitment, industrial conflict, increased staff turnover, more accidents,
deprofessionalisation, recruiting problems and a continued poor public image (Ibid.).

Working conditions in the construction industry are undesirable. Construction workers in the UK tend to work longer hours than those in other industries and are more likely to be involved in an accident (Rethinking Construction, 2000). The industry has also been slow to develop standards of welfare such as the adequate provision of toilets, drinking water, washrooms on site and disabled access, taken for granted in other industries (Drucker and White, 1996). Reports from trade unions about breaches of employment law and a lack of basic employment rights are also a regular occurrence within the industry (Rethinking Construction, 2000). Attitudes to individual workers are communicated by the lack of provision for the physical and increasingly, emotional, needs of the workforce, sending out a clear message about the lack of value put on their contribution and skill (Drucker and White, 1996). The result is an undervalued and demotivated workforce (Ibid.).

3.3 Construction’s image

Construction has one of the worst public images of all industries (Dainty 1998). It is seen as promoting adversarial business relationships, poor working practices, environmental insensitivity and having a reputation for under-performance (CIB 1996). There is also a widely held perception that career opportunities within the industry are limited (Baldry 1997). This is compounded by the poor quality of information provided by careers advisors regarding the opportunities available within the industry, and the qualifications required (Fielden et al, 2000). This ‘image problem’ has been shown to be a significant influence on women’s under-representation (e.g. Gale, 1991; Sommerville et al, 1993; Court and Moralee, 1995; Fielden et al, 2000). Gale (1992) found that many women view the industry as a male dominated, threatening environment, with an ingrained masculine culture characterised by conflict and crisis. Clarke et al (2004) point out the irony that in a highly gendered society, construction work is understood as heavy ‘man’s work’ in contrast to lifting and carrying sick human beings, small children and all the domestic tasks of the household which are generally understood as ‘women’s work’. These assumptions underpin the frequent
argument that women are not physically strong enough to undertake construction work, an assumption undermined by empirical research (Clarke et al, 2004; Wall and Clarke, 1996).

Studies have shown that women believe it practically impossible to get jobs in the industry (Fielden et al, 2000), jobs are unsuitable for women, sexual harassment is as major concern and that all the best jobs in the industry go to men (EOC 1990; Agapiou, 2002a). Clarke et al (2004) suggests that the industry perpetuates its image as a highly gendered activity, preexcluding the idea of women even holding the required skills to work as equals beside men, through its continuing use of gender biased occupational terminology, e.g. craftsman, chain-boy or foreman (Fielden et al, 2000). Women also perceive the industry to have inadequate facilities and poor training (Sommerville et al, 1993; Agapiou, 2002a). Gale (1990) also found that males had a poor image of the industry describing it as dirty and dangerous; consisting of low status manual work, low wages and long hours. Thus, Gale (1994a) concluded that the features women find unpleasant about the industry, many men also dislike.

A study on the under-representation of Black and Asian people in construction found that similar perceptions of the industry exist which deters ethnic minorities. Black and Asian people believed they would have difficulty in gaining contracts and jobs, and encounter racism (Royal Holloway 1999) (see section 3.6).

Eisenburg (2004) points out that not only are a high percentage of construction projects direct or indirect beneficiaries of public funds, they are also publicly visible workplaces. As such, she suggests they shape cultural notions about women's spheres and men's spheres, the career and skills goals of young people, beliefs about who moves the earth and who affects physical structures. Consequently, Eisenburg (2004) concludes that the importance of public imagination should not be underestimated as it lays the groundwork for society's direction.
3.4 The experiences of underrepresented groups in construction

Presenting an accurate statistical analysis of women’s, ethnic minorities’ and disabled people’s representation within construction occupations is difficult, as much of the available data is contradictory. Recent work examining women’s representations in the professions used the data available from professional institutions (Ellison, 2001 and Greed, 1999). However, these figures do not account for non-members working in the professions, nor do they represent manual/craft workers. Furthermore, the casualised nature of the sector makes official statistics on the numbers of people employed unreliable, and the Department of the Environment relies on estimates (Wall, 2004). Accordingly, statistical summaries of underrepresented groups in construction have been taken from a variety of sources published over the last ten years to present a picture of women’s, ethnic minorities’ and disabled people’s employment in the sector.

There have been a spate of studies that have explored the underrepresentation of women in non-traditional occupations in the construction industry. These studies have focused on attracting women to the industry (Gale, 1994b), the experiences of women in the construction education process (Srivastava, 1996), and their transition from higher education into paid work (Wilkinson, 1993). More recently, the literature has depicted the experiences of women within the industry. This work has given insight into the nature of women’s careers (Court and Moralee 1995; Dainty et al 2000a; 2000b; 2001) and to the reconciliation of work and family (Duncan 2000). Whilst there has also been some groundbreaking work which has explored the career experiences of ethnic minority employees and contractors within the sector (Ansari et al, 2002; Royal Holloway, 1999; Steele and Sodhi, 2004), this area remains relatively under researched.

Through a review of the available literature, the following sections develop a quantitative and qualitative conceptualisation of the current position of these groups in the construction industry’s labour market.
3.5 Women in construction

3.5.1 The historical exclusion of women from the construction industry

Internationally, occupations and jobs are designated as either suitable for women or men. There are broadly two different theoretical perspectives to explain the international demarcation of jobs as suitable for one sex or the other (Rubery et al., 1999; Bagilhole, 2002). The first emphasises the supply side of labour, of which theories relate to the differences between women's and men's skills which are assumed to be natural and innate or learnt. However, essentialist suggestions that women have fixed natures (e.g. Baron-Cohen, 2004) have been rejected by many feminist writers (Bagilhole, 2002). Alternatively, the demand-side theoretical perspective is based on the concept of hierarchy and the power of exclusion or inclusion (Ibid.). Bagilhole (2002) argues the designation of occupations and jobs as either 'women's work' or 'men's work' is a complex process in which both perspectives feature and where gendered concepts, discourses, language and symbolism play an important role.

From their research into women in the construction crafts and trades, Clarke and Wall (2004) suggested that gender divisions are specific to the productive system. When feudal relations of production generally prevailed, women entered building as wage labour under statutory regulation. Under capitalism, women's presence remained minimal as control of apprenticeship was applied by employers and trade unions alike to exclude women and to preserve the male 'property' of the skill of the building craft worker (Ibid.). Indeed, throughout their development in the nineteenth century, the engineering professions and unions adhered to a policy of excluding women (Drake, 1984). However, under the more regulated conditions applied in the twentieth-century world wars some women were allowed into and trained in the building trades, only to be largely excluded once the wars had ended (Wall and Clarke, 2004). During the 1970s women succeeded in entering the industry owing to targeted initiatives such as Women and Manual Trades, but only under the more regulated conditions of the public sector in the local authority Direct Labour Organisations (DLOs) (Ibid.). However, with the decrease in DLOs many women have again been excluded, although there are a few exemptions (Ibid.). Consequently, Clarke and Wall (2004)
conclude that the system of training is critical to entry, thus current systems must be transformed along with a greater regulation of employment and social relations in the industry if women are to be successfully integrated.

In the science and engineering occupations, the numbers of women entering since the 1980s has risen slightly. This may have been boosted by initiatives such as the Women into Science and Engineering (WISE) campaign, which has promoted science and engineering careers for women. However, until recently the construction industry has done little to facilitate women's entry into its professional occupations (see section 3.8). Dainty (1998) argues that the current low number of women in the construction professions is set against a historical backdrop of low representation and deliberate exclusion by the industry and its professional institutions.

3.5.2 Women's under representation in construction

Recent figures suggest that women constitute only 13% of the overall construction workforce, with two thirds of these employed in construction occupying secretarial or clerical roles (Fielden et al, 2001). The industry appears to exhibit the greatest degree of horizontal segregation by sex. Furthermore, women in management positions are concentrated in 'specialist' positions including personnel and public relations, rather than mainstream management (Ibid.).

Women form 6% of the total membership of the construction professions meaning that professional women account for less than 1% of the total construction workforce (Greed, 1999). The majority of women professionals work in architecture, landscape architecture, interior design or town planning, remaining seriously underrepresented in all of the built environment professions which have direct involvement with the construction process (Dainty, 1998). Moreover, it appears that some of the increase in women's representation gained over the past few years have been overturned (Dainty, 1998). For instance, De Graft-Johnson et al (2003) note that only 13% of practising architects are women compared to the current student ratio of 38%. In addition, women are vertically segregated with respect to their membership of professional bodies; for example, Ellison (2001) found that women comprise only 7% of the total membership of the
Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), and 1% of the most senior rank of membership, Fellow.

Women in skilled construction trades represent only around 1% of the labour force (CITB, 2002) and tend to be attracted to ‘female friendly’ trades such as painting and decorating (Wall and Clarke, 1996). Women are also segregated by the type of organisation in which they are employed. For example, a survey of the members of the Chartered Institute of Building (1994) indicated that substantially more women were employed by housing associations than by any other sector within the industry. Overall the survey showed than women were over represented in the public sector and underrepresented in the private sector, with the greatest discrepancy in self-employment where women accounted for only 0.3% of the membership.

3.5.3 Empirical explanations for women’s underrepresentation

Some barriers to women entering and working within construction include the poor image of construction; a lack of positive role models and career knowledge amongst children and adults; gender biased-recruitment literature; peer pressure and poor educational experiences (Sommerville et al, 1993; Gale, 1994b; Srivastava, 1996; Dainty, 1998). Other obstacles for women include recruitment practices and procedures; sexist attitudes; organisational culture; the work environment and the inherent demands of construction work for women with family and domestic responsibilities (Fielden et al, 2000; Gale, 1995; EOC, 1990). These are further explored below.

Construction has a poor public image (see 3.3) and as a result women remain reluctant and disinterested in the industry. This problem is compounded by a general lack of knowledge and information about the industry, the career opportunities on offer and what qualifications are required (Duncan 2000; Fielden et al, 2000). Careers officers and teachers act as ‘gatekeepers’ preventing women from embarking on construction careers (Gale, 1994b; Duncan, 2000). According to Duncan (2000) careers officers and teachers seek to protect women from the harassment associated with entering a male dominated preserve. In addition, as previously highlighted, women perceive the industry as an unsuitable career in which they would experience inequality and harassment (Dainty, 1998).
Frequently, women are deterred from applying for jobs in the industry by informal recruitment procedures; advertisements and brochures displaying images which reflect masculine values and interests; unstructured interviews; discriminatory selection criteria and sexist attitudes (Fielden et al, 2000; Fielden et al, 2001; Greed 1997; 1991). Recruitment into the industry is often based on conservatism, old boys networks and personal contacts to the exclusion of female entrants (CIB, 1996; Drucker and White 1996; Wall and Clarke, 1996).

Clarke et al (2004) highlight that the relationship between gender, skill and technology has been explored in efforts to explain the continued sex stereotyping of occupations. These approaches are based on the social construction of gender and the nature of skill are relevant to understanding the exclusion of women from construction occupations that require attributes such as manual dexterity and physical strength which are closely associated with societal notions of masculinity (Ibid.). Consequently, many employers still consider women unsuitable for traditionally male jobs (Greed 1997; Wilkinson, 1993) and have stereotyped perceptions of women's societal roles (Jones, 1994). Indeed, construction is an example of how the segregation of the labour market into masculine and feminine jobs is as intact today as it was at the beginning of the last century (Clarke et al, 2004). Employer prejudices manifest themselves during recruitment where women have been asked about their personal lives in interviews, such as whether they planned to have children in the future (Bolton, 1994).

The need for physical strength is often used by employers to deter women from a career in the construction industry. However, Fielden et al (2000) argue that with the introduction of weight lifting restrictions by the Health and Safety Executive, the need for physical strength is decreasing, yet the perception of the industry as one which is uniquely physical remains intact. Greed (1997) suggests that it is not the physical site that is the problem but rather the nature of social relations on site, in particular the ethos of pressure and bullying (see section 3.5.5).
3.5.4 Women's educational experiences

Routes into the construction industry stipulate formal qualifications in subjects such as mathematics, science and technical drawing, however, due to educational segregation girls are less likely than boys to meet these requirements (Fielden et al 2000). In higher education, women remain underrepresented on construction related degree courses comprising only 20% of current undergraduates (CITB 2002). Fielden et al (2000) suggest that the lack of female staff on such courses is a contributing factor to the number of female students they attract.

In the trades, modern apprenticeships and National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) have also persistently failed to attract more than a small amount of women (Briscoe, 1998). In addition, the lack of training opportunities for those over the age of 25 discriminates against women who tend to enter the industry later in life (Fielden et al, 2001). However, Wall and Clarke (1996) observed that high levels of qualifications amongst the female trades-women in their study, illustrate the different starting point for women entering the industry. Whereas men can generally rely on informal means of entry, women depend on formal training and qualifications to prove their ability. However, qualifications and experience do not guarantee success, as women are largely excluded from the informal social networks that provide men with inside information about training places, job openings and other opportunities (Clarke et al, 2004).

Women find it virtually impossible to learn on the job, a common feature of training in the construction trades, as this invariably involves networking and mentoring on site, from which woman are excluded (Clarke et al, 2004). Clarke et al (2004) refer to this as a craft based system of training, concluding that where such systems predominate, women will seek formal college training in order to acquire skills, although many will fail to gain site experience and will end up dropping out. However in the Public sector women gain both training and work experience in Local Authority building departments or Direct Labour Organisations (DLOs) (Michielsens et al, 1997).

Srivastava (1992) discovered that women studying the built environment were covertly discouraged from joining the industry by the negative attitudes of teaching staff and a lack of female role models to act as mentors and advocates.
of careers in the industry. Male dominated training courses create a number of problems for women arising from an intimidating environment and masculine culture (Gale 1994a; Fielden et al, 2001). Fielden et al (2000) note a study by Peacock and Eaton (1987) who found that women trainees encountered a general disbelief among male instructors and colleagues that women could be technically competent. Hence, Loosemore and Tan (2000) argue that many of the industry's problems stem from the educational systems, which in many cases instil and reinforce the preconceived occupational stereotypes which sustain the industry's occupational culture. These attitudes progress through training into the workplace, where women were expected to undertake clerical and support duties and had to fight to be given technical training and work (Fielden et al, 2000). Clarke et al (2004) demonstrate how women-only introductory courses have benefited many tradeswomen through boosting their confidence and gaining basic skills. Fielden et al (2000) also noted that some women experienced advantages during their training because of their gender resulting in extra help, positive response and better opportunities due to their high visibility.

3.5.5 Women's employment experiences

3.5.5.1 Sexism, harassment and bullying

Research has shown that women's experiences of the industry include sexual discrimination, harassment, bullying, intimidation and less overt discriminatory mechanisms such as exclusion from out of work social events (acknowledged to have many career enhancing benefits) (Dainty, 1998; Dainty et al, 1999). Bagilhole et al (2001) offer a vivid account of the cultural environment faced by professional women in site based projects where sexual harassment is endemic and seen as an occupational hazard which has to be endured. Tradeswomen also find they have to prove their competence to every new group or individual male worker they encounter despite their qualifications and experience (Wall and Clarke, 1996; Clarke et al, 2004).

Women in construction have reported being singled out by their male counterparts for tasks intended to 'test' their ability. These include being sent up tall buildings, expected to inspect unsafe buildings, subjected to rude and indecent behaviour and being asked technical questions designed to catch them
out (Fielden et al, 2000). Some women who have refused to participate have found themselves accused of incompetence and have been targeted for further harassment (Ibid.). Clarke et al (2004) suggest that survival takes its toll and a continual lack of recognition of women's skills contribute to stress. Furthermore, the cost of poor performance for women reinforces gender stereotypes of women's lack of ability. In addition, women may not receive adequate support because those in senior positions are men (Greed 2000).

Bagilhole et al (2000) suggest that construction companies in the UK provide a patriarchal workplace environment, where men resent women's participation as professional equals. Thus, in addition to socially excluding women, men overtly attempt to undermine women's contributions in an attempt to preserve their own positions. However, despite the problems, some women across the industry have been found to derive a high degree of satisfaction from their work, appreciating the varying nature of projects and enjoying the rewards of effective team relationships on certain projects (Wall and Clarke, 1996; Bagilhole et al, 2000).

3.5.5.2 Culture

Bagilhole et al (2000) argue that exclusionary and discriminatory aspects of the industry's culture undermine women's achievement and prevent their equal participation. They present evidence of a cultural discord between the environment offered by the construction workplace and women's career needs and expectations. Hence, women's careers are unlikely to progress in parity with men's until the male culture of the industry has been moderated (Dainty et al, 1999). Manual jobs in construction consist of work that is central to masculine identity. The male construction worker, whose physical strength and manual skills are prized attributes of masculinity, is highly aware of his masculine status (Clarke et al, 2004). Thus, when women enter the male domain in traditionally male roles, men frequently respond aggressively to re-assert not just their positions of power but also the very notions of themselves as men (Bagilhole, 2002; Clarke et al, 2004). Other work which acknowledges the major cultural hurdles include studies by Greed (2000), Dainty (1998), Gale (1997), Drucker et al (1996), Court and Moralee (1995) and Langford et al (1995). The impact of the construction culture on women in construction is discussed further in section 3.9.
3.5.5.3 Male orientated structure

Gilbert and Walker (2001) suggest that reasons for women being discouraged from joining the industry are generally related, directly or indirectly, to the apparent male domination, and therefore male orientation of the workplace (Court and Moralee, 1995). The institutional structures disadvantage women in recruitment processes, career development and training, selection and promotion procedures, and in their day-to-day activities (Bagilhole, 2002; Evetts, 1996; Carter and Kirkup, 1990). Women in construction have to endure male orientated work practices that do not take into account their needs, for example, long hours, expectations of geographical flexibility and no possibilities for career breaks (Dainty et al, 1999; Bennett et al, 1999). Hence, Dainty et al (2001) found that structural organisational factors supported a workplace culture of inflexibility and discrimination, and that women found developing their organisational careers problematic within operating frameworks favouring male career patterns and needs (Dainty et al, 2000a). In addition, they observed that communication within construction firms was left to informal mechanisms which were reliant on individuals maintaining a wide network of organisational contacts. These communications included information on changing job titles, shifts in responsibility and changes to the internal shape of the company. It was concluded that such informal structural mechanisms maintained women's career underachievement (Ibid.).

Structural systems such as appraisal have been shown to maintain women's underachievement within the industry (Dainty et al, 2000a). These were found to encourage staff to seek vertical promotion by rewarding behaviour which matched that of the appraising manager. Moreover, unfair assessments of female employees were made which further undermined their careers (Ibid.). Also, Clarke et al (2004) note how the gang system of piecework epitomises the way in which the construction process can be so organised to exclude women where men are perceived as physically stronger and therefore achieve greater output and thus earnings.

The industry has a tradition of working long hours and weekends, with employees given little warning about overtime (Fielden et al, 2000). This is seen as a demonstration of commitment and a lack of compliance can adversely impact on
promotion prospects and even future job security (Sutherland and Davidson, 1993). The transient nature of the industry means that site based employees are usually subject to changing work locations. This can involve travelling substantial distances or long periods away from home, a situation which presents serious difficulties in terms of transport and childcare. Women also endure stereotyped assumptions involving 'perceived' domestic commitments and responsibilities, and hence, are often assumed to be less mobile, less committed to the organisation and more inclined to be absent from work than men (Gale, 1995, Greed 1991). Carter and Kirkup (1990) concluded that men see women engineers as primarily women and therefore out of place in the public domain. Thus, women's continuing responsibility for unpaid work impinges on their paid work, limiting their chances, and requiring the development of strategies to cope with apparently limitless and competing responsibilities (Carter and Kirkup, 1990). These include keeping all references to private roles and commitment out of the work context.

In addition, because those working in manual trades are frequently engaged on a self-employment basis, they are rarely employed in a permanent capacity and can face long periods of unemployment between contracts and a highly fluctuating wage package (Wall and Clarke, 1996). As a result Wall and Clarke (1996) find that employment conditions are fundamental to women's long-term employment in the industry.

3.5.5.4 Women's underachievement and issues of retention

Dainty et al (2000b; 2001) found that men and women experienced disparate progression dynamics with men gaining promotion more rapidly than women during the first ten years of their careers. Dainty's (1998) analysis of women's career progression showed that only women who had long term commitment to the industry, and maintained an unbroken career pattern of at least 12-13 years, progressed in parity with their male peers. However it was found that few female informants believed they would stay in construction for such a period (Ibid.). This sustains women's underachievement and reinforces the dominance of the male career model.
Other factors maintaining women’s underachievement include the prejudice of male managers who act as gatekeepers to successful careers, male organisation systems which hamper career progression, workplace culture and the need for women to focus on coping with the male dominated environment. Men, however, only had to concentrate on progressing vertically (Ibid.).

According to Dainty et al (1999, 2000b), women working in the industry effectively face a number of choices. They can choose to confront the barriers to their careers and risk retribution and marginalisation; conform to male patterns, which perpetuates existing structural and cultural barriers, whilst providing no guarantee of equal opportunity; leave their organisation, which may ultimately impede their vertical career progression; or leave the industry which serves to reinforce stereotypes around women’s lack of commitment to the industry.

Wilkinson (1993) concluded that employers have higher expectations of women and therefore they are less likely to be promoted. Ellison (2001) found that women are not barred from senior management on account of deliberate policy but by a succession of unconscious, instinctive decisions made by existing male managers. These decisions deny women important people management roles, access to high profile assignments and inevitably leave them short of the experience they are expected to have for promotion to senior management. The result is a higher turnover of women employees in comparison with men, and the likelihood of women leaving for careers in less problematic industries (Dainty et al, 2001). In particular, Dainty et al (2000a) suggest that younger women leave the industry because they find the actual working conditions less desirable than those they were led to believe would be present by targeted recruitment campaigns. Other writers argue that women develop alternative careers as specialist experts which are widely perceived as less senior and with fewer opportunities for ongoing promotion (Evetts, 1996; Carter and Kirkup, 1990).

Furthermore, the industry's failure to appreciate some of the issues associated with combining work and family commitments militates against women's participation (Gale, 1994b) This is discussed in more depth in 3.5.7. As a result, Dainty et al (2000b) and Bagilhole (2000) support the concept that women feel forced to make a choice between career or family.
3.5.6 Breaking down the barriers

Dainty *et al.*, (1999) and Bagilhole *et al.*, (2001) conclude that at present the industry is ill equipped to ensure equal opportunities for women. Instead of focussing attention on recruiting female employees, the industry should be more involved in changing its culture of harassment and discrimination towards women from within, before attracting and retaining female employees. Yates (2001) calls for a critical mass of women to help reduce some of the problems by virtue of increasing numbers and exposure (see also Kanter 1977). However, applying Glover's (1999) point relating to women entering the sciences, this solution says little about what will happen to women if and when they get into construction. Others have called for: improved training and working conditions (see Wall and Clarke, 1996); convincing employers of the business benefits of greater workforce diversity (Agapiou, 2002); policy implementation (Ellison, 2001) and networks and mentoring schemes (Fielden *et al.*, 2001). Clarke *et al* (2004) conclude that good employment and working conditions, career development and support mechanisms are decisive for women's retention. However, this would require a revolution in the construction processes given the mass of small firms with rationales based on a narrow range of tasks and a relative indifference to qualifications and training (Ibid.).

According to Gilbert and Walker (2001), realistic proposals for the retention of women are yet to be identified and successfully implemented. The Construction Industry Board (CIB) (1996) produced a set of guidelines on equal opportunities, the Equal Opportunities Taskforce in Construction compiled ten commandments for equal opportunities and more recently, the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) commissioned research into why women leave architecture (De Graft-Johnson *et al*, 2003) which produced detailed recommendations for the retention of women architects. However, there has been no systematic evaluation of their application to different sectors and companies within the industry.

3.5.7 Reconciliation of work and family in the construction process

Duncan (2000) concluded that little is being done in the construction industry to promote reconciliation of work and family. She refers to 'archaic' employment practices in which employees are expected to work long hours and be available
on demand. Many employees felt under pressure to sign 'opt out' agreements in order to increase the number of hours per week they were legally allowed to work (ibid.). Loosemore et al (2003) drew attention to the nomadic and increasingly lean structure of the construction industry as stipulating such employment conditions. In addition, the existence of lower security of employment from increasing outsourcing, cyclical workloads and greater competition, have been found to have a detrimental impact on the construction employee's family life (Duncan, 2000; Lingard 2003a; Lingard and Francis, 2003; Loosemore et al, 2003). Duncan's (2000) research also highlighted that few construction employees are aware of their rights under the existing family friendly directives/legislation. Whilst these issues may have a negative impact on many male employees, the reluctance of construction employers to provide family friendly policies is a significant barrier to the entry of women into the industry.

A recent study (Francis, 2004) discovered that male civil engineers in Australia experience moderate levels of work-family conflict and do not perceive their organisations to be supportive of their needs to balance work-family life. However, those with a work environment supportive of work-life balance reported higher levels of organisational commitment, greater job and life satisfaction, lower levels of work-family conflict and lower intentions to quit their jobs. Furthermore, Lingard and Sublet (2002) found that in extreme cases family demands often interacted with work demands to produce a syndrome of chronic stress known as burnout.

The rationale supporting the introduction of policies to ensure the reconciliation of work and family includes employment demographics, changing societal attitudes, legislative reforms and organisational performance issues (Duncan, 2000). However, research has observed that the implementation of work-life balance and family-friendly policies will have little worth unless their underlying values are strongly embedded within the workplace culture (Francis, 2004; 2002). Employees are unlikely to take advantage of provisions where long hours and physical presence are viewed as indicative of commitment, performance and likely to impact on promotion opportunities (Lingard, 2003a). Hence the rigid work practices currently in place act as a subtle form of discrimination with policy implementation only being effective if cultural and attitudinal change is also achieved (ibid.).
Francis (2004) argued that demonstrating the benefits of work-life balance for men will encourage companies to consider issues of reconciling work and family. This is likely to be more successful than attempting to engender a change in attitudes to work-life balance from an equality perspective given the low numbers of women in the industry. However, this may lead to work-life balance policies that are male orientated and do little to alleviate the problem of reconciling work and family for women.

3.6 Ethnic minorities in construction

There are significantly fewer studies on ethnic minorities in the construction industry than there are about women, with this area of the construction industry remaining under-researched. However, this section reviews these studies and reveals the extent of ethnic minorities underrepresentation and underachievement in the industry.

3.6.1 The underrepresentation of ethnic minorities in construction

Ethnic minorities make up only 1.9% of the construction workforce, compared with an economically active population of 6.4% (Royal Holloway, 1999). In comparison with the white population, ethnic minority groups comprise a younger age profile. For example, ethnic minorities comprise 7% of the 16-24 age group, one of the key target age groups for entry into the construction trades. The percentage of ethnic minority people in the 5-15 age group rises to 9% (Royal Holloway, 1999). Clearly ethnic minorities will increasingly form a substantial recruitment pool for construction employers and therefore addressing their underrepresentation is important to circumvent skills shortage and ensure future labour demands are fulfilled (see section 3.10).

Construction employs the lowest number of ethnic minorities than any industrial sector in Britain (Hampton, 2000). Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) figures (CITB, 2004) indicate that ethnic minorities form 2% of trades people, 3.2% of professionals and managers, 2.3% of sole traders and 2.9% of entrepreneurs running micro-enterprises employing 1-10 people. The remaining
ethnic minorities in construction work in secretarial and sales and make up 3% of people working in this area.

A report by Royal Holloway (1999) examined numbers of ethnic minorities in training for construction. Significantly more Black and Asian people were enrolled on construction related courses in further and higher education than on CITB training programmes and modern apprenticeships. Indeed, there were relatively high levels of Black and Asian people on construction-related degree courses (10%). However, the number of Black and Asian people who actually get jobs after graduating in these areas remains disproportionately low, at around 2% (CITB 2002). Thus, it would seem that gaining qualifications, whilst improving the chances of employment, does not narrow the gap between ethnic minorities and white people (Royal Holloway, 1999). Indeed, a Trades Union Congress (TUC) report found that while young African men were better qualified than white men, they were three times as likely to be unemployed (Singh, 2000).

3.6.2 Empirical explanations for ethnic minorities’ underrepresentation

The Royal Holloway (1999) report attributed the underrepresentation of ethnic minorities in all levels of the industry to: a lack of information about the types of work available in construction; channels that are more accessible to white people; an overwhelming absence of ethnic minority role models; and perceptions and experiences of direct and indirect racial discrimination. These are a reflection of the barriers to women’s participation in the industry (see section 3.4.3) indicating the exclusionary nature of the industry to anyone who does not fit the white, able-bodied, male stereotype.

Ethnic minorities were found to perceive the industry as a white, male bastion, in which they are unlikely to be accepted in an equal manner. Potential entrants believed that it would be difficult to secure contracts and jobs and feared racism. However, the commonly held perception that ethnic minorities are not interested in jobs in construction was disproved. Rather, there was an interest amongst ethnic minority community groups to gain more information about the career opportunities in the industry (Royal Holloway, 1999).
The Royal Holloway (1999) report also noted few examples of positive action initiatives to tackle the under-representation of Black and Asian people in construction. For example, 32% of construction companies gave presentations to schools, however, only 14% of companies made presentations to schools with a high ethnic minority population (Royal Holloway, 1999). Similarly, Steele and Sodhi, (2004) found very few examples of positive action, or good practice, in relation to the contracting power of housing associations. Their research suggests that ethnic minorities are somewhat cautious about positive action initiatives, in particular the setting of targets, that can be misconstrued as giving favourable treatment. As one of their interviewees commented 'all we want is a fair crack of the whip' (Ibid, pp. 156).

3.6.3 Ethnic minorities' educational experiences

The Royal Holloway study (1999) found that a large number of ethnic minority construction employees believed their training experience or working life as a Black/Asian person to be different from white people, commonly citing examples of less favourable treatment. Ethnic minority students felt they had been neglected and pointed to a lack of support from their educational institution. In one instance, three Black African students were the only ones who had not been found work experience by their university. Similarly, ethnic minority college trainees had great difficulty in finding work, particularly long-term work, in the industry (Anasari et al 2002.).

3.6.4 Ethnic minorities' experiences in gaining employment

Ansari et al, (2002) found that some ethnic minorities reported poor experiences during recruitment interviews. Some had found that the interview largely about social interests, and this could exclude those from minority cultures. For example, one ethnic minority informant was asked whether he could see himself going out for a drink after work. Furthermore, ethnic minority candidates received very little feedback from companies and found recruitment agencies unresponsive. Ethnic minority contractors also reported a lack of feedback on their unsuccessful tender submissions which led them to believe their efforts had been a costly waste of time (Steele and Sodhi, 2004). This lack of feedback and transparency in the
contractor selection processes has caused concern among ethnic minority SMEs about the prevalence of discriminatory practices. These findings confirm Grant et al's (1996) study that housing associations have failed to combat racism in the award of construction contracts.

Ethnic minority trades people experience difficulty in gaining employment (Ansari et al, 2002). In contrast to white people, ethnic minorities did not feel that approaching employers on site for a job was successful (ibid.). In addition, job centres were generally found to be unhelpful to ethnic minorities and were perceived as 'gatekeepers' preventing entry to the industry. In some instances this also applied to secretaries and receptionists, who were found to discourage ethnic minorities from applying for jobs (ibid.). Having an easily identifiable ethnic minority name was one reason why some ethnic minority applicants suspected they were not invited to an interview (ibid.). Conscious of racial stereotyping, Steele and Sodhi (2004) established that many ethnic minority SMEs are often initially reluctant to establish face to face contacts with prospective clients. Ethnic minority managers in construction felt that they had to establish a relationship, selling work on the telephone or by post, before customers saw the colour of their skin.

As in the case of women (see section 3.8 for a comparison of women's and ethnic minorities' experiences), word of mouth recruitment practices and information about contracts tend to exclude ethnic minorities. Networking is an important aspect of securing work and contracts and discriminates against ethnic minorities through their exclusion from formal or informal groupings (Royal Holloway, 1999). Socialising with colleagues is recognised as important to career progression and central to the work ethos of the industry (Ansari et al, 2002). This was found to disproportionately impact on some ethnic minorities, in particular those wishing to avoid a drinking culture (Ibid.). Similarly, Steele and Sodhi (2004) discovered that inviting known and recommended contractors and consultants to join housing associations' approved list of contractors mitigated against the promotion of equality of opportunity. Their research highlighted that for many Black and minority ethnic contractors 'the old boys network is still very much alive and it's the accepted way things happen' (pp.154).

Ansari et al, (2002) found that ethnic minorities were given less responsibility than their white peers, ranging from a lack of opportunity to work on a project
independently, to being expected to make tea and act as the office hand long after comparable colleagues had moved up. In appraisals, some ethnic minorities felt they were constantly marked down due to prejudice on the part of the appraiser, and some white respondents even noticed the lack of progression for their black colleagues. There was also strong perception that opportunities for development within employment were severely limited for ethnic minorities who had to work harder than white people for training opportunities (Ibid.). In contracting, where ethnic minority companies did secure housing association contracts, these tended to be for certain types of work, namely the less lucrative repairs and maintenance work, and work of relatively low value (Steele and Sodhi, 2004; 2000). Sodhi and Steele (2000) discovered a perception amongst housing associations that black and minority ethnic SMEs are unable to cope with big contracts.

Racial banter is claimed to be an accepted feature of life on site which ethnic minorities either resign themselves to or avoid by leaving the industry (Building 1999; Loosemore and Chau, 2002). Furthermore, Loosemore et al (2003) conclude that racism is an inevitable consequence of working in the construction industry, and one which is largely ignored by managers and accepted and tolerated by workers. They noted that managers were largely uncomfortable in managing and preventing discrimination and their perceptions of equal opportunities issues were negative and defensive.

Ethnic minorities are frequently subject to racial abuse and face resentment and further discrimination and retribution if they report the harassment (Building 2002a; Loosemore et al, 2003). Ansari et al (2002) cite examples of how white workers had intervened to deal with racism. However, this was usually done by the individual, because of his or her own level of understanding and commitment, rather a result of company policy (ibid.).

Ansari et al (2002) concluded that the experiences of women to an extent mirrored those of ethnic minorities, and for ethnic minority women there was a dual disadvantage.
3.6.5 Policy Implementation

Royal Holloway (1999) noted the low level of awareness among construction organisations of the level and types of discrimination which ethnic minorities experience. However, whilst they found that to have an equal opportunities policy in place is routine for medium to large size construction companies, its direct link to the core business of the organisation is less common. This calls into question the value of routine equal opportunities policies if they are not being implemented. For example, possessing an equal opportunities policy may allow an organisation and its senior management to feel that something has been done, or, amount to 'lip service' being paid to equal opportunities, whereby a verbal expression of agreement remains unsupported by real conviction.

3.6.6 Institutional discrimination

The Royal Holloway study (1999) recognised that practices of institutional discrimination and disadvantage within wider society have effected ethnic minorities entering and succeeding in the construction industry. For example, ethnic minorities reported difficulties in obtaining bank loans to implement business development plans or lease premises. The study concluded that, institutional discrimination is prevalent within the construction industry's traditional customs and practices which have created an environment which operates to the detriment of ethnic minorities, such as the reliance on informal networking and contacts to secure work. In the USA, Feadin and Imani (1994) observed racial discrimination within contracting and bidding processes and banks and suppliers. Practices of collusion with white contractors and unfair performance evaluations on the part of government officials were also uncovered.

The work of Loosemore and Chau (2002) demonstrates that issues of discrimination and marginalisation are not unique to the UK. They found significant levels of blatant racial discrimination and harassment in the Australian construction industry at an operative level. Loosemore et al (2003) suggest that levels of racism increase with managerial seniority indicating that it is a product of company policy rather than cultural disharmony within a multicultural workforce. However, managers perceived problems of racism to occur mainly between operatives themselves rather than between managers and operatives and hence
issues should be resolved at operative level. This contrasts with research findings that solutions to reduce racism must be 'top down' (Ibid.). In addition, Loosemore and Chau (2002) argue that there is a minimal infrastructure to reduce racism or manage it effectively when it occurs. Thus, they conclude that the construction industry has an assimilationist mentality, whereby everyone is expected to be the same, i.e. ethnic minorities have to assimilate into the white male culture.

3.6.7 Industry attitudes

A recent survey of 200 senior construction executives revealed that 78% were unconcerned about the underrepresentation of ethnic minorities in the industry despite 90% regarding skills shortages as a major problem for construction (Building, 2003). Research has also revealed that construction organisations regard the under-utilisation of women and ethnic minorities as unimportant (Mackenzie et al, 2000; Agapiou et al, 1995; Drucker and White, 1996; Clarke and Wall, 1998). Indeed, according to Cavill (Building, 1999) it would appear that many construction companies pay lip service to equality and fail to fully implement equal opportunities policies.

"Does the industry care that it is discriminating against a pool of talent it can ill afford to ignore? The short answer is no. Firms express concern about the poor representation of ethnic minorities in the industry, and most have equal opportunities policies. But these policies are not working - either in overcoming the perception of a white-dominated industry with an entrenched culture of racism, or in eradicating discrimination for those already in construction ...Racist graffiti and casual racist banter are all too common on Britain's sites." (Building, 1999 pp.29)

In an increasingly international construction market, there has been some research focusing on inter-cultural communication (see Loosemore and Al Muslamani 1999; Loosemore and Lee 2002). This has uncovered evidence of cultural insensitivity resulting in misunderstanding and conflict. For example, Loosemore and Lee (2002) observed that English can often be the minority language on site and is confined to managerial level. Other languages spoken were focused into specific functional areas which are both physically and emotionally separated. Since there are few initiatives to alleviate these problems, Loosemore and Lee (2002) conclude that it is unsurprising that the language
differences between supervisors and operatives are perceived to be a significant source of communication problems and potential conflict in the industry. Thus, companies deal with cultural diversity as a potential problem rather than a potential opportunity (Ibid.).

Problems arising from language barriers have relevancy to many construction sites in London. For instance, according to Building (2001) there are large numbers of illegal immigrants who do not speak English working on almost every site in London. The article contests that workers who do not understand English pose health and safety risks on construction sites. Building (2002b, pp.17) reports on increased accident rates due to linguistic misinterpretations, in addition the article finds that "workers with poor English are treated like animals. Nobody has time to explain, so people shout at them". The article also accuses employers of providing insufficient support and training for non-English speakers.

3.7 Disabled people in construction

There is very little data available on disabled people's employment in the construction industry, and there has only been a cursory exploration of their potential participation in the industry (i.e. Loosemore et al, 2003). Greed (1999) estimates disabled people account for less than 0.3% of all construction professionals. Loosemore et al (2003) note that with many construction jobs being site based there will be obvious problems for disabled people, and thus the underrepresentation of disabled people in the industry is expected. However, they also suggest that many disabled people can work effectively and safely on site with appropriate support, and there are no reasons why disabled people cannot work in office based design and management roles (Ibid.). Although, Mathiason (1995, cited in Duncan 2000:97) found that some employment agencies did not believe that disabled people were suited to a number of construction professions, such as surveying.

Disabled people are also underrepresented in the wider UK labour market. For instance, the long term unemployment rate is 38% for disabled people compared to 26% for non disabled people (Labour Market Trends, 1999). In Europe, the employment rate for disabled people is only 27%, less than half the level for the
total working age population (European Commission, 2001). Of those disabled people in employment, many face active discrimination in relation to pay and promotion (Kitchen et al, 1998). Furthermore, Murrey (1994) reported that disabled people are more likely to be employed through informal arrangements that are not covered by formal contracts and employment legislation, and that disabled people are concentrated in low paid, semi-skilled and unskilled jobs with little prospects for promotion. Thus, Oliver (1991) argued disabled people are often trapped in a situation of unemployment, underemployment and poverty, and actively constitute an underclass.

Kitchen et al (1998) reported that disabled people have been excluded from the labour market by direct discrimination such as abuse (verbal, psychological and physical), wage discrimination and indirect discrimination such as less job security and inaccessibility through building design and lack of transport links.

Although, there are relatively few studies on disabled people’s employment experiences, a study by Kitchen et al (1998) found that disabled people’s employment in Ireland is limited in a number of ways. The disabled respondents experienced a conveyor belt of training schemes that did not lead to long term, secure and paid employment. Furthermore, trainers were found to be patronising, unsympathetic and under the impression that they 'know what is best' for disabled people. Kitchen et al (1998) also observed barriers for disabled people making the transition from training schemes to paid work. Employers were found to be ignorant and fearful of disability and had little time for disabled people. In addition, it was believed that high insurance premiums and the costs needed to make their premises accessible led to discrimination and exclusion of disabled people from the workplace. They concluded that employers were generally inflexible, unwilling or unable to try to accommodate disabled people into their workforce.

In his survey of employer’s perceptions on the employability of disabled people, Ruggeri Stevens (2002) found that limited key board/writing ability was seen as the most important obstacle to disabled people’s employment. The next most important obstacles identified were impairments of speech and vision. Physical mobility and strength were not thought to be major obstacles to employing disabled people. However, interpersonal ‘social’ skills were seen by the
employers in the study as the most important for successful work performance, followed closely by the general ability to handle information.

This brief review demonstrates that issues surrounding disability and employment are under researched. Clearly there is a need for information on disabled people in employment in the construction industry.

3.8 A comparison of women’s and ethnic minorities experiences

Dainty et al (2004) found that the construction workplace presents a hostile environment for both women and ethnic minorities. Both groups face similar and different barriers, thus by comparing and analysing their group experiences a more holistic approach towards managing diversity in the sector can be achieved (Ibid.). Accordingly, Table 3.1, presents a comparison of women and ethnic minority’s experiences of gaining employment and working within the industry.

Table 3.1 A comparison of women’s and ethnic minorities experiences of gaining employment and working within the industry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Efforts to attract</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Ethnic Minorities</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concerted industry efforts to attract women through targeted recruitment campaigns instigated by industries professional institutions (Dainty et al, 2004)</td>
<td>Few efforts to attract ethnic minorities. Publicity material tends to exclude images of Black and Asian people in the industry (Dainty et al, 2004)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women tend not to be advised on a construction career by their friends and family thus had a poor initial understanding of the culture and the difficulties of working in such a male dominated environment (Dainty et al, 2004)</td>
<td>More of an understanding of industry culture having received information about the industry through a personal contact. (Dainty et al, 2004)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image</td>
<td>Industry oversold to women who become disillusioned (Dainty et al, 2004)</td>
<td>Feared racism, perceived that it would be difficult to get a job (Dainty et al, 2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Ethnic Minorities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Informality of recruitment practices was a barrier to women's employment (Dainty et al., 2004)</td>
<td>Direct and in direct discrimination in recruitment practices (Royal Holloway, 1999)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line managers were found to discriminate against women in recruitment (Dainty, 1998)</td>
<td>Exclusion from networking about employment, promotion opportunities and information about contracts (Royal Holloway, 1999)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal networks excluded women access to information on employment and promotion opportunities (Bagilhole, 2002)</td>
<td>Preference to recruit in own image, and on recommendation (Fielden et al., 2001)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preference to recruit in own image, and on recommendation (Fielden et al., 2001)</td>
<td>Ethnic minorities given less responsibility than white peers and do not reach senior positions (Ansari et al., 2002)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glass ceiling and glass walls; Women do not reach senior positions and tend to work in different specialisms to men (Dainty et al., 2004)</td>
<td>Ethnic minorities moved out of large companies into smaller firms run by ethnic minorities or became self employed (Dainty et al., 2004)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women believed inter-organisational mobility was necessary to circumvent barriers obstructing their progress (Dainty et al., 2004)</td>
<td>Assumptions about low career commitment because of their assumed likelihood to have children (Bagilhole, 2002)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived little opportunity for work-life balance (Dainty et al., 2004)</td>
<td>Perceived to lack ability to do the job. Need to additional qualifications to be taken seriously (Dainty et al., 2004)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive work environment led to resentment from white male peers. Women thus faced exclusion from social groups and overt harassment (Dainty et al., 1999)</td>
<td>Discrimination faced by ethnic minorities included racist name-calling, jokes, harassment, bullying, intimidation and physical violence. Frequently tolerated as seen as the generally accepted culture of the industry (Royal Holloway, 1999)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiences of the industry as one where racism could prevail (Ansari et al., 2002)</td>
<td>Ethnic minority women found their gender and ethnicity combined to further exacerbate their situation and the level of discrimination perpetrated against them (Ansari et al., 2002)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1 demonstrates that women and ethnic minorities face similar barriers to workplace equality perpetrated by the dominant white male culture. These include discriminatory behaviour, informal recruitment practices, restricted opportunities for career progression, stereotyping, exclusion from white, male networks, and a hostile work environment. Therefore, although it is important to acknowledge the separate disadvantages of women and ethnic minorities, it may be useful to analyse sexism and racism together as there are areas which overlap. Such an analysis would therefore represent a more integrated, holistic
and mutually reinforcing approach to equal opportunities in the construction industry, which could help to enhance opportunities for all non traditional entrants.

3.9 Culturally determined factors affecting underrepresented groups

Traditionally, sources of construction employees have been predominantly, young white male trainees (Agapiou, 1995). Gale (1992) suggests that exaggerated 'macho' behaviour among this group legitimises a person's membership of the construction industry. In construction, male values are the norm and are rewarded. These include long working hours, competition, full time working, and the expectation that career achievement is paramount (Davey et al, 1999). The construction culture is characterised by male domination, crisis, aggression and conflict, gallant behaviour and traditional attitudes (Gale and Cartwright, 1995). Students are socialised, educated about and initiated into the construction culture (Ibid.). Gale (1992) observed that to maintain the maleness of the culture is in the interests of those who have chosen to work in the industry, thus keeping conflict and crisis as preferred aspects of everyday working lives. It has been accepted that the industry suffers from confrontational attitudes (Barthorpe, et al 2000). Consequently, if male values include the propensity for conflict in human interaction, then conflict becomes locked into the construction culture (Gale 1992).

Greed (2000) contends that the need for identification with values of the construction culture blocks the entrance of alternative ideas and people who are seen as different or unsettling with implications for women, ethnic minorities and disabled people. Furthermore, the culture possesses the power to control who is included, some entrants are made to feel awkward and unwelcome (mainly women and ethnic minorities) whilst others are welcomed, made to feel comfortable and as part of a team (predominantly white, heterosexual males) (Ibid.).

Greed (2000) suggests that 'more [women] does not necessarily mean better'. Some women will be more able and willing to 'fit in'. Hence entrants to the
industry appear to be either socialised to conform, or are marginalized, discouraged or rejected (Ibid.). An increase in the proportion of women into the industry is considered unlikely to change the entrenched 'macho' culture.

The 'maleness' of the industry perpetuates adversarial, confrontational and often unsociable behaviour that discourages women and ethnic minorities (Barthorpe et al, 2000). However, those women who seek entry into male dominated cultures either have to masquerade as men in order to be successful (Bagilhole, 2002), or leave if they are not adaptable to the culture. Alternatively, they can remain in the industry without behaving like men but maintain unimportant positions (Davidson and Cooper, 1992; Davidson 1996 cited in Bennett, 1999; Dainty et al, 2001). Thus, senior women continued to produce a masculine model of success in organisations (Evett, 1996). Furthermore, Cartwright and Gale (1995) note that women in such situations display typical characteristics of 'anti-feminism' - such is the requirement that the core values and behaviours of the project organisation must be upheld by all. Indeed, Gale (1994a) found that in the construction culture women will engage in sexist putdowns to other women, which produces tension between their female identity and reinforces the construction culture.

The industry thrives on informal networks and exclusionary practices making it difficult for outsiders to enter successfully. For example, formal job vacancies account for only 3% of employment, equivalent to only 2% of the workforce (Constructionskills, 2005). Informal entry routes have tended to rely on learning on the job and have neither required nor generated formal qualifications. Indeed, Greed (1997) notes a general lack of clear written criteria in matters such as recruitment, promotion, career development and qualification. Rather, she observes that such systems operate on the 'he's a good chap, I knew his father' principle. She observes that informal associations, pub culture fraternities and sporting enclaves favour white males in playing a key role in the management of the industry and the chance of work at all levels (Ibid.).

Thus, many have argued that attracting more women would lead to more humane forms of management which would result in greater productivity and less of a confrontational, conflict-ridden 'macho pack culture', resulting in greater efficiency and cost-effectiveness (Greed 1997; CIB, 1996 Langford et al, 1995).
3.10 Industry change agenda

The academic community have made repeated calls for the industry to urgently address equality and diversity as core business issues, if it is to avoid the crippling effects of skills shortfalls, demotivated employees, and employment tribunals (Greed, 1997; Dainty et al, 1999; 2000a; 2000b; 2001; Bagilhole et al, 2001; Agapiou and Dainty, 2003). Greed (1997) argues that the participation of women, ethnic minorities and disabled people in the built environment would allow these groups more control over their own environments and address community concerns, especially the inadequate design of buildings, lack of access for the disabled and those with pushchairs and small children (Greed, 1997; 1995). Ansari and Jackson (1996) add that companies should also recognise that they will suffer if they do not recognise the social concerns of the communities in which they operate. In addition, it is becoming increasingly acknowledged that the ‘productive economic and creative benefits of a harmonious and well managed multi-cultural workforce are enormous’ (Loosemore and Chau, 2002; Loosemore et al, 2003).

However, Clarke et al, (2004) maintained that political will spanning national, sectoral and local levels, is a necessary element to transforming the industry. Michielsens et al (2004) illustrate the minimal take up of gender and equality issues by the national social partners (employers and trade unions) in the European Union construction sector, even though they are core players in the formulation of the equal opportunities agenda at European level. Furthermore, Michielsens et al (2004) have found that the social partners corroborate rather than counter the conservatism and inertia which characterises the construction industry.

Nevertheless, there has been a gradual recognition of the need for workforce diversification from within the construction sector. The Latham Report (1994) recognised that equal opportunities must be vigorously pursued by the industry and a working group was set up which explored the value of diversity and ways of developing people effectively (Construction Industry Board, 1996). Although not a specific theme within the Egan's Rethinking Construction Report (1998), diversity emerged as a key issue within the consequent Respect for People working group report (Rethinking Construction, 2000).
3.10.1 The drivers of workforce diversification advocated by the construction industry

The business case

The Respect for People working group report (Rethinking Construction, 2000) outlined a prima facie business case for workforce diversification in the construction industry. This included enhanced innovation and creativity, increased workloads, and an expansion of the customer base. It was on this basis that the business case emerged as the key driver for diversity in the construction industry. Loosemore et al., (2003) argue that construction companies are becoming increasingly aware that in a highly competitive labour market, recruiting from under half the population is likely to severely restrict their growth and future development. However, discussion in section 3.6.7 would call into question this statement.

Skills shortages

The issue of skills shortages in the construction industry has been well documented (Agapiou 1995; Sommerville, 1993; CIB 1996). Construction has the most acute skill shortage of any sector in Britain (Lloyds TSB, 2001). It is reported that as many as 61% of building companies are suffering difficulties in recruitment (Ibid.). The industry is currently experiencing a rapid recovery, and workloads are predicted to grow (Mackenzie et al 2000). In response, the CITB estimates that the industry will require about 74,000 more new recruits year-on-year for the next five years (CITB 2004).

The causes of the skills shortages in the UK construction industry are primarily attributed to the demographic decline in the number of young men available to enter the labour market (fewer younger people to recruit as a result of an ageing population, and increased numbers of young people staying on in education), which has increased competition for new entrants to the labour pool (Rethinking Construction, 2000; Mackenzie et al, 2000; Druker and White, 1996). The situation has been exacerbated by a reliance on temporary agency labour and self-employment (Rethinking Construction, 2000). According to Rethinking Construction (2000) this means that construction firms have to seek alternative
sources of labour, including attracting more women, ethnic minorities and disabled people (see also Loosemore et al, 2003; Dainty et al, 1999). However, Greed (1991) revealed the tendency for women to reach a sudden career halt which she attributed to employers recruiting women to fulfil short-term need or labour shortage rather than a long term investment. As a result, she believed that demographic arguments will do little for workforce diversification in the long run.

3.11 Summary and conclusions

This chapter has presented a review of the employment issues related to the underrepresentation of women and ethnic minorities in the construction industry. It has highlighted women's and ethnic minorities' experiences of individual and institutional discriminatory practices; overt and covert racism and sexism; inflexible working structures; an unhelpful environment for the reconciliation of work and family and an adversarial workplace culture. However, this review has failed to uncover any previous research on disabled people in the construction industry. This highlights a need for some exploratory work in this area which is addressed by this thesis.

A gap in the knowledge exists as previous research has not explored the views of a range of industry stakeholders who are key agents of change, exerting influence at micro, meso and macro levels within the industry. These include individual employers, professional body representatives, unions and campaigning bodies. These stakeholders are often in charge of policy formulation and implementation. Thus, without exploring their views and responding to the challenges that these may represent, it is likely that efforts to promote workforce diversity will only be partially effective.

Section 3.2 discussed the industry's complex structures and processes and suggested how they undermine HRM strategies refined in other more stable industries. This points to a need for further exploration to understand more fully how underrepresented group's experiences of construction, as described in this chapter, are determined by the industry's structure. In addition, this thesis will examine how these industry structures determine the shape and operation of equal opportunities practices and procedures in construction organisations. This
review has also demonstrated that the industry presents a white male culture in which women and ethnic minorities face hostile attitudes and behaviours on the part of the white male majority. Thus, together with structural explorations, identifying stakeholder views on the industry's culture will provide insights into how the day-to-day activities across the industry reinforce and maintain the current situation for women and ethnic minorities.

The issue of workforce diversification has been finally given recognition by several industry reports and initiatives (see section 3.10). However, this literature review has revealed that women and ethnic minorities entering and working in the industry are faced with a complex array of structural and attitudinal barriers. Thus, there is a need to analyse how industry efforts to diversify the construction workforce have addressed these issues. It is also important to explore how heads of organisations responsible for driving change within their organisation, have engaged with the diversity agenda. Furthermore, this review has shown how industry processes, attitudes and behaviours have served to exclude and marginalise women and ethnic minorities at all levels within the industry. Thus, an integrated set of policy initiatives which address these issues is likely to improve opportunities for underrepresented groups in the industry.
CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter the methodology used to meet the research objectives is explained. Initially, the aims and objectives are stated as a focus for the data collection and analysis. An explanation is provided for the selection of the interpretivist epistemological position and on the rationale behind the use of a qualitative methodology. The research design comprised three distinct stages, the first and second stage involved the use of semi structured interviews to facilitate the collection of rich, insightful data. Specialist computer software was used to aid the analysis of the vast amount of data collected using these methods. The second and final stage of the research involved data collected from a combination of numerous data sets including attendance at numerous meetings, desk-top and telephone surveys and a workshop.

4.2 The requirements of a research design

Chapter 2 provided a review of the literature on managing diversity and equal opportunities and demonstrated the paradigm shift from equal opportunity approaches to managing diversity within the contemporary social policy literature. This raised the need to explore these concepts, their drivers and their applicability to the construction industry. Chapter 3 showed evidence of the discrimination faced by women and ethnic minorities. Importantly, it suggested a need to establish industry stakeholder attitudes towards workforce diversification in order that the underrepresentation of women and ethnic minorities may be addressed through a set of practical policy initiatives challenging the existing ingrained structures and cultures. Understanding why people behave as they do, demands an ethnographic research approach capable of appreciating individual’s perspectives and promoting inquiry into the meanings people make of their
experiences. This forms the basis of the research design described in this chapter.

4.3 Aims, objectives and research propositions

The research aims, as set out in the introduction (section 1.3) were two-fold:

1. To explore industry stakeholder attitudes towards diversity and equality and identify their implications for workforce diversification and workplace equality.

2. To construct a framework of practical policy initiatives to tackle inequality and encourage greater diversification of the construction industry labour market.

The term stakeholders has been used to refer to those responsible for initiating equal opportunities within construction organisations and driving change within the wider industry. Thus heads of construction companies and training organisations, representatives from professional bodies and campaigning groups, and unions were included within the term.

Objective I

The first objective was to explore women's, ethnic minorities' and disabled people's experiences within the context of relevant stakeholders' perspectives on diversity and equality. To date no study has examined diversity and equality from a broad multi-stakeholder perspective. The main body of research has tended to focus on women's and ethnic minorities' experiences. An investigation and analysis of stakeholder attitudes and perceptions would therefore provide a more holistic, multifaceted and detailed explanation of the current position of women, ethnic minorities and disabled people in the construction industry.
Objective II

The second objective was to explore the impact of the structure and culture of the construction industry on diversity and equality. Accordingly, a key output of the research is a critical analysis of how the industry's structure and culture shape the attitudes of construction stakeholders towards diversity and equality. This also allowed the relative effect of structural and cultural barriers to diversity and equality to be established.

Objective III

The third objective was to evaluate how the industry has attempted to address inequality and to diversify the construction workforce. Exploring whether the industry has engaged with diversity and equality issues, and evaluating the effectiveness of actions taken in this regard highlighted residual issues in need of redress.

Objective IV

The fourth objective was to develop a framework of practical policy initiatives to address the factors emerging from the study which have led to the exclusion of women, ethnic minorities and disabled people. Such a policy framework could be used to address inequality within organisations and industry institutions. This framework of initiatives must respond to the unique structural and cultural context of the industry. It must also reconcile the needs of women, ethnic minorities and disabled people with industry requirements regarding diversity and equality.

Objective V

The final objective was to validate and refine the framework of policy initiatives. The validity of the policy framework was tested in a workshop involving leading industry representatives and practitioners.
Aim 1 and its related objectives i and ii, involved a thorough investigation of stakeholder attitudes and perceptions of diversity and equality as well as the structural and cultural factors which shape them. This required exploratory and in-depth data of personal and subjective accounts to be collected.

Aim 2 was satisfied through objectives iii, iv and v which developed policy solutions to the underrepresentation and underachievement of women, ethnic minorities and disabled people in the construction industry discussed in chapter 3. This necessitated the use of analytical techniques that have allowed for both exploratory and orderly systematic examination of varied data sets. The data must be collected and organised in a way that allowed the key issues to emerge.

The research approach developed to meet the objectives in line with these requirements is outlined in section (4.4).

4.3.1 Formulation of research propositions

The need to explore multi-stakeholder perceptions required the collection of data from the individual's frame of reference. Thus, it is unlikely that identical issues will emerge from any two informants and so a flexible data collection approach was required. Therefore, a fundamental problem exists with formulating hypotheses as any modification to them would invalidate the research (Popper, 1992). Thus, Simister (1994) argued that propositions which interact with the emerging findings are more appropriate in the context of inductive research. Accordingly, propositions were developed as general statements, allowing relationships between variables to be explored, but not definitive statements of what the researcher expected to find from the study. They are provided, merely as a framework upon which aims and objectives can be fulfilled. From the aims and objectives, a set of research propositions was formulated to guide the research. These were:

**Proposition 1**

*Construction stakeholders hold negative views on women, ethnic minorities and disabled people working in the industry*
Proposition 2

*Underrepresented groups' experiences in the construction industry are influenced by its culture*

Proposition 3

*Underrepresented groups' experiences in the construction industry are influenced by its structure*

Propositions 1, 2 and 3 were explored through in-depth interviews which investigated stakeholder attitudes to workforce diversification as well as the factors which shaped their perceptions.

Proposition 4

*The industry’s attempts to address inequality are misguided and ineffective in addressing equality of opportunity*

This proposition was explored by investigating the effectiveness of the industry’s attempts to address the underrepresentation of women, ethnic minorities and disabled people. In-depth case study interviews were also used to explore the experiences of construction employers who had engaged with the industry’s principle diversity initiative.

Proposition 5

*Opportunities for underrepresented groups can be improved through a set of integrated policy initiatives which address cultural and structural determinants of inequality*

Based upon the data collected on stakeholder attitudes and experiences of workforce diversification as well as a general good practice within the field of equal opportunities and diversity, a framework of practical policy initiatives was developed to promote an equitable working environment. The validity of these was tested by working collaboratively with industry. The final framework should
provide a more strategic approach to addressing diversity and equality within the sector.

4.4 The identification of an appropriate research approach

Some investigations of gender and race issues in construction have employed surveys or interviews within a quantitative analytical framework (e.g. Gale, 1994a; Srivastava, 1992; Wilkinson, 1993, 1996; Royal Holloway, 1999; Ellison, 2001). Fielden et al (2000; 2001) utilised action research in attempting to change the attitudes of women towards the industry. There have also been several studies which have involved a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods (Steele and Sodhi, 2004; Duncan, 2000). Due to the nature of the research problem, the method utilised for this study draws upon the approaches taken by Dainty (1998) and Greed (2000). It selects an interpretivist methodology within an ethnographic framework of investigation in order to build a holistic and detailed picture of stakeholder behaviour and attitudes, and to find meaning in the words and actions used by them regarding diversity and equality. Notably, it seeks to understand the interplay of the industry's structure and culture as having led to the current situation. These requirements necessitate a qualitative enquiry (Creswell, 1998).

Table 4.1 displays the ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions of the qualitative research paradigm. These are an inherent part of a research study and provide the direction for the research design. These are discussed in relation to how they influenced the research design below.
### Table 4.1 Assumptions of the qualitative paradigm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assumption</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Qualitative paradigm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ontological assumption</td>
<td>What is the nature of reality?</td>
<td>Reality is subjective and multiple as seen by participants in a study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemological assumption</td>
<td>What is the relationship of the researcher to that researched?</td>
<td>Researcher interacts with that being researched</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodological assumption</td>
<td>What is the process of research?</td>
<td>Inductive process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mutual simultaneous shaping of factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Categories identified during the research process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Context-bound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Patterns, theories developed for understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Accurate and reliable through verification</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source Creswell, 1994. pp5.)

#### 4.4.1 Ontological level

Ontology refers to the first philosophical assumption that underpins research, the theory/philosophy of reality (Hussey and Hussey, 1997). Questions of social ontology are concerned with the nature of the social world, and qualitative research generally embodies a view of social reality as a constantly shifting emergent property of individual's creation (Bryman, 2001). It is concerned with establishing how the research is set out within the external and internal contexts of the research topic and how the researcher views the subject of the research. In this thesis, the ontological assumption is that the world is socially constructed and best understood by examining the perceptions of human actors, for example different industry stakeholders would be expected to have different experiences and beliefs all of which deserve attention.

#### 4.4.2 Epistemological level

This research has focused on understanding the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants and thus aligns with an interpretivist epistemological position. Interpretivism is the term given to a contrasting epistemology to positivism. The term subsumes the views of writers who have been critical of the application of the scientific model to the study of the
social world and therefore requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social interaction (Bryman, 2001). Its emphases social action as being meaningful to actors and therefore needing to be interpreted from their point of view. Thus, knowledge is derived from everyday concepts and meanings. The social researcher enters the everyday social world in order to grasp the socially constructed meanings. Researchers interact with those they study (Creswell, 1994). Furthermore, a naturalistic approach (the study of social life in naturally occurring settings), puts the researcher in a better position to interpret and understand social actions in their own context and establish the meaning attributed to such concepts by those taking part in the study (Harvey and MacDonald, 1993).

4.4.3 Methodological level

In a qualitative methodology inductive logic prevails whereby categories emerge from informants. This emergence provides rich context-bound information leading to patterns or theories which help explain a phenomenon (Creswell, 1994). Accuracy of the information is addressed through verification of the information with informants. This is discussed in more detail below.

4.5 Research design

The research design is the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to the studies initial research questions, and ultimately, to its conclusions (Yin, 1994). The research reported in this thesis had three distinct stages as outlined below.

4.5.1 Stage 1

The first stage sought to explore women’s, ethnic minorities’ and disabled people’s experiences within the context of attitudes of relevant stakeholders. Hence, the main data collection was in-depth semi structured interviews with forty construction industry stakeholders.
The interview findings were presented at an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) 'People in Construction' seminar held at the Department of Social Sciences, Loughborough University. Five of the original respondents were in attendance at the seminar which provided an opportunity for member validation of the research findings. In addition, valuable feedback was gained from academics and other researchers in the field which facilitated new ways of interpreting the data and ensured the research findings were trustworthy and credible. These discussions were manually recorded in a diary and were used to develop memos to aid data analysis and interpretation.

4.5.2 Stage 2

The second stage of the research comprised two phases. Phase 1 included desk-based research, to map the industry's attempts to address equal opportunities and diversity and analyse their effectiveness. This review of existing initiatives included internet searches and telephone surveys of relevant bodies, interest groups and a range of providers of specialist diversity advisory services. In order to gain a more in-depth understanding, a case study of a single initiative was selected as an appropriate research framework for phase 2 of the research design (see below).

A case study is a research design that entails the detailed analysis of a single case (Bryman, 2004). Cases are selected because they serve a particular evaluation purpose (Patton, 1987). Thus the Respect for People (RfP) 'Diversity in the Workplace' toolkit was selected as a case due to a number of factors. It was significant in that it was the industry's principle and most contemporary diversity initiative. It had pan industry relevance and was atypical in that it had received substantial resource and government support. In addition, the toolkit encompassed a checklist of equality measures that could be used by organisations to implement good equal opportunities. Therefore, it allowed for examination of the practical application of equal opportunities and diversity policies to the construction industry through the exploration of multi stakeholder perspectives of the toolkit. Thus the RfP 'Diversity in the Workplace' toolkit was an object of interest in its own right, and the aim was to provide an in-depth elucidation of it. The exploratory potential of case study research (Bryman, 1989),
allowed a high degree of flexibility to investigate the factors influencing the toolkit's impact. The approach was also favoured for producing rich causal data (Blismas, 2001), which enabled substantive evidence to be collected.

The case study involved twenty in-depth semi structured interviews with all types of construction companies, namely clients and end users, consultants, main contractors, sub-contractors and suppliers. The findings were presented at a workshop comprising of two of the original respondents, members of the original working group responsible for developing the 'Diversity in the Workplace' Toolkit, representatives from industry bodies, practitioners and experts in the diversity field. This provided an opportunity to determine the acceptability of the research findings to those who took part in the research as well as those with expertise in the field. Again, the discussions were manually recorded and used inform future work.

4.5.2 Stage 3

The third stage of the research also comprised two phases encompassing the development of a policy framework for diversity and equality and its validation.

Phase 1 drew on the research findings from stages 1 and 2 to formulate a policy framework for the advancement of equality and diversity in the construction industry. This was supported by desk-based research, a review of equal opportunities and diversity policies and good practice, and face-to-face meetings with experts in the field to gain feedback on potential policy solutions. This emerging code of practice was further developed and verified via an iterative process with industry. This involved gaining feedback on the code periodically from the Institution of Civil Engineer's (ICE) equal opportunities committee (ICEfloe). Attendance at four ICEfloe committee meetings and regular contact with key committee members over a twelve month period ensured that the code's development was continually scrutinised and validated in line with industry needs.

Phase 2 comprised a workshop held at the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) headquarters in London. The purpose of the workshop was to generate debate amongst a collection of influential industry stakeholders on the merits and demerits of the code of practice and explore the role of the code in contributing to
the delivery of a fair and equitable workplace environment. It also provided a high level forum for the code's validation by industry. Accordingly, it was chaired by the incoming president of the ICE and attended by nineteen delegates including industry leaders (senior managers of major contracting and consultancy companies), practitioners and academics. The workshop also afforded the opportunity to present and gain feedback on some the findings emergent from stage 1 and their resulting implications for policy.

An overview of the research design and data collection methods used in this study is illustrated in figure 4.1.
Figure 4.1 Diagrammatic project model

**Main Data Collection**

**Stage 1**
- In-depth semi-structured interviews with 35 construction industry stakeholders
  - Chapter 5

**Stage 2**
- An evaluation of the industry's attempts to address issues of equal opportunities and diversity.
  - Desk-based research and telephone surveys
  - Chapter 6
- Case study: The Respect for People "Diversity in the Workplace" toolkit
  - 20 in-depth semi-structured interviews with construction companies, organisations, and clients.
  - Chapter 6

**Stage 3**
- Development of a diversity and equality policy framework
  - Desk-based research
  - Meetings with the ICE/reo (equal opportunities) committee
  - Chapter 7
- Workshop to validate the policy framework
  - Chapter 7

**Supporting Data**
- Findings were taken back to 5 original informants through a seminar presentation
- Findings were presented to 2 original informants and 8 industry stakeholders through a workshop presentation
- Face to face meetings with experts in the field
- Policy framework sent out for comment by the ICE/reo committee
4.5.3 Research process: Issues of validity and reliability

According to Bryman (2001) a simple application of quantitative methodological criteria of reliability and validity is undesirable for qualitative research. Qualitative research does not claim to be replicable (Marshall and Rossman, 1999), the researcher purposefully avoids controlling the research conditions and concentrates on recoding the complexity of situational contexts and interrelations as they occur naturally. This study views the accounts presented as one of a number of possible representations rather than as a definitive version of social reality (Ibid.; Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Indeed, it has produced a variety of accounts of issues related to equal opportunities and diversity in different contexts, with obvious implications for generalisation to the wider industry. It was therefore not the aim of the research to generalise the findings to the industry at large, but to highlight and explore the issues raised and provide insight into how they might be tackled. Indeed, the practical considerations of a qualitative enquiry such as the extensive time consuming nature of data collection and analysis impose limits on the number of cases that can be investigated. However, an in-depth analysis of even a single interview can yield deep insights (Kelle and Laurie, 1995).

A number of methods have been used to test the validity of the research findings. In addition to respondent validation (Guba and Lincoln, 1994) (see section 4.5.1), and clear exposition of the process of data collection and analysis (Murphy et al, 1998) (see section 4.6 and 4.7), care has been taken to pay systematic attention to the analysis of negative cases (Silverman 1989) and to achieving fair dealing (Dingwall, 1992) in the analysis and reporting of data.

4.6 Methods of data collection

To meet the aims and objectives outlined in section 4.3 a diverse range of methods to collect both in-depth and supplementary data were employed. Each stage of the research design (see section 4.5) required a bespoke methodological approach. However, the methods were designed to complement each other in an integrated manner, in order that an holistic interpretation of the data could be gained.
The research involved the systematic combination of separate yet interrelated data sets. These were: transcribed interview data; field notes; respondent validation; desktop and telephone surveys; feedback from presentations and meetings; workshop findings; documents, memos and coding notes taken from the analysis and findings from searching the data. All of the data collected was recorded manually or within the chosen analytical software package.

4.6.1 Interviews

To investigate and understand the meanings that people have for their everyday activities, qualitative interviews formed the primary method of data collection in stages 1 and 2 of the research design. The purpose of interviewing is to elicit information from the respondent. Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable and able to be made explicit (Patton, 2002). It also assumes that not all of the important categorical distinctions have been established at the outset of the research (Dey, 1993). Interviews can vary between totally unstructured, open interviews which are usually informal, conversational and exploratory in nature, to highly structured interviews comprising of a set of questions and answers (Hughes, 1996). Commenting on the debate between structured and unstructured interview approaches, Pawson (1996) argued that without steering from the researcher, there is a danger that extracts will be selected from the massive flow of data which will be refitted in an unrepresentative framework. However, too much structuring leaves the subject's response entirely defined by the researcher's conceptual system. Hence, semi structured interviews were used to achieve a balance between flexibility and selectivity through a series of foreshadowed problems to focus the data gathering exercise, whilst allowing respondents to answer in an open manner.

The semi-structured approach, encouraged the informants to talk in their own terms around subjects defined by the researcher. A loosely structured interview schedule included a list of questions and topics to be explored. Where a subject was covered, the researcher noted this without asking the specific question on the checklist (Harvey and MacDonald, 1993). Questions not included in the guide were asked where points of interest or the need for clarification occurred.
All of the data collected during the interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim by the researcher to allow a thorough examination of interviewee responses. A high quality, unobtrusive mini disc recorder was used with a small microphone placed between the researcher and the informant. Most respondents acceded to the request for the interview to be recorded. However, five informants declined to be recorded, and so field notes were taken and written up immediately after the interview. These respondents felt anxious and self aware at the recording of the interview, but were content with field notes being taken of the main points raised. Bryman (2001) warns that among those who agree to be recorded there will be some who will not get over their alarm at being confronted by a microphone and the prospect of their words being preserved. Although respondents generally appeared unperturbed by the recording equipment, it may be possible that a few were affected in this way. This observation rests on the premise that several respondents offered further information once the official interview had ended and the mini disc recorder had been switched off. This information was recorded as field notes.

The interviews were conducted in an informal, free-flowing manner using open-ended questions to enable the collection of rich insightful data. The length of the interviews was not restricted, and the respondents were allowed to talk until the interview reached its natural conclusion, or was terminated because of time restrictions dictated by the informants’ work environment. The average interview time was around two hours, although it was not unusual for the interview to go on for considerably longer. The interviews were carried out in the respondents’ natural work environment, and were conducted in private offices or site meeting rooms.

It is acknowledged that research cannot be biased or value free. However, self reflection and reflexivity about the part played by these ensures that there is no incursion of values in the research process (Bryman, 2001). A neutral stance was adopted by the interviewer to ensure the research did not set out to prove a particular perspective but to understand the social context, convey fairly complexities and multiple perspectives and be balanced in reporting (Patton, 2002).

It is frequently suggested that it is important for the interviewer to establish rapport with the respondents to encourage them to want, or at least be prepared
to, participate in and persist with the interview (Bryman, 2001). People may react to the knowledge that they are being studied, they might become self conscious or alter their behaviour to take account of the purposes of the research (Denscombe, 2002). To overcome this problem it was important to demonstrate empathic neutrality (Patton, 2002) in the interviews. This involved communicating understanding, interest and caring (empathy) and retaining a non judgemental stance towards respondents' thoughts emotions and behaviours (neutrality).

4.6.1.1 Choice of respondents and gaining access

Stage 1 Interviews

In accordance with the aims and objectives of the research, industry stakeholders were sought to gain multi perspectives on equality and diversity across the construction industry.

Initially, a desktop mapping exercise was conducted revealing significant construction bodies and professional institutions within the construction sector. Telephone calls to each organisation allowed a list of suitable respondents and their contact details to be compiled. All the information collected was organised into a spreadsheet format. Electronic mails were then sent out to each potential respondent. This proved to be an effective way of introducing the researcher and the research project. Indeed, many people were receptive to the follow up telephone calls to request and arrange the interview. Of the construction industry bodies and professional institutions contacted 60% agreed to be interviewed, resulting in a total of 14 interviews being conducted with representatives from across the construction industry including: building services, construction management, architecture, civil engineering, industry training providers, a construction union and, the largest pan-industry body concerned with all aspects of the built environment. In addition, two support/campaigning groups one for women and one for ethnic minorities were interviewed.

Gaining access to construction employers required a pragmatic mixture of convenience, snowball and purposive sampling methods. Initially, a list of contacts from previous construction management research projects in
Loughborough University's Civil and Building Engineering Department provided a convenience sample by virtue of its accessibility. Securing research participants proved to be more successful where a lead name and a contact featured in introductions. Thus, a snowball sampling method was successful in facilitating further contacts and interviews. Finally, a purposive approach selected stakeholders that were information rich and likely to offer useful manifestations of the phenomenon of interest. Clearly, the sampling approach taken is aimed at insight into the phenomenon, not empirical generalisation from a sample to a population. In total twenty two employers were interviewed divided equally between contractors and consultants, they were also well stratified in terms of geographical location and size.

Establishing the number of respondents to interview was problematic and limited by practical considerations of a qualitative inquiry. However, Glaser and Strauss (1967) offered a practical solution, in that data collection should cease when data saturation takes place, whereby no new issues emerge from the data or properties of categories can be further developed. Thus when new respondents confirmed much of what had already emerged and it was deemed that data saturation had been achieved.

Stage 2 Interviews

Rethinking Construction was the banner under which the construction industry, its clients and the government worked together to improve UK construction performance (Rethinking Construction, 2000). One of the main agendas for change included 'Respect for People' (RfP) and subsequently, a RIP working group was established.

The RIP working group provided access to informants for the case study interviews. Accordingly, a contact list of potential interviewees consisting of companies who had used the toolkit and some who had declined to use the toolkit was supplied by the RIP team. They also sent out a letter to all these firms requesting that they participate in the evaluation study. A total of 20 organisations involved were interviewed. Of these companies, 13 had attempted to use the 'Diversity in the Workplace' toolkit. In each case, the person responsible for managing the implementation of the toolkit was interviewed in terms of their
experiences of using it. Depending on the size and nature of the organisation, this included HRM specialists, senior managers and directors.

The remaining 7 companies had declined to use the diversity toolkit, but were engaged in using one or more of the other RIP toolkits. These companies provided a control sample as their opinions of the toolkit and the issue of workplace diversity generally had not been effected by their experiences of using the diversity toolkit. In these cases, senior managers were interviewed who had general responsibility for their involvement with the toolkit. Together, the 20 participating companies provided a stratified sample in terms of their type (i.e. clients, consultants, contractors, sub-contractors etc.), geographical location and size (in terms of the number of employees and annual turnover).

4.6.1.2 Research Instruments

Separate interview schedules were developed for each stage of the research. These have been included in the appendices for reference.

Stage 1

The interview schedule for stage 1 was developed from themes extracted from the literature. Relevant issues were used to form a set of questions to be explored from various stakeholder perspectives. For example, the barriers to women, ethnic minorities and disabled people entering and working in construction identified by various research projects were explored. These included: attracting women to the industry and the industry's image (Fielden et al, 2000), recruitment and retention (Dainty, 1998) sexist attitudes (Bagilhole et al, 2001), organisational culture (Greed, 2000; Dainty, 1998, Gale and Cartwright 1995) and the construction work environment (e.g. Wall and Clarke, 1996). These factors have also been established as problems faced by ethnic minorities in the industry (Royal Holloway, 1999; Ansari et al, 2002). In addition, questions relating to stakeholder perceptions of workforce diversification provided a basis from which practical and holistic policy initiatives could be developed. The interview schedule has been included in Appendix A for reference.
Pilot interviews were used to test the suitability of the instrument, the effectiveness of the questions, and to collect preliminary data on attitudes towards equality and diversity. Three pilot interviews were conducted with staff within Loughborough University's Civil and Building Engineering Department. As new issues emerged from the data, they were noted then built into the research instrument to be fed back to future respondents. This approach allowed the findings of the research to be continually tested and validated throughout the data collection phase. Validating findings in this way ensures that developing theories stand up to scrutiny during the analysis and prevented problems of over-reliance on certain key informants' data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

Stage 2

For stage 2, the interview schedule focused mainly on the contents of the toolkit, its usability, impact and how it could be improved. However, organisations who had completed the toolkit were asked additional information on their experiences of using it. The participants who had decided not use the diversity toolkit were asked why they had chosen not to use the diversity toolkit. The interviews schedule has been included in Appendix B for reference.

4.6.2 Desktop and telephone surveys

Stage 2 Phase 1

A review of the industry's attempts to address equal opportunities and diversity was conducted by means of a desktop survey (literature and internet searches), supported with telephone surveys of relevant bodies, associations and interest groups.

Stage 3 Phase 1

Desk based research also supported the development of the diversity and equality policy framework. This included an investigation of policy relevant
material and good practice approaches from both within and outside the construction sector.

Supplementary primary data collected included telephone surveys of experts in the field including the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), the Race Relations and Employment Advisory Service (RREAS), Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS), and the Construction Best Practice Programme (CBPP). Face-to-face meetings were also held with members of the original committee responsible for developing the RIP 'Diversity in the Workplace' toolkit and representatives of Equality Direct, Change the Face of Construction and the Union of Construction and Allied Trades Technicians (UCATT). These individuals and organisations commented on the policy approaches contained within the code of practice.

4.6.3 Collaboration with ICEfloe

The Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) equal opportunities committee (ICEfloe) provided a useful vehicle through which the policy framework could be developed iteratively with industry. Indeed, members of the ICEfloe committee consisted of a range of industry practitioners including consultants, engineers and construction managers. The code's emerging content was presented to the ICEfloe committee on four occasions. The committee were then allocated time to discuss the code of practice. This approach ensured the code was continually validated and scrutinised.

To validate the code of practice (stage 3 phase two of the research design), the ICE and ICEfloe hosted a workshop. The aim of the workshop was to debate the merits and demerits of the code and its potential to drive change in the industry. The workshop was chaired by the incoming President of the ICE and attended by industry leaders and other key stakeholders. These included directors of large construction companies, senior HRM specialists, employers and academics.
4.7 Ethics

4.7.1 Informed consent

The research incorporates the principles set out in the British Sociological Association's (BSA) *Statement of Ethical Practice*. According to the statement:

*"As far as possible participation in sociological research should be based on the freely given informed consent of those studied"* (BSA, 2002, pp.3)

Accordingly, informed consent was gained by providing the research participants with the necessary information about the research to ensure that they made an informed decision about whether or not they wished to participate in the study. Therefore, prior to the interview, respondents were informed what the research was about, its purposes, who was sponsoring it, the precise nature of their involvement in the research and how long their participation was expected to take. They were also assured that they could withdraw from participating in the research at any time.

4.7.2 Gatekeepers

The term 'gatekeeper' is often used to describe the person who controls access to a location where it is hoped to carry out the research. In this piece of research, the gatekeepers were those who had administrative control over the organisation approached to take part in the research. These individuals raised concerns about the amount of time that would need to be spent with each informant and the potential risks to the organisation's image. Accordingly, the gatekeepers were fully informed about the proposed research and the expected length of the interview. They were also reassured that the identity of the organisation would be hidden. Consequently, the gatekeepers were supportive of the research and cooperative in helping to set up the interview.
4.7.3 Anonymity, privacy and confidentiality

The BSA statement also raises issues about ensuring the anonymity and privacy of those who participate in the research, and confidentiality in relation to the recording of information. Interviewees were thus assured that their identity would be hidden. This also ensured that interviewees were confident to be objective in their views and freed them to express their true feelings. Furthermore, interviewees were informed of the procedure for using and storing the data (see below).

4.7.4 Data protection

To comply with the principles of data protection each respondent was asked if they would like to read, edit and confirm the accuracy of the verbatim transcripts of their own research interview. However, every one of the respondents declined this offer.

Further data protection issues relate to the security of the environment in which the data is stored. Respondents were therefore informed that the mini-discs containing the raw data were stored in a secure place, the data was accessed and transcribed only by the researcher and the verbatim transcripts were stored electronically on the researchers own computer. These were not accessible to a third party. Participants were also informed that to protect their identity they would be assigned an informant number.

4.8 Analysis and representation of data

In qualitative research the validity of the researcher's interpretation is enhanced by an open explanation of the processes used to analyse the vast amount of relatively unstructured data collected. The following sections outline the analytical approach taken.
4.8.1 Computer aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS)

The volume of data collected and transcribed necessitated the use of data management and analysis software. Most computer aided methods enhance the validity of qualitative research findings in two ways (Blismas, 2001). Firstly in assisting the management, manipulation and exploration of much larger and wider data sets, and secondly, in providing facilities to code, search and retrieve vast amounts of qualitative data on a particular topic, that is simply not possible, with traditional techniques (Kelle, 1995). Thus, NVivo (version 1.3) was used as an analytical tool based on advice from fellow academics and the subsequent availability of a support network which quickly facilitated proficiency in the use of the package. Nvivo is relatively simple to use. It is possible to import documents directly from Microsoft Word and code these documents easily on screen. Coded text can be viewed via coding stripes made visible in the margins of documents. In addition, it is possible to write memos and link these to relevant pieces of text in different documents.

Notwithstanding these benefits, Blismas and Dainty (2003) warn researchers against equating qualitative data analysis software with an epistemological viewpoint rather than simply viewing them as tools to aid the larger research strategy. Furthermore, computer programmes are often erroneously viewed as frameworks ensuring robustness and transparency is maintained, even though the researcher is still required to exercise consistency and structure throughout the analysis (Ibid.).

4.8.2 Data codification

Qualitative data require particular analytical techniques which avoid the problems of researcher bias, data overload or unsubstantiated or erroneous conclusions being drawn (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Miles and Huberman (1994) argue that coding is a process that enables the researcher to identify meaningful data and set the stage for interpreting and drawing conclusions. This simultaneously reduces the voluminous data to common themes that allow comparison and patterning between data sets. In NVivo coding is done by connecting each of the
passages or items to a node. Nodes were both descriptive and conceptual in their codification of the data. Without categorisation there can be no basis for comparison between observation (Dey, 1993; Blismas and Dainty, 2003).

4.8.3 Coding using NVIVO

NVivo facilitates the attachments of codes to sections of data and their retrieval and display. Nodes formed the storage areas for the conceptually labelled issues emerging from the data to be placed in order. They were organised and arranged hierarchically from general to specific categories. The index system is completely flexible and can be manipulated by cutting, pasting deleting and merging nodes (and the data they contain) together. More than one node can be applied to each piece of text, and codes may overlap each other. No matter how many different codes are assigned to each document, the original text can be returned to at any time within the document system. Nodes were essentially distinguished as 'free' and 'tree' nodes. Free nodes appeared in a list. The latter formed a hierarchical tree of issues, which served to keep the process tidy, promote the understanding of respondents' views of the world and to gain an overview of the way the conceptual framework develops. In addition, breaking down complex issues into a hierarchical format reduces them into manageable elements at lower levels, thereby facilitating their analysis (Muya et al, 1997). Figure 4.2 demonstrates the coding process. The highlighted text is the selection of text that has been chosen to be coded. This is then stored in a node. If no suitable conceptual label exists then a new one can be created.
Figure 4.2 Screen short showing the coding process in NVivo

Before creating the initial coding framework, a general model was developed using the research instrument and general inferences within the data and the literature (see Miles and Huberman, 1994). This framework was used as a starting point from which to build the initial index system in NVivo, although it changed considerably over the duration of the coding and analytical process. To avoid becoming too tied to these initial nodes, each document was also coded line by line, in order to pull out from the data what is happening and to avoid bias. Hence, the systematic use of 'in vivo' or 'live' codes was used to develop a bottom-up approach to the derivation of categories from the content of the data (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). Dey (1993) suggests that the categories nodes represent should mirror the data and serve some analytic purpose. Accordingly, nodes formed a focus for thinking about the text and its interpretation. Assigning a conceptual label to a piece of text in a consistent and rigorous manner, reflecting the information contained within it, was a consideration during the coding process. Dey (1993) identified the importance for categories (nodes) to relate to an appropriate analytic context and be rooted in relevant empirical material. Hence, nodes are meaningful in relation to the data and in relation to
other nodes. Consequently, the majority of nodes were created during the coding process to reflect concepts emerging from the data and relate them to other categories, the remainder being created to store emerging themes during the coding process. Furthermore, NVivo proved useful in encouraging the user to define multiple, closely aligned categories because of the ease of which new nodes can be created and repositioned. Figure 4.3 below details the 'Equal Opportunities' part of the final coding structure to demonstrate the layered approach taken.

Since virtually every piece of coded text can address more than one concept, (thus necessitating the application of more than one code to a segment of data), the links between coded categories became extremely complex. The ease with which NVivo permits multiple codification or 'over-coding' can result in the user creating masses of nodes which tended to result in the duplication of much of the data as sections of text were found to refer to a number of issues (Dainty et al, 2002; Blismas and Dainty, 2003). Indeed the coding process generated 153 nodes. A further consideration was to avoid losing the sense that the coded segments of data are part of whole accounts (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996), thus
explorations were taken back to the original documents to contextualise the concepts emerging from codification.

4.8.4 Analysing the data

NVivo was used as a tool to manage and code the vast amounts of data. Here, data could be instantly accessed, retrieved and viewed and documents in the system remained unaffected by coding and manipulation of the researcher, allowing limitless manipulations of the data without altering the original data set. Additional features such as colour-coding of documents were useful in managing the coding and analysis stages of documents. The coding approach taken involved looking beyond the data, thinking creatively with the data, asking the data questions and generating theories and frameworks (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Coding also followed descriptive and interpretative routes (Miles and Huberman, 1994), serving both a substantiating role, in which data supported the identified concepts, and a descriptive role, in which stakeholder perspectives were described through the coded data.

4.8.5 The practical application of NVivo

The analytical facilities of NVivo are searching tools which have been thought by some to add rigour to qualitative research (Richards and Richards, 1991). Indeed, NVivo allows data to be searched in terms of attributes (such as, job role, gender or age). This yielded reliable results on, for example, how many contractors believed women self select away from a career in the construction industry, by virtue of ruling out human error (Welsh, 2002). Such results were collected and stored in a node for further inspection. However, interrogating the text in more detail is problematic, since the ways in which respondents expressed similar ideas in completely different ways made it difficult to recover all responses (Welsh, 2002). For instance in a search for stakeholders who had expressed essentialist statements about women and their perceived role in the construction industry, the word ‘attribute’ returned only two ‘finds’. A manual search of the data found instances of this kind of attitude expressed in terms such as ‘female qualities’, ‘women’s skills’, ‘caring’ and ‘diplomacy’ to name a few. NVivo also
possesses a matrix search function which constructs cross-tabulations of a range of nodes against another range of nodes or attributes and presents them simultaneously. However, the matrix searches proved difficult to execute and it was therefore decided to complete the rest of the analysis manually.

Further NVivo tools employed to aid the analysis included memos which were attached to the data and to nodes within the index system, and for them to be operationally linked with the data. These memos also included the supplementary data collected as part of the research design. This allowed ideas to be continually built upon within the index system. Also, the coding stripes facility in NVivo proved very useful in presenting multicoloured stripes that represented portions of coded text and the nodes that have been used.

Blismas and Dainty (2003) argue that computer packages can never replace the intuition of the researcher and the need to make judgements which are a key characteristic of qualitative research. Simister (1995) outlined that one of the problems inherent within the richness of interview data, is that analysis is impractical without a reduction in the form of data. Yet this reduction must be balanced with general intelligibility, and must also convey the deep meanings that have emerged from the analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994). To overcome this problem, each node was analysed for themes which essentially represented the perspective of social agents (through interpretation). These were then organised into overarching themes under which the analysis is presented.

Coffey and Atkinson (1996) argue that writing and representation should be approached as an analytical task and is a vital way of thinking about the data. Accordingly, writing formed a significant part of the analysis leading to new and different ways of interpreting the data and thinking about the meanings, understandings, voices and experiences presented in the data. Hence, analytical ideas were developed and tried out in the process of writing and representing. The analytical process of writing is paralleled by that of reading (Ibid.). In common with Glaser and Straus (1967) and Coffey and Atkinson (1996) the literature was used to develop ideas and analyses. Thus, the literature was used to develop perspectives on the data and draw out comparisons, analogies and metaphors (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996).
4.8.6 Additional data analysis

Due to the smaller numbers of interviews carried out during the policy evaluation exercise, it was decided to analyse the data using an Excel spreadsheet to formulate a matrix display to produce the data in a manageable format. Here data was conceptually labelled and analysed under themes emerging from the transcripts as embodying the views of the informant group, together with supportive quotations. Key findings under each theme were then explored according to particular informant groupings, such as the type of organisation and their size in terms of the number of employees and turnover.

Similarly, data collected during Stage 3 also utilised Excel spreadsheets to formulate matrices of best practice initiatives and recommendations for the redevelopment of the Respect for People toolkit. Field notes taken during conferences and ICEfloe committee meetings were condensed into themes and developed into memos and documents within NVivo and included during the coding process.

The ICE workshop held during stage 3 phase 2 of the research was analysed using detailed field notes from which a summary report was relayed to all construction stakeholder participants and feedback was requested. Subsequent recommendations were fed into the redeveloped Code of Practice.

4.9 Summary

This chapter has documented the research design and methodology adopted to address the research propositions which were derived from the aims and objectives of the study. The basic philosophical positions for the research were outlined indicating an interpretative learning within a qualitative data methodology. Semi structured interviews formed the main data set, supplemented by data collected using a variety of qualitative data collection techniques including desktop and telephone surveys and a workshop. Data analysis has been described highlighting the coding and searching aspects of the process. Writing and data representation has also been central to the analysis. The remaining five chapters present the findings, analysis, discussion and
conclusions of the research. Specifically, chapter 5 presents the results and analysis from stage 1, chapter 6 details the policy evaluation study of stage 2 and chapter 7 discusses the framework of policy initiatives developed in stage 3.
CHAPTER 5

STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES ON THE EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN, ETHNIC MINORITIES AND DISABLED PEOPLE IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

5.1 Introduction

Chapter three discussed the under-representation and underachievement of women and ethnic minorities in the UK construction industry and examined their experiences of disadvantage and discrimination. It also found a lack of research on disabled people in the industry. This chapter seeks explanations for the current situation faced by these groups by exploring the perceptions of key industry stakeholders. It also examines their views on implementing equal opportunities and diversity. This is necessary for the development of policy initiatives that respond to the particular context of the construction industry. Accordingly, the chapter explores research propositions 1 to 3 as detailed in section 4.3.1.

5.2 Methodology

5.2.1 The research sample

The interviews set out to explore the employment of women, ethnic minorities and disabled people from a construction 'stakeholder' perspective. The term 'stakeholder' is used to refer to key potential industry change agents who are responsible for making decisions about policy formulation and implementation. These included heads of construction companies and training organisations, professional bodies and union representatives, clients and campaigning groups. Thus, exploring workforce diversity from their perspective is required for the development of effective diversity and equality strategies.
Table 5.1 provides a summary of the construction stakeholders who participated in the research interviews, the findings of which are presented in this chapter. Informants have been organised according to the type of construction organisation they represent. Each has been assigned a number in order to determine their involvement within the research findings. The interview sample comprised senior managers with responsibility for strategy, business planning and policy making. The organisations represented were also well stratified in terms of their geographical location and size, both in terms of their number of employees and annual turnover.

Table 5.1 Summary of informants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company Type</th>
<th>General Information</th>
<th>Respondent(s)</th>
<th>Informant number</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contractor</td>
<td>Contractor and training agent</td>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>North</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Annual turnover: £250 million 1000 employees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Building contractor Annual turnover: £50 million 500 employees</td>
<td>Business support manager</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>North</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Training manager</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Building contractor Annual turnover: undisclosed 500 employees</td>
<td>Senior manager Resources</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>North</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Building contractor Annual turnover: £4 million 105 employees</td>
<td>Managing director</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Midlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Building contractor Annual turnover: £2.5 million 80 employees</td>
<td>HR Director</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Midlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Building contractor Annual turnover: £5.5 million 106 employees</td>
<td>Managing director</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Midlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Building contractor Annual turnover: £1 million 30 employees</td>
<td>Proprietor</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Midlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Building contractor Annual turnover: £500,000 7 employees</td>
<td>Proprietor</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Midlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Civil engineering contractor Annual turnover: £16 million 100 employees</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist Sub-Contractor</td>
<td>Building materials Annual turnover: £12 million 12 employees</td>
<td>Plant manager</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Midlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultant</td>
<td>Lightening protection contractor</td>
<td>Managing director</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>South</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Annual turnover: £10 million</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25+ employees</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Repairs and maintenance contractor</td>
<td>Managing director</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>North</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Annual turnover: 23 million</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>600 employees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joinery contractor</td>
<td>Managing director</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Midlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Annual turnover 3 million</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50 employees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consulting engineers</td>
<td>Technical director</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Scotland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Annual turnover: £148 million</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3500 employees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Architecture, planning</td>
<td>Associate</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Annual Turnover:</td>
<td>HR manager</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>undisclosed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>240 employees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Construction management</td>
<td>HR director</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Annual turnover £130 million</td>
<td>Training manager</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1000 employees</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Architecture practice</td>
<td>Managing director</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Annual turnover:</td>
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<td>Architecture practice</td>
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<td>Annual Turnover:</td>
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<td>3 employees</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Quantity surveyors &amp; consultants</td>
<td>Managing director</td>
<td>22</td>
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<td>Annual turnover £12 million</td>
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<td>Multidisciplinary engineering consultancy</td>
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<td>800 employees</td>
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<td>Civil engineering</td>
<td>Associate</td>
<td>24</td>
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<td>Annual turnover:</td>
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<td>110 employees</td>
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<td>Architecture, planning, landscape</td>
<td>Senior architect</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>London</td>
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<td>Annual turnover:</td>
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<td>15 employees</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sector skills council for construction</td>
<td>Area manager</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Midlands</td>
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<td>Private training provider</td>
<td>Manager</td>
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<td>Midlands</td>
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<td>Annual turnover: undisclosed</td>
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<td>100 trainees</td>
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<td>Local Authority training provider</td>
<td>Apprentice coordinator</td>
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<td>Midlands</td>
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<td></td>
<td>100 trainees</td>
<td>Carpenter</td>
<td>29</td>
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The interview schedule, which has been included for reference in Appendix A, sought the attitudes and experiences of informants on workforce diversity, equal opportunities and the employment of underrepresented groups. Informants were asked specifically about attracting, recruiting and retaining underrepresented groups, implementing equal opportunities practices and procedures and their feelings towards change in terms of more women, ethnic minorities and disabled people entering the industry. The interviews allowed the informants to express their feelings, views and opinions and capture the barriers they perceive in diversifying their industry.

5.2.2 Analytical strategy

After coding and searching the data using NVivo (see section 4.7), the findings emerging from each node were clustered to compare and contrast responses with other responses and emergent themes. This approach also allowed the
development of explanations of the emerging phenomena to be studied in context and be related to existing theory.

Representative quotations taken from responses to the open ended questions of the interview schedule were used to convey rich insights into the informant's experiences and attitudes. In each case the number assigned to the informants in Table 5.1, has been included for identification purposes and to allow comparisons to be made between the responses of different informants. Where the views of different types of stakeholders (i.e. contractors, consultants or professional bodies) contrast, this has been highlighted within the analysis. To portray strength of feeling, the proportion of informants who raised the points discussed has been indicated.

Interestingly, 12% of the stakeholders interviewed were women and ethnic minorities. These respondents offered interesting perspectives, both as women and ethnic minorities working in the construction industry, and as key industry stakeholders. Furthermore, their responses strengthened the findings in providing relevant examples of how prejudiced and discriminatory attitudes were manifested.

5.2.3 A note on the presentation of the findings

This research aimed to explore social dimensions of gender, race and disability within the construction industry. However, during the interviews gender was discussed most frequently, followed by race. There was only a cursory attempt to discuss the employment of disabled people in the construction industry. This is reflected in the presentation of the findings. This may be a sign of the fact that attempts to diversify the workforce in the industry have been primarily targeted at women (e.g. CIB, 1996) and to a lesser extent ethnic minorities (Royal Holloway, 1999). Certainly, there is little awareness of thought given to the idea/possibility of disabled people working in the construction industry.
5.3 Stakeholder explanations for the current position of women and ethnic minorities in the construction industry

5.3.1 Self exclusion

Explanations for the underrepresentation of women and ethnic minorities in construction centred on the assumed and often stereotyped characteristics of the groups involved, thereby placing the blame outside the industry. For instance, about a quarter of the interviewees stated that in Indian cultures, construction carries a low status and family pressure encourages the pursuit of alternative 'high status' professions such as law and medicine.

"The ultimate aim of an ethnic, is to be a doctor, dentist or a lawyer... I have some Indian friends myself and they would be aghast at the thought of any of their children entering the building industry. So it's the parents that are the main problem, in getting them to accept their children working in the construction industry" (20)

"In Indian society an engineer is lowest of the low. So they are not encouraged to be engineers, they are encouraged to be doctors and solicitors but not engineers" (21).

Also there was a perception was that all people of Indian origin prefer to stay in education than enrol on apprenticeships.

"Indians don't want to work in construction because they have a much stronger school ethic than us. A lot more of them go on to be doctors or just get a better education" (11)

Several stakeholders believed that the setting up of family businesses such as shops and restaurants was the primary focus of the early immigrants. This was seen to make Asian people uninterested in the industry.

"Historically, the immigrants who came here were business men not manual workers, they wanted to run businesses - shops, restaurants, commerce. So these people coming in from India and Pakistan did not align themselves with the building industry... And so nowadays the fact that all their relatives are bus drivers or cab drivers or shop keepers or whatever, means that the young
ones don't think of the building industry as a career choice... these things get carried on through generations" (30)

"The Asians that started the Asian population in Britain were businessmen, they weren't manual workers at all, they ran businesses; shops, retail, restaurants, insurance and commerce. So if you are born into a family where you don't get builders, then it's not going to be a job that you take into consideration when you are growing up. If all your relatives are shopkeepers or cab drivers, for example, then you don't think about the building industry as a career choice" (35).

In addition, it was claimed by a few informants that ethnic minorities being from warmer climates, perceive working in construction to be too cold. Such arguments place the blame on these groups and limit accusations of overt discrimination. Such statements also form rationalisations to avoid stating opposition to ethnic minorities participation.

"...they [ethnic minorities] want to work in the warm because they come from a warm climate. So they'll run shops and restaurants, drive buses and trains, but they need to be warm... they love taxis because there's a heater in the cab. Abroad they will work in construction, because of the warm climates and of course they have to construct in their own country. But it's not the construction people that come over here" (10)

Therefore historical and sociological reasons were put forward by construction stakeholders to explain and legitimise the underrepresentation of ethnic minorities in the industry. However, research has suggested that such arguments are unfounded and that ethnic minorities are attracted to the construction industry (Royal Holloway 1999; Ansari et al, 2002). This highlights the importance of dispelling negative myths and stereotypes within the industry.

Nearly half of the informants also argued that women have a aversion to engineering and construction related tasks. This was generally seen to be innate and exemplified by the argument that in childhood, girls tend not to play with construction toys.

"Women aren't interested in construction... take my little girl, she loves her Barbie dolls, she's not interested in Lego building blocks like boys are... at school you find that girls don't go for the engineering related subjects. Why can't people just except that girls and boys are different?" (2)
Subsequently, it was perceived that girls do not obtain the appropriate technical background for a construction career throughout their education. It was also perceived that nature of site work as too 'heavy', 'cold' and 'dirty' accounts for women's low level of interest in construction. Furthermore, the nature of work in the construction industry was perceived to be irreconcilable with the notion of 'femininity'. For instance, a particularly patronising account of femininity was set against the masculinity of the construction environment and processes. Reservations, if not opposition to women in construction were expressed as 'concerns' that female employees could not reconcile femininity and working in construction. This also confirms Wajcman’s (1991) view that for women to be accepted as engineers they must give up their femininity.

"If you look the fact that on site you work long hours in a physical demanding job, often in adverse weather conditions, and then you look at the image a female wants to project of herself - with her nicely manicured fingernails and smooth skin and makeup, those things are a total contradiction" (35)

"A female employee would think ‘what perception are other people going to have of me if I go into this particular industry?’ This industry compromises a lot of attitudes to women in general" (36)

The view was that women entering construction must forsake their femininity. Thus, a large number of informants commented that tradeswomen are seen as 'masculine' ‘tom boys’ and ‘one of the lads’. One informant commented that: ‘they [trades-women] have bigger balls than me!’ (9). Although such comments could be interpreted as either ridicule or respect, they demonstrate that women working in the construction industry are expected not to be feminine. Intuitively, this also raises the issue about the validity of the assumption that all men fit a macho stereotype. Employers were therefore suspicious of women outsiders wanting to enter their male domain and required justification of women's decision to join the industry.

"I think women will always struggle to convince a potential employer as to why they want to tolerate it. An employer would think that ‘surely there must be other more attractive things, Miss Smith, you’d want to do?’" (1)

"For the life of me I just can’t see why a nice young lady would want to work in the building industry" (10)
The casualised nature of construction as a project based industry and the associated short term thinking was also believed to deter women. A quarter of the informants argued that women prefer the security and stability of other more static industries.

"the white van man and his gang, will tend to work on short term contracts and their order book is only 2-3 weeks ahead, so they take someone on for that period...and I would suggest that that scenario is a problem for women. It's probably a gender thing that women aren't attracted to the instability of the industry. Women like security, they are the nest builders aren't they?!" (30)

These findings demonstrate that the informants were unwilling to take responsibility for the underrepresentation of women and ethnic minorities in the industry. The blaming of women and ethnic minorities for their position also indicates a lack of political will to promote the change necessary to attract and retain women and ethnic minorities. For example:

"Why should we have to do anything? The jobs are there if they want them. They can just come along and we'll give them a job, it's as simple as that" (2)

5.3.2 Poor public image of construction

Over three quarters of the informants acknowledged that construction suffers from a problem with its image which makes women and ethnic minorities uninterested in the industry and reluctant to join. This was largely seen to reflect its exclusionary macho culture, physical work, undesirable working conditions and un-professionalism.

"It's seen as all blokes who are 'f'ing and blinding all the time, wolf whistling and looking at nude calendars on the wall" (23)

"There is this image that construction is all about big burley blokes and physically demanding work...construction work is not seen as something which is suitable for women and disabled people (14)

Women were seen to self select away from construction in the knowledge that there are considerable physical barriers to working in the industry. Furthermore, informants believed that women and ethnic minorities and their parents and
teachers perceive jobs in the industry as being limited to bricklaying, carpentry, plumbing and painting and decorating. Thus, the status of the industry as a career does not compare favourably with other options.

"The types of jobs within construction are seen by young people as limited to bricklaying and carpentry. They don't know what a quantity surveyor, a buyer or an estimator does" (22)

"Women don't understand construction, they think it's all building sites, noise, loads of men running around carrying heavy loads of bricks. And it's not like that, it's much more refined. There's the CAD side, the surveying side, the architecture and design which they don't know about." (31)

"Construction as a career isn't promoted to girls by careers advisors. I also suspect that young women's parents aspirations for their children don't include construction. They see bricklaying, carpentry and joinery, painting and decorating and that's it. They don't see the professional qualifications, the planning, the estimating, the tendering, the supervision side of construction" (34)

Several companies interviewed had made efforts to promote construction careers in schools by holding various careers events and presentations. Although some companies had found these to be worthwhile, for others, they reaffirmed beliefs that girls remain uninterested in the industry. For example:

"We've gone into schools but the girls just aren't interested in construction, they'd rather go into hairdressing or work in a shop" (7)

Furthermore, many companies felt that professional bodies and training providers, rather than construction companies, should take the lead in coordinating efforts to promote the industry in schools.

Almost a quarter of informants also acknowledged that underrepresented groups do not enter the industry because they anticipate that its culture will be one in which they would feel discomfort.
5.3.4 Assumptions about women’s unpaid work

Cockburn (1991) argued that women are defined in domesticity and in this way men represent women as a problem in the workplace. These ideas were strongly conveyed by informants through their perceptions that women will want children and the problematic effect this will have on the organisation. Consequently, the majority of respondents maintained that children are a consideration when employing women. Indeed, a small number of these informants went as far as to admit that they would not employ a married woman of child bearing age.

"It's always going to be at the back of people's minds that 'I'm not going to recruit this young lady because she's going off to have babies next year. It will always be there whether it's illegal or discriminatory and there is nothing anyone can do about it" (35)

"I'll be honest and say to you that I wouldn't employ a woman if I thought she would be looking to start a family within the next few years. It's just too much hassle" (2)

Employers were keen to state the numerous problems of employing women who are likely to have children, for example the health and safety of pregnant women was a particular concern. For many contractors, these issues provided sound justification for not employing women in site based roles.

"...and there are huge health and safety implications, we can't have pregnant women waddling about on site climbing up ladders and scaffolding. So are there are problems from day one" (14)

Ensuring that women's responsibilities for childcare does not affect their commitment or impinge on the business was a primary concern for many interviewees.

"There are issues with women that we have to consider, like has she got childcare? is she married? what would happen if the child was ill and how much time would she have to take off?...Our male employees have wives to deal with all these issues....Women feel its their right to be able to go and pick up their children, and we end up losing out because the work isn't then being done. Now why should we lose out? I think that maternity and women's responsibility to the family is one of the big drawbacks a lot of people have about taking women on, especially in such a male dominated industry" (12)
Smaller employers in particular, argued that they were particularly vulnerable to the financial costs of maternity provision. They argued that female employees taking maternity leave would be detrimental to their business and thus demonstrated a lack of awareness and experience in dealing with maternity issues effectively.

"it seems ridiculous to me that I, in a relatively small business, have got to cope for that year without her, I've got to recruit somebody else, I've got to keep her position open, I've got to not allow her progress in the company to be affected by the fact that she has not been there for a year. It's just not practical" (10)

"As a small employer we are bound to see pregnancy as a potential problem, the cost of retaining women's jobs through that period is expensive...and lets be realistic, if it's a job where you are really having to train, you can't just get someone in... So if young married woman came for a job then I would have to consider pregnancy from a strategic perspective" (9)

A few employers were resentful of women taking maternity leave:

"If women want to have children fine, have children. But don't expect me to do extra work to support the fact that you've had a child, that is your responsibility not mine" (2)

Over half of the informants believed that women prioritise their domestic concerns over their commitment to paid work. For example:

"Most women would rather stay at home with their kids if money was not an issue...and of course their kids are their first priority, so that's what you have to be aware of when you are dealing with women" (12)

Working long hours and weekends are a tradition in the industry and during peak times employees receive little warning about overtime (Fielden et al, 2000). Sutherland and Davidson (1993) observed that a lack of compliance with these traditions can adversely impact on promotion prospects and job security. Indeed, that women with children were seen as being unable to comply, they were viewed as being less committed and focussed than men. Some employers were therefore more concerned about how to terminate women's employment after they have had children, than exploring opportunities for reconciliation of work and family. This demonstrates short term thinking and the failure to see the bigger
picture of women’s long term commitment having achieved a work life balance, the total cost of unnecessary recruitment or, the likelihood that male employees may also be difficult to retain. Interestingly, the fact that several women interviewed shared this view is an example of the tension produced between their female identity and the male norms of the industry’s culture.

"... the biggest problem when women come back to work after having a baby, and we’ve had plenty of experience of this, is that they are not the same people. They are ringing home three or four times a day. They suddenly take on a lot more personal phone calls. Their work ethic and productivity goes down. Then, the other biggest problem we’ve got is that we are stuck with them. Unless they do something really awful, you have no way of getting rid of them* (12)

Indeed, cases of employers overtly discouraging women to continue their careers after they become pregnant were reported.

“A lot of people look for excuses to fire women once they are pregnant and that is fact. We have had people complain about the bad treatment they have got once they have told their employer that they are pregnant. They have been taken off jobs, no longer given responsibility and side lined. It’s because the employer thinks that the architect is no longer any value... it’s a perception that so many men have” (39)

One female respondent recounted the negative attitudes towards her after having a child:

"I’d always been fairly treated but when I had a child suddenly a whole load of new issues come to play, and I became very aware me having a child was a major issue for many people. I really struggled to convince these people that I was the same person... that I was still capable and reliable... So it was having a baby that really opened my eyes” (16)

While women have to cope with negative employer’s attitudes and raising a family, men could concentrate on progressing their career (Dainty et al, 1999).

“It takes 7 years to train as an architect, and having a child will obviously slow you down because when you get to the age where maybe you want children your career is just taking off. I waited till I was 39 before I had my first child. And then it’s so difficult to get back into it and the guilt you feel for leaving your babies and all of that... If you are a young white man you are going to get
through the system much faster because there are less obstacles and you don't have all these things to worry about" (16)

5.3.5 Assumptions about women's and ethnic minorities’ aptitude for construction work

Many informants suggested women in non-traditional roles in the construction industry are perceived to be less competent than men. This assumption appeared to make some construction employers reluctant to employ women.

"I know that lot of employers put the CVs of women, down to the bottom of the pile and only look at the men's... I've seen it happen! Frankly, a lot of employers don't think that women are up to the job" (39)

Similarly, Steele and Sodhi (2004) found that ethnic minority led SMEs are perceived by housing associations as being unable to cope with big contracts.

The vast majority of employers perceived that women are unable to handle the ingrained confrontational culture, being too ‘soft’ to cope on site. It was commented that women would be easily offended by swearing and ‘banter’, and that unlike men, women cannot handle aggressive forms of communication. This appeared to make employers reluctant to employ women unless they were believed to have adopted the industry's macho culture, values and traditions.

"... it is a very rough and ready industry, and I can't be doing with somebody in tears because Fred's made a crack and girls who don't like getting really dirty or breaking their nails" (13)

Demonstrating the interconnecting and mutually reinforcing nature of gender and racial stereotyping and discrimination, a few employers were found to have discriminated against ‘petite’ ethnic minority women in recruitment because they believed that these women would not have been able to cope in the industry.

"We decided not to recruit a lady of Chinese origin because, although she was very technically able, she was too petite and wouldn't have been able to cope with the rigour of a construction site... she was a sweet young thing. We did discuss this with her and, although she felt willing to give it a go, we decided that, on this basis, she wouldn't be suitable" (22)
"There was once this little Indian women who came for a job and she was quite good in the interview but she would have been walked all over on a construction site" (18)

Also, the manifestation of the industry's machismo culture and simultaneous stereotyping of men was evident as over a third of contractors were concerned about 'men being distracted by women on site' (7) and 'women who flaunt themselves' (10).

In addition, it was frequently stated that ethnic minorities have a 'chip on their shoulder' and will look for opportunities to 'play the race card'. The interviewees expressed belief in an 'us and them' dichotomy, and were suspicious and defensive of ethnic minorities entering their white male domain. This indicates a lack of sympathy for the experiences of ethnic minorities.

"...They [ethnic minorities] come with this view that you'd better look out because I've got the Commission for Racial Equality behind me and if you don't take me on I'm going to go for you" (12)

"...They have got this attitude that says you've got to give me this job because you need more of us" (2)

In the experience of a small number of informants, ethnic minorities were shy and lacking confidence at the interview stage of recruitment. These findings suggest two possible issues to address; that the interviewers are ineffective, or that ethnic minorities are not putting themselves forward in a favourable light.

Those informants working in social housing commented that negative encounters with ethnic minorities trigger negative assumptions. These may also be a product of the lack of contact with ethnic minorities.

"We work for a housing authority who house refugees. Now the behaviour of some of the refugees is terrible...the way they treat the property, their cleanliness, the fact that they will say they've got no money and they're not treated right but they are on drugs and buying them readily and using them openly. That produces hostility on the part of my workers who are slogging their guts out trying to do their jobs. I've actually had a plumbing and heating engineer who has left our company because he can't stand working for those type of clients because he just felt so angry at the way they behave" (5)
This is also an example of racial profiling, a practice of defining a social problem in racial terms. Here, stereotypes included the ethnic minority drug user, criminal and welfare cheat. It also demonstrates the ghettoising of ethnic minorities and the detrimental effect of this on client-contractor relationships.

These findings also link to the work of Bonilla-Silva and Forman (2000) who identified the commonality for whites to use phrases such as "I am not racist, but..." as a shield to avoid being labelled as racist when expressing racial ideas. Informants were thus able to use racial and gender stereotypes to convey their support for the white, male construction bastion in an apparently non sexist and non racist manner.

5.3.6 Women’s work

Women were perceived by over two thirds of respondents to be more suited to office-based consultancy roles where they could be more conveniently catered for and protected from the ‘hard, macho, unstable’ and more site related end of the construction spectrum. Similarly, women were seen as less strong and as having more finesse, hence more suitable for trades such as painting and decorating.

“I think women will do a better job than men on painting for instance, women are much better painters than men, I’ve seen it. They pay more attention to detail and they are wonderful at painting” (14)

“Some of the female painting and decorating apprentices we have are actually better than some of the lads. Girls tend to have more concept for flair, shape, size, colour and interiors than boys, they have a better eye for detail, and I think it’s particularly the domesticity about it all which suits them” (27).

“Women don’t like the physical, dirty work, they are too concerned about whether they are going to damage their nails and their hands and all the rest of it. This is reflected in the fact that the girls who join the industry are interested in things like painting and decorating because it doesn’t damage their hands as much as handling nasty bricks. (13)

Kanter (1977) identified role traps that are employed to encapsulate women in a category that men could respond to and understand. Two of these are classics in
Freudian theory: the 'seductress' and the 'mother', and were used by some informants to categorise and legitimise women's contribution in construction and the gendered status quo. Women, thus remain subordinate to men who are in charge of the 'real business'.

"Why does every house builder have women working in the show homes as the sales negotiators? It obvious why, sex sells! So the industry knows that women are a good marketing tool and knows when to use them and when they want them. I mean we have exhibitions from time to time and I put my girls on the front because I know the builder will take information from them far more easily than he would from me. And then when the girls say 'this fella really wants to talk to somebody' I would get involved" (35)

"I've got a middle aged lady, Helen, who looks after out computers. Now we've got some pretty stroppy lads in here, contracts managers and surveyors etcetera, but they've responded really well to Helen, they respect her because she looks after them and doesn't try to show them up...she's been a great success, and her being female and older, I have no doubt is part of that" (4)

References to women's role socialisation were used by a nearly a quarter of informants to emphasise gender differences and give significance to female attributes. For example:

"I take the sociological view of women that because of their traditional role as wife and mother, they create a better environment on site, they are friendlier, more caring and understanding, better communicators, and not as threatening to customers as men. They are more polite; they will go into peoples houses and wipe their feet and explain what they're doing. As opposed to knocking on the door, grunting and walking straight through with muddy boots, like so many men do" (28).

According to most respondents a typically female approach was seen as emphasising cooperation, mediation, communication, caring and sensitivity in relationships. As Wacjman (1991) argued, the stereotyping of women's nature as peace making and nurturing has reinforced the view that women's place is in the private sphere of the home. This suggests that women in the industry could be pushed into the 'compassion trap' (Lunnenborg, 1990).

"Women bring the softer skills that are often lacking in construction such as diplomacy, caring, managing people, sympathy, emotion and understanding."
Amongst other advantages, this would allow men to admit when they are ill, stressed or can't cope" (18).

"In construction, you are likely to get a white man crossing swords with another white man. and I think us women tend to come in as the peace makers...we are less aggressive and can diffuse situations. I know I've been bought into that role a number of times" (12).

In construction, women's perceived preference for relational processes, can lead to them being inducted into stereotypical roles which preserve the familiar form of women’s tasks. For example:

"I know a guy who deliberately employs female decorators. Most of his work is for housing associations or old peoples residential homes, and his general view is that women would get on better with the older folks, and they would feel safer having a woman in their home" (36)

"We employ tenant liaison officers to provide a link between the contractor and the client...and they are all women, and they are brilliant! I think they are a calming influence...because sometimes the client can be quite aggressive if the jobs running late or there are delays, and I think that women can deal with those situations better. So within the industry there are roles, such as working in accounts or reception, where women are perceived as being better than men. So it's almost like let them [women] get on with it while we [men] lay the bricks" (13).

Painting and decorating was seen as the softest and least macho of the construction trades, thus admitting women pays lip service to equal opportunities and preserves the male bastion and macho status of other parts of construction. Similarly, roles such as 'tenant liaison officer' retain women in less senior positions with fewer chances for ongoing promotion, whilst men maintain power at every level in the industry. Thus, ‘female’ roles were perceived as ‘soft’ and peripheral to real construction business. This confirms Evetts' (1996) findings whereby women are accommodated by means of encouragement into specialist roles leaving men to use the mainstream route into positions of power and authority. It also reflects Glover's (1999) concept of contingent inclusion where newcomers are incorporated but in a strictly limited way and in a particular set of circumstances and locations which do not threaten 'core' jobs.
However, as asserted by Dainty et al (2000b) and Greed (2000), such stereotyped roles often carry the cost of marginalisation. Further accounts of marginalisation that arose from the interviews included women being left out of important decisions, sidelined when working reduced hours, sat next to secretaries in the office and being expected to 'make coffee' and 'look after' or 'mother' their male superiors.

"I work reduced hours and I find that every so often I have to confront people and say 'hey look here, I need to be in on this so can you make sure we discuss it in the morning'. And it's quite scary to stand up and say something, especially when you are feeling intimidated and you are the only women which was the case for me." (39)

Furthermore as pointed out by Eisenburg (2004) women's segregation from the construction sites is a powerful structural mechanism undermining women's skills and ability to use tools and their input into the built environment. The cultural impact of this reinforces the occupation of distinct men and women's spheres.

Furthermore, a third of informants acknowledged that women do not progress through to the senior positions in the industry. Most of these believed that this was because women 'cannot cope' in senior positions:

"Women don't get very far in the construction industry. We have a turnover of 250 million yet there isn't one woman higher than a senior manager. Women aren't as likely to get promoted, to be absolutely honest with you, and no offence, but women struggle to cope. The combination of a stressful job, being a woman in a male dominated environment and probably having to look after a family as well, is just too much for them. And you can't blame them!" (1)

Vertical segregation was also found to occur within specialisms, such as HRM, where women have succeeded only to find barriers to their progression into the more senior positions. This demonstrates that even where women professionals are incorporated, organisational power is retained for men.

"Considering that HRM is a pretty female discipline, I am still often the only woman...and the more senior you go in HRM its very male. I'm probably operating within the engineering sector as high as women tend to get, I'm only 34 and I'm thinking that to advance my career I will probably have to go elsewhere" (17)
5.3.7 Summary

Racial and gender stereotyping allowed informants to find justifications to exhibit prejudicial views or support positions which maintain the white male status quo and blame women and ethnic minorities for their self exclusion. As a result, many respondents divorced themselves from issues of discrimination and exclusion.

"... It's not the unwillingness of the employer. If we had a woman roll up tomorrow with a trowel in her bag wanting a bricklaying or plastering job, no problem, we'd set her on. But they are not there and it's not our problem!" (4)

Assumptions about women's unpaid work prompted employers to view women as problematic and therefore to refrain from employing them and discriminate against them in recruitment. The findings also uncovered the use of demarcation strategies (Witz, 1992, cited in Glover, 1999) to mark the boundaries of women's inclusion in certain domains within the industry such as painting and decorating.

To address these findings, a policy approach is required which educates and challenges stakeholders' deeply held and common notions of gender and race.

5.4 Stakeholder views of equal opportunities

The following sections explore stakeholder perceptions of equal opportunities and the legislation that has been passed in this field. It also examines the issues surrounding the implementation of equal opportunities in the construction industry.

The majority of companies in this research did not have comprehensive, fully implemented and monitored equal opportunities policies. This was attributed to the fact that many SMEs did not have HRM support. Although 95% of companies possessed an equal opportunities statement, only a quarter of these had comprehensive equal opportunities policies, and even these companies had made few efforts to implement their policies or had achieved equal opportunity. This demonstrates a marked discrepancy between formulating policy and implementing equal opportunities through practices and procedures. However,
according to some informants, having an equal opportunities policy statement was confirmation of being an equal opportunities employer.

"I think that those companies who have gone to the trouble of having an equal opportunities policy are going to be responsible people, because they’ve actually thought about it enough get the piece of paper" (37)

This minimal stance suggests that they are thus ‘engaged in a damage limitation exercise, holding equal opportunities to its shortest possible agenda’ (Cockburn, 1991, pp.216).

There was a consensus view that SME firms, who make up the vast majority of the industry both in terms of employment and turnover, would lack understanding and awareness of the concept of equal opportunities and the knowledge to implement the associated practices and procedures. It was also suggested that many firms remain ignorant of their legal responsibility not to discriminate on the basis of gender and race and disability, leave alone religion and belief and sexual orientation. This indicates that at a macro level, the industry has failed to engage with even the liberal model of equal opportunities (see section 2.2.1).

"Most construction companies would go ‘you what?’ when you asked them about equal opportunities. I should suspect the majority of small businesses would still be unaware of the requirements despite the legal aspects and the potential penalties" (26).

"It’s my betting that the majority of construction companies will probably have never even heard of equal opportunities, and if a woman goes onto a building site they’ll just say ‘what’s she doing here?’" (28).

Rather than having formal equal opportunities policies and action plans, issues of harassment and requests for flexibility or provisions were dealt with informally in the majority of organisations interviewed. However, the danger in this approach is that it is likely to be selective and partial, giving rise to piecemeal equality gains for chosen individuals.

"I suspect that most of these things are done informally rather than out of a policy or action plan... It’s very much an open door policy" (35).
Adhering to equal opportunities practices in recruitment was viewed by just over half of the informants as irrelevant and unnecessary given the lack of female, ethnic minorities and disabled people that apply for jobs in the industry.

"Companies may have an equal opportunities policy, but because they haven't got the diversity of workforce, they don't really have to implement it other than in recruitment. And if the job market doesn't contain those groups, which it doesn't, then it's all very unnecessary" (4)

Furthermore, the consensus view was that the bureaucracy of equal opportunities is particularly inappropriate for very small firms.

"For small companies employing under five people it's irrelevant, and they'd say 'why do I want an equal opportunities policy?'" (36)

Over three quarters of respondents argued that a proactive approach to equal opportunities in terms of removing discriminatory working practices, procedures and facilities was unnecessary in the construction industry. This demonstrates that equal opportunities is well down the strategic agenda of construction companies.

"I wouldn't provide, for example, a female toilet on site unless I knew someone was going to use it" (8)

"Equal opportunities is not relevant to my business, I don't have any women so I don't have to think about dual welfare facilities. There is no point us doing all this unless we employ women. You've got to realise that there is an economic entity in all that we do and all this is very expensive so if it's not needed then we are not going to do it... The fact is that the industry is very cost competitive, so to overload our cost base we are making ourselves very uncompetitive" (10)

Equal opportunities was therefore seen as being problem focused. Thus, most respondents concluded that construction companies would be discouraged from employing underrepresented groups because they may require the introduction of additional policies and welfare provisions to meet their needs.

"...It's almost like accepting there is a problem, that the person in the minority brings with them a problem; it should be about, increasing opportunities
across the company rather than saying 'he's Black what are we going to do?' or 'she's got childcare, she's going to want job share." (1)

"What they have is the belief that women will give them more trouble than they're worth." (28)

"Those who don't practice the policies, won't employ the people who raise the issues in the first place." (32)

Stakeholders were particularly preoccupied with the costs of employing underrepresented groups, for example, in providing female toilets or making buildings accessible for people with disabilities.

"At the end of the day it comes down to cost, say if I was going to employ someone in a wheelchair and it would mean me ripping all the doors out and fitting wider ones in the office block and installing a lift and ramps all over the place, now that would probably cost me in the region of 50 grand, then to be honest I probably wouldn't take that individual on, especially if I had another able bodied candidate." (30)

Many respondents felt that equal opportunities policies and practices must fit in with existing management strategies. Clearly, this approach will do little to drive positive change in the industry.

"With equal opportunities it's a case of making reasonable adjustments and seeing what fits in with how we operate as a company, because at the end of the day we can't cater for everybody's whims." (13)

The language used by many interviewees trivialised the importance of equal opportunities. It was perceived by some as being little more than a 'whim' (see quotation above), driven by activists (see quotation below). This indicates that equal opportunities and diversity were not taken seriously.

"It's becoming a bit of a sensitive area because some people wish to make it sensitive and impose it on people. But for us its all a big fuss over nothing; it's not an issue, we don't get very many people from these groups applying for jobs because they are not in the job market, and if we do employ them then we will treat them fairly and with respect." (22)
Just over half of the informants argued that the mindset and culture of the industry at a macro level is a major barrier to the uptake and acceptance of equal opportunities. Thus, the masculine culture determines the shape and operation of equal opportunities policies.

"It just won't happen. All these practices and procedures: the flexible working, the formal recruitment practices, the positive action, taking complaints of sexual harassment seriously, all these things are not in their concept. Believe me, I've been trying push this for years." (28)

"You are talking about the building industry now! Most of that [equal opportunities] doesn't come into play!" (8)

Ultimately, a large number of stakeholders displayed frustration at the drive for a socially representative construction workforce. As discussed in section 5.3, the perception was that women and ethnic minorities do not want to work in the industry, this provided the rationale for the belief that the implementation of equal opportunities in the industry is futile and unnecessary.

"I don't think and understand why equal opportunities has got to be forced into every sector. My wife is a nursery nurse and very few men go into that because it's a woman's domain that's what they do, and that's what they do well and there is no reason why a bloke should go in there. Lets face it that certain industries attract men or women." (10)

"Women are good at some things and men are good at some things, and I don't think everybody should try and be equal. That's why women do personnel and guys like to go out there and do it, they make better doers and manual labourers." (14)

"They [ethnic minorities] aren't coming into the industry because its not in their culture but they might do because the are being forced to. But why should you force people? Why should your workforce have to reflect the community in which you live? Because there are certain industries that suit some people more than others, so there's very few women in the construction sector but if you look in the care sector find the opposite. And believe it or not the Asians have no need to work in the construction industry in this country, all this 'equal opportunities' is a waste of time." (35)

Just under half of the interviews provided evidence of a backlash against equal opportunities in the form of accusations of political correctness, lip service and
red tape. This was seen as sufficient criticism to ensure that equal opportunities policies and practices are viewed as illiberal, repressive, extreme and based on totally fallacious premises (Bagilhole 1997).

5.4.1 Colour and gender - blind approach

The dominant model of equal opportunities found in the interviews was to advocate same treatment. For example, it was argued that women working on site must be as physically capable to carry out a job as a male counterpart.

"As far as employing women on a construction site, we haven't got a problem with it as long as they can prove they can do the job as good as anyone else." (9)

"...if they [women] can't carry their ladders or do exactly the same as everybody else then they are no use to me." (14)

"If they [women] can't carry their own bricks then they really shouldn't be here." (2)

This also illustrates the issues surrounding the expectations of all construction workers irrespective of gender or ethnicity. There has been a tacit acceptance that a worker needs to be very physically strong and also willing to sacrifice long term health for short-term monetary benefits (Kunju-Ahmad and Gibb 2004).

The majority of informants supported a 'colour and gender - blind' approach to equal opportunities. This gives equal treatment and equal access but fails to recognise the historical and contemporary reality of ethnic minorities' and women's group experiences and to acknowledge their different needs (Bagilhole, 1997). For example:

"I used to be in the forces and they came in with this equality business, and paid women the same...but all the physical tests etc were different...I give you an example, in the army a man has to run three miles in a specific time, a female only have to run one and a half miles in the same time, now is that equality? Not to me it isn't." (2)
"Equal opportunities is a contradiction because it's not equality. The heading is 'equal opportunities' but it's actually about positive discrimination against men. I say equal opportunities has got to be for everyone and not just for women. Let's make it a level playing field." (4)

"I don't think Black people should be treated any different whatsoever, whatever race you are it doesn't make any difference to your ability. And if they are treated differently that's positive discrimination." (14)

These views demonstrate a refusal to address structural and cultural inequalities. Moreover, it was assumed that inequality arises out of individual biases and prejudice and is separate from organisational processes.

The majority of informants claimed to be colour and gender-blind, believing ability to be the only recruitment criteria and thus perceiving equal opportunities to be irrelevant.

"I might disagree with a lot of politics surrounding it all, but if somebody comes here Black, white, yellow, green, three heads whatever! They are here to do a job and as far as I'm concerned I will judge them on their ability to do that job." (35)

"...if women want to come and work here and they're reliable and good workers and they might give the men a run for their money, I would have no hesitation in giving them a job." (10)

However, despite the informant's claims that they were colour and gender-blind, their views indicated that they were indeed extremely colour and gender-conscious. For example, over a quarter of the employers interviewed stated that they judged minority individuals according to whether they would make an 'issue of their difference'. Thus, the emphasis was on the minority conforming to the practices, customs and values of the majority. Therefore, employers were prepared only to recruit ethnic minorities whom they liked, trusted and could identify with.

"When we interviewed Mark, the black bloke for the plumbing job, he was a nice, genuine bloke and I never could imagine that he would pull the race card, but there are others that you know would create all sorts of trouble." (5)
Furthermore, some employers were clearly concerned to minimise differences between people, for example through assigning ethnic minorities 'English' names and employing women who will masquerade as men, to avoid challenging existing norms, customs and practices and creating a backlash.

"All this [equal opportunities] does is to emphasise the differences between people and cause reactions from the rest of the workforce. There will be resentment and all sorts and that's just what I don't want. I work very hard to be fair, because it's the only way to run a business." (4).

5.4.2 The 'special case' for underrepresented groups

Implicit in the voluntary responses to the implementation of equal opportunities was the notion of a special case status for underrepresented groups. For example:

"Equal opportunities is seen as special treatment by employers and it puts them off, they see it as a strain and another portion of their profits." (32)

A considerable number of informants associated equal opportunities practices and procedures with positive discrimination and were thus resentful and resistant. Consequently, these interviewees perceived equal opportunities to be exclusive to women and ethnic minorities, and at the expense of white men. Similarly, Cockburn (1991) also found that some of her respondents reacted 'as though the end of the world was at hand' (pp. 47).

"I think that it would be fair to say that those employers who say they are equal opportunities employers are probably slightly biased towards recruiting people who would otherwise be at a disadvantage to be recruited. And we would never positively discriminate, so you have to be very careful of equal opportunities" (22)

"Equal opportunities is not equal for everybody, so its positive discrimination. It has got to be fair and not just for women and Blacks" (4).

Interestingly, a small number of respondents commented that in their experience women wanting to enter the industry have expected to receive 'special treatment'.
This also demonstrates how a negative experience can have a considerable impact in reinforcing gender stereotypes. For example:

"I had a woman work here for a week that wanted one of the men to carry her ladders around for her! Now she can carry her own ladders, I'm not getting somebody to carry them for her! Cost wise that's a nonsense... She left after a week." (7)

"I have been really disappointed with the women that have applied, their attitudes, they didn't think they should have to be on site for seven thirty in the morning! They expected special treatment." (14)

Initiatives to redress women's and ethnic minorities' disadvantage, such as women only courses and positive action, were viewed as reverse discrimination by the majority of interviewees.

"When I worked at... we ran painting and decorating courses just for women, but men weren't allowed on the premises. I wasn't allowed there, it was purely women and we had to put women tutors in there or have the women come to another premises to be taught by our males. Now that's not equal opportunities, they were being sexist against me!" (11)

Indeed, three quarters of respondents expressed their disdain for women's and ethnic minorities' support and campaigning groups.

"All these groups campaigning for women rights in the industry are discriminatory and exclusive. They harp on about the glass ceiling and the old boy's networks etcetera, but they are so hypocritical. If we set up a group, I dunno, say 'Men in Architecture' there would be uproar! By forming these groups they are doing the same thing they are criticising us for!" (2)

Clearly, there was little empathy for women's and ethnic minorities' position or regard for the group consequences of historical and contemporary race and gender discrimination. Indeed, equal opportunities was perceived as advocating 'special' or 'preferential' treatment for women and ethnic minorities at the expense of the white, male majority reinforcing negative male attitudes towards women and ethnic minorities.
"A friend of mine works with a Muslim who disappears, you know goes off to pray, and yeah it's seen as special treatment and different. If somebody else asked to disappear for a couple of hours they wouldn't be allowed to" (25)

Indeed, there was a clear ignorance of different cultures and religions amongst many stakeholders interviewed.

In addition, those companies who had employed ethnic minorities and felt their progress to be unsatisfactory felt very uncomfortable about taking disciplinary action for fear that they would be seen as racist.

"We are having a lot of problems with our Black apprentice, we have spent a lot of time, having meetings with him, and doing as best we can to try and motivate and retain him. And I am feeling very awkward with the whole thing because I know he would have gone a long time ago if he'd been White." (14)

The negative attitudes expressed by the informants towards equal opportunities indicated that workplace equality policies may not necessarily improve the position and quality of work life for women and ethnic minorities if their imposition carries a detrimental attitudinal cost amongst the men in the industry.

"I don't think it's [equal opportunities] right. I think all you are doing there is dividing the organisation, causing bad feeling and undervaluing and disadvantaging us men" (22)

A quarter of respondents presented themselves in conflict with implementing equal opportunities and the negative reactions of their white male workforce. In particular, the perception that diversity would bring about increased workforce tension was given as a reason for not being proactive about equality and diversity.

"I don't want to give them special treatment, because I think special treatment starts to encourage them and then they'll want more and more. You've really got to get on an even keel because otherwise, you are going to emphasise the differences and then you are going to get a reaction from the rest of the workforce. There will be resentment and all sorts and that's just what I don't want because I work very hard to be fair. But things like flexible hours and prayer times that gets to be a problem and you then start talking about the difference between theory and practice" (14)
Furthermore, many employers were uncomfortable at the prospect of dealing with racial tension and racism within the workforce and the supply chain. This indicated a lack of expertise and knowledge in dealing effectively with racism in the industry.

5.4.3 Stakeholder views on equality legislation

A few respondents commented that equality legislation is a fundamental underpinning of fairness and justice and that eliminating discrimination requires strong enforcement powers. Furthermore, it was suggested by two interviewees, that implementing equal opportunities on site should be mandated to ensure all companies comply and, that those that have invested resources in equal opportunities are not disadvantaged by other firms who may be able to work more cheaply. This would avoid relying on voluntary actions which were viewed as occurring sporadically and having limited impact in changing the composition of the industry.

"Equal opportunities is a cost issue, unless you make it a level playing field, where legislation requires that all contractors must provide A, B, C. At the moment its optional, its discretionary and why should we stick our heads above the parapet and maybe lose work because we are in a weaker position that the companies around us aren't doing it. If there was something to say that all sites must do it then that might be the way forward" (6)

However, the majority of informants argued for a 'carrot approach' believing that over time education, voluntary measures, persuasion and fiscal incentives would be sufficient. Some respondents indicated that legislative measures simply suppress real feelings which may encourage more subtle forms of discrimination which are harder to uncover and eliminate.

Two thirds of respondents argued that legislation drives fear, is misunderstood, breeds resentment and promotes a backlash against equal opportunities. Furthermore, there was a consensus view that current equality legislation is overly complex, bureaucratic, onerous and impractical. This prompted one informant to state:

"I look at all that legislation and red tape and I think, sod it, I won't bother" (4)
Medium sized employers felt they had to ‘fight their way through the red tape’ and many admitted to not fully understanding their legal obligations. In particular, maternity legislation was identified as a minefield for employers to understand and comply with. Furthermore, legislation was seen to be particularly problematic for small firms who are more vulnerable to staffing issues such as sickness and maternity and are less likely to have HRM expertise.

Larger companies tended to bring in legal advisors to ensure their policies, procedures and company handbooks were robust should they be taken to employment tribunal. Thus the emphasis was on minimum legislative compliance rather than creating and implementing effective equal opportunities policies and procedures. Indeed, these stakeholders felt that a culture of litigation is becoming more prevalent in the industry.

The overriding response to equality legislation was that due to the complexity of the legislation and the associated penalties of contravening it, employers are discouraged from appointing women and ethnic minorities. For instance, it was believed that women entering construction will be exposed to sexual harassment which may lead to employment tribunal proceedings. For example:

“To be honest with you, I wouldn’t want to employ a woman because I could get so much grief if, say one of the lads said something to her and she decided to take me to tribunal, and the same for an ethnic minority. The legislation puts you off because we have to think about minimising the risk”

(13)

“I would always want to employ a guy. Men don’t have any hang ups, unlike women where you’re thinking, is she married? If so how does her husband feel about her career? is she likely to get pregnant? and how many times? If she has two babies that’s almost two years she will want off work. Has she already got a family and if so what will happen if one of the kids get sick, has she got childcare? So it’s easier in the long term to employ a man, its very hard not to look at someone and think how much are you going to cost me”

(12)

“Women will give us more trouble than they are worth because a woman is more likely to invoke a grievance than a man” (22)
Concerns were also expressed relating to the risk of contravening health and safety legislation in employing women on construction sites. Many employers also felt uncomfortable with the prospect of disciplining or terminating the employment of ethnic minorities and women in the fear that they would be taken to industrial tribunal.

This evidence suggests that equality legislation may be a barrier to the employment of the groups it aims to protect.

5.4.4 Stakeholder views on the role of the client

The role of the client was the focus of both Latham (1994) and Egan (1998) in their influential industry reports. The Latham Report (1994) was concerned with radically transforming relationships between clients and contractors, recommending that contracts should be founded upon principles of fairness, mutual trust and teamwork, rather than anticipated confrontation. The central message of Egan (1998) was that through the application of best practices, the industry and its clients can collectively act to improve their performance. Indeed, informants referred to the role of the client regarding workforce diversification in a number of ways. Many contractors argued that for the industry to engage with diversity and equal opportunities it must be client driven and, that clients have a responsibility to meet the costs of workforce diversification due to the economic pressures of production.

"If clients are not willing to pay any more money we can't do it and so they force us to go in very cheaply and cut corners" (5)

Several organisations who carried out work for local authorities commented that an explicit commitment to diversity was increasingly becoming a prerequisite to inclusion on local authority tender lists and to securing partnering agreements.

".... maybe we will score more brownie points if we include some words on diversity, so when a Local Authority client asks for our policy they maybe impressed somewhat...but I don't believe diversity is an issue within our organisation and it seems a nonsense to have to do it" (10).
However, these contractors believed that their public sector clients were not adequately supporting them to address diversity and equal opportunities, for instance, by not allowing trainees on the job:

"The Local Authority don't give two hoots, in a contract we've got at the moment we are only allowed to use fully skilled people. So they can't tell us to have more women and at the same time make it difficult for us to train them."

(14)

It was believed that public sector clients should help meet the costs of training minority groups to ensure they possess the skills required to enter the industry. However, many contractors argued that local authority clients merely pay lip service to equal opportunities. Requesting a firm's diversity figures was seen as a bureaucratic procedure and of no real impact in securing contracts. This antagonised the informants and further undermined the promotion of diversity and equal opportunities.

"We used to do a lot of work for local authorities until I wouldn't sign up to their equality policy... I simply couldn't comply with it. They were asking me to make sure that everybody that I employed including sub-contractors were not prejudiced. That's impossible so I didn't sign it, and the top guy came to see me because apparently he sent out two hundred and fifty of these and two hundred and forty-nine had been signed; and he said 'you are the only one who hasn't signed it and we can't work with you if you haven't signed it' and I said 'well I'm the only one out of the two hundred and fifty who is being honest' and he said 'well that doesn't matter, it's just the paperwork, can you just sign it?' and I said 'well I disagree with the principle that you've produced it and you're going to ignore it, what's the point of all this?'" (5)

Nearly half of the respondents disagreed with clients requesting information on their equal opportunities policies and workforce composition. These informants argued that their workforce composition should not be of any concern to their clients nor should clients have the right to dictate who the company should employ, or challenge the longstanding tradition of building a family business. Consequently, these informants remained defensive of what they perceived as a political agenda and an imposition of equal opportunities policies and practices.

"It's not down to them [clients] to say 'you should have five women working for you' or 'I want half of your workforce to be women' it's none of their bloody business and it really annoys me." (14)
"A lot of small construction businesses are 'Joe Bloggs and Son' so to turn round and say that you are breaking the law if you want to employ your son is ludicrous!" (36)

One contractor believed he was instructed to positively discriminate by a local authority, although given that positive discrimination is unlawful this is likely to be a misunderstanding. However, this indicates that some public sector clients may be failing to promote equal opportunities and indeed succeed in discouraging and antagonising companies.

"I actually lost a major contract by refusing to positively discriminate, they [local authority client] actually asked me if I was prepared to discriminate positively towards ethnic minorities and I said 'no!...I would never ever positively recruit somebody just because of their race or colour because that in itself is discrimination. And, I actually wasn't allowed to go forward in the tender process because of that. I think that you would find that that's the sort of thing that's gets people's back up" (4)

Many contractors also argued that including workforce composition in contracts was unfair and ineffective due to external factors outside their control, such as the geographical distribution of ethnic minorities and the popular perception that underrepresented groups self select away from the industry.

"The idea that if you employ a more diverse workforce you are more likely to get the job is terrible... To my mind that's some sort of racism... We are in Kent and there aren't many black people around. And ok there are quite a few Indians around but they don't want to work in construction at the moment, they would go and work in an Orange mobile phone store" (12)

Furthermore, public sector clients' equal opportunities requirements were seen as unworkable by many interviewees. It was believed that such policies are aimed at individuals personal attitudes by attempting to govern how they think or feel and are therefore difficult to regulate. This view was exacerbated by the presence of lengthy subcontractor chains.

"I can't be responsible for other people's prejudices, it's impossible, we have got our own policies to try and address it, but we can't force those on our subcontractors, well I can try to but then I'm becoming like the council and the people who are trying to force it on me. I can give them all a piece of paper
and say 'sign this' and they'll sign it, but I can't police what they are actually doing in reality, I can't spend all my time driving around and finding out whether they've taken on their percentage of ethnic minorities or they've kicked someone out the yard for being racist, I can't enforce it" (4)

5.4.5 Summary

The interviews highlighted a lack of equal opportunities policies and practices across many of the organisations interviewed. The consensus was that equal opportunities was irrelevant to the construction industry as a white, male domain. In particular, it was argued that implementing equal opportunities was inappropriate for small firms who employ few people.

The findings also suggest a backlash against equal opportunities. Employers responded to the notion of equal opportunities with suspicion, anger, resentment and dismissed it as 'positive discrimination'. Underrepresented groups in the industry were awarded a 'special case' status and their presence was believed to cause hostility. Indeed, there was little empathy or regard for underrepresented groups disadvantaged position. Women's and ethnic minorities' support groups as inclusionary attempts attracted further hostility.

Whilst, the liberal model of equal opportunities which rests on the premise of 'same treatment' was advocated by many informants, there was no recognition of the social, political and economic issues which undermine this concept. Informants claimed to be colour and gender-blind and to reward on the basis of human capital alone.

Equal opportunities legislation was extremely unpopular amongst the informants. It was seen to be overly complex and bureaucratic, particularly for small firms. Moreover, it was seen as a barrier to employing women and ethnic minorities. Respondents acknowledged that problems of harassment and bullying of underrepresented groups are likely to be acute given the ingrained white male culture of the industry and therefore feared being taken to an employment tribunal. Also, many informants believed that in not employing women ethnic minorities and disabled people they could effectively ignore equality legislation.
Finally, according to the informants, for the industry to make efforts to diversify its workforce, the client must be prepared to meet some of the costs involved. However, informants were resentful of contract compliance as a means of ensuring the industry engages with workforce diversification. In addition, in the experiences of a significant number of stakeholders, local authority clients have been found to pay 'lip service' to equal opportunities and diversity. This suggests the need for strong leadership and commitment from industry leaders and clients.

5.5 Stakeholder views on diversity and its significance as a business issue

Having explored stakeholder perceptions of equal opportunities, the interviews proceeded to focus on attitudes towards 'diversity' for the ongoing career development of women and ethnic minorities in the construction industry. The aim was to explore whether the diversity concept with its business focus would be more successful in engaging the industry.

Informants were asked to discuss their perception of what 'diversity' meant for their company and its significance as a business issue. There were wide-ranging responses to this question, including some clear misunderstandings of what the term meant amongst many of the companies interviewed. In particular, small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) had generally misunderstood the meaning of the diversity concept. For example, diversity was defined as:

"Diversity is how many different things you can do successfully to make money, skills perhaps, how many different skills one needs to earn money."

(9)

"It's a number of issues not a single topic...diversity in the workplace is about getting people to change and not just do one type of work" (24)

A considerable number of respondents viewed industry attempts to promote workforce diversity and the associated business benefits in terms of 'initiative overload', the phenomenon of continually swamping the industry with new initiatives. Subsequently, the diversity concept was dismissed as comprising
'jargon' and 'silly buzzwords'. These views were strengthened by the widely held view that the equal opportunities agenda has had little impact and gone stale.

"They [construction employers] feel a little bit overburdened because there are so many various initiatives, over this last couple of years in particular. Because of the strategic forum and the Latham and Egan reports they probably feel a little bit bombarded at the moment. And I think companies are suspicious of new initiatives because of the rate they come in only to be replaced several months later by new ones. And we've been talking about equal opportunities for a long time and still nothing has changed for the average SME construction company, so there are probably a bit fed up of it all at the moment" (37)

Most stakeholders believed diversity to be synonymous with equal opportunities and described diversity as a new label for an old concept, for example:

"What are they trying with diversity? It's a new name for the old thing [Equal Opportunities] or is it something else?" (25)

Thus, most respondents offered their views on equal opportunities and discussed diversity in terms of their externally driven legal obligations as employers. Like equal opportunities, diversity was associated by many stakeholders with what they viewed as political extremism and articulated in terms of accusations of political correctness and the 'loony left'. The business-focused approach to diversity appears to have created suspicion of an underlying political agenda and undermined the impact of the economic arguments.

Table 5.2 presents an overview of different stakeholder attitudes to elements of the business case arguments for diversity, and the policy implications of these views. The premise is that stakeholders across the industry remain unconvinced of and in some cases opposed to the business case argument for diversity thus embedding diversity within the business agenda of organisations in the industry is likely to be problematic.
Table 5.2 Multi-stakeholder perspectives of the espoused business case for diversity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Espoused Business case (literature based – see chapter 2)</th>
<th>Contractors' Views</th>
<th>Consultants' Views</th>
<th>Clients' Views</th>
<th>Implications for policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Best use of human capital i.e. widening the pool of talent; valuing employees; enhancing innovation &amp; creativity</td>
<td>No evidence of enhanced business performance. Business benefits can not be quantified. Angered by business improvement claims. Business benefits are accrued through good people management, diversity is irrelevant. Suspicious of a political agenda, linked to political extremism and political correctness. May be a case for diversity to meet labour shortages. More commitment from underrepresented groups due to their disadvantaged position in the industry. Underrepresented groups self select away from construction. The use of female sexuality to manipulate men. The use of women's perceived essentialist attributes.</td>
<td>Business case comprises 'rhetoric'. Business benefits can not be quantified. May be a case for diversity to meet labour shortages. Benefits accrued through good people management, diversity is irrelevant.</td>
<td>Unconvinced that employing underrepresented groups will provide a better product or service. Need a competitive price.</td>
<td>Diversity strategies not linked to business performance. May result in lip service to policy. What may be good for businesses may not be good for underrepresented groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expanding customer base &amp; workload</td>
<td>A negative business case if prescribed by clients. However, clients are perceived to pay lip service to equality. Angered by public sector clients prescribing the composition of their workforce. Some believed that ethnic minority workers could liaise more effectively with ethnic minority clients.</td>
<td>Ethnic minorities working for ethnic minority clients.</td>
<td>Perceived as irrelevant.</td>
<td>Elevates the role of the client as a business case driver of diversity. Requires commitment and investment from clients. Business case could antagonise organisations. Could lead to marginalising of ethnic minorities and women for certain types of work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving image &amp; reputation</td>
<td>Only when prescribed by local authority clients or to avoid industrial tribunal</td>
<td>Marketing tool to enhance company profile. May attract greater diversity.</td>
<td>Unconcerned.</td>
<td>Policy issues subcontracted out. Policy just a review of the systems - minimal compliance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As demonstrated by Table 5.2, very few organisations viewed diversity as an internally driven business improvement issue and hardly any referred to the actual advantages of harnessing differences and/or fully utilising their employees' talents in order to improve business performance. Only the larger organisations tended to have understood the diversity concept, but it is important to note that the majority of the informants from these companies were from HRM backgrounds and had undertaken specialist training in equality and diversity issues. They recognised that the industry puts unfair pressure on people's social and private lives, offering little opportunity for the effective reconciliation of work and family lives. The implications included difficulties in retaining new recruits after initial experience on the job. It was therefore believed that 'what is good for women is good for the industry as a whole'. However, informants indicated that although diversity is important to them as HRM practitioners, it is less important to senior management and company directors, who were consequently reluctant to address this issue. Indeed, the majority of interviewees dismissed flexible working and job share as incompatible with the construction process (see section 5.6.5)

The majority of interviewees questioned the validity of the business case and argued that the associated business benefits have not been proven.

"This business argument is fine words with fine goals, but where's the evidence?...the reality for us is what we can do for our staff and make a profit at the end of the day" (2).

Most of these informants refuted the premise that employing a diverse workforce would raise productivity and profits.

"I don't believe that having more women and ethnic minorities will increase productivity, how on earth did they [business case proponents] figure that one out?" (35)

"I think it ludicrous to suggest you will make more money by employing women and ethnic minorities, I just can't see how that would happen!" (31)

Other employers argued that to profit from workforce diversification would require considerable investment and that business improvements could not be quantified or expected with any certainty.
"It's expensive and such a hassle to provide these things; to formulate and implement all these procedures and policies. So it's a case of, is it worth it? Are we going to get anything out of it? And why do we have to do that if I can get good output of the business anyway?" (1)

A few informants commented that the business benefits linked to diversity are simply a product of good people management rather than a tangible output of employing a diverse workforce.

Nevertheless, many informants felt that if proved, the business case could be a successful driver of the diversity agenda.

"If it does bring in more money people would be recruiting women and ethnic minorities left, right and centre!" (4)

5.5.1 A negative business case for diversity

The analysis above has demonstrated that many informants were sceptical of the validity of the business case espoused by diversity proponents. However, the findings of the interviews suggest that a negative business case for employing underrepresented groups in construction may exist. This rests primarily on the industry's need to meet skills shortages and the exploitation of women and ethnic minorities.

5.5.1.1 Demography and skills shortages

A considerable number of employers acknowledged that women and ethnic minorities have increased their share of the national labour force. Thus, they felt that encouraging the participation of these groups would be an important factor in ensuring the future labour demands of the construction industry were met. However, none of these informants had made efforts to address workforce diversity in their respective organisations.

Evidence in support of the skills shortages currently facing the industry was apparent from the interviews. Generally, employers across the industry had experienced staffing problems, although the construction trades appeared to be
facing the most acute shortages of labour. As a result, nearly half of the respondents believed that diversity was important from a skills shortage perspective and suggested that construction companies may be forced to attract, recruit and retain women and ethnic minorities. However, few had acted on these beliefs and embedded diversity in their business plans. Although, one company (22) explained how a shortage of labour had forced them to recruit from overseas, however, these recruits were white South African men. Similarly, just under a quarter of respondents argued that efforts should be concentrated in attracting young men to the construction industry. This demonstrates a clear preference for employing white men.

"There is a body shortage and what we need to be doing is encouraging young men into the industry, and maybe women and ethnic minorities too, but we shouldn't have to do that for the sake of it" (2).

The interviews also indicated that efforts to attract and sustain a more diverse workforce are likely to be made redundant when skills shortages decline. This shows a pragmatic but narrow view of the benefits of diversity. Thus, in achieving long term change within the industry a case built on the economic climate of the industry is unstable, selective and partial, giving rise to ‘fair weather equality action’ (Dickens, 1994). For example:

"I don't agree with the business case for diversity, the only advantage I can see is that these people will bring much needed bodies into the industry. We are facing a massive skills shortage so it is purely about numbers" (35).

"While there are enough white men to do the job, they will always be recruited first" (5)

Also, the growing population of asylum seekers in the UK were viewed opportunistically as a resource to meet labour demands and address skills shortages by several interviewees. However, such factors must be given consideration in light of the fact that companies can and do exploit women and ethnic minorities as a cheap, flexible labour force (Dickens 1999).
5.5.1.2 Employing the 'underdog'

Interestingly, a considerable number of interviewees suggested that non-traditional entrants were often loyal and committed employees because of their disadvantaged position in the construction industry.

"My view is that if you give a disadvantaged person a chance or opportunity, you get more loyalty, more support, more commitment because you've given them the opportunity. And I think that we can actually benefit from that... Whilst I'd never positively discriminate towards an ethnic minority or woman over a white male I do think that in a situation where you had got the two, a white man and a woman say, I would go for the disadvantaged person because you are recruiting commitment and loyalty" (5).

"I think they [under-represented groups] would be faithful and a lot more committed; and they would be more likely to think 'I'm going to do this job because I've been given a chance and I'm grateful for that' and I think they'd put more effort into the job as a result. Instead of them thinking I've only got this job because the dole office said they weren't going to give me any more money" (14).

In terms of retention, one respondent suggested that women would be easier to retain due to a need for them to reinforce their position in the construction industry.

"I'd suppose retention might actually be better as women may try a little bit harder to prove everyone wrong, so they may work a bit harder and put a little bit more in and be more loyal to that company" (30).

Women and ethnic minorities in the industry were generally viewed by the informants as being well qualified:

"An Asian guy approached us for a job and he had about 3 degrees! Now that's impressive but we need someone with practical experience" (4)

"I think girls outperform boys academically and tend to leave university with better qualifications" (31)

This demonstrates that women and ethnic minorities are in possession of the necessary human capital (credentials or formal qualifications) (Glover, 1999). However, supporting Wilkinson's (1992) observations, a significant number of
employers admitted that women must outperform their male counterparts to earn respect and 'make it in a man's world'. Indeed, all the female and ethnic minorities respondents believed that that they had to be better than their white male counterparts to earn the respect of their colleagues. Thus, it is clear that underrepresented groups must be prepared to earn respect whereas white men are automatically given it.

"...You'd have to be very good at your job and sometimes better than your male counterparts to earn their respect. After that you would have no problems working in the industry" (11)

"I think that women need to have the skills and abilities, probably a little bit more than their male counterparts. I suspect they need to be better than the men and have better qualifications to get the job in the first place. Then there's an expectation for them to maintain their position, they'd have to do a better job" (30).

Thus, formal qualifications are insufficient; women and ethnic minorities must also have cultural capital to feel part of the institutional culture and to make progress within the occupation (Mcllwee and Robinson, 1992). Cultural capital is therefore conceptualised as all the other elements which individuals may or may not possess and which influence their advancement within a given profession (Glover, 1999). These ideas serve to perpetuate women's exclusion and reinforce the macho culture of the industry.

This led a small number of employers to believe that women and ethnic minorities make better workers because they have to outperform white men in order to succeed in the industry. For example:

"They are one of a few against the many and I think it becomes a real positive an 'I can show you' kind of thing. They work harder to prove themselves and be accepted. They have a bigger a hill to climb. So their work is better, generally speaking" (28)

"We think that women in engineering have had to battle harder to get through university and so they tend to be more confident, mature and committed than the men. They've had to overcome more obstacles and work much harder and we've been impressed with our female graduates." (18)
5.5.1.3 Implications of the business case

A quarter of the interviewees commented that advantage to employing women was that they could use their sexuality to manipulate men throughout the supply chain. Adkins (1995) refers to a similar idea as 'sexual servicing' where sexually attractive women are employed in order to please clients.

"Men will do anything for a pretty women! I knew of one very attractive female construction manager who had all the sub contractors eating out of her hand, they would have done anything for her!... Women are very good at handling us men" (10)

It was also suggested by just under half of the informants that employing women would be good for business because of their 'female' attributes or conditioning. These were seen to range from providing a civilising influence to good people skills and regard for health and safety (see also Clarke et al, 2004; Langford et al 1995). For example:

"Women are very good organisers, and make excellent project managers, and they are more likely to get on with the boring side such as the paperwork" (22)

"We tend to use girls for telesales work because they tend to be slightly better at it than the men. I think that's because they are more able to talk to our customers on a level which the customers want, and the girls will chat with some of the guys on the telephone, whereas the men will want to go in get the order and come away. Girls are better at forming a relationship with the customer" (12)

"Women can bring a different set of emotional competencies to the industry, such as negotiating, diplomacy, compassion, cleanliness, they are also less aggressive! They also tend to want to look after people so they take health and safety seriously." (28)

These findings question the extent to which the business case for diversity represents a focus on women's distinctive skills and whether the selective celebration of category specific traits is useful for encouraging their progression at work. Calas and Smircich (1993) state that although such positions are presented as a force to bring about organisational change, they actually restate traditional management approaches which devalue women's contribution.
Nearly a quarter of respondents commented that ethnic minority employees would be able to liaise more effectively with ethnic minority clients and build links with ethnic minority communities. However, there may be a danger that this could lead to the marginalising of ethnic minorities into certain types of work.

"It's a business issue. I do feel that if you've got someone coming into the firm that speaks Punjabi and you are working in a highly ethnic minority populated area, you will actually attract custom, because your communication is immediately more effective" (12).

These views suggest that the industry is likely to implement workforce diversity to its own end.

Furthermore, a substantial number of interviewees argued that racial diversity would incite racial tension, this constitutes a business case for not employing ethnic minorities.

"In my experience, sometimes people of different ethnic origins won’t work together, people of different races can’t get along. We once had to resolve a situation where an ethnic minority client refused to work with one of our employees who belonged to a different ethnic minority group, so in that case it [diversity] actually worked against us" (3)

Indeed, four companies interviewed had found themselves dealing with racist clients especially in the areas of social housing, for example:

"My Black joiner turned up to re-fix a lock for a lady who on answering the door said 'oh my word your Black' and would not let him in. And she phoned us up promptly and gave us a real mouthful saying 'if you want this job you will send me a white man' and I said 'I'm not sending you anybody then' so I didn't and I lost the job. There is no way I am going to leave my company open racist accusations. So I gave him a days pay and I lost the job as well and it cost me money." (14)

However, the view of most of these informants was to appease the client by sending a white employee to do the job:

"If a client turns round and says 'I don't want that Black in my house' what can you do? That is the individual's view, it's in his house, and you can't do
The business case puts a tremendous burden on women and ethnic minorities who are not even up to critical mass levels in the industry (see Greed, 2000). It may also serve to reinforce negative views of women and ethnic minorities if their presence does not engender tangible business improvements. Furthermore, the business case ignores the need for major structural and cultural change on the part of the white male majority.

5.5.2 Summary

Most informants viewed diversity as being synonymous with equal opportunities, and discussed diversity as an externally driven issue largely linked to compliance with legislation. Clearly, future policy should endeavour to clarify meanings and use more accessible language when discussing these issues.

Most firms interviewed remained unconvinced by the business case arguments for diversity, and viewed diversity as having a bureaucratic and political agenda, rather than a business one. The business case for diversity had little bearing across the interview sample and thus its efficacy as a driver of the diversity and equal opportunities agenda is questionable. As one respondent observed:

"The business argument is not a real argument if the industry itself doesn't actually see or value it as a true statement. Employers are saying quite clearly by demonstration that they believe this is an industry for white men. The business case argument is seriously flawed because the businesses themselves do not accept it" (1).

The interviews revealed that the only business case to exist in the construction industry builds upon negative arguments whereby diversity is either imposed by clients, forced by skills shortages, or required by labour market demography. The more positive arguments of enhancing innovation and creativity and raising the calibre of the workforce through widening the recruitment pool were largely unaccepted.
It is clear that a more sophisticated business case needs to be developed that taps into the interests of those at a strategic level in the industry.

5.6. Structural barriers

The following section investigates the effects of industry structures on the capacity of employers to engage with the equal opportunity and diversity agendas. It demonstrates how internal structures and processes undermine the delivery of equal opportunities policies and practices necessary to recruit and retain underrepresented groups in the industry.

5.6.1 A project based industry

The consensus view was that structural issues such as the project based nature of the industry undermine the HRM mechanisms developed in static industries. Rapid project mobilisation and deployment, accounting for changing needs throughout the project lifetime, the practicalities of providing welfare on site and project size and duration were found to affect the delivery of equal opportunities in the industry. For instance:

"The city council are saying to me that if I do one of their contracts then I've got to recruit women etcetera and do a certain amount of training. But I can't guarantee that because I've got to work within the practicalities of the contract, for example, I've only got six months and finite resources and the city council will apply penalties if the job's not finished on time, but at the same time they are saying to me 'you will have X number of trainees' 'you will undertake recruitment of ethnic minorities'... and all this will increase my costs and my risk of not finishing on time and they'll start charging me" (14)

In particular, the delivery of equal opportunities was seen as being incompatible with the work of SME contracting companies:

"The vast majority of SME work is done on an extremely quick fire basis... whether it be domestic or local authority work, so you don't have the time or certainly the funding within the project to allow for some of these welfare facilities which we would all recognise in the ideal world" (36)
Indeed, the large proportion of dispensable labour in the industry and the tendency for firms to outsource activities appeared to promote short-term thinking which undermines any long term investment in equal opportunity strategies. A quarter of interviewees also acknowledged a reluctance to take responsibility for the workforce composition of a transient, rather than a directly employed workforce. For example, lengthy subcontractor chains appeared to result in a lack of responsibility for equal opportunities and low commitment. This was seen as being particularly relevant for subcontractors than those who work in professional occupations within the industry.

"Professionals probably have a bit more support behind them in terms of equal opportunities policies, but generally the blokes that are on site will be subcontractors and working as a gang of brickies or chippies contracted to a main contractor, so it becomes disjointed and piecemeal and when it gets down to the site, they are probably on their own, working under somebody's banner but not with any support" (36)

5.6.2 The HRM function

It was commented on by over a quarter of respondents that small construction companies lack HRM support and dedicated personnel to oversee and take ownership of equal opportunities, and in larger companies, HRM is viewed as peripheral to core business. All respondents argued that the delivery of equal opportunities is difficult for firms without a dedicated HRM division since senior managers are often too busy, have no interest in, or do not value the importance of equal opportunities. It was also argued that small firms lack the resources to monitor and ensure transparency in decision making.

"The HRM role is vital because I think that you have to have very strong and open policies and procedures to prove that you are not being racist or sexist or discriminatory against disabled people. You have to be able to prove it and the only way you can is to monitor, and for that, you have to have an adequate HRM department with the proper records. So I think it is difficult for smaller companies, without the time or the resources to monitor, and I think we're leaving ourselves open to it" (7)

It was also widely held that small firms without HRM support lack the expertise to address prejudice and discrimination and implement fair and equitable people
practices. Thus, it was suggested that discrimination may be more prevalent in companies who do not have dedicated HRM staff or personnel with responsibility for equal opportunities.

However, even for larger organisations with dedicated HRM managers, the extent of their influence at higher levels of an organisation is questionable. Indeed, as indicated previously, the HRM specialists interviewed felt that their role is undervalued by the industry.

"The role of HRM in the industry has been undervalued, until very recently we were called personnel, and it's still seen very much as an admin function" (15)

Moreover, at a middle management level the delivery of HRM equal opportunities policies and procedures can be circumvented by line managers who do not follow procedure. Over half of the informants commented that equal opportunities is a HRM matter and had little hope of it actually permeating the organisation.

"Its all lip-service... at the bottom of the job advert they'll put 'so and so is an equal opportunities employer' and that's it...but we are never challenged on it, its just a one line you put at the bottom. We've got an equal opportunities policy and for us to get on select tender lists we have to send a copy of it to all our potential clients. But at the end of the day we haven't got any women and nor have we the facilities for them. So we've got our equal opportunities policy which someone from personnel has written but that's where it ends" (2)

"It would be fine at organisational level for the HRM department to say right we're going to do this, but I doubt whether it would reach site level, they have got other more important things to think about like getting the job done!" (22)

"The larger companies will probably give it all the lip service, but let's go and have a look round a their sites! They've got to be seen to be saying it all because they tender for government contracts etc. But if you actually get up and have a look round any of their sites you'll find they're not doing anything about it, probably no better than the small companies" (32)

HRM was also perceived as having an important role to play in construction as a point of contact for under-represented groups. Indeed several informants indicated that it is not uncommon for senior managers to be the source of the harassment and discrimination faced by women and ethnic minority employees.
“Most of the stories that are raised within our women’s support group, are from women who work in small organisations where the main harasser is the person who has that duty of care towards them, so they have no one to complain to” (39)

5.6.3 The nature of site work

There was a consensus view that health and safety in the construction industry is still a major problem despite legislation and health and safety requirements. Many contractors argued that the nature of site work, (‘a shovel of muck is still heavy’) and time pressures (‘it’s quicker and easier to lift it yourself than waste time and money setting up mechanical aids’) create and reinforce physical barriers for women and disabled people, as well as damaging the health of all workers.

“I think the actual reality of site means that it’s still important to be big and strong because the materials and tools are still heavy! And whilst you’ve got well managed sites that will implement the various health and safety procedures, it is largely a question of how well construction companies buy in to health and safety” (2)

Furthermore, a significant number of informants commented that lifting regulations are still too heavy for men let alone women. This was seen as a legitimate reason for not employing women in site based roles in the industry.

“I think that legislation is doing nothing for potential female employees because if you look at bricklaying, the manual handling regulations say you shouldn’t lift more than twenty five kilograms, twenty for repetitive lifting. With those sort of weights involved, to be honest with you most male employees are struggling” (13)

Employers argued that the uncompromising need for physical strength discourages women from working in the industry. Indeed, all the women in the interview sample also perceived physical barriers for women in the heavy construction trades.

“Plastering is probably the most physically demanding trade in the building industry anyway and I don’t think women could do it” (6)
"I would have liked to have trained as a plumber, but was told I couldn’t be, that it was too hard, you know, physically" (27)

"I'm not as physically as strong as a man, and if I was a plant operative having to lift heaving weights then I would think 'no, that probably isn’t for me'. You do have to be realistic and acknowledge the physical difference. You do have to realise that there are some jobs in the industry that can’t be done by women, but not all of them, you have to be sensible with your physical capabilities" (11)

Consequently, nearly a quarter of respondents believed that employing women on site would affect productivity.

"I think that women would struggle too much in the heavy trades, brickwork, carpentry and plastering which require constant lifting and carrying throughout the day. It’s a quick process you know, you want the shell of the house up and soon as possible, and an employer would probably think that a woman would slow things down" (13)

In addition, several interviewees pointed out that institutional structures such as piece working systems, where employees are paid according to their productivity, reward physically strong males through financial gain and an enhanced reputation for hard work. Thus women were seen as being unable to compete with men.

As a result the consensus view was that underrepresented groups could be more easily accommodated within office based professions within the industry. Thus, equal opportunities was seen as being more relevant to the industry's professional occupations. For example:

"The industry is more accepting of women in professions such as architecture than out on site. On site there is a perception of what women can do in terms of male and female roles and a mindset that they aren’t suitable for site work. It's also easier to accommodate people here in the office" (37)

That women were perceived as being unsuitable for site work impacts on their career progression. Site experience was identified by over three quarters of respondents as a prerequisite for eventual progression to senior positions in the industry both in contracting and consultancy. However, several of the contractors interviewed were reluctant to have women on their sites, believing that “... it
upsets things to have a woman wandering around" (2). According to a HRM manager of a large construction firm, women find it difficult to gain the site experience necessary for advancement.

"A lot of females on our graduate program find it difficult to get site experience, they will come to us saying how they haven’t been to site, that they feel as though they are ‘just another body’ and often they get seated with all the secretaries and thus they become marginalised and don’t gain the same experience as men" (18)

This was confirmed by many of the female and ethnic minority respondents who had experienced difficulty gaining the experience necessary to further their careers:

"Interestingly, I came across this fairly subliminally, the fact that we women always got selected to do the interiors of the buildings and the men got to do the outside bits... it’s difficult to get the experiences you need to advance" (16)

"you might be good enough to work in the design office, but they won’t let you get the experience you need to progress, that of working directly on site where you have to deal directly with the labour force. That’s certainly been my experience" (34)

5.6.4 The provision of welfare facilities

Over three quarters of the informants argued that client demands for faster, cheaper and higher quality buildings means that tight profit margins and meeting time, cost and quality targets ranks above human needs. These factors produce working conditions that disproportionately impact on women. For example, two female interviewees had worked on sites where there were no female toilets and were given personal protective clothing in the wrong size. Indeed, many informants acknowledged that the provision of welfare facilities and the general treatment of employees remain secondary to profit, productivity and ultimately project delivery.

"Welfare is secondary and organisations will tell you time and again that welfare is not in the prelims... So you even have a battle to just get a labourer on site. Trades people are often expected to clean up after everybody to avoid..."
Nearly half the informants described how that the survival of construction firms necessitated a compromise on services outside the physical delivery of the project.

"The crunch comes when there is a squeeze on a business; when the business is under pressure health and safety and welfare facilities will suffer. And people are just made redundant or sacked because the nature of their work isn't core business, so people in human resources, marketing, and health and safety will all get dropped off one at a time, and the only ones that will be left standing are all those physically running the projects because without them, the project will not get completed" (31)

The quotation above indicates how construction firms are willing to compromise the welfare of their existing workforce, thus, the provision of additional facilities to meet the needs of a non-traditional workforce seems unlikely. The majority of contractors argued that providing welfare facilities was costly and thus requirements beyond a very basic level were seen as being unnecessary. Furthermore, the reconciliation of profit and business acumen and the resources required to implement equal opportunities and make provisions for a diverse workforce are problematic, even for construction companies maintaining outward support for equal opportunities.

"I would say of those construction companies who approach equal opportunities with good intentions, if it interferes with core business, profits and bottom lines, then it becomes secondary" (22)

It was also suggested that the location and the nature of the site environment may prevent the implementation of welfare facilities required by underrepresented groups. For example, the quotation below illustrates the difficulty of providing a second female toilet within a remote concrete plant.

"You have to work within the capabilities of the plant or environment that you are working in... if I took on a female I would try to make the environment friendly for her and put in an extra toilet for her; but, I'd still have to work around the plant, so for example there may not be plumbing for an extra toilet" (11)
According to many informants, a diverse workforce could be more easily accommodated within large projects with a substantial lifespan. Lesser projects were seen to lack the time, funding and space necessary for the delivery of the welfare facilities and working arrangements required by women and ethnic minorities.

"To be perfectly honest, ethnic minorities would be granted prayer meetings and such like, and women would be provided with toilets etc. on any sizable site. But obviously it's not going to happen on small sites run by small companies, they are not going to have the resources to provide these things. But if you've got a substantial contract of ten or fifteen million pounds, if it's a question of having one extra room with a prayer mat in it then I'm sure it would happen" (36)

5.6.5 Full-time continuous employment model

According to over half the interviewees, the high investment cost and economic considerations require the shortest possible construction period and so maintain the rigour and fast nature of project activities across the industry. This places pressure on the workforce. For example, the industry demands flexibility from workers including: working long hours (dictated by logistical issues such as working around daylight and rush hour traffic limitations), overtime and travelling substantial distances or working periods away from home. Indeed, the transient nature of construction projects means excessive mobility requirements with just under a quarter of respondents commenting that it is not unusual for them to spend up to five hours a day travelling to work. Geographical mobility is clearly difficult for women who provide caring activities for others, unlike men whose partners often bear the burden of domestic responsibilities (Bagilhole, 2002). These factors reinforce the industry's inflexible working practices with informants arguing that the introduction of flexible working is particularly problematic for construction firms. For example:

"It very difficult to provide flexible working on construction sites; a lot of our sites are remote and a significant proportion of site workers are bussed to site...so they all have to go and come back together, and I can't have one person say 'well I want to start at seven in the morning' and another saying 'I want to start at nine"" (5)
In addition, working within a fragmented, complex and demanding supply chain requires full-time involvement and prevents the delivery of flexible work practices, which are important and necessary to attract and retain women. All stakeholders argued that employees must be available to manage interfaces with other construction professions and to respond to clients to ensure customer satisfaction and the smooth and successful running of the project. For example:

"It's a case of supply and demand, when the demand is there then you need to have the person in place in order to supply. I mean most of my guys are still working fifty-five hour weeks, but what are we supposed to do? We simply have to be able to cater for our clients at their convenience or they will go elsewhere. Then there is the interfaces with the other professions and the sub contractors, we need people who can be responsive and whom we can count on" (12)

"We couldn't provide flexible working for everybody because when you are working in people's houses and if we can't come at a certain time then it's not convenient for our customer. So it makes it very difficult when you are working in people's houses" (14)

"The other thing with construction is that you've got to remember that there are lots of outside agencies involved, clients, architects, surveyors, various people involved in the project who will come and go to site throughout the day. So it's no good having a site agent who's going to turn up when he feels like it because he's on flexible hours. Because if the architect turns up to speak to the site agent and he's not there then that's going to cause real problems" (22).

"And working as part of a supply chain makes all this [flexible working practices] impossible! For example I have one job where I can only deliver something up to 10am on a Monday. Or, for Mick, our electrician, a lot of his jobs can't be done during the working day, because he has to switch all the electricity off. We have to be flexible to our clients so we might find it very difficult to be flexible to our employees, its very difficult to try and co-ordinate it, because we also have a limited time to get jobs done" (14)

As a result, many respondents felt that flexible working would be detrimental to effective team working and would affect the smooth running of business activities. For example:

"Also due to the nature of the work, a lot of the work on a construction site is team based, not many people will work on their own. So the brick layer will
have somebody making the mortar and somebody carrying the bricks to him and they'll be working as a 2 and 1 gang, so you can't have one man turning up later than the others when they all rely on each other" (9)

These employers also suggested that if key people worked flexible hours the pace of the project would be affected and there would be increased risk that the project would not be completed on time.

"... Flexibility could hardly exist on a building site, because you could hardly have a lady bricklayer down tools at three in the afternoon to pick the children up from school, it would just stop the job wouldn't it?" (5)

Several employers commented on the difficulties of providing flexible working arrangements to employees with specialist knowledge, which would be extremely difficult to replace.

Employers in the industry appear to demand flexibility on the part of their employees, yet there are few mechanisms such as flexible working to ensure employees receive the same level of flexibility demanded by their employers. Indeed, almost a quarter of the respondents commented that costing, planning and implementing flexible working schemes such as job share and part time working is too resource intensive.

"...as soon as you have 2 part time employees that's double the admin, pension contributions and responsibility and more people to look after! Also the continuity with the client will become fragmented and we've still got to keep the overall business running" (22)

A few employers described their unsuccessful attempts to introduce job share schemes for women in administration roles. They concluded that job share requires stringent management supervision and that co-ordinating the activities of two employees is problematic. Furthermore, several interviewees expressed their own frustration of conducting business with people working part time.

"A few years ago the council seemed to employ everybody part time and the frustration of picking the phone up and finding that the planner who you'd been talking to literally a day ago who's dealing with something fairly important to you, is not working again until next Wednesday because she is on job share or whatever and there isn't anyone else to speak to because she's dealing with it; so you think 'gosh I've got to wait until next week and if I
The consensus view was that providing flexible working in construction is problematic due to the processes involved, such as, working under site conditions, managing a complex supply chain and the reliance on team work both in physical construction and in supporting the construction process. Therefore a dominant pattern of career in the industry has emerged around hard (and often physical) work, long set hours, being available at all times and continuous service with no career breaks. Thus only men can succeed within these gendered processes because they are relatively unencumbered by domestic and personal responsibilities and can fulfil professional duties and achieve career potential. (Bagilhole, 2002).

However, in the experience of two respondents, technology has facilitated the introduction of flexible working arrangements. Although, it must be noted that these are large companies easily able to afford to invest in technology. Moreover, recipients were largely office-based employees.

“We provide whatever support people need to do their job. And for a lot of women, the issue for them is childcare. Now, we’re a consultancy and much of our work is based on valuation of materials and report writing, so we give them laptops they can do it at home” (15)

In addition, larger firms have the scope to be able to relocate employees, thus, smaller firms would find it more difficult to offer their employees the option of flexible working.

“The size of our organisation means we have the flexibility to move people around. It’s a size thing and a role function thing in terms of swapping people around. So it would be very difficult for a small firm where they only had one person doing the job, who would they get to replace that person if they wanted to leave early?” (18)

5.6.6 Summary

The interviews revealed structural barriers related to the implementation of equal opportunities policies and practices in the construction industry. In particular, the
project based nature of the industry was found to undermine the HRM mechanisms refined in static industries. Thus, delivering equal opportunities practices and procedures was restricted by rapid project mobilisation and deployment, accounting for changing needs throughout the project lifetime and the practicalities of providing welfare on site. In addition, meeting client demands for faster, cheaper and higher quality buildings ranks above the needs of the workforce. These factors also contribute to the industry's currently inflexible working practices. Furthermore, informants argued that the nature of site work reinforces physical barriers for women. This creates a problematic structural environment in which to accommodate the needs of a diverse workforce.

It is clear that a strategic approach to equal opportunities and diversity is needed to mainstream equal opportunities and diversity throughout the functions of the industry. This demands a collective approach across the complex supply chain to ensure that individual efforts are not undermined.

5.7 Cultural barriers

The following sections investigate stakeholder perceptions of the cultural environment of the construction industry that has prevented women, and ethnic minorities from achieving the same as white, non disabled men.

5.7.1 Construction subcultures

Like previous research (e.g. Gale and Cartwright, 1995), the informants characterised the industry's culture as masculine, encompassing an exaggerated sense of masculinity stressing attributes including physical and mental courage, virility, domination of women, and aggressiveness where displays of vulnerability were contrary to the male identity.

Greed (2000) visualised the construction industry as a hostile world inhabited by the construction tribe which itself is divided into competitive aggressive sub-tribes, corresponding to the different specialisms within construction. Similarly, the informants in this research divided the industry into two male dominated sub-
tribes according to trades and professional occupations. It was argued that the different tribes have their own subculture, which refers to their peculiar cultural traits beliefs and lifestyle (see also Greed, 1991).

The trade's culture was characterised by the interviews as 'hard' and 'tough', reflecting the exposed and physical nature of site work, and by overtly sexist and racist language and behaviour. Sexual and racial harassment was found to take verbal, physical and visual forms including, suggestive remarks and innuendos, actual bodily contact and sexually derogatory images of women openly displayed (see Fielden et al, 2000). Several respondents commented that the popularity of the tabloid newspapers and their coverage of issues such as asylum seekers encourage racial tension. Thus, the culture and the belief system is being constantly reinforced by such influences. In addition, the need reinforce heterosexuality was important to emphasise a masculine identity.

"If I was to go around the sites and say 'right you can't have these girlie calendars anymore, because I find it offensive' then they would call me a 'poof!'" (23)

As a result, a considerable number of contractors stated that they would not be prepared to expose potential women and ethnic minority employees to this hostile environment.

"To put a female in an environment where when during their breaks, the conversation will be today's page three and they will all pass it round and have a look...Well you can't help but feel a bit protective towards her, especially if she was a sixteen year old apprentice" (4)

"I would worry about employing an ethnic minority, he'd certainly get a lot of stick on site, there would be racist jokes and discriminatory attitudes, it certainly wouldn't be a nice place for him to be" (5)

In the case of women, there was a perceived need to 'protect' the 'weak', which extended to arranging work in such a way that women need not do the most risky, difficult or heavy aspects of work. Furthermore, it was widely held that the men in the industry should tone down their language and behaviour, in the presence of women.
"...you can call it old fashioned, you can call it chivalry, everybody else like me can look after themselves... I've got a daughter and I certainly wouldn't want her exposed to filth you hear on site" (35)

Confirming this finding, three female informants had experienced chivalrous behaviour from their male colleagues.

"Site workers are the sort of guys, old fashioned type of men who look after the women. When I used to go on site they would come rushing out and give me a coat or whatever and say 'come out of the rain' The guys on site won't let me carry anything, they are very gentlemanly" (12)

Whilst the majority of female respondents appreciated this behaviour, others felt frustrated although recognised they must accept such behaviour to avoid antagonising their male colleagues.

"But they naturally though, if I go on site and one of them swears he will turn round and say sorry. That's just the way some men are. It can get a bit annoying, but you have to respect that they feel like that" (19)

Many of the interviews demonstrated that banter, a traditional and popular form of communication and interaction in the trades, legitimises and sustains sexism and racism in an apparently harmless way and allows a 'bullying culture' to prevail.

"The industry is such that we have these big beefy broad blokes who have the crack, and are very bigoted... they are very macho and for them its good to knock ethnic minorities and women, its part of the pub joke room and its very hard to dispel that, for example one of my mates would get on and work with an ethnic minority like a house on fire, but if you talk to him you would think that he was one of the biggest bigots you've ever met, because its macho to talk about ethnic minorities like that" (5)

Ansari et al, (2002) observed that racial banter was accepted as part of the joking environment which is tolerant of all kinds of banter. In this sense, women and ethnic minorities are not excluded by virtue of gender or colour but by the culture of the building site, thus racism and sexism is not personal but institutional. For example:
"If it's not colour or gender, they will find something else to pick on. There's a bullying culture on site, if it's not the Blacks it the Irish, and if it's not the Irish they'll find something else" (25)

Banter also serves to trivialize and legitimise racism and sexism in the industry. There was little recognition or awareness found within the interviews about what constitutes acceptable language and behaviour.

"If somebody is attractive then a wolf whistle is a compliment, I don't see anything wrong with it..., I'd love to be whistled at! People are overly sensitive these days" (14)

"Racism is serious when it becomes physical. But in the industry it's more banter... I mean my black mate calls me a honky and I'll call him coon. And he'll walk into a pub wearing a white shirt and I'll say 'Christ thank God you've got that white shirt on I wouldn't have seen you otherwise' but is it any worse than telling Irish jokes? I don't think it is" (31)

In comparison to tradesmen, men in professional occupations in the industry were described as being more educated and rational. This led almost three quarters of the interviewees to believe that that the construction professions are much more tolerant and embracing of diversity.

"I think if there was a graph, bigoted-ness would be more proportional to the manual jobs. The blokes who get stuck in out at the front end, who perhaps aren't as educated and the rest of us, perhaps aren't quite as reasonable... so without a doubt I would definitely say there are more opportunities for disadvantaged groups within the construction professions" (5)

"Trades employment is a very butch, macho, type of job, and you can image what the lads are like when they get together, they all encourage each other and call each other a whip, or gay. The image they project is drinking and womanising and to some extent that is the reality. The professions tend to be people that have had a better education and they have probably been to university, they're perhaps more aware. I think there would definitely be more problems for women on site than there would be in architecture" (13)

"In here [the office] we're all fairly intelligent, academic people, but out on site, and I hate to be stereotypical, but your traditional bricklayer is a white male hairy arsed sexist 'Sun' - reading pig! Aren't they?!" (20)
Thus, it was suggested that those within the industry's professional occupations are more likely to understand and accept the need for equal opportunities and diversity. However, explorations of multi-stakeholder attitudes towards equal opportunities and diversity contradicted this view (see section 5.5).

“We [the professions] can see that it is right to have equal opportunities, as opposed to site people who would just say ‘no it’s a load of rubbish, how is a woman bricklayer going to carry their bricks?’ Here, we understand why it’s there and support it, it's the opposite on site” (20)

A few respondents noted that the professional institutions including the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) and Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) have engaged with the diversity and equality agenda. Thus there was a perception that equal opportunities and diversity is starting to be addressed within the construction professions. This suggests that the professional bodies are starting to be viewed as equal opportunity and diversity champions/advocates by the industry.

“I'd be very surprised if architects had a problem. They always come over as very equal. The RIBA led the way on equal opportunities for a long time. The ICE is leading very much within the engineering sector. So the professions have the professional bodies whom have recognised the problem and they are dealing with it” (15)

However, just over a quarter of the interviewees described the professions subculture as covertly exclusive, where racism and sexism prevailed through the existence of the 'old boys network' and the 'glass ceiling', limiting the advancement of women and ethnic minorities into positions of power and maintaining a white, male domain. It was also noted that discrimination, harassment and bullying are likely to be focused on inhibiting career progression, rather than verbal attacks.

“I think that site discrimination may take the form of verbal abuse or wolf whistling, openly pointing out differences in the workplace. In the professions and the office type scenario that doesn't happen, or it may happen but it isn't so obvious or so frequent. But the way the way in manifests is more on people's careers as opposed to their day-to-day working life. So its not a personal attack whether physical or verbal it's a case of not getting the rewards – the promotions, status and the career progression” (18)
"Discrimination in the professions is more dangerous, because there is more power at the top, it is more cutthroat and backstabbing" (6)

In particular, it was commented that men in the industry would be resistant to women in authority:

"No man likes being bossed around by a woman do they?!" (30)

"I can see problems occurring as women move into positions of authority, I think that the men will be very resistant" (1)

Thus, it was suggested that the overt discrimination found in the trades may be easier to tackle than the subtle and indirect discrimination prevalent in the professions.

"On site if people have got something to say they will come out with it whereas up the top its much more political. And its quite significant at the top as they are the people that can hamper your career prospects" (7)

"I have never had any trouble on site, I have found it worse in the professions. On site, banter is in the open and you can deal with it, and generally people respect you for it, in the professions people are set in their ways and they have the power to promote you and allow you to develop your career. They play the game, old boys network and all that" (12)

Interestingly, several respondents suggested that there are more opportunities for ethnic minorities within the construction trades than in the professions. Although, this contradicts with earlier findings, it was believed that the industry would prefer that ethnic minorities remain in lower status occupations in the industry, so that the higher status and more powerful professions are preserved for white men.

"If you are a surveyor for example, your perceived as something slightly different, the 'cream of the business', although the guys that actually deliver, the guys on site are perceived as the dogs bollocks. So there are probably more opportunities for ethnic minorities on site, because that's where I perceive the dogs go! I'm not saying Blacks, Asians are dogs, but that's probably the perception of most employers" (32)

"I would think that although there maybe racial issues on sites I would think that it would be easier for ethnic minorities to get on the sites than into the office perhaps. This keeps them away from the industry's elite" (38)
Table 5.3 provides a summary of the characteristics of the industry’s trades and professions subcultures.

Table 5.3 Summary of the industry’s subcultures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trades sub culture</th>
<th>Professions sub culture</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflects exposed and physical nature of work – ‘hard’ ‘tough’</td>
<td>More educated, tolerant, rational than trades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exaggerated macho behaviour including:</td>
<td>Fewer physical barriers to women in professional occupations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ importance of heterosexuality</td>
<td>Professional institutions have begun to engage with equal opportunities and diversity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ ‘nude’/‘girlie’ calendars</td>
<td>Covert discrimination to prevent women/ethnic minorities gaining power. This form of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ aggressiveness/body contact</td>
<td>discrimination was seen as being more difficult to uncover than overt forms.</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ physical strength - site work seen as unsuitable for women and disabled people</td>
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<tr>
<td>Popularity of the tabloid newspapers impacts on racial tension.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexist and racist banter accepted</td>
<td>Old boys network</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of respect for women/ethnic minorities in positions of authority.</td>
<td>Lip service</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overt discrimination including verbal attacks. This form of discrimination was</td>
<td>Professions seen to have a higher status, which means more opportunities for ethnic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seen as being easier to address than covert discrimination</td>
<td>minorities in the trades.</td>
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Although there are differences in the ways in which underrepresented groups are disadvantaged by the different subcultures of the trades and professions, recurring themes have been identified which relate to men’s exclusionary behaviour. For instance, men’s masculinity is closely related to and constructed through their paid work (Bagilhole, 2002). Previous research found that masculinity is challenged when women enter male dominated occupations (Carter and Kirkup, 1990; Greed, 1991, Cockburn, 1991). Like Williams (1989), there was evidence to suggest that white men in construction appear territorial about their occupations and are threatened by competent women and ethnic minorities, whose presence may undermine their masculinity and cultural identity. Indeed, over a quarter of the informants perceived that men across the industry
and at all levels, would find it difficult to accept women and ethnic minorities in positions of seniority. For example:

"A female site manager would have more problems, because a woman in authority will be harder for the men to accept because it's that old-fashioned way of thinking, it's like them having to come to terms with their wives, daughters, and sisters telling them what to do!" (22)

In this research men appeared to resent the intrusion of women and ethnic minorities, on the grounds that it suppresses normal conversation, and takes away the pleasure of working in an all white-male environment. Indeed, many stakeholders were most concerned about dealing with the reactions of the existing workforce should they be asked to change their behaviour.

"I could just imagine if I said to the lads that they couldn't talk about this or that for fear of offending a woman or an ethnic...they would kick off and I don't want my guys to feel that they have to watch their backs and they can't have a laugh... and that's the problem with diversity, people are too sensitive. (4)

Furthermore, Bagilhole (2002) argued that men who work in male dominated jobs perceive women's presence to reduce the pay and status of their work. Indeed, in this research women were seen as unwanted competitors:

"As a graduate, you aren't a threat to anybody, but when you are ready to progress you become a threat. And you are more likely to encounter problems if you are a woman, it's a macho thing, men don't want to be beaten, especially by a woman" (White, female contractor)

Thus as previously recognised, many employers felt that there would be widespread resistance to changes which improve gender equality (Evetts, 1994; see section 5.4.2)

5.7.2 Socialisation into the industry

The interview findings confirmed that in order to succeed, members of underrepresented groups must conform to the dominant construction culture (Greed, 2000; Bagilhole et al, 2001). It would appear that their actions are
constantly observed and scrutinised in order to reinforce their difference to the white male majority.

"I mean it depends on, the personality, especially with women, because they have to be able to fit in, their personality and attitude has to be correct, and although the idea of not fitting in applies to men and women, what women do is highlighted because there are so few of them in the industry" (11)

Many informants commented that underrepresented groups were generally held in low esteem until they proved themselves. Thus, the onus was on the minorities to cope, 'fit in' and earn the respect of the white male majority. There was no recognition of the need for a fundamental re-examination or change in the cultural model itself.

"As far as I'm concerned if I had somebody who needed to pray at a certain time of the day that would be fine, as long as they could accept the working environment because people would give the banter and they would have to accept that" (5)

"One person I knew that did get upset by comments on site and took offence had real problems because straight away a barrier was put up between her and the guys and communication broke down...You have to be able to take it on the chin and you can even turn it round to your advantage... that's the nature of the beast" (15)

Indeed, the female respondents recognised the importance of forming good relations with their male colleagues. In their experience, employing a hard nosed approach and seemingly male characteristics and temperament was high risk and likely to evoke confrontation and expulsion. (Kanter, 1977). Thus, they learnt to 'handle the men' through appearing non-threatening and non-offensive. They had also accepted that they were required to prove themselves in order to earn the respect unlike their male peers.

"What I learnt very quickly was that if you tried to be the same as them and say 'no I can do it' it upsets them. The thing to do is to become their equal over time as opposed to going straight in there wanting to be their equal... And once they have accepted that you know what you are talking about and that you are there to learn and you are interested in what they are doing, they will be fine. And I've had all the things about going to site, and all the wolf whistles and looking at you like you've got three heads because you are the
only woman they've seen on site. But you just smile and ignore it, and as long as you know what you are talking about and have the skills and the abilities you will be fine, if you go in there, demand equal treatment then they will judge you and they will make things very difficult for you” (12)

Thus women are clearly in a double bind in that they cannot be feminine in the construction industry (see section 5.3.1), but neither can they be too masculine (Bagilhole, 2002).

5.7.2.1 Characteristics of underrepresented groups in construction

As Greed (2000) observed, many of the women interviewed in this research appeared to hold no more substantially different or enlightened views than male respondents. There is some evidence to suggest that these senior women converge with men in the images that they hold of the industry as they progress in their career. This is another example of ‘fitting in’. For example:

“I have realised that the industry requires a real macho and hard working environment, like the miners were hard working...I think if more women came in we would lose the tendencies to work physically hard in harsh and tough conditions, I mean look at the weather today! And you can’t change that! And I don’t think women possess those sort of characteristics like men” (12)

Supporting the work of Gale (1995), the women interviewed were invariably at pains to point out that they were not feminists. Indeed, they were openly sexist in their opinions about female entrants, arguing that women do not have the right attitude to work in the industry and that there are jobs in construction that women cannot do. Glover (1999) observed that this level of institutionalisation is problematic for change in that it is likely that individuals are changed by institutions long before they themselves manage to change those institutions. Furthermore, the power relations in organisations are likely to curtail any attempt at changing from within (Ibid.). This calls into question the effectiveness of initiatives which suggest that providing female role models and networking systems to encourage more women to enter construction (for example UMIST ‘Building Equality in Construction’ project).
Over a quarter of the interviews provided evidence that women and ethnic minorities in the construction industry must accept overtly sexist and racist language and jokes. Indeed, sexist and racist comments were routinely rationalised by both male and female informants as harmless banter, the underlying symbolism of such language was routinely denied.

“If I make a mistake they all go ‘bloody woman!’ and ‘who let you out of the kitchen?’ [laughs] But I just give as good as I get!” (12)

“I worked with a coloured guy and everyone called him Osama Bin Laden, it was just a joke and he laughed along with the rest of us!” (36)

These findings reflect the work of Whittock (2000; 2002) who observed that a ‘thick skin’ coupled with a sense of humour and acting as ‘one of the boys’ is a necessary prerequisite for women working in non-traditional occupations. Similarly, ethnic minorities must also possess a ‘thick skin’.

For many informants the macho culture of the industry was necessary for carrying out work in a hostile environment. For instance, informants commented on the positive impact of banter and camaraderie on employee morale, relationships, support and ultimately productivity: ‘when you are working hard on a cold muddy site, having a laugh is sometimes the only thing that gets you through’ (13). Indeed, the majority of informants appeared to enjoy the construction culture regardless of their race and gender. Several women enjoyed the camaraderie with their male colleagues and did not want to change the female composition of the construction workforce.

“No one is going to tell me that I don’t belong, but then I’m very confident and arrogant, brought up on sites I suppose!...My mum always had a great saying, because I always used to come home from site saying ‘I’ve argued with so and so’ and she’d say ‘yeah, but you love the kick spit and bollocks of it all’ And that’s a great phase because you say ‘it’s the kick and spit but its all a load of bollocks and you go for a pint at the end of the evening” (15)

“I enjoy working in construction, in a male dominated environment and I wouldn’t look to change it, the blokes treat me really well and will go out their way to help me. I like mucking in with the lads and having a laugh” (12)
5.7.3 Exclusion

Over half of the interviewees argued that integrating women and ethnic minorities into the mainstream white, male workforce would be problematic. Rather, it was suggested that as their numbers increase women and ethnic minorities would form their own groups. There were concerns that this would cause problems for the effective management of teams:

"At my university the room was split into two, one side was middle class white, the other was the blacks, Asians, women, everything that couldn't sit over the other side of the room, and that was our group" (32)

"I think a female trainee bricklayer would be looking out for a female mate to train with and they'd get on with it. I don't think they'd integrate into the workforce; they'd have great difficulty because of the culture. So a diverse workforce would end up in clique groups And that sort of site would never work, because it's an us and them and it's got to be a we" (25)

In particular, the contractors were concerned that women and ethnic minorities would not fit in. It was believed they would be segregated because they would not share the same interests of football and 'going down the pub' with their white male colleagues.

"What the average builder is going to be talking about on site may not be the sort of things that some of the ethnic minorities could associate with. For example, how many Asians do you see at a football match? - none, so if on a Monday morning all the topical conversation on a building site about what the local team did on Saturday, if you've got a group of Asians, they would not perhaps get involved, or feel involved. And you might suddenly find that they are pushed to one side and isolated. And it could be the pub culture and if you've got some Asians who are Muslims and don't drink alcohol, you could then get isolation and groups of people. I could see that happening" (35)

Indeed, an ethnic minority respondent recalled being excluded from his white, male colleagues because he did not appreciate his colleagues use of racist banter:

"I felt very very excluded in my work, especially when I worked in the Shetlands, there were about five of us non whites in total, as opposed to about five thousand white men ... and we would be sitting in the locker rooms
and they would all joke about having so many Blacks to work or assist you and how they'd love it and all of that" (32)

Women and ethnic minorities were also excluded from informal networking, which has been shown to have career enhancing benefits (Bagilhole, 2002). Most of the female and ethnic minority informants discussed the difficulties they had experienced. In particular, these respondents commented how men share information with other men at social and sporting events. Notably, such activities perpetuate forms of interaction with which white men feel most comfortable. For example:

"We do get some really sad stories, with the men closing ranks and the women feeling they're being squeezed out, invariably its the male decision making and bonding that goes on in the pub from which women are often excluded is the big issue" (39)

"I think those ethnic minorities that don't drink will find it difficult to network because its in the pub after work when important decisions are often made!" (21)

When setting up her own architectural practice, one women recounted how she was alienated, made to feel unwelcome and ultimately excluded from male networks despite making efforts to conform.

"The culture of the industry is such that it makes it difficult for people outside to join in and network. I found it really difficult when I started my business to make contacts. They were all deliberately very cagey with me, I found it very frustrating and upsetting" (21)

It was also commented that family commitments made informal networking impossible for some women.

"Even if they did ask me to go to the pub, I can't because I have to go home to take care of my children" (21)
5.7.4 Recruitment

Many stakeholders acknowledged that recruitment in the industry is informal and through personal contacts.

"A lot of people have family and friends in this business and you'll get people ringing you up asking if you've got any work for their nephew or whatever. It's quite a good thing because it means you know what you're getting, someone who can do the job." (13)

Contractors appeared to prefer word of mouth recruitment because applicants are recommended or have worked for the company before:

"Often we will recruit informally through word of mouth, this works well because know we are getting people with the right experience and attitude and who will just get on with the job" (8)

Furthermore, the adversarial culture of the industry (Harvey and Ashworth, 1993) ensures that conflict and crisis are aspects of everyday life (Gale, 1992). This appeared to incite employers to recruit white men like themselves whom they trust and identify with. For example:

"This is the construction industry and when things go wrong, it's not a nice place to be!...when I set someone on I will be thinking 'can I talk to them? Will we be able to work together?' And I'll be honest, I would feel more comfortable with people like me, who are builders and know where I'm coming from, than a black guy or a woman I've never met" (9)

Sub cultural groups appeared to control who is included through mechanisms of social closure (Greed, 2000). White men are welcomed into the industry and made to feel part of the team. On the other hand, women and ethnic minorities are made to feel unwelcome and uncomfortable. Indeed the majority of the interviewees stated that they would prefer to employ white, non disabled men who would 'fit in' with their existing workforce.

"It's a safe bet to employ someone you know will fit in. We're only going to have trouble if we employ women and ethnic minorities...The lads won't like it and, they won't be afraid to show it!...They'll [women and ethnic minorities] just end up leaving and that puts me in a position where I've got no one to do the work" (13)
It was also, common practice for many contractors to employ men who had approached them on site asking for work. This ensured recruitment costs were kept to a minimum. Indeed smaller companies argued that tight profit margins meant that implementing formal recruitment procedures was too expensive. For example:

"It all about who you know in this industry, if I need certain trades I'll ring round me mates who can often help. Quite often I've been approached on site by blokes looking for work, who have heard about the site from someone they know in the business... it certainly saves me a lot of money in recruitment." (8)

As well as cost, smaller companies were more likely to rely on informal recruitment owing to tight project timescales and a lack of HRM support.

"We are a small company, we can't afford the time or the money for long-winded recruitment practices. If I need 12 joiners on site for tomorrow then I need to do what I can to get them which is probably ringing around and seeing who's out there to do the job. I can't be placing adverts everywhere, interviewing people and then by the time I've set someone on the job, we will be almost finished! but lets be honest you are not going to make massive strides into the employment of disadvantaged people through our kind of businesses anyway" (9)

"Recruiting someone in a stringent HRM way of ticking boxes and making sure the is are dotted and t's are crossed is near on impossible for a small firm like ours which doesn't have a HRM department" (8)

For many of the large organisations, recruitment was devolved to operational management as opposed to trained HRM staff. This results in an inconsistent approach where company HRM policies often contradicted divisional recruitment strategies. At site level, for instance, recruitment was found to be largely devolved to line managers who employ people on the basis of whether they are willing to conform to the construction culture.

"Most recruitment comes down to the site agent turning round and saying 'yes I'll have you' or 'no I won't' And the personality would have to fit in on site" (4)

"We have a very small personnel team and responsibility for recruitment is delegated to the line management teams. So its not as though we've got one
centrally located team who we can train and monitor, we have about 50 points of recruitment throughout the business, and so to be honest I don't really know whether they always follow our set procedures" (1)

"I have tried to be very strict with managers and say to them that they can't be racist, because I used to hear comments like 'I'm not interviewing him because he's coloured' or because he's got a funny name... but it's very difficult with applications, because they [managers] can give me some other excuse, so I suppose I never really know if there has been racism" (6)

Several consultants sought particular types of employee. For example, one director of a large company requested candidates to supply a photograph with their job application form to track applicants and, because:

"You can tell a lot about a person from their face, whether they are a strong character... and that's the type we like to employ" (22)

According to another informant:

"When I meet an interview candidate, I'll throw something at them! Not anything big that will hurt, but a scrunched up bit of paper or something. Now if they don't do anything then there is no way I'll employ them... If they pick it up and put it on the table then well, maybe... but if they pick it up and throw it right back at me, that's the guy I want!" (1)

Furthermore, a small number of informants felt it to be their right to ask questions to determine a female candidate's long-term commitment:

"I have every right to know whether she intends to have children. It's hardly fair to me if I give her a go and she buggers off after a couple of months on maternity leave" (9)

"I wouldn't come right out with it, but I want to know where she sees her career going and how long she would want to be with us... and I suppose I'd look at her age and see whether she was wearing a wedding ring" (3)
5.7.5 Dominance of the male career model

According to nearly half of the interviewees, the male career model, which values full time and continuous employment, has evolved as a cultural tradition in the industry. This deters the introduction of new and alternative working arrangements because altering conventional patterns of work to accommodate women with childcare responsibilities or people's religious requests was seen as going against the ingrained working culture of the industry. Furthermore, requesting flexible arrangements to pray or for childcare is far removed from men's needs and were viewed derogatively. For example:

"The building industry wouldn't accept that so and so's nipping 'off because its prayer time or to pick up the kids, That wouldn't go down well with the lads who are just trying to get the bloody job done!" (35).

Indeed, over a quarter of the respondents were resentful of the concept of flexible working and were keen to defend the 'male way'.

"I start to react when we start talking about flexible working and the likes, Its ridiculous, its just not possible! This is the way the industry is and has always been and its not about to change. If they don't like it then what are they doing here?" (4)

Many employers predicted that allowing female employees to take their children to school would be perceived as favourable treatment by their male colleagues; there was no recognition that men are less likely to need the flexibility to care for their children.

"I say to those women [requesting flexible working] that if you want to have children, fine, have children. But don't expect me to do extra work to support the fact that you've had a child. It has to be fair across the board" (2).

Furthermore, adhering to the dominant full time career model is a prerequisite for success in the industry. The tradition of valuing and rewarding long hours, continuity and time served through promotion imposes a crucial restriction on women's careers (Dainty, 1998).
5.7.6 Summary

The trade's subculture was characterised by overtly sexist and racist language and behaviour allowing a ‘bullying culture’ to pervade. In comparison, the culture of the professions was found to be covertly exclusive, where strategies were employed to limit the advancement of women and ethnic minorities into positions of power. Despite these differences, the interviews defined the overarching construction culture as masculine, aggressive and competitive, where women's and ethnic minorities entry can provoke emotional feelings of loss of masculinity and white privilege. Similarly, the dominance of the male career model serves to protect the industry as a male domain. Thus, the findings have demonstrated that women and ethnic minorities who enter the industry must conform to the values and beliefs of the construction culture. Clearly, these findings have implications for the assimilation of values of fairness and equality and for promoting the change necessary to attract a greater workforce diversity.

5.8 The interplay of structure and culture

It may be overly simplistic to categorise barriers to equal opportunity and diversity as being structural and cultural in nature. Further analysis demonstrated how the industry's structure and culture are inextricably linked and mutually reinforcing. For instance, time, cost and quality pressures, logistical issues, and working within a complex, fragmentated and demanding supply chain induce the need for long set working hours and full time involvement, and are thus structural barriers to the introduction of flexible working practices. However, over half of the informants commented that working long set hours are a cultural norm and are seen as indicative of employee commitment. This also sustains the male career model. Similarly, the transitory nature of construction projects requires that employees be geographically mobile. Construction companies arrive on site, build and leave for the next project which may be a great distance from the company's headquarters. This is clearly a particular problem for women with family responsibilities. However, beliefs about commitment and ability to do the job also reinforce the need to be geographically mobile, for example:
There is a very 'can do' action man culture... It's can you cover fifty-two sites in 12 hours, or can you drive down to Birmingham from Scotland for a meeting and back rather than just phoning them" (15)

The ingrained culture of the industry is also a barrier to accepting the need for and implementing structural changes because 'this is the way its always been' (4). Indeed, over half of the respondents did not agree that the industry should change to accommodate a more diverse workforce.

The interplay of structure and culture is also detrimental to the white men in the industry. Loosemore and Waters (2004) observe how men in the industry suffer stress related to risk taking, disciplinary matters and implications of mistakes. Lingard and Sublet (2004) identified in their study of construction engineers face increased workloads and greater time pressures which result in health problems and a syndrome of chronic stress known as 'burnout'. Arguably, these could be attributed to the interplay of the industry's structure, including the project based nature, complex supply chain, demanding clients, and the industry's macho culture, encompassing adversarial working relationships, conflict, crisis and aggression (Gale, 1994). Furthermore, there is a tacit acceptance particularly at site level, that a worker needs to be very physically strong and also willing to sacrifice long term health (Kunju-Ahmad and Gibb, 2004). This is detrimental to employees irrespective of gender and ethnicity, yet sustained by the structural issues such as the need for manual work on site, and the macho culture which values strength or toughness.

5.9 Stakeholder views on employing disabled people in construction

Although the research set out to explore the employment of women, ethnic minorities and disabled people in construction, the informants seldom discussed disability during the interviews. This demonstrates that the informants did not think about equal opportunities and diversity holistically, but only in terms and race and gender. Lack of physical access to construction sites, the need for physical strength and the industry's health and safety agenda were seen by over three quarters of respondents as sufficient grounds for excluding disabled
people. These views were shared across the industry since even non-site based occupations invariably require site visits from time to time.

"I must confess, when you asked me about underrepresented groups I failed to think of people with disabilities, but then it's near on impossible to employ a disabled person in this industry because of the problem of access, they physically could not get onto site" (29)

"What do you want us to do? Carry them in their wheelchairs across a construction site? Let's be realistic here, it is impossible to employ disabled people on site... I suppose you could employ them in the office, but even so, there is still the need to go to site. There really aren't many opportunities for disabled people in this industry" (2)

Such views were also strengthened by the fact that many informants categorised disabled people as wheelchair users.

"I suppose that there are different degrees of disability, but when you said disability I immediately thought of someone in a wheelchair" (37)

"The word 'disabled' frightens people to death, because everyone seems to think that it means someone who is wheelchair bound" (20)

Some informants recognised differing 'levels' or 'degrees' of a disability and discussed people as being less, or more disabled and thus, less or more able to do the job. A medical model of disability was adopted in which people have disabilities which require specific and reasonable adjustments to be made. The provision of ramps, stair lifts, disabled toilets, ground floor office space and kind support for dyslexics were examples of adjustments most interviewees thought reasonable. However, these only amount to limited physical adjustments; rearranging working hours/patterns was not seen as reasonable but as evidence that a person could not work effectively in the industry. Furthermore, making adjustments to a site environment was seen as impossible, thus reinforcing the perception that disabled people are physically incapable of site work.

"I can't afford to employ people to run around after a disabled person. Now, I'm very sorry that they are disabled but if they can't hold their own on site and are struggling to do the job, then we cannot be expected to employ them" (13)
The quotation above also reflects that disability was seen as a 'personal tragedy' arising from disease or an accident. Thus, whilst many informants felt 'sorry' for disabled people they did not recognise the stigma, exclusion and discrimination experienced by disabled people (Lonsdale, 1990)

There was no recognition of a social model of disability (see section 2.2.2.3) in which the construction industry disables people and discriminates against them. Thus, in terms of the social model of disability anyone who cannot comply with the physical demands of the industry is disabled. In this way, the industry can be said to disable women in the same way that it may disable people with impairments.

As previously noted, employers perceived a discord with the employment of disabled people in construction occupations and the industry's health and safety agenda. For example, one company had employed a deaf bricklayer who had been injured on site because he had not heard verbal warnings.

"I wasn't overly keen on somebody deaf working on my site because it's a big risk with all this health and safety law, and it backfired on me. Our deaf guy was digging a trench in wet weather and the it started to cave in and he got covered because he didn't hear the warnings to get out. It's just not worth the hassle, and I would never do it again" (14)

The quotation above illustrates that disabled people are expected to fit with existing methods of working without appropriate technical aids or support, and how the resulting incident reinforces the perception that disabled people cannot be employed in construction occupations. The consensus view was that employing disabled people on construction sites is too dangerous, both in terms of the individual disabled person's health and safety, the health and safety of co-workers and the firm's liability. Indeed, health and safety appears to be a default container for disability equality issues.

Such access barriers and conflicts with health and safety prompted several informants to consider whether disabled people should be allowed on construction courses at university or college as they would not be able to pursue a career in the industry.
"I have a friend with severe cerebral palsy who has started a project management course at university. He's already finding the course quite difficult and the truth is employers are really unlikely to employ him at the end of the course because they would see him as a liability... And it's a really difficult because on one hand I think go for it but on the other hand he's paying thousands of pounds to do this course and on the end of it he's very unlikely to be employed" (37)

However, a large number of informants suggested that disabled people were employed in the industry, especially people with dyslexia. It was also argued that a significant proportion of tradesmen have acquired impairments as a result of accidents at work. For example:

"I wouldn't say that disabled people are underrepresented in the industry... You seen an awful lot of people working in the industry that have suffered accidents as a result... I remember working with a joiner who had no fingers on his left hand! But it didn't affect his work one bit." (13)

Indeed, many informants commented on the industry's poor health and safety performance and argued that this had resulted in many construction workers becoming disabled. Large numbers of construction workers were said to suffer ill health including muscular skeletal problems (particularly in the case of older workers). According to the informants, workers either left the industry or continued to work provided they could manage their impairment. This suggests that there is a lack of opportunity for employees to disclose their impairment and request a reasonable adjustment. Clearly, within the construction health and safety agenda, disability is equated with injury and incapacity and seen as a reason for leaving, not entering the industry (Greed, 2000).

Like women and ethnic minorities, disabled people in the industry also face exclusion and marginalisation. For instance, one employer described the experience of a deaf employee who was isolated because he was unable to join in with group conversations:

"We employed a deaf lad, and although he could lip read really well face to face, he was isolated much of the time because he couldn't really join in group conversations because he found it too difficult to understand what they were saying. And I did notice that he would used to sit on his own in the mess whilst the others were having a laugh and a joke. And it's sad but what can you do?" (14)
Unsurprisingly, this informant went on to say that he left the construction industry after a relatively short period of employment.

5.10 Conclusions

This chapter has satisfied objectives 1 and 2 of the research design in providing an analysis of stakeholder attitudes, in their own voices, towards the employment of women and ethnic minorities in the construction industry. The findings of the interviews have shown that prejudice, thoughtlessness, racist and sexist stereotypes and overt and covert discrimination are located in the values through which people in the construction industry define their roles and the legitimacy of their activities. Thus, construction reproduces a white-male oriented environment in which non-traditional entrants can face harassment and discrimination and are often not afforded the same career opportunities as their white male colleagues (see chapter 3).

This research found that the disabled people are disregarded and ignored by the industry. Physical access and health and safety were seen as sufficient grounds for overlooking disability in the equality agenda. Therefore, it would appear that disability constitutes a difference too far. However, it was also found that there are few opportunities for employees to disclose disability. This raises the question of whether disabled people are underrepresented in the construction industry or whether disability remains under-disclosed.

The interviews revealed that the liberal, free market and pragmatic rhetoric of colour and gender-blind racism and sexism allowed white men to defend white male supremacy in an apparently non-racial and sexist manner (Bonilla-Silva and Forman, 2000). Thus, adopting colour-blind and gender-blind approaches allowed informants to appear non-racist and non-sexist ‘everyone should be treated equally’, preserve their privileged position in the white male dominated structure and culture, blame women and ethnic minorities for their underrepresentation and situation (i.e. ‘they don’t want to work in construction’) and criticise equality of outcome and positive action approaches (i.e. as being
'positive discrimination') (Ibid.) Thus, according to Bonilla-Silva and Forman (2000):

"we must unmask colour blind-racists by showing how their views, arguments and lifestyles are white colour-coded. We must also show how their colour-blind rationales defend systematic white privilege"

In addition, based on the findings, gender must also be considered here.

In relation to objective 2 of the research, the findings presented in this chapter have identified the problematic nature of the industry's structural and cultural environment for the application of workplace equality polices and the diversification of the construction workforce. However, it is too simplistic to categorise issues arising from the interviews as being structural or cultural. Rather, structural and cultural barriers to diversity and equality are inextricably linked and mutually reinforcing. For instance, the structure of the industry is gender-coded limiting opportunities for women, for example through the introduction of flexible working practices that are necessary to attract and retain women. The macho culture creates a hostile environment for women and ethnic minorities. Thus, the interplay of structure and culture shape the processes and attitudes through which racism and sexism is pervasive in the industry.

As highlighted by section 3.8, these findings have also demonstrated that although, it is important to acknowledge the separate disadvantages of ethnic minorities and women, it is useful to analyse racism and sexism together as many issues which overlap. Indeed, the findings reported in this chapter suggest the prevalence of institutional discrimination. The construction industry has been found to form an arena where racist and sexist manifestations overlap and interpenetrate within the industry's structure and culture. Male orientated industry structures retain the industry for white men, whilst the culture creates a hostile environment for women and ethnic minorities. Structure and culture are therefore inextricably linked and mutually reinforcing entities, which shape the processes and attitudes through which racism and sexism is pervasive in the industry. Positive change therefore demands recognition of the need to dismantle structural and institutional barriers to inequality as well as to propagate an inclusive culture to support it.
CHAPTER 6

A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY'S APPROACH TO ADDRESSING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND DIVERSITY

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 identified the challenges to diversifying the construction workforce, demonstrating that equal opportunities and diversity remain well down the strategic agenda of many construction organisations. Moreover, it presented evidence of resistance from the industry's white male workforce who perceived equal opportunities to threaten their own opportunities and prospects. This chapter critically evaluates the industry's solutions. Initially, it maps the industry's attempts to address equal opportunities and workforce diversity over a ten year period since the influential Latham Report of 1994. It then provides a critical review of the impact of the industry's action within the context of the relevant literature and the findings of chapter 5.

This chapter also presents the findings of a case study, which evaluated the industry's largest, and most recent, diversity initiative, Rethinking Construction's 'Diversity in the Workplace' toolkit. It explored the toolkit in terms of it's effectiveness, usability and impact. Conducting this research provided an in-depth understanding of construction companies' attitudes to policy implementation and identified implications for future policy development.

6.2 The industry's approach to equal opportunities and workforce diversify

As described in 4.5.2, desk based research, including website searches and a telephone survey, was conducted to map the industry's attempts to diversify its workforce. This has included a comprehensive review of government/industry
reports, industry commissioned research and the activities of the industry's professional bodies regarding equal opportunities and diversity. In addition, initiatives and action groups aimed at diversifying the construction workforce have been reviewed. Table 6.1 below presents the findings of these research activities.

Table 6.1 Overview of the construction industry's attempts to address equal opportunities and diversity in construction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry's response</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Latham Report</strong></td>
<td>&quot;Constructing the Team&quot; (1994). Stated that equal opportunities in the industry requires urgent attention.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Egan Report</strong></td>
<td>&quot;Rethinking Construction&quot; (1998) Although not a specific theme within the Egan Report, diversity emerged as a key issue within the Rethinking Construction agenda.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>A Commitment to People &quot;Our Biggest Asset&quot; (2000)</strong></td>
<td>Identified workplace diversity as a priority for action attributing a range of business benefits to workforce diversification. Developed an associated diversity toolkit, a checklist and a score card that companies can use to implement diversity and improve their performance.</td>
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<td><strong>Accelerating Change Report (2002)</strong></td>
<td>Stated that the industry needs to widen recruitment from underrepresented groups. Specified the need to improve opportunities for adults as women and ethnic minorities are more attracted to the industry at an older age.</td>
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<td><strong>Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE)</strong></td>
<td>&quot;Black and Minority Ethnic Representation in the Built Environment Professions&quot; (Centre for Ethnic Minority Studies, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2004)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) and the Department of the Environment</strong></td>
<td>&quot;Balancing the Building Team: Gender Issues in the Building Professions&quot; (Court and Moralee, 1995). Developed a series of recommendations to encourage more women to enter and remain in the industry. These included: raising public awareness of the role of women in building, the formulation of a business case for equal opportunities and support for women entering and pursuing careers in building.</td>
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</table>
"The Underrepresentation of Black and Asian People in Construction" (Centre for Ethnic Minority Studies, Royal Holloway, University of London, 1999). Found that ethnic minorities fear and experience racism and exclusion and that the industry has failed to raise awareness of the opportunities for ethnic minorities in construction and take positive action. Recommendations covered planning; improving access to the industry; enhancing the industry's image for ethnic minorities; culture change; making equal opportunities a business issue; monitoring progress.

"Retention and Career Progression of Black and Asian People in the Construction Industry" (Centre for Ethnic Minority Studies, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2002) Found that ethnic minorities: lack structural systems of support in education; find it harder to get work and network; were given less responsibility than white peers and are marked down in appraisals and experience 'racial banter'. The recommendations covered an implementation group to develop an overall industry action plan; set of construction industry guidelines in racial equality; rigorous approach to ethnic monitoring; support for ethnic minorities and companies; demonstrable commitment from companies; outreach and positive action.

"Raising the Ratio: the surveying profession as a career" (Ellison, Kingston University, 2003) Research aimed to increase understanding of the extent to which work life balance is being achieved by surveyors. Revealed a desire for greater flexibility amongst surveyors; a correlation between long working hours and promotion and underrepresentation of women within senior management and unequal pay.

"Why do women leave architecture?" (de Graft-Johnson et al, 2003) Identified why disproportionate number of women leave architectural practice. Reasons broadly included: unequal pay, long, un-family friendly hours, sidelining, glass ceiling, paternalism, macho culture. Key recommendations covered: better dissemination of legislation and good practice, inclusion of equal opportunities in the professional bodies codes of practice; returner training; help-line support; diverse representation of profession to the public; targeting education.

"Gender Equality and Plan Making: The Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit" (Greed et al, 2003) The toolkit provides practical guidance on how to incorporate gender issues into planning. It is based on a series of questions and incorporates a range of checklists, indicators and guidance facts.

Equal Opportunities taskforce established in 1998. Developed an equal opportunities statement for the Council; organised lectures aimed at attracting women to construction and developed an equal opportunities network. Also produced a video "Building Visions" to highlight career opportunities in the construction professions.
<table>
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<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Positive Image campaign to encourage more women and ethnic minorities to enter the industry (2003/2004).</td>
<td>Developed an equal opportunities strategy, including designated equal opportunities staff and monitoring diversity in its own service provisions (1999).</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICEFLOE is the equal opportunities committee for the ICE and was established in 2000. Activities include: the publication of fact sheets on equal opportunities; a photographic exhibition to give exposure to underrepresented engineers; articles published in the ICE magazine; involvement with mentoring schemes and the organisation of several workshops and events on diversity and equal opportunities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Architects For Change (AFC) is the equality forum of the RIBA and was established in 2000. It guides RIBA action on equal opportunities in practice and education and is an umbrella body encompassing independent organisations such as WIA and SoBA. It activities have included: encouraging research and dissemination, organising seminars, events and exhibitions on diversity and commenting on equal opportunities in architecture.</td>
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<td>Change the face of construction website was set up in 1999. It provides a network for the exchange of information, news and support through its website. Originally funded by the DETR, the CIB in alliance with CITB, it is now maintained by a private business consultancy</td>
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<td>Association for women in Science and Engineering (AWISE)</td>
<td>Established in response to the 'The Rising Tide', a Report on Women in Science, Engineering and Technology, published by the UK Government (HMSO) in 1994. Aims to promote SET for girls and women. Acts as a forum for networking and lobbying and a centre of information and resource. Activities include: meetings, workshops, newsletters, liaising with women's groups, career advice, mentoring, and supporting women embarking on or returning to science and engineering professions. Funded through sponsorship</td>
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<tr>
<td>Formed in 1999, BWW supports women who want to develop a career in the construction trades. Sets up pilot work placements at sites in London with contractors. Also supports employers. Developed the Build Up programme which consists of three strands: 1. a training consortium for women-led construction SMEs to offer work experience; 2. a social enterprise offering building services from BWW trainees to community and voluntary organisations; 3. An out-of-hours training programme for tradeswomen and men who wish to upgrade, update and develop their skills. Funded by: London Development Agency; European Social Fund; London Central Learning and Skills Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>Established in 1980. Provides training to unemployed women in carpentry and joinery. Trains in a confidence building environment and offers support including childcare and travel allowance, as well as core and job seeking skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Initiatives and action/support groups</td>
<td>Let's TWIST (Train Women In Science, and Technology)</td>
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<td>Project originated in 1998. It aims to ensure women’s long-term participation in construction and technology training and occupations. It works to: encourage girls to understand and get excited by engineering at school; support women and girls through a mentoring programme linking them to women working in the industries; provide training for women, especially women returners; create conducive learning environments for women; overcome gender stereotyping in careers education and guidance. Funded by European Social Fund and the Regional Development Agency for Yorkshire and Humber.</td>
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| JIVE (Joint Interventions) Partners | Comprises a partnership of 10 organisations working from 2002 to 2005 to provide a holistic approach to tackle the multiple barriers women face in the engineering, construction and technology sectors. Continues and develops the work of Let's TWIST. Offers free training to careers professionals and learning providers and supports employers to develop good gender equality practice. Encourages, coaches and supports women and girls through mentoring and networking; targeted recruitment of girls and women; and provides up-skilling courses to women. Funded by the European Social Fund. |

| National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC) | Established in 2002, NAWIC aims to address the underrepresentation of women in construction; raise the profile professional women working in the industry; encourage best practice and provide mutual support. Funded by its membership. |

| PORTIA | Established in 1998 as a web-based community. It provides a learning section, links to partner organisations, information on jobs, meetings and events and a forum for airing concerns about women in SET. |

| Promoting Women in Construction (PWIC) | PWIC project ran from 2000 to 2002. It aimed to raise awareness of the opportunities for women in construction and address barriers to women’s employment in the industry. PVIC also developed a network matrix to signpost information, support and training available to help recruit and retain women into construction at all levels. Funded by the European Social Fund. |

| Promoting Science Engineering and Technology for Women | Unit was set up (2003) to tackle women's under-representation in the science, engineering and technology community. It aims to improve the recruitment, retention and progression of women throughout SET education and employment and to increase their involvement in shaping SET policy. Funded by DTI. |

| Women and Manual Trades (WAMT) | Formed in 1975 by a group of tradeswomen. Aims to provide information, advice and support to women working in, training in or wishing to enter the construction industry. Works in partnership with training bodies, employers, public sector organisations and tradeswomen to address the issues that prevent women entering, or continuing to work in, the trades. Funded by the Association of London Governments and the European Social Fund. |

| Women as Role Models (WARM) | Set up in 1990 to enable women in the construction industry to act as role models to school girls and female students, to visit schools and raise awareness of women in the construction professions. |
Women's Education in Building (WEB)


Women's Engineering Society (WES)

Formed in 1919. Involved in promoting education, training and practice of engineering among women; increasing public awareness of the women's contribution to engineering; provides a forum for women in engineering; maintains contacts with women engineers on career breaks and facilitates their return to paid employment; lobbies Government and policy-making institutions. Registered charity.

Women in Architecture (WIA)

Founded in 1999. Provides a forum for shared experiences, lobbying for better conditions, for raising the profile of women architects and for representing their views. Activities include career taster days and networking lunches.

Society of Black Architects (SoBA)

Founded in the mid 1990s. Aims to promote the contribution of minority ethnic professionals within the sphere of the built environment. Operates in three areas: culture, a business forum; and assisting ethnic minorities in training to explore and communicate their ethnicity in coherent ways.

UK Resource Centre for Women in SET

Aims to establish a central hub that provides information and advisory services to employers, professional bodies, Sector Skills Councils, careers professionals and Higher and Further Education to promote best practice in the recruitment, retention and progression of women in SET and the built environment. Funded by DTI from 2004-2007.

Association of Women in Property (WIP)

Established in 1987, WiP is a forum for the professional development of women in the property and construction industry. Seeks to promote the role of women in a wider business community and to encourage women to take up and develop their careers. Providing members with the industry intelligence and skills they need to facilitate business networking. Funded by its membership.

Women in Science and Engineering (WISE)

Established in 1984. Aims to attract more women into SET and to support other organisations that enable women to advance their careers and stay in the SET sector. Registered charity.

6.2.1 Advocacy of the diversity issue within the construction industry

Chapter 3 (section 3.10) showed that there has been a gradual recognition of the need for workforce diversification within the construction sector. Indeed, equal opportunities and diversity has been addressed by several industry reports (see table 6.1). Working Group 8 (which was set up in response to the influential Latham Report) explored the value of 'diversity' and ways of developing people effectively. Their subsequent report argued for the need to increase women's
participation primarily from a business case and manpower resources perspective (CIB, 1996). Although not a specific theme within the Egan Report (1998), diversity emerged as a key business issue within the consequent Respect for People (RfP) working group report (Rethinking Construction, 2000). Furthermore, the Strategic Forum for Construction (2002) advocated diversity as a means by which the industry could attract and retain a quality workforce.

Table 6.1 also shows that several of the industry’s professional institutions have also begun to engage with the equality and diversity agenda by formulating their own equal opportunities working groups/committees. These have included, the Construction Industry Council (CIC), the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE), the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) and the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS). This has led to efforts from the ICE and RIBA to raise awareness of equal opportunities and diversity in producing written information and articles, and organising events and seminars on equality and diversity. Some professional bodies have also commissioned research on equality and diversity. For instance, the RIBA and the RICS commissioned work to understand and confront the barriers to the retention of professional women. The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) and the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) explored the underrepresentation of ethnic minorities. In addition, the CIC coordinated an industry-sponsored video to promote career opportunities in the construction professions to young people aged 14 to 18. The video featured some women and ethnic minorities in construction related professions to act as positive role models to female and ethnic minority students. The efforts of such equal opportunities committees and working groups were recognised by several informants in chapter 5 (see section 5.7.1). This suggests that the professional institutions have an important role to play in promoting equal opportunities and diversity across the industry.

This desk-based study also revealed that a number of campaigning, support and action groups which aim to raise the profile of women in the industry and offer support and networking opportunities, are operating within the industry. Examples of these included the National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC) and the Society of Black Architects (SoBA). Greed (1997) proposed that these groups form part of a powerful network. She also found that they were highly productive in publication, research and campaigning (bid.). However, this research found that many interviewees were resentful of women’s and ethnic
minorities' pressure groups. They were perceived as going against the assumption that everyone should be treated the same and led to beliefs that white men were being discriminated against (section 5.4.2).

Numerous initiatives to attract women and ethnic minorities to construction were also identified by the mapping exercise. For example, the Construction Industry Training Board's (CITB) 'Positive Image 2004' campaign which sought to create a positive image of the construction industry to all young people and their influencers, and the Lets Twist (Lets Train Women in Science and Technology) programme.

However, the desk based research failed to uncover any initiatives on disabled people and the construction industry. Thus, it can be concluded that disabled people have been ignored by the industry and excluded from the equal opportunities and diversity agenda.

Nevertheless, Table 6.1 has demonstrated that there has been activity in the areas of gender and race within the construction industry. Consequently, the remainder of this chapter analyses their effectiveness in improving opportunities for women and ethnic minorities in construction.

6.2.2 The impact of the industry's attempts to address equal opportunities and workforce diversity

6.2.2.1 The composition of the construction workforce

In 1994, around 10% of the construction industry's workforce were women (Court and Moralee, 1995). Recent figures from National Statistics (2004) indicate that this has risen slightly to 11.8%. Women in the trades and crafts have accounted for approximately 1% of the whole construction workforce since 1994 (CITB, 2004). This demonstrates that limited progress has been made in terms of delivering a more representative construction workforce over the last ten years.

An indication of the changing composition of women in the construction professions can be gained from the professional body membership data. Court and Moralee (1995) provide data on women's membership of numerous
professional bodies in 1993. This has been compared to data collected by Watts (2003) in Table 6.2.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women’s representation in the construction professions in 1993 (all figures Court and Moralee, 1995)</th>
<th>Women’s representation in the construction professions in 2003 (taken from Watts, 2003, with the exception of CIBSE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institution of Civil and Engineers (ICE)</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS)</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB)</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chartered Institute of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE)</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution of Structural Engineers (IstructE)</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Institute of British Architects</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.2 indicates an overall trend of women’s increased representation in the membership of the professional bodies. However, women still remain severely underrepresented, particularly in the built environment professions which have direct involvement with the construction process.

The information presented in Table 6.1 suggests that the industry has only begun to engage with the issue of ethnic minority representation in the last 5 years. It shows that the CITB first commissioned research on the underrepresentation of ethnic minorities in 1999 and again in 2002. Furthermore, RIBA’s Architects for Change (AFC) forum and ICE’s Equal opportunities committee (ICEfloe), which cover race, were established in 2000. Therefore it is too early to evaluate their success in terms of increasing opportunities for ethnic minorities in the industry. Furthermore, as found by Royal Holloway (1999), figures relating ethnic minorities’ representation in the different trade and professional occupations in the industry were not easily available. The nature of the industry was found to be such that data relating to ethnic origin is not systematically collected.
In summary, the persisting underrepresentation of women and ethnic minorities can be said to call into question the effectiveness of the industry's approach to redressing women's and ethnic minorities' underrepresentation. Furthermore, chapter 3 found that women and ethnic minorities in the industry face exclusion and harassment and are not afforded the same career opportunities as their white male peers.

6.2.2.2 Lip service

There is evidence that the construction industry has paid 'lip service' to equal opportunities and diversity. For example, chapter 5 found that the majority of informants had not engaged with the equal opportunities and diversity agenda (see sections 5.4 and 5.5), and, that many were resistant to the implementation of equal opportunities policies and practices. This is almost a decade after reports from Latham (1994) and Working Group 8 (CIB, 1996) which addressed the importance of equal opportunities. Clearly, the recommendations made in these reports to improve equality of opportunity have failed to percolate through the industry. Indeed, Greed (2000) observed that the Working Group 8 report (which emerged from the Latham Report) had not even been mentioned at major national conferences which were meant to give feedback on the Latham Report. Thus, Greed suggests that Working Group 8 was unsupported by real conviction or action by the industry. Greed (2000) also observed lip service at a micro level:

"...I was to find that the content of Working Group 8 was quickly forgotten, nevertheless astute male construction professionals obviously thought it would show them in good light if they could remember to mention the name of the report: a useful shield to protect them from the likely accusations of lack of gender awareness..." (pp.185)

It is too early to determine whether the recommendations of recently commissioned CITB research (Royal Holloway, 1999; Ansari et al, 2002) will be successfully implemented. However, it can be concluded that there appears to be a lack of systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of the industry's efforts to diversify its workforce.
6.2.2.3 Culture and attitudinal change

Dainty et al (2000a) argued that initiatives aimed at effecting change and improving representation of women must be capable of manipulating the culture of the construction work environment, as well as removing structural barriers that impede the retention and career progression of women. Indeed, the Working Group 8 Report recognised that cultural change is key to engendering change rather than simply a case of ‘add women and stir’.

However, this present research has found no evidence of a cultural shift in the industry. In 1995, Court and Moralee identified cultural attitudes which had implications for women working within the industry. Almost ten years later these same attitudes have been found to exist within the interview data presented in chapter 5. For example, informants made assumptions about women’s career aspirations (section 5.3.5); women appeared to be treated differently from their male colleagues (section 5.3.6); and there was unease about women in positions of authority (section 5.7.1). Similarly, the research reported in this thesis has found no evidence of a cultural shift since Gale characterised the industry’s male culture and ethos in 1994. Moreover, the interviews identified evidence of a ‘backlash’ against equal opportunities and diversity (see section 5.4).

6.2.2.4 Drivers of equal opportunities and diversity

This review of the industry’s attempts to diversify its workforce found that a business case has been advocated as the primary driver of equal opportunities and diversity (Court and Moralee, 1995; CIB, 1996; Rethinking Construction 2000). However, the findings of the interviews conducted during stage 1 of the research design, presented in chapter 5, revealed that stakeholders were unconvinced by the business case for diversity (see section 5.5). These findings indicate that industry has failed to convince construction companies and their supply chain partners of the benefits of taking action to address inequality for underrepresented groups in construction.

Agapiou and Dainty (2003) recognised the importance of client led approaches in increasing the participation of women and ethnic minorities in the construction workforce, arguing that public sector clients will play a crucial role. Similarly, a
significant number of construction stakeholders interviewed as part of this research argued that the client could provide impetus for construction companies to address equal opportunities and diversity. Although, the Strategic Forum for Construction discussed the importance of client leadership in their report (2002), there was no reference to the role of clients in delivering enhanced equal opportunities performance throughout the sector.

6.2.2.5 Industry support

The funding of research and initiatives on issues related to equal opportunities and diversity portrayed in Table 6.1, indicates the industry’s lack of commitment to addressing these issues. For example, many of the initiatives were funded by the European Social Fund, rather than the construction industry per se. Furthermore, Glackin (2000) found that the ‘Change the Face of Construction’ initiative faced collapse because it had failed to attract funding from construction companies. It was therefore concluded that the industry was “not willing” to commit funds:

“In order for it to continue, it needs money that the industry does not seem willing to give. It’s very sad, but construction companies do not seem interested in what the Change the Face of Construction is doing.” (Glackin, 2000)

Also, in 1999, lack of funds and poor take up of delegates meant that the Change the Face of Construction initiative was forced to cancel a conference on ethnic minorities and women in construction (Ibid.).

Similarly, the Construction Best Practice Programme (CBPP) was forced to cancel, for the second time, its ‘Managing Diversity: learning by doing’ workshop. Delegates would have been able to learn how to recruit and retain women and ethnic minorities. However, despite fierce marketing, only three people signed up to the event (Construction Manager, 2003).

It was found that many initiatives only received funding for a set time period, for instance ‘Promoting Women in Construction’ was funded for two years (PWIC, 2004). Greed (2000) has observed that groups “come in with enthusiasm, burn brightly and then fizzle out”. The evidence from chapter 5 suggests that this can
lead to accusations of 'initiative overload' and 'reinventing the wheel', which can also undermine stakeholder confidence and support for these initiatives as they perceive them to have limited impact in achieving their aims (see section 5.5). Thus Greed (2000) suggested that those with official backing and pan-professional appeal such as the Equal Opportunities Taskforce will have greater sustainability.

Data gathered during this desktop survey, indicates that the professional institution’s equal opportunities committees receive inadequate funding. Indeed, the Chair of one such committee disclosed that funding had been recently reduced. This calls into question the level of importance attributed to equality and diversity within the business plans of the industry's professional institutions.

6.2.2.6 Fragmentation

Clarke et al, (2004) argued that political will, spanning national, sectoral and local levels, is a necessary element to transforming the industry. However, Michielsens et al (2004) found that social partners (employers and trade unions) corroborate rather than counter the conservatism and inertia which characterises the construction industry. These findings have highlighted the need for joined up thinking and a more industry-wide strategic approach to equal opportunities and diversity. However, the desk-top research presented in Table 6.1 has revealed a significant number of equal opportunities and diversity related research projects, initiatives and action groups across the industry. Although, these have produced good work and should be commended, it could be argued that they represent a fragmented approach and have limited strategic impact on improving equal opportunities and diversity across the industry.

Furthermore, there has been no systematic evaluation of the impact of the initiatives outlined in Table 6.1. This is essential in order to learn from their success and weaknesses.
6.2.2.7 'Best practice'

There has been a considerable degree of interest in the notion of 'best practice' relating to equal opportunities and diversity in the industry. For example, Working Group 8 (CIB, 1996) presented examples of 'best practice' taken from other sectors such as retail, the National Health Service (NHS), the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and accountancy. Similarly, the Egan Report (1998), compared construction with other industries, and made recommendations drawing on the experience of other industries. More recently, the exchange of best practice knowledge has become an integral part of both the Rethinking Construction initiative and the Construction Best Practice Programme, now united under the banner of Constructing Excellence. Marchington and Grugulis (2000) identified a number of problems with the notion of 'best practice' HRM including the meaning of specific practices and their consistency with each other, as well as claims that best practice is universally applicable. Thus, in an equal opportunities and diversity context, whilst it is important to learn from other industry’s and sectors simply 'borrowing' best practice from other industries is problematic when analysed more systematically in light of the industry’s unique structural and cultural environment, for instance, the particular challenges that arise from a project based industry. In addition, the culture and workforce are very different from the retail industry. Failure to address these issues may have contributed to the limited success of equal opportunities and diversity initiatives in increasing the numbers of women and ethnic minorities in the industry. This view is explored further within the case study research presented in following sections.

6.3 Case study of the Respect for People ‘Diversity in the Workplace Toolkit’ initiative

6.3.1 The Respect for People initiative

Rethinking Construction was initiated in response to the Egan Report (1998) and formed the banner under which the construction industry, its clients and the government work together to improve UK construction performance. Under Rethinking Construction, The Movement for Innovation (M4I) was set up to lead
radical improvement in the construction industry in terms of value for money, profitability, reliability and respect for people through the demonstration and dissemination of best practice and innovation. For the purpose of this objective a number of working groups were created, including a 'Respect for People' (RfP) working group.

The RfP working group identified seven action themes within their report 'A commitment to people – our biggest asset' (Rethinking Construction, 2000). One such theme concerned 'Diversity in the Workplace', under which the measurement of the proportions of different underrepresented groups was recommended. The report justified the need for improving the industry's performance on diversity by attributing a range of business performance benefits to workforce diversification. These included enhanced innovation and creativity, increased workloads and an expansion of the customer base. In common with the other RfP improvement areas, Rethinking Construction developed an associated 'toolkit' for diversity. The diversity in the workplace toolkit comprised a checklist and scorecard by which construction companies can measure their diversity performance in recruitment and retention practices and procedures. It provides a means by which users can benchmark their existing performance and assess how quickly shortcomings are addressed. The intention of the toolkit is that it is used on a regular basis to ascertain whether levels of performance are being maintained or improved upon following action taken after the previous benchmark. The toolkit is broken down into seven interrelated sections which cover the development of a diversity policy, recruitment and advertising, selection and promotion, retention and exits, diversity training, management procedures and practice, and monitoring and strategy review.

### 6.3.2 Purpose and justification of the Respect for People case study

The purpose of using the RfP diversity toolkit as a case study was to explore reasons why such an approach has not brought about change. The RfP diversity toolkit was chosen as the exemplifying case because it provided a suitable context for certain research questions to be answered (Bryman, 2004; Yin, 1994). These centred on what the impact of a newly implemented diversity initiative has been. It was logical to choose the RfP 'Diversity in the Workplace' toolkit as a case because it was at the time, the industry's most recent and principal diversity
initiative. Furthermore, it represented the first serious attempt to address the
diversity issue by way of a practicable change tool. It had pan-industry relevance
and had received substantial resource and government support in comparison to
other initiatives such as Change the Face of Construction and Promoting Women
in Construction. In addition, that companies were engaged with using the
diversity toolkit would exemplify stakeholder attitudes to the equal opportunities
measures contained within the toolkit. Thus, along with the findings presented in
chapter 5, the RfP case study provided the basis for the policy framework for
diversity and equality to be developed (chapter 7).

6.3.3 Methodological approach

The RfP working group in charge of promoting the diversity toolkit in the industry
found that the toolkit was considered the worst of all the RfP toolkits in terms of
its relevance, effectiveness, usability and impact. (Rethinking Construction, 2001)
In particular, it was noted that small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs) had not
engaged with the diversity issue and were finding the toolkit difficult to use (Ibid.).
Thus, the main focus of the following sections has been to evaluate the
experiences, attitudes and perceptions of companies that have used the diversity
toolkit. This has been supplemented with an analysis of the perceptions of other
firms who, despite being involved with the other RfP toolkits, had declined to use
the diversity toolkit.

As outlined in chapter 4, in-depth semi-structured interviews were carried out with
13 companies who had attempted to use the toolkit and a further seven who had
not. The participating firms represented virtually every type of construction firm
and included public sector clients, design consultants, main contractors, sub-
contractors and other specialist firms. This has allowed an analysis of the toolkit's
practical utility as a change tool within a variety of industry contexts.
Table 6.3 Summary of companies interviewed who had attempted to use the toolkit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company Type</th>
<th>General Information</th>
<th>Informant number</th>
<th>Geographical Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specialist Contractor 1</td>
<td>Building services engineer (international)&lt;br&gt;Annual turnover: £350 million.&lt;br&gt;5000 employees.</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Contractor 1</td>
<td>Large building contractor. UK based.&lt;br&gt;500 employees</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>North</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Contractor 2</td>
<td>Large contractor &amp; training agent.&lt;br&gt;Annual Turnover: £400 million.&lt;br&gt;1000 + Employees</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>North</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contractor 1</td>
<td>General contractor &amp; joinery workshop.&lt;br&gt;Annual Turnover: £8 million.&lt;br&gt;110 people Employees</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>North</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contractor 2</td>
<td>Housing Regeneration Contractor&lt;br&gt;Annual turnover: £35 million.&lt;br&gt;300 employees.&lt;br&gt;Sub contractor of civil engineering, concrete works, groundwork's, foundations, superstructure, external drainage and services. Annual Turnover: £40 million.&lt;br&gt;650 employees</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>North</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist Sub-Contractor 1</td>
<td>Mechanical and Electrical Contractor.&lt;br&gt;Annual Turnover: £27 million.&lt;br&gt;300 direct employees&lt;br&gt;Consulting engineers.</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>North</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultant 1</td>
<td>Annual Turnover: £8 million.&lt;br&gt;180 employees&lt;br&gt;Quantity surveyors and construction consultants.</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Wales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultant 2</td>
<td>Annual turnover: £12 million.&lt;br&gt;215 employees&lt;br&gt;Team within the economic development section within a city council. Responsibility for social policy and strategy within the construction industry within the city.</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>South</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Sector Client 1</td>
<td>Repairs and maintenance. Council property.&lt;br&gt;Annual budget: £23 million.</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Midlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Sector Client 2</td>
<td>Councils in-house design Consultancy.&lt;br&gt;Annual budget: £28 million.</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>North East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Sector Client 3</td>
<td>Technical and Property Services.&lt;br&gt;Annual budget: £27 million.</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>North West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Sector Client 4</td>
<td></td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Wales</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6.4 Summary of companies interviewed who had not used the diversity toolkit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company Type</th>
<th>General Information</th>
<th>Informant number</th>
<th>Geographical Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main Contractor 3</td>
<td>Infrastructure services business. Annual Turnover: £100 million. 1050 employees</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>South East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist Contractor 2</td>
<td>Office fit out and refurbishment company. Annual turnover: £180 million. 250 employees</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultant 3</td>
<td>Large multidisciplinary engineering Consultancy. 800 employees</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>South West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultant 4</td>
<td>Architects 110 employees</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Sector Client 5</td>
<td>Responsible for the estates of a large public sector client. Annual budget: £1 million. Environmental Services.</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Midlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Sector Client 6</td>
<td>Maintenance of council property. Annual budget: £20 million. Specialist Construction Workers.</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>South West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union</td>
<td>Union 110 000 members</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Representatives of participating companies who had used the toolkit were asked a range of questions on how the toolkit had been used, their motivation behind using it and its perceived effectiveness in terms of engendering change. The 7 companies that had declined to use toolkit were asked to explain why they had chosen to exclude diversity from the suite of RifP toolkits. In order to obtain their perceptions of the toolkit, these respondents were shown a copy of the diversity toolkit and asked to comment upon each section. All respondents were asked to identify where changes were needed to be made to improve its effectives and encourage the wider usage and take-up of the toolkit in the future. Opinion has also been sought from a range of other industry practitioners, industry specialists, government commissions and advisory groups in order to present a balanced analysis of the toolkit's strengths and weaknesses. The interview schedules have been included in Appendix B for reference.

The content of the toolkit, restated from section 6.3.1, included the development of a diversity policy, recruitment and advertising, selection and promotion,
retention and exits, diversity training, management procedures and practice, and monitoring and strategy review.

6.3.4 Factors determining the use of the diversity toolkit

A small number of organisations had made a commitment to improve their diversity performance and therefore viewed the toolkit as a potential way of formulating a coherent strategy and managing the implementation of a diversity policy. Several other firms had engaged with the toolkit because they thought it would raise their company profile to public sector clients. However, the key factor behind the toolkit's use was that most companies had decided to use the suite of RfP toolkits as a complete package.

All the organisations that had excluded the diversity toolkit from those that they had chosen to use, commented that they did not see diversity as a key RfP issue. Confirming previous findings, there was a consensus that diversity issues lack relevance to the construction industry because underrepresented groups self select away from careers in the industry (see section 5.3.1).

Reinforcing the findings presented in section 5.5, the majority of informants did not accept the RfP business case for diversity (see section 6.3.1), and pointed to the lack of evidence for it. This raises questions over the effectiveness of the business case as a driver of diversity. In addition, informants argued that increased diversity may not offer universal business benefits. For example, several informants acknowledged that due the potential effects of the industry's hostile culture (see section 5.7) underrepresented groups may under perform.

"I think its very hard for women and ethnic minorities in this industry. In my view, it would be difficult for them to get the help and support that they need and inevitably all eyes will be on them and here will be a lot of people that would like to see them fail. So I think it is problematic to simply say that employing these groups will improve your business performance because it's a lot more complicated then that" (50)

Indeed, Dainty et al (1999) found that women in construction had to focus their efforts on coping with the male dominated working environment whilst their male peers could concentrate on career progression.
In addition, as discussed previously (see section 5.6.5), the industry's structural environment demands full time involvement. As a result nearly half of the respondents believed they it would be detrimental to employ women and disabled people who may require alternative arrangements. Consequently, business case arguments await clear theoretical specification or a much stronger empirical base.

Most of the firms declining to use the diversity toolkit commented that they had perceived it to be too onerous, and that the procedures that it promoted were too complex and bureaucratic to be of practical use. SMEs with no HRM support felt that it would be too demanding for already overloaded employees. Thus, the emphasis on the need for formal policies had also alienated many of these companies, for example:

"One of the things looked at was would we monitor these things and the answer is no. We don't really advertise, we head-hunt. If we do need staff then we'll commission recruitment agencies to find them for us. This is just not relevant to us....a lot of the toolkit assumes that there have to be policies on everything, but our organisation is very bureaucracy averse, we will not go for policies and procedures that are very bureaucratic, we will run away from them." (55)

6.3.5 Perceptions of the diversity toolkit

The majority of interviewees agreed that the toolkit's contents were very comprehensive and that the overall structure was logical. The breadth of its coverage had led two SMEs to consider the diversity of their workforce for the first time. For one larger company, it had raised awareness that they could do more to address diversity issues:

"I think what it did was make us realise was that we weren't really doing enough, we have got a policy and we've got good intentions, but we didn't really have the hard measures in place to monitor... the one thing it did was to make me realise that we were a bit complacent... We had done all the policy type things but I had to mark us down quite a bit because we weren't really taking the supportive action" (41)
Despite these positive comments, the majority of informants were not sure of the type and nature of the organisation it was aimed at and who should be responsible to oversee its use. However, it was generally believed that the toolkit was more appropriate to large organisations and not to SMEs:

"The toolkit doesn't suit the typical small private sector organisation whose prime purpose is to make a profit. The questions within the toolkit are designed to develop departments to deal with these issues, that are not strictly relevant or important for the smaller organisations like ourselves." (49)

Furthermore, most informants agreed that it was only appropriate for HRM specialists because of the nature of the statistics required and that little in the content of the toolkit was site-related. This had a negative effect in that it did not involve operations staff that have the capacity to exert influence within the construction workplace environment:

"it would be useful if managers and supervisors on a project level could fill this in to see what their understanding is, but because it asked for facts and figures we could really only ask the personnel department to complete it as they had the data. This is a real problem because the whole of Respect for People is about your workforce, if you don't involve them in it what's the point in doing it?" (49)

In addition, most of those interviewed believed that the toolkit needed to acknowledge the distinct needs of both smaller and larger companies, if its take-up was to be encouraged in the future.

Another generic issue concerned the language and terminology used within the toolkit. This was criticised by all informants for being overly complex and problematic. The general tone was also criticised for being too demanding and prescriptive. It was felt that the way in which the questions were phrased made it read rather like an 'instruction manual', which arguably detracted from its focus (i.e. to measure the quality of the diversity policy and its promotion within the organisation). Thus, most respondents commented that the diversity toolkit comprises a confusing amalgamation of a checklist, scorecard, guidance document and instruction manual. This indicated that by being so broad in it its coverage, the usability and content of the toolkit had been undermined. However, there was also evidence that equality guidance is needed by the majority of the firms represented in the interviews.
Another related perception amongst respondents was that completion of the toolkit could lead to damaging criticism of their performance if they were shown not to employ a workforce which reflected the overall working population. Those that had attempted to use the kit had generally scored poorly against most of the measures and had become disillusioned with the process.

"We know that the industry is 98% white male, and therefore we know the answers are going to be negative. But you can't ask everyone in the industry to stand up and say 'well look at what a bunch of b*****s we are'... you've got to get them to say these things to each other, to acknowledge these problems, but let them do it in a room with the door shut, so they can sort themselves out.... change needs to come from within." (47)

It is important to note that none of the companies interviewed had used the toolkit in the way intended. All the respondents had completed the toolkit only once and so consequently the 'measurement, review, action and measurement cycle' had not been carried out. Indeed, virtually all of the companies had fundamentally misunderstood the scoring system, rendering it an ineffective measure of diversity performance.

The following section presents the key findings of a robust analysis of the toolkit's contents which demonstrate the ineffectiveness of the toolkits content and approach. The findings are presented under the toolkit's seven section headings.

6.3.5.1 Section 1: Diversity Policy and Implementation

This section is essentially about formulating and implementing a diversity policy. It takes the user from the development of the policy itself through to the action plan, marketing and PR and finally ensuring widespread understanding of the policy by employees and all those connected with the firm. However, over three quarters of the informants had difficulties in understanding what a diversity policy was and how it differed from an equal opportunities policy:

"Should we have diversity and an equal opportunities policy, or will one or the other suffice, or are they the same thing?" (48).

These comments support the findings in section 5.5, that diversity was generally believed to be synonymous with equal opportunities. This confusion also
impacted on the efficacy of the scoring system. For example, most companies took a diversity policy to mean an equal opportunities policy and scored themselves accordingly. However, a few companies scored themselves down for not having a separate diversity policy, even though they were confident in the quality of their equal opportunities policy. Thus, finding appropriate measures of performance was problematic.

Over half of the informants also believed that the toolkits marketing and public relations requirements were onerous and required a bigger commitment to diversity issues than construction companies were willing to invest. For instance, many interviewees commented that they did not have the time or resources to partake in activities such as speaking at events and exhibitions. In addition, many respondents also sought explanations of what the toolkit was suggesting when it mentioned requirements such as the development of a ‘photo library’, with there being little understanding of how this interfaced with the diversity issue.

Most informants believed that this section on policy formation was the most important in the toolkit and if it was misunderstood, this would effectively undermine the whole document.

6.3.5.2 Section 2: Recruitment/Job Presentation

This section of the toolkit reviews an organisation’s recruitment procedures; measuring how accessible their employment opportunities are to underrepresented groups. Indeed, the majority of respondents were fundamentally opposed to alluding to diversity issues within advertisements. These informants echoed the views expressed in chapter 5 whereby equality measures were seen as ‘positive discrimination’ against white men (see section 5.4.2).

Perhaps even more fundamentally, over half of the companies interviewed stated that they rarely advertised for employees. Recruitment procedures tended to be fairly informal or through recruitment agencies. This is reflective of the casualised nature of the industry as discussed in section 5.6. For senior positions, people are often headhunted based on their reputation, experience and competencies. Consequently, the section was regarded as unrealistic and as not aligning with
the way in which the industry operates. Whilst it was appreciated that traditional recruitment practices were not necessarily fair or equitable, it was generally believed that a toolkit such as this should promote incremental change rather than suggest a change to a radically different and unrealistic recruitment approach.

Many of the SMEs expressed their unease about asking applicants to complete a separate form with their personal details as detailed within the toolkit, in case this led to accusations of discriminatory practices. Again this reflects the findings of section 5.4.3 that a fear of legal repercussions may impede equality progress in the industry.

Providing application forms in a variety of formats such as in large print and Braille was rejected by the vast majority of the companies interviewed, as not only was this was thought to be too expensive, but most informants thought it impossible to employ people with sight impairments in construction occupations. Similarly, the provision of application forms in different languages was perceived as too expensive and irrelevant despite the relatively large migrant labour force now working within the industry. Furthermore, it was clear that on site, because of the need to employ people rapidly, employees are often given a job without completing an application form. This is another example of how the problematic structural environment undermines many of the central tenets of workplace equality policies.

**6.3.5.3 Section 3: Selection/Promotion**

Every company interviewed agreed that this section was very important as it evaluated a candidate's suitability against their competencies and skills. However, it was commented that the language used in this section was difficult to interpret, for instance, terms such as 'competence based criteria' caused confusion amongst several informants who were unsure of the appropriate criteria which should be used to measure a candidate's competencies and abilities. Furthermore several informants commented that they would feel uncomfortable making their selection decisions transparent.
For many companies, implementing formal monitoring systems was considered unnecessary as it was argued that figures could be recalled from memory. It was also argued that monitoring diversity was meaningless as the percentages involved would be so small. The consensus was that, given the industry's current position, to take action was more important than the monitoring and recording of percentages. As one contractor commented:

"It is one thing to get hung up on all these percentages, but it is more important to encourage companies to have fair policies that don't discriminate.... It's just important that we encourage the industry to make a start on addressing these issues" (54)

It was also pointed out that this section did not attempt to encourage or guide organisations to use the information collected to prompt action and facilitate improvement. This was considered extremely important if the toolkit is to be used to drive continuous improvement.

6.3.5.4 Section 4: Retention/Exits

This section addressed staff turnover and the importance of conducting an 'exit interview'. In the current climate of skills shortages, this section was generally well received by the interviewees. It was felt that this addressed an issue which is very important to many organisations, that of retaining their workforce.

The section prompted users to consider staff turnover issues in terms of gender, ethnicity, and disability. However, again SMEs had concerns over the benefits of monitoring staff turnover by gender, ethnicity and disability:

"we do monitor staff turnover but not by diversity and why should we? The numbers would be too small to tell us anything substantial" (48)

It was also pointed out by a small number of informants that to carry out exit interviews for site operatives can be very problematic. Work is often of a transient nature, thus employment contracts may be short term and employees may move on very quickly to other projects. Hence, in these situations conducting formal exit interviews was found to be problematic.
6.3.5.5 Section 5: Training

This section covers training on diversity issues. It addresses training for interviewers, new-starters to the company at induction, and regular up to date training specific to a site or project. However, of all of the toolkit's section, this was probably the one which led to the greatest confusion amongst the informants. The majority of which did not understand the meaning of 'diversity training', did not carry it out and were unaware of what it should involve. A significant proportion of informants interpreted the section to mean general staff training and scored themselves accordingly.

Mainstreaming diversity training into induction and general training programmes was seen as preferable to the provision of bespoke courses as it effectively put the significance of diversity into context. An example of this occurs during induction training where new starters are informed of the equal opportunities policy alongside other training issues.

However, the majority of interviewees viewed diversity training as an onerous and difficult task given the ingrained macho culture of the industry. Smaller firms were particularly sceptical of diversity training. Their concern was that it did not reflect an achievable aim given the poor record of the industry on training provisions generally:

*This is an industry which doesn't train full stop... It will only train people if it is forced to. Training is time consuming... and unfortunately diversity training is no way near a priority* (59).

6.3.5.6 Section 6: Management - Procedures and Practice

This section is essentially about managing diversity and making efforts to accommodate the needs of a diverse workforce. It was generally felt that the use of the toolkit for continuous improvement required a greater commitment than most were able or willing to give to the diversity issue. It was argued that commercial organisations would not realistically be able to balance the resources required to address diversity with more pressing business needs. For smaller companies with no HRM support, the completion of the section was found to be particularly problematic.
Again, the wording of the section was criticised by nearly three quarters of the companies. It was described as ‘long-winded’, ‘overly complex’ and ‘difficult to interpret’. The effect of this was described by one company as having the potential to create a ‘backlash’ amongst users.

Several aspects of this section of the toolkit were also seen as difficult to measure. For example, there was concern as to how a company could measure the extent to which all employees have taken ‘ownership’ of the diversity policy. To integrate this into the appraisal process requires the monitoring of employee acceptance and attitudes towards diversity, which are hard to measure.

A few informants expressed concern over complaints procedures. They were unclear as to what constituted a complaint (i.e. under what circumstances a formal complaints procedure should be employed) and there were concerns that to promote such a formal procedure would encourage people to complain unnecessarily which could adversely affect morale within the firm. There was also a fear that to implement such procedures could encourage grievances and industrial tribunals. There is also no mention of bullying and harassment within the toolkit. Consequently, this overlooks a significant issue for underrepresented groups within such a white male dominated industry.

Smaller companies in particular, were confident that an informal but well communicated ‘open door policy’ by which employees could discuss any issues and worries with management was more effective than formal complaints procedures. However, these informants appeared to have missed the point of having an formal and objective grievance process.

“We operate an open door policy, all my staff know that they can knock on my door anytime to discuss anything and I will do my best to sort out any problems. If I began to institute formal complaints procedures this would break down the culture of openness that we have sought to create over the years” (49)

The section on working conditions and facilities was seen as largely irrelevant by most sub-contractors and consultants interviewed, as in most cases the facilities and working conditions were provided by the client or the main contractor. Clearly, there is diminished responsibility for the provision of welfare on site, and/or confusion over who should be responsible for this. Furthermore, many
informants argued that there was little point in creating special facilities when their own workforce is not diverse. For example, providing female toilets on site when there are no women employed was seen as an unnecessary expense.

It was concluded that the cost of meeting the needs of a diverse workforce far outweighed the benefits likely to be derived from them. As one sub-contractor put it:

"Anything that will help us to retain employees we would consider, but having said that, this is far more involved than we'd want to be, or could afford to be....To do all this document suggests, we would probably need to employ 2 or 3 more people. If we could improve our retention through some of these things then we would use it, because there is a business case, a business benefit for that cost. But doing all this, all this paperwork, won't retain our people, doing the right things for our people will retain them. Things like working conditions are important, but all of these things are high effort and it's debatable whether there's any return on them at all" (47)

6.3.5.7 Section 7: Monitoring/Policy & Strategy Review

The last section of the toolkit requires the user to evaluate the company's monitoring system and the effectiveness of any action taken following the analysis of the data collected. It requires the precise examination of the composition of the workforce at each level within the organisation. As found previously, diversity monitoring was not accepted by the majority of companies interviewed, particularly for those with no previous experience of the monitoring process.

There was much apprehension surrounding the development of 'improvement targets'. This was perceived as potentially unlawful as it could be confused with setting quotas. Moreover, it was thought that the diversifying the workforce through setting and achieving targets would lead to a perception of positive discrimination and a potential backlash from white male workers. Furthermore, achieving year-on-year improvement towards attaining a representative workforce was seen as unrealistic for smaller firms in particular, as many do not always take on new employees each year. Furthermore, many respondents commented that in certain geographical locations where there are very few ethnic minority residents, monitoring staff ethnicity was irrelevant as they have very few
employees from ethnic minority backgrounds. Thus, formal monitoring was seen as unnecessary and bureaucratic and over three quarters of the companies interviewed were not prepared to undertake comprehensive diversity monitoring.

*I will certainly not be monitoring numbers of women etcetera in my company, this sort of thing is another burden which I don't need... It's a complete waste of time!... I know we don't have women in senior management*. (48)

Again, it was pointed out that the numbers to be monitored would be so small that it would be almost of no use to break it down into each level within the organisation. This demonstrates the problematic nature of addressing vertical segregation in the industry. There was also a fear that to complete this section would undermine the profile of the company and facilitate assumptions about the underlying reasons behind the data collected.

Thus, the majority of companies argued that the section called for an unreasonable amount of work for something (i.e. diversity) they do not regard as a major issue. As a result, many of those whom had used the toolkit had grown increasingly frustrated with its demands by this stage.

*We must get a wider market to attract people and then do everything we can that's right, affordable and practical to retain them. But it is unfair to give this document to us and expect us to go ahead and do it, and we're one of the bigger contractors.... the amount of effort to implement such a detailed system is implausible and expensive. For the type of business we are it is very, very, difficult and we just can't see the benefits*. (55)

### 6.3.6 Summary of the Respect for People diversity toolkit case study

The evaluation exercise has uncovered a number of key limitations of a toolkit approach in promoting the diversity and equality agenda. Firstly, no company had used the toolkit as part of a continuous improvement cycle. This infers that there are problems with its practical use and implementation and raises doubts as to whether it is an appropriate tool for driving continuous improvement in diversity performance within the industry. Furthermore, scoring against diversity performance was perceived as overly complex and subjective. Many users had become discouraged with their consistently low scores and there was a fear that
poor performance could lead to damaging criticism. The toolkit was also criticised for not recognising that different companies have different needs and employment capabilities. It was also criticised for reading like an 'instruction manual' as well as a checklist and scorecard. This indicates that the purpose of the toolkit was unclear and caused further confusion.

The level of commitment required to use the toolkit was far more than most companies were willing or able to make. This may stem from companies remaining unconvinced by the business case rhetoric. A further concern relates to the language and terminology used which was found to be inaccessible for smaller firms and off-putting, even for those with a firm commitment towards equality. This reflects the importance of approaching diversity and equal opportunities in simple, clear and concise terms to maximise understanding and support of the issues raised. Respondents perceived that to use the toolkit effectively required formal HRM mechanisms and support. This view militates against the wider take-up of the toolkit in the industry given the lack of HRM support available to small firms which make up the vast majority of the industry and, that the HRM function remains largely undervalued in the industry (Drucker and White, 1996).

6.4 Discussion

The analysis of the RIP diversity toolkit has raised a number of issues which support the findings presented in chapter 5. This thesis has found that diversity and equal opportunities is consistently misunderstood and misinterpreted. Moreover, the concepts of equal opportunities and diversity have been found to be unpopular and have provoked a demonstrable 'backlash' amongst many informants. This is fuelled by the lack of an effective driver to encourage firms to engage with diversity and equality. Yet the business case for diversity and equal opportunities continues to be promoted in the industry despite the lack of evidence for it (see Rethinking Construction, 2000; CITB, 2004). The findings have also reinforced how the structure and culture of the undermine diversity policy implementation, for example in recruitment, retention and monitoring.
Thus, the key challenges identified for policy makers include the need to engage with staff outside the HRM function, to respond to the industry's unique structural and cultural environment and to recognise that construction companies have differing needs and employment capabilities. Furthermore, it is also clear that comprehensive guidance on diversity policy formulation and implementation is required and that accessible language is needed when discussing these issues.

The evidence presented in this chapter suggests that the industry's overall approach to addressing equal opportunities and diversity has been ineffective. For instance, it has been found that a toolkit approach does little enforce structural and behavioural change, and, this may encourage companies to use it to pay lip-service to diversity. Furthermore, the industry's attempts to diversify its workforce appear represent a fragmented 'a pick and mix' approach to managing equality and diversity (see section 6.2.2.6). Thus, pragmatism and short-termism are features of the industry's attempts to move forward in this area, rather than the deployment of consistent, integrated and long-term packages of diversity and equality diversity measures.

It is clear that a more strategic, pan industry approach is needed for the industry to move forward in this area. This forms the rationale for the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) code of practice which is discussed in chapter 7. As an industry leader, the ICE has the capacity to coordinate a more strategic long term approach to tackling diversity and equality issues in the industry. Furthermore, an industry wide code of practice with official backing, would set the standard for diversity and equality across the industry. However, it is clear that this would need to respond to the issues outlined in this thesis in order to promote positive change within the industry.

6.5 Conclusions

Whilst chapter 5 identified the challenges of workforce diversification, this chapter has critically evaluated the industry's solutions. In conclusion, the findings presented in this chapter support proposition 4 (see section 4.3) that the industry's attempts to address inequality are misguided and ineffective in addressing equality of opportunity. It has been argued that the industry's change
agenda has made little impact on the composition of the construction industry. As a whole, the industry's approach to workforce diversification have failed to embed diversity and equality within the industry's unique structural and cultural environment identified in chapter 5 (see sections 5.6 and 5.7). Furthermore, diversity and equality initiatives have been found to lack profile and support (section 6.2.2.5). The RIP toolkit has been reviewed as a practical attempt at solving the diversity issue and has provided a valuable insight into the applicability of diversity and equal opportunities policies and procedures within the construction context. Accordingly, the issues raised from this analysis have been fed forward and addressed within chapter 7.
CHAPTER 7

DEVELOPING A POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY

7.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the fifth objective of the research; to develop a framework of policy initiatives to redress the current exclusion of underrepresented groups in the construction industry. This involved the development of a diversity and equality code of practice to respond to both the findings of the stakeholder interviews (chapter 5) and the review of the industry's approach to addressing equal opportunities and diversity (chapter 6).

The code of practice was developed by means of an iterative process with the Institution of Civil Engineer's (ICE) equal opportunities committee and was subsequently adopted by the ICE, the industry's leading built environment professional body. Initially, the chapter sets out the weaknesses of current approaches which need to be addressed by an industry code of practice. An overview and discussion of the principal sections of the code is then provided, followed by a discourse around the complex challenges facing the industry. The code was then debated by industry leaders during a validation evaluation workshop. In addition, these influential stakeholders discussed the wider issues pertaining to the wider take up of diversity and equality in the industry and suggested a way forward for the diversity and equality agenda. The workshop was chaired by the incoming President of the ICE and held at the ICE global headquarters in London.

7.2 Developing the code of practice

It was recognised from the outset that a policy framework could not be seen as a catholic solution to the diversity and equality challenges currently facing the
construction industry. Rather, the purpose of the code was to address where possible, the research findings arising from the analysis of stakeholder perceptions, the problematic nature of the interplay of the industry's structure and culture and the failings of previous industry attempts to address the diversity issue. Thus, the evidence presented in chapters 5 and 6 demonstrate that without efforts to tackle these issues, they remain insurmountable barriers to the future diversification of the construction industry.

7.2.1 Methodology

In addition to responding to the research findings outlined in chapters 5 and 6, a desk-based survey was undertaken to collate equal opportunities and diversity policy relevant material to inform the development of the code of practice. This included a wide range of published information, internet sources and contacting people from a variety of fields. To ensure the consistency of the code with government initiatives and the leading agencies working to eliminate sex, race and age discrimination, information was particularly sourced from the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS), the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) and the Disability Rights Commission (DRC). The information gathered from these sources has been referenced accordingly throughout this chapter.

The code, which was written and presented for the organisation who supported its development, has been included in Appendix C for reference.

7.2.1.1 Collaboration with ICEfloe

Chapter 6 criticised the industry's fragmented approach to addressing equal opportunities and diversity and demonstrated the importance of embedding equality and diversity at a strategic level across the industry. Therefore collaborating with ICE provided a vehicle for addressing equal opportunities and diversity at a strategic level within the industry. Furthermore, the ICE, established in 1818, is the longest standing engineering institution. It gained its Royal Charter in 1828 which gave it status as the leader of the profession (ICE, 2004). It is also the largest professional institution across the construction sector comprising
almost 80,000 members worldwide (Ibid.). Clearly, the ICE has enormous influence across the industry and is a key potential industry change agent and diversity and equality champion.

ICEfloe (Institution of Civil Engineers - Fair, Level, Open, Equal), represents the Institution of Civil Engineer's (ICE) equal opportunities committee. Working with the ICEfloe committee enabled the code to be developed through an iterative process with a body of industry representatives. The ICEfloe committee comprised ten industry stakeholders including practitioners and employers, who were consulted periodically during the code's development. This involved presenting progress of the code's development and emerging content during four ICEfloe committee meetings over an annual period. Twenty to thirty minutes discussion time on the code was allocated during these meetings. This ensured the code was continually scrutinised and validated by industry representatives. Written records were kept of discussions which facilitated new ideas and enabled feedback to be incorporated into the code's development.

The ICE also assisted with the research in hosting a workshop to debate the code's practical application and issues of equality and diversity in the industry more generally. Furthermore, that it has been adopted by the ICE, is validation of the code in itself, supported by the outcomes of the workshop (see section 7.6)

7.2.3 Policy approach

The code of practice covered all kinds of potential discrimination against all individuals. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that men in the industry are also disadvantaged in terms of health and safety, working conditions (see section 5.8) and work life balance (Lingard 2003a; Loosemoore et al, 2003). However, the existence of group inequality was also acknowledged by the code. Furthermore, the code represented an integrated approach to equality by encompassing other 'strands' of group disadvantage including sexual orientation, religion and belief, disability and age which, until now have been ignored by the industry's equal opportunities agenda (see section 6.2).

The code recognised that the construction industry differs from other industries in certain important aspects. Thus it aimed to provide a construction industry
orientated policy framework in addressing, where possible, the issues raised by research participants as well as suggestions from the ICEfloe committee.

Liff and Cameron (1997) summarised a typical approach to equal opportunities in organisations as beginning with the establishment of a policy defining the organisation's aims in relation to equal opportunities and the translation of these into a set of procedures explaining how the policy is to be put into practice. This often includes guidance on how to carry out activities such as recruitment and grievances in line with equal opportunities. Finally, monitoring is carried out to determine the extent to which the procedures are achieved in practice and the policy is refined accordingly. However, the stakeholder interviews revealed a marked discrepancy between the approach outlined above, and what construction companies actually do. This provided the rationale for the code of practice to provide systematic and detailed guidance on how to carry out activities such as recruitment in line with equal opportunities. Furthermore, this approach aligns with existing government initiatives (e.g. information produced by ACAS) and codes of practice issued by the leading equality commissions (EOC, 2004d; CRE, 2004; DRC, 2004) as identified by the desk-top survey. Thus, the aim is not to be radically different to what has been done before, but to reconcile good practice with meeting the needs of the construction industry.

However, Liff and Cameron (1997) also pointed out that underpinning the 'personnel approach' is the assumption that the provision of detailed instructions on how to behave, will result in improved practice. However, as explored in 5.6, it is recognised that structural change, in terms of how work is organised in the industry, in addition to cultural change, encompassing changed understandings, values and attitudes, is fundamental for the industry to deliver diversity and equality. Thus policy initiatives which challenge the industry's structure and culture are included within the code of practice.

Ultimately, the ICEfloe committee concurred that for employers to comply with the spirit of the code was a fundamental starting point for the industry, especially for firms considering the issues contained within it for the first time. Indeed, it was recognised that change is likely to be evolutionary rather than revolutionary given the ingrained male orientated culture of the sector.
7.2.4 Terminology and language

The term 'diversity' was utilised to challenge the idea that the code of practice is intended only for women and ethnic minorities. Given the white, male dominance in the industry, this aimed to generate support by altering the way equal opportunities is viewed. In addition, by being inclusive and valuing all differences, diversity requires and promotes cultural and structural change.

However, as explored in chapter 2, diversity has been criticised for being too individualistic (Wilson, 1996, Liff, 1997). The code qualifies this by the inclusion of 'equality'. This acknowledges that on a macro level people's experience of work is strongly correlated with their social group membership (Liff 1999). Furthermore, the stakeholder interviews indicated that 'diversity' and 'equal opportunities' are contentious and controversial and their meaning is widely misunderstood (sections 5.4 and 5.5). However, 'equality' was suggested to be a more simple term with a clearer meaning amongst many of the case study informants.

The code was purposefully written in simple and concise language to maximise understanding of the issues it raised. It avoided the use of jargon and business case rhetoric. This addressed a key failure of the RfP diversity toolkit which was found to be difficult to interpret and alienated potential users. Moreover, all terms used within the code of practice were fully explained within a glossary of terms contained within the its appendices.

7.3 An overview of the sections of the code

The following sections present an overview of the principal sections of the code of practice. Due to the nature of the code it does not just contain a set of distinct recommendations but an implementation framework.

7.3.1 The purpose of the code

The purpose of the code was to provide a construction industry orientated policy framework for diversity and equality and practical guidance for its implementation.
It was intended for use internally within the ICE, in addition to ICE members and employers. It therefore established a standard for diversity and equality which all those associated with the institution should meet. Accordingly, it provides a useful way of communicating across the industry the rights and responsibilities of individuals in this regard (see section 6.4).

### 7.3.2 The drivers of the code: engaging stakeholders

The rationale for the development of an industry code of practice was provided in sections 6.4 and 7.2.1.1. The following discussion relates to section 3 of the code in formulating a framework to encourage its uptake by the industry.

Collectively, the research findings have indicated that companies remain unconvinced by the business case for addressing diversity and equal opportunities. Accordingly, the code avoided the high level rhetorical claims to enhanced business performance enshrined within the RfP working group report (Rethinking Construction, 2000). Indeed, this thesis has argued that a theoretical and empirical base for the business case is needed which should provide evidence of enhanced business performance. Until these issues can be resolved, the research findings suggest that it is inappropriate to promote unsubstantiated business arguments as the primary driver for diversity.

However, the ICEfloe committee were keen that the code should outline some of the potential benefits of diversity and equality (see section 3 of the code) to enthuse engineers to take practical action. These were then cross-referenced to supporting evidence, legal implications and moral and social justice arguments. This helped to form a more robust argument for addressing diversity and equality issues. In addition, where relevant, a clear rationale was included at the outset of each section of the code specifying why the steps outlined were important. An example of this would be section 12 of the code on work life balance. This approach was suggested by nearly a quarter of the case study interviewees as a more effective ways of engaging individuals and organisations. This was also perceived to be awareness raising by the informants.

The failure of the business case to secure commitment to diversity and equality may also be addressed by raising the profile of the legal case. For instance,
many of the case study interviewees felt that the *RIP* diversity toolkit would have been of greater value if its use assisted them to comply with equality legislation. This was seen as being particularly important for SME's who may lack understanding of their legal obligations. As a result, the code provided a framework for legal compliance.

The code also aimed to demonstrate the relationship between diversity and equality and good employment practice (see section 7 of the code). The intention was to promote a link between broader management issues and the steps outlined within the code. For example, the code highlighted that fair and equitable recruitment and selection procedures not only help to remove unlawful discrimination, but also ensure that individuals are appointed on merit rather than because they fit the white male stereotype.

7.3.3 ICE Policy statement

To demonstrate strong leadership from the ICE, The ICE’s equal opportunities policy statement was included within section 4 of the code. This included a statement of commitment to diversity and equality, indicating that it is an important part of the institution’s strategic vision for the industry.

7.3.4 Responsibilities

Section 5 of the code of practice outlined the responsibilities of both individuals and employers in driving forward the diversity and equality agenda. At an individual level, it highlighted the responsibility of all individuals and employees to refrain from harassment, intimidation or victimisation. It also called for individuals to cooperate with measures introduced by management and to draw attention to suspected acts of discrimination (see EOC, 2004d). Employers’ responsibilities focused on their legal obligations to ensure there is no unlawful discrimination (Ibid.). Accordingly, this section called for collective action on diversity and equality from all levels within the organisation. This responded to the concerns identified from this research that certain individuals and line managers undermine equality and diversity efforts (section 5.4.2 and 5.7.4).
7.3.5 Implementing the code of practice

Approximately 95% of the companies interviewed across the research design stated they had an equal opportunities statement. However, the number of companies which had taken steps to implement an equal opportunities policy was much lower (see section 5.4). In response, the code provided a useful guide for organisations on policy implementation.

The code called for the active support of senior management as being responsible for strategic planning in an organisation. However, a limitation of the RfP diversity toolkit was that it did not involve operations staff who have the capacity to exert influence within the construction workplace environment. As a result, the code advocated the involvement of supervisory staff and other relevant decision makers (such as line managers).

The code advocated the mainstreaming of diversity and equality into all policies and decision making within the organisation. This focussed on changing organisational practices and procedures rather than redressing the 'problems' faced by certain social groups. It was evident from the stakeholder interviews that this latter approach merely reinforces views that women are inadequate and require 'special treatment' and/or positive discrimination, which in turn was seen to cause a backlash amongst the white, male majority (see section 5.5.2). Hence mainstreaming represents a long-term strategy to bring about cultural and structural change in that it requires equal opportunities and diversity to be integrated into the everyday work of an organisation. Furthermore, the case study informants suggested that mainstreaming diversity and equality highlights its relevance and helps to ensure maximum exposure of the issues through engaging with all employees.

It also recommended that organisations set up a diversity and equality working group to establish how they can best serve the needs of all staff.

7.3.6 Influencing the supply chain and projects

The complex nature of construction projects and lengthy supply chains identified in section 5.6, indicated that embedding the code's principles and practices
throughout the supply chain and at project level was essential in working towards a fair and equitable industry. Thus, section 8 of the code recommended that users consider whether supply chain partners and organisations possess a well-communicated and effectively implemented equal opportunities policy, if not they should be requested and/or required to sign up to the code and/or comply with its spirit. Indeed, the ICEfloe committee thought this to be particularly pertinent for small companies who may not be aware of equality legislation or good diversity and equality practice.

In addition, a number of interviewees suggested that embedding diversity and equality objectives within 'partnering' arrangements would encourage contractual partners to work collaboratively towards equality objectives. Partnering refers to the long term agreements between companies to cooperate to an unusually high degree to achieve separate and yet complementary objectives (CII, 1991). It can be project specific or be extended to longer term arrangements. At a macro level, it has been seen as a solution to the problems associated with the industry's fragmentation (Bresnen and Marshall, 2000). In encouraging better integration and cooperation between contractual partners, it is intended to address the endemic confrontational culture and reduce the adversarialism typical in the industry (ACTIVE, 1996).

At a micro level, in the experience of several informants, partnering with larger firms had allowed them to plan workloads, time and resources more effectively for the incorporation of equality and diversity objectives, for instance, in executing equitable recruitment campaigns linked to future workloads. Partnering was also seen to encourage the employment of a more stable workforce, which was believed to be more attractive to women. Finally, some informants perceived partnering to move away from traditional competitive tendering to 'best value', thereby encouraging companies to invest in the provision of adequate welfare facilities to meet the needs of a diverse workforce. This ensures the costs of diversifying the construction workforce are shared. In addition, successful partnering requires that partners hold complementary values (DTI, 2004c). Thus, the problems of integrating a diverse workforce identified in section 5.7.3 are more likely to be circumvented.
7.3.7 Small businesses

As an overarching code of practice, the code addressed the construction industry in general. It therefore recommended that employers adapt it in a way appropriate to the size and structure of their organisation. Indeed, the RfP diversity toolkit was widely criticised for not meeting the needs of small firms. As a result, section 9 of the code acknowledges that smaller businesses require much simpler procedures than large organisations with complex structures and thus, it may not always be reasonable for them to carry out all the code's detailed recommendations. However, small firms were requested to ensure the consistency of their practices with the code’s general intentions and that employees are treated fairly and equitably.

7.3.8 Recruitment and selection

Recruitment and selection was addressed within section 10 of the code. This provided a framework of simple recommendations from which an equitable recruitment policy could be developed. In particular, it highlighted the importance of establishing and using consistent criteria.

Many of the companies interviewed in the RfP diversity toolkit case study used recruitment agencies (see section 6.5). In response, the code emphasised that confining recruitment to agencies, job centres and further and higher education institutions may result in the attraction of only certain types of candidate. Thus, it recommended that employers explore whether recruitment agencies have adequate diversity and equality policies and implementation mechanisms. This addressed a need to engage such outside organisations with diversity and equality to ensure they do not undermine efforts to diversify the construction workforce.

Whilst it can be argued that implementing good practice would invariably lead to fairer recruitment, this does not challenge the structural and cultural factors at the root of current inequitable recruitment practices in the industry. For instance, a significant number of employers were found to appoint on recommendation as means of recruiting a rapid and transient workforce in a casualised industry (section 5.6). The culture of the industry also prompted these informants to recruit
in their own image (see section 5.7.4). This reinforces the need for supply chain partners to sign up to the code of practice so that structural and cultural barriers can be dismantled through collective action.

Furthermore, many interviewees commented that the implementation of equitable recruitment practices is futile due to the lack of suitably qualified people from underrepresented groups applying for jobs. This emphasised the wider issues of attracting underrepresented groups to careers in the industry. In response, section 17 of the code emphasised the role of the ICE in promoting the industry to underrepresented groups and in raising awareness of the positive action measures that can be put into practice by companies (section 7.3.13).

7.3.9 Retention

The findings presented in this thesis indicate that the assimilation of industry processes, attitudes and behaviour retains the industry as a white, male domain. Within this environment underrepresented groups must either conform to existing industry structures and the dominant white, male culture, or face exclusion, marginalisation or rejection (see section 5.7). This level of institutionalised racism and sexism is the major barrier to retaining underrepresented groups who have chosen to enter the industry.

To help overcome these barriers, the code outlined a set of practical recommendations which sought to address the industry's current exclusionary processes, attitudes and behaviours. For example, it recommended training for any staff responsible for performance appraisals to ensure that underrepresented groups are not discriminated against in the appraisal process. It also advised that a member of staff be appointed to deal with any problems or complaints to ensure effective channels of communication (CRE et al, 2004). In addition, construction employers were encouraged to review their welfare facilities so that the needs of underrepresented groups could be catered for. For example, through the provision of sanitary facilities, recognition of prayer times and the allocation of room that could be used for prayer and disabled access where possible. It also prescribed the use of consistent and equitable procedures in all aspects of promotion, transfers and training, and recommended that all terms of employment, benefits, facilities and services be reviewed to ensure that they are
fair (EOC, 2004c). Furthermore, to ensure that the needs of underrepresented groups are met, the code recommended that employers consult with the relevant groups.

7.3.10 Work life balance

The rationale for the inclusion of work life balance within the code was provided by the literature (section 3.5.7). For instance, the difficulty women face in combining work and family roles has been identified and linked with women's underachievement within the industry (Dainty et al, 2004). Furthermore, research has also suggested that work/life conflicts which exist in the construction industry are not necessarily exclusive to one gender (Loosemore et al, 2003). In response, the code also drew attention to the fact that men may also need to undertake domestic responsibilities, thereby challenging the belief that traditional ways of working are only a problem for women.

Incorporating literature findings, good practice and the suggestions of the ICEfloe committee, section 12 of the code encompassed practical guidance on the formulation of a work-life balance policy to reconcile the operational needs of an organisation with those of the workforce. It encouraged employers to think creatively and implement flexible working hours, part time working, job share or working from home wherever practicable. As a useful starting point for companies, it suggested a process of consultation with staff and the undertaking of a trial programme to gain initial experience and feedback (CRE et al, 2004). The code also referred readers to other sources of help and guidance on implementing flexible working.

The code drew attention to the fact that simply providing opportunities for work life balance is insufficient; the take up of such provisions will remain low because it is believed that taking advantage of work life balance strategies will be interpreted as lack of commitment (Francis, 2004). Thus, the provision of such policies will only be effective if cultural and attitudinal change is also achieved (Lingard, 2003a). Consequently, the code called for employees to be assessed on the quality of work they produce rather than the hours they are at their desk. Francis (2004) posits that in order to achieve such a culture, change must be
driven from the top and that sensitivity training for middle managers and supervisors is required.

However, as demonstrated in section 5.6.5 there is evidence of a discord between the industry’s structure and the successful implementation of work-life balance policies. For example, the need for full time involvement of the workforce is dictated by a complex and demanding supply chain. It is therefore acknowledged that providing solutions to overcome the industry’s current ways of working is currently beyond the scope of this code of practice. However, the research findings indicate that it is likely that a radical approach which addresses the gendered nature of the industry’s structure is required.

7.3.11 Help with equality legislation

The interviews showed that many stakeholders did not fully understand equality legislation which subsequently impinged on their ability to fulfil their legal obligations (see section 5.4.3). In response, section 13 of the code of practice provided basic overview of employers legal responsibilities. According to the ICEfloe committee, this would be particularly helpful to smaller firms who may not be fully aware of their legal duties. The code provided guidance on maternity and health and safety legislation, as these were areas that caused most concern amongst the construction stakeholders interviewed in chapter 5. For instance, many informants argued that complying with maternity law was onerous and costly, and deterred them from employing women (section 5.4.3)

In terms of health and safety, many interviewees perceived that women, disabled people and those ethnic minorities wishing to observe religious and cultural dress (e.g. turbans) were more susceptible to injuries on construction sites than white non-disabled men (sections 5.6.3 and 5.9). Many informants also expressed their concern for the health and safety of pregnant employees. Accordingly, the code provided a checklist to help companies manage some of these health and safety issues.

A study by the American Occupational and Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) revealed health and safety issues specific to female construction workers; including, stress related illnesses; restricted access to sanitary facilities
and toilets; ill-fitting protective clothing and equipment; and poor on-the-job training in which women do not benefit from the informal training common among their male peers. These were all found to be significant issues that adversely impacted women's ability to perform their jobs safely (OSHA, 1999). Several informants interviewed as part of the RIP diversity toolkit case study, suggested that mainstreaming equality and diversity into everyday health and safety practices and procedures would help to bring about safe, healthy and equitable conditions for all workers. Accordingly, the code of practice advocated that diversity and equality be mainstreamed into existing health and safety policies and procedures. This ensures that measures designed to protect people from harm were not used to discriminate or exclude women, ethnic minorities and disabled people from the workplace. For instance, many stakeholders frequently used examples of health conditions to justify discrimination against disabled people and pregnant women (see section 5.9). However, this also highlights the need for education and training to challenge such assumptions.

The code also covered the law on equal pay for men and women and the legal obligation to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people.

### 7.3.12 Harassment and bullying

Section 14 of the code of practice covered harassment and bullying. This addressed a gap in the RIP diversity toolkit which did not contain any references to harassment and bullying. However, the harassment and bullying of non-traditional groups is an endemic part of the dominant white, male, culture of the industry (section 5.7). There is also a great deal of evidence of harassment and bullying of women and ethnic minorities within the literature (Royal Holloway 1999; Ansari et al, 2002 and Bagilhole et al, 2001).

Accordingly, practical guidance on developing a bullying and harassment policy was provided for all types of firm including small businesses. This covered the need to provide examples of unacceptable behaviour (see section 5.7.1), and the development of fair disciplinary, grievance and investigation procedures. It also drew attention to the fact that individuals should be protected from victimisation following any complaint.
The code recommended training for managers on how to keep the workplace free from harassment as well as how to handle complaints. This would need to refer to the certain motivating structures and incentives that can make it rewarding to harass and bully others in the workplace. These can include internal competition, reward systems and expected benefits (Salin, 2003). Training for employees on their rights to be free from harassment was also advocated.

In addition, the code recommended that reasonable steps be taken to prevent/eliminate harassment by customers, clients, sub contractors and suppliers. These reinforced the need to involve external organisations in working towards a fair and equitable work environment.

7.3.13 On-site behaviour

The research findings indicated that men on construction sites display exaggerated macho behaviour. Sexism and racism was found to take verbal, physical and visual forms including, suggestive remarks and innuendos, actual bodily contact and sexually derogatory images of women on display (see section 5.7.1). Sexist and racist attitudes were also reported. For instance, informants commented that women lack ability for construction work, and that Black people will look for opportunities to 'play the race card'. Furthermore, relationships in the industry were characterised by argument, conflict and crisis (Gale 1994a). Not only does this create an extremely hostile and intimidating environment for women and ethnic minorities, interviewees were reluctant to employ women and ethnic minorities because of it (section 5.7).

Consequently, this section of the code called for the establishment of a code of conduct requiring all those on construction sites to behave in a way that promotes good relations between men and women, disabled and non disabled people and people of all races, religion and sexual orientation. It prohibited sexist and racist language and behaviour, aggressive behaviour, bullying, intimidation, harassment and abuse. It also included a statement that individuals are expected to treat all site workers in a fair and non-discriminatory way and be respectful of people's differences.
It also included the need for awareness raising training to promote understanding of acceptable and unacceptable language and behaviour, challenge negative attitudes to women and ethnic minorities and communicate the rights of workers not to be discriminated against or harassed.

7.3.14 Raising awareness of diversity and equality

Section 15 of the code covered training in diversity and equality. However, there was widespread misunderstanding of the meaning of diversity training within the case study interviews (section 6.5.5). Accordingly, this section provided a practical framework for the development of diversity and equality training programmes.

In response to the findings presented in sections 5.4 and 5.5, the purpose of this section of the code was threefold:

- to promote understanding of equal opportunities and diversity
- to raise awareness of the existence of discrimination, prejudice and stereotyping and gain support for diversity and equality
- to deliver the advice, information and skills necessary for the effective implementation of the code to the workforce.

The role of training in effecting cultural change has been discussed in the literature (Royal Holloway, 1999). Liff and Cameron (1997) noted the success of intensive training programmes that allowed men and women to explore the limitations of their current roles and behaviour and develop solutions both in relation to business requirements and their life outside work. In addition, the code also recommended that training should provide the workplace skills necessary to work effectively with those who are different (Zhu and Kleiner, 2000). For instance, managers and employers should be empowered to reframe negative thoughts and improve their conflict management.

Indeed, in the experience of one interviewee training workshops had proved successful in breaking down gender stereotypes:

“We did a training course in order to challenge peoples assumptions...So we took for example, the age old argument that women can't work in construction”
because they can't lift things. So our trainer said to the group 'ok, take plumbers, they have to lift spanners, so can women lift spanners?' and everyone agreed that yes they could, women could lift spanners, and they could lift screwdrivers and radiators etc. And as this went on, it became apparent that they were starting to lose their argument. When the trainer said 'what about boilers?' they all agreed that women couldn't lift boilers. So the trainer then 'how heavy is a boiler?' and they agreed on X amount of weight. And the trainer then said to them 'well I'm a strong man and I don't think I could lift that! Can you lift that?' and they all said 'no' so the trainer asked, 'well what do you do?' And they said 'I get my mate to help me'. And so it dawned on them that they were being silly, that women could also get help. And this was precisely how we started to break down these stupid stereotypes!" (18)

Smith (2003) found that a key to successful culture change is the recognition of middle rank of leadership at the business unit level. Their sponsorship was perceived as more related to successful culture change than that of the most senior staff. Accordingly, the code of practice recommended that training be provided for all staff at all levels within the organisation. In response to suggestions from ICEfloe committee members, this section of the code was purposefully entitled 'raising awareness of diversity and equality' since it was felt that the term 'training' may be considered patronising and off-putting, particularly for senior members of staff.

The stakeholder interviews indicated that disabled people have been ignored by the industry (see section 5.9). In response to this, the code drew attention to the need for disability training to increase awareness of the abilities and potential of disabled people and the assistance that should be made available in the employment of disabled people.

The case study interviews highlighted that diversity training was seen as too onerous and impractical, and that most companies were unwilling to provide specific training on diversity perceiving this to be expensive and unnecessary. In response to these concerns, the code also recommended the mainstreaming of equality and diversity into general training courses. For example in informing new starters of the company equality and diversity policy along side other training issues during induction training. Indeed, several informants who took part in the RIP diversity toolkit case study believed this to be a more effective use of time and resources, and preferable to bespoke courses as it effectively puts the
significance of equality and diversity into context. For example, the delivering of advice to employees when working in areas where there are few English speakers during project induction (see section 6.5.5).

Many of the case study informants also commented on the importance of affordable professional advice on training issues. Indeed, one informant had received assistance from the Race Relations Employment Advisory Service (RREAS) in delivering presentations and workshops to engage all staff and ensure their commitment. This demonstrated the effectiveness of workshops as a means of engaging commitment to issues of diversity and equality. As a result, the code sign-posted users to organisations and initiatives who were able to offer expertise and support via the information contained within its appendices.

7.3.15 Monitoring diversity and equality

In line with the codes of practice produced by the equality commissions (EOC, 2004d; CRE, 2004), this section of the code recommended that monitoring be carried out to collect information to measure an organisation's performance and effectiveness, the results of which may suggest how the organisation can improve and inform the future development of policies and practices and subsequent targeted action to prevent discrimination. The code recommended that monitoring be carried out in recruitment, selection and promotion processes. The code also called for the active consideration of the impact of diversity and equality policies, process and practices on different groups, for example through regular consultation with those affected by the policy.

However, the majority of the case study informants argued that diversity and equality monitoring called for an unreasonable amount of work for something they do not regard as a major issue. Many also found that the monitoring section of the RfP diversity toolkit did not indicate what was required in simple and straightforward terms, leading to confusion and dissatisfaction amongst users. To address these findings the code highlighted the link between monitoring and policy development, implementation and evaluation. Furthermore, it demonstrated how a basic analysis of information may identify areas requiring attention, for example: whether members of a particular group do not apply for employment or promotion; are not recruited or promoted or are concentrated in
certain jobs sections or departments carrying a lower pay, status or authority (see EOC, 2004d). In recommending that appropriate action be taken on the findings, the code aimed to promote monitoring as a positive tool which, if used effectively, can help to create change. Indeed, this addressed a criticism of the monitoring section of the *RfP* diversity toolkit, which did not specify that follow up action should be taken (section 6.5.7).

The code deliberately avoided prescribing a specific monitoring framework since monitoring will vary according to an organisation's particular circumstances, problems, characteristics and to its size and structure. Thus, it thereby acknowledged that in a small firm with a simple structure it may be enough for managers to assess the distribution and payment of employees from their own personal knowledge. This aimed to avoid the frustration experienced by users of the *RfP* diversity toolkit who saw little need to develop comprehensive formalised monitoring procedures when only a handful of people are directly employed (section 6.5.7).

Liff and Cameron (1997) argued that whilst documenting where women and men are in the organisation is useful in bringing home the extent of unequal distribution, it is also open to the conventional interpretation that women lack the qualifications, drive or commitment to move up the hierarchy. Therefore, the code maintained that reasons for underachievement be fully investigated to avoid stereotyped assumptions. In addition, it emphasised that information collected for the specific purpose of monitoring should never be used at any stage of a selection process.

### 7.3.16 The role of professional institutions

Promoting equality and diversity is a process of culture change, best achieved though influencing, informing and advising (ECU, 2004c). Given the capacity of professional institutions to communicate across the industry, and at all levels through the membership, they were seen as having a fundamental role to play in promoting diversity and equality and in raising awareness of discrimination.

Indeed, the industry's professional institutions are in a position to put over a strong message about what is expected and the importance of achieving it, for
example through adopting and promoting such a code of practice. The importance of leadership and commitment from the top was recognised by the ICEfloe committee. In response to this, there needs to be a process of internal introspection and action to address diversity and equality for the professional institutions to demonstrate their commitment and lead the industry by example.

Thus, in consultation with the ICEfloe committee, section 17 of the code publicised ICE's commitment to diversity and equality. It stated that the ICE through ICEfloe would:

- support, promote and encourage equality and diversity initiatives;
- subject its policies to continuous assessment and review in order to examine how they will affect under-represented groups;
- monitor the recruitment and progress of all ICE staff paying particular attention to women, ethnic minorities and disabled people;
- take positive action wherever possible to support this code of practice and its aims;
- offer guidance and help on equality and diversity issues to all individuals, members and employers associated with the Institution;
- publish this policy widely and make it available on the ICEfloe website.

Although these action points were agreed in conjunction with ICEfloe on behalf of the ICE, they are applicable to other construction professional bodies.

**7.3.17 Positive action**

Section 18 of the code introduced the concept of positive action and suggested some proactive measures employers may wish adopt to recruit and retain underrepresented groups. Positive action measures, by focussing on group outcomes, may help to build a large enough critical mass to engender change within the industry. Due to the fact that positive action was misunderstood by many stakeholders (see section 5.6), it was clearly defined and distinguished from positive discrimination.

Several informants had participated in positive action schemes and had found them to be worthwhile. Drawing on the experiences of these informants and to
address women's, ethnic minorities' and disabled people's underrepresentation and underachievement, the code recommended the following practical actions:

- Encouraging people from under-represented groups to apply for job vacancies, promotion or transfer opportunities using 'statements of encouragement' in adverts to encourage applications
- Promoting the engineering profession to women, ethnic minorities and disabled people through presentations to schools and careers fairs
- Supporting, mentoring and/or sponsoring women, ethnic minorities and disabled people on university courses
- Developing mentoring programmes for women, ethnic minorities and disabled people in the industry.

In addition, to redress the lack of suitably qualified people from underrepresented groups applying for jobs in the industry, as commented on by a significant number of interviewees, the code recommended that employers put pressure on educational institutions to play their part in addressing the under representation of women, ethnic minorities and disabled people on engineering and related courses.

7.3.18 Culture change

Finally the code included highlighted and reinforced the need for culture change in the industry in order to provide a fair and equitable workplace environment for all employees. Indeed this research has shown that the white male culture perpetuates negative attitudes, hostility and discriminatory behaviour towards non traditional entrants (section 5.7) as well as inequitable working practices (such as 'word of mouth' recruitment, inflexible working practices and poor welfare facilities).

7.3.19 Guidance and support

In response to the suggestions from those who participated in the RfP diversity toolkit case study, separate guidance was developed to support the operation of
the code of practice. This included a glossary of terms, a table of useful contacts and an accessible overview of equalities legislation. The glossary aimed to facilitate understanding of terms used in the code as well as promoting general understanding of the issues raised. A table of information and contacts of relevant initiatives and organisations was included to sign-post users to further guidance and help if required. Finally, a comprehensive guide to equality legislation was developed in response to the finding that many stakeholders admitted to not understanding their legal obligations (section 5.4.3). This also reinforced the legal case as the driver of diversity and equality. These documents were included as appendices to the main code of practice to avoid including lengthy passages of text within the code itself. Indeed, the case study informants suggested that although the provision of guidance was necessary to improve the RiP diversity toolkit's usability, its inclusion within the toolkit itself would make it daunting and unwieldy.

The case study participants also suggested that detailed advice on monitoring and setting equality targets, together with construction specific examples of proven strategies that can help to achieve equality targets would also maximise users understanding. Although time constraints prevented the development of these, there is scope for their future inclusion in the code's appendices to facilitate continuous improvement in this area.

The code aimed to encompass a non-prescriptive approach to avoid the potential for a 'backlash' as observed within the case study interviews. Therefore, the use of model equality and diversity policies, and pro forma job advertisements and application forms that can be adopted and/or adapted by firms, has been deliberately avoided. Such an approach was widely criticised by the majority of case study informants for being overly prescriptive and preventing organisations from responding to their own individual needs. These informants argued that a set of guiding principles and practical equality and diversity measures which could be adapted by different sizes/types of firm would be more useful and acceptable to employers.
7.4 The grounding of the code within the research findings

Table 7.1 overleaf demonstrates the grounding of the code within the research findings. It must be noted that the intention of the code was not to be radically different to what has been done before. Rather, it aimed to complement past efforts and reconcile good practice with meeting the needs of industry.
Table 7.1 The grounding of the code within the research findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder attitudes (chapter 5)</th>
<th>The Industry’s response (chapter 6)</th>
<th>Filling in the gaps: Recommendations espoused within the code of practice (chapter 7)</th>
<th>Issues still to be addressed (chapter 7)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholders unconvinced by the business case (section 5.7).</td>
<td>Latham (1994) recommended that the industry pursue equal opportunities.</td>
<td>Developed a more robust case for addressing diversity and equality resting on business related facts, legal and moral arguments (section 7.3.1).</td>
<td>The need for more effective ways to engage companies, particularly SMEs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislation is poorly understood, appears to discourage the employment of underrepresented groups (section 5.9).</td>
<td>Working Group 8 (CIB 1996) and <em>Respect for People</em> (Rethinking Construction, 2000) both extolled a business case for workforce diversification.</td>
<td>Equality and diversity promoted as part of good employment practice (section 7.3.1).</td>
<td>The need for a theoretical/empirical base for the business case (section 7.3.1).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few companies had fully comprehensive equal opportunities policies (section 5.6).</td>
<td>Working Group 8 report (CIB 1996) offered guidelines on equal opportunities in the form of a checklist based on best practice.</td>
<td>Delivered a balance between good practice and addressing the needs of construction stakeholders (section 7.2.3).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrepancy between policy formation and implementation (section 5.6).</td>
<td>No company had used <em>RIP</em> diversity toolkit to redevelop existing policy or as part of continuous improvement (section 6.6). The monitoring section of the toolkit did not include the need for follow up action.</td>
<td>Reconciled a systematic personnel approach with approaches aimed at challenging the structure and culture of the industry (sections 7.2.5, 7.3.4 and 7.3.11).</td>
<td>Set targets for improvement (Royal Holloway, 1999).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gap between rhetoric and practice (section 5.6).</td>
<td>Provided an implementation framework (section 7.3.2).</td>
<td>Diversity and equality seen as the responsibility of everyone (section 7.3.3).</td>
<td>The role of the professional institutions in promoting the code throughout the industry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Advocated monitoring and follow up action (section 7.3.12).</td>
<td></td>
<td>Industry should reward efforts to improve equality and diversity performance (section 7.3.14).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language And the understanding of diversity and equal opportunities in the industry</td>
<td>Diversity misunderstood and confused with equal opportunities (section 5.7).</td>
<td></td>
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<td>---</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working group 8 (CIB 1998) and the <em>Respect for People</em> initiative appear to have renamed equal opportunities as diversity without making significant changes in content or approach.</td>
<td>Used accessible language, avoided the use of jargon and business case rhetoric (section 7.2.6).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>RIP</em> toolkit criticised for inaccessible language and prescriptive tone (section 6.5).</td>
<td>Provided a glossary of terms (section 7.3.15).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The usability of the <em>RIP</em> toolkit was undermined by the lack of guidance and supporting information (section 6.5).</td>
<td>Avoided prescribing model equality and diversity policies which do not respond to the needs of individual organisations. (section 7.3.12).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The need for more detailed advice on monitoring, setting targets, and in formulating effective work life balance strategies (sections 7.3.15 and 7.6.1).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure and culture</th>
<th>The organisation of work in the industry impedes the delivery of equal opportunities practices and procedures (section 5.6.3).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The industry has ignored structural and cultural barriers to workforce diversity and workplace equality.</td>
<td>Highlighted the need to embed the code within the supply chain and at project level. Collective action/‘partnering’ may help to address some structural and cultural barriers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The <em>RIP</em> diversity toolkit was seen as irrelevant to small firms and firms without HRM support (section 6.5).</td>
<td>Addressed work/life balance (section 7.3.8).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The <em>RIP</em> diversity toolkit did not address work life balance.</td>
<td>Recognised the differing needs of small firms for instance they would require less stringent monitoring procedures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aimed to be accessible to line managers not just HRM specialists.</td>
<td>The dominance of the male career model.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cultural/ attitudinal barriers diversity and equality. For instance:

- White men resentful of the intrusion of women and ethnic minorities (i.e. section 5.5.3).
- Colour/gender blind racism/sexism (section 5.6.1)
- 'Special case' status for underrepresented groups (section 5.6.2; Gale, 1992)
- Problems perceived in integrating a diverse workforce (section 5.5.3).

Toolkit approach did not address the need for culture change.

Raised the importance of cultural/ attitudinal change (section 7.3.14).

Advocated mainstreaming to embed equality and diversity throughout the organisation and involve everyone in the organisation (section 7.3.2).

Aimed to educate, inform and advise (section 7.3.15).

Cultural change.

Training and education needed to break down stereotypes.

Structural and cultural issues reinforce equal opportunities and diversity as contentious and controversial creating a 'backlash' (section 5.10).

Industry has failed to address structural and cultural issues.
7.5 Validation of the code of practice

A workshop was organised to debate the merits and demerits of the code of practice. The workshop was held as an evening event at ICE headquarters in London and was chaired by the vice president of the ICE. Nineteen industry representatives including senior managers, practitioners and academic experts, attended the workshop. Details of the workshop participants are included in Table 7.2 below:

Table 7.2 Workshop participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workshop participant</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ICE Incoming president and Director</td>
<td>Engineering consultancy, planning and project management. Annual turnover (UK) £395 million. 7000 employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR Director</td>
<td>Consulting Engineers. Annual Turnover: undisclosed. 200 employees. London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Engineer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR Manager</td>
<td>Large engineering consultancy. Annual turnover £1.2 billion. 14000 employees. London base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Engineer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR Manager</td>
<td>Construction related services and project management. Annual turnover: £133 billion. 70000 employees. London base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Engineer</td>
<td>Speciality consultancy company. Annual Turnover: undisclosed. 100 employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice President and Managing Director</td>
<td>Professional body, 80000 members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICEfloe committee</td>
<td>ICEfloe committee members represent both public and private sector organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 members in attendance including:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chair</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Engineer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR director</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjudicator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Engineer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor of Employment Studies</td>
<td>Higher Education Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager of a centre for ethnic minorities studies</td>
<td>Higher Education Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor of Social Policy and Equal Opportunities</td>
<td>Higher Education Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior lecturer in Civil and Building Engineering</td>
<td>Higher Education Institution</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.5.1 Perceptions of the code of practice

The code of practice was praised for being well written, the language was found to be clear, concise and widely accessible. Participants also commented that the code was comprehensive in its content and was effective in raising awareness of the range of equality and diversity measures that companies can put into place to improve their employment practices.

There was generally some uncertainty over whom the code of practice was aimed at. Participants felt that it was not clear whether the code was intended for the ICE, its members or companies in general. There was also a consensus view that the majority of organisations will have, and prefer, their own equal opportunities policies and would therefore not require the code of practice. In response, many participants commented that the code should be targeted as a useful resource for members of the Institution to take back to their organisations to ensure that existing policies and practices include all the issues raised by the code. Moreover, the code was thought to be of particular benefit to SMEs and companies with a limited experience of diversity and equality. Due to its style and content, it was also perceived to be useful and accessible to line managers, with several commentators reinforcing the importance of engaging middle managers for successful policy implementation.

The views of the workshop delegates indicated that the status of the code should be raised as one which has been prepared and issued by the Institution to give practical guidance on the operation of diversity and equality within the civil engineering profession.

Guidance and supporting information

The structure of the code as comprising a concise framework of equality measures, cross-referenced to the detailed guidance and information contained within the appendices, was perceived to be effective by many participants. They commented that this allowed additional information and guidance to be easily incorporated as required.
Many of the workshop participants suggested that further information and guidance on everyday issues such as dealing with subcontractors and operatives should be included within the code to better align it with the needs of civil engineering companies. Guidance on delivering flexible working arrangements and reintroducing women following a period of maternity leave were also considered necessary. Unsurprisingly, the difficulties of implementing work-life balance policies within the contracting side of the industry was raised, and participants argued that collective action across the supply chain is required for employers to provide improved work/life balance and flexible working arrangements. Furthermore, participants perceived that advice and examples of how to develop and implement effective monitoring systems, and guidance on how to take into account local labour market forces when monitoring workforce profiles, would be useful.

Several participants also suggested that conferences and workshops could be used to assist companies in implementing the code of practice. Ensuring that these were targeted at different sizes of firm would ensure practical advice is offered. In addition, participants also suggested that a forum of shared experiences would constitute a useful resource for construction companies attempting to implement the code.

**The code of practice and professional conduct**

Several participants commented on the potential interrelationship between the code of practice and ICE’s rules of professional conduct. Thus, it was proposed that the rules of professional conduct should be modified to include diversity and equality and cross referenced to the code of practice. This would ensure the responsibility of individual members to abide by the principles contained within the code. It would also allow complaints to be brought to the ICE about the professional conduct of a member in respect of equality and diversity. This would also send a strong message to the profession and the wider industry that discrimination, harassment and victimisation constitute improper conduct. However, it must be acknowledged that the incorporation of diversity and equality into the rules of professional conduct would represent a structural condition which masks a much harsher cultural reality. Thus, the importance of culture change should not be ignored.
7.5.2 Overarching diversity and equality themes

7.5.2.1 Engaging firms

Despite the code's efforts to provide a more robust case for diversity and equality by incorporating business, legal and moral arguments, workshop participants argued that this was insufficient to engage the industry with the code of practice, and the diversity and equality agenda more generally. In response to this, several stakeholders commented on key roles that clients could play in encouraging change by setting the standard for diversity and equality. It was argued that clients could specify that work should be provided for currently underrepresented groups. However, it was felt that firms would have difficulty employing women, ethnic minorities and disabled people since members of these groups are not attracted to the construction industry and its working conditions. Thus, adopting contract compliance to drive change is not a straightforward solution; simply forcing behavioural change does little to challenge the perpetuating stereotypes and equality assumptions and structural barriers identified within chapter 5. However, it was agreed that clients have a role in promoting a collaborative approach to the diversification of the industry.

A further suggestion focused on using the leverage of market leaders to showcase the business benefits of diversity to encourage a wider take-up of diversity and equality amongst smaller firms. Thus, larger companies should be targeted, with smaller companies becoming involved through a drip feed process. It was thus considered important that large firms collaborate with smaller firms, including sub-contractors, to help them implement equality and diversity measures.

Ultimately, participants argued that cost effective ways of introducing diversity and equality are required for construction companies to take action. Indeed, many stakeholders interviewed perceived the implementation of equal opportunities to be extremely costly.
7.5.2.2 The role of professional bodies

A consensus view amongst the workshop participants was that the ICE should adopt a lead role in delivering workforce diversity and equality. Subsequently, the following section comprises an overview of action points for the Institution as suggested by the informants. These are in relation to the endorsement and promotion of the code of practice and, engagement with the diversity and equality agenda more generally. Although directed at the ICE, these suggestions are also applicable to other professional bodies operating within the construction sector.

Exemplifying good practice

As the leader of the profession, stakeholders maintained that the Institution should lead by example. Consequently, it should publicly endorse the code of practice and examine and address the gaps in its own practices. Indeed, particular emphasis was placed on mainstreaming in attempting to ensure that equality and diversity are considered at all stages of the policy process within the Institution itself and its work within the wider profession.

It was also suggested that monitoring the diversity of the membership would provide the data necessary to develop a suitable strategy to address the underrepresentation of certain groups. Indeed, it was argued that addressing diversity and equality requires the development of measurable targets for achievement, and deliverables that can be used as milestones against which progress can be measured. Informants suggested that the posting of short, medium and long term targets on the ICE website, would define a clear direction in terms of diversity and equality for the Institution and its members.

The need for a dedicated diversity and equality specialist to oversee the Institution's work, and further support the network of ICEfloe volunteers was raised by the ICEfloe committee representatives.

There was also a discussion on the role of the ICE in contributing to the white male culture of the construction sector. Indeed, several informants commented specifically on the prominent portraits of past presidents (all white, male) which line the stairway of the main building, and the fact that relatively low numbers of
women, ethnic minorities and disabled people occupy visibly powerful positions within the Institution. Thus, without action to address its own exclusivity, the participants argued that any message promoted by the ICE on diversity and equality would be lessened. One practical suggestion was for the ICE to openly represent women's and ethnic minorities' contribution for example by displaying more diverse images throughout the institution.

Promoting and raising awareness

A second key role of the ICE centred on exploiting its influence and networks to promote diversity and equality and the code of practice throughout the profession and the wider industry. At a macro level, the potential to liaise with government on the issues related to diversity and equality in the industry was highlighted. The incoming ICE president and chair of the workshop agreed to invite a minister to the institution debate diversity and equality. This would provide an opportunity to promote the policies and interests of the profession in the public arena and gain political leverage.

Several of the participants believed it was important for the code to be promoted within the ICE regions. This was seen as an effective means of facilitating the engagement of a wide range of companies and other stakeholders, including clients, with a vested interest in the same socio-economic context. For example, by holding regional workshops to engage managers of local firms in the diversity and equality issue, it was felt that ICE could provide an excellent forum for encouraging debate and shared experience amongst construction businesses. This could also provide an opportunity through which innovative approaches towards the management of equality and diversity could be showcased to other construction companies.

The importance of communicating operational activities and achievements effectively to members and stakeholders both regionally and nationally was recognised as key to securing confidence in the ICE's commitment to diversity and equality. Being able to demonstrate industry's achievements in this area, alongside the benefits to the profession was seen to ensure diversity and equality is accepted as a focus for industry development.
Informants stated that ICE should publicise the diversity and equality code of practice and it was agreed that the code should be officially launched by the Institution in due course. Publishing the code of practice on the ICE website was recommended in addition to a more traditional mass leafleting campaign to advertise the code amongst the membership. It was also commented that new members should receive a hard copy of the code within their induction packs. Several participants suggested that the inclusion of diversity and equality within the members satisfaction and employer surveys would raise awareness of the code of practice and ensure the Institution meets the needs of the membership through constantly examining and taking action to improve its equality and diversity services.

Existing events and conferences such as the ICE Annual Conference and Civils 2004 were seen as an opportunity to advertise and promote the code of practice and the wider diversity and equality agenda, perhaps through the development of an ICEfloe display stand. Participants also highlighted other various media which could also be utilised to promote the code, raise awareness of the issues and disseminate good practice and achievements, these included the Institution’s own media centre, magazine and journal.

It was also suggested that widespread promotion of the code of practice and its subsequent uptake within the profession may encourage other professional bodies and institutions to address equality and diversity, thereby securing enhanced commitment to diversity and equality across the construction sector.

Finally, several participants commented that the institution needs to do what it can to reward firms attempting to improve their diversity performance. It was agreed that change is likely to be evolutionary rather than revolutionary given the white male culture of the industry. Engendering incremental change requires that firms taking initial steps should be rewarded in the form of recognition of their efforts. It was suggested that firms who have made progress in this area could be recognised through the media or by winning an award for their efforts. Furthermore, the ICE could run events for senior managers and industry stakeholders to celebrate progress made, raise the profile of diversity and equality and inspire individuals to promote it within their own organisations.
7.6 Conclusions

The code of practice has set down a framework of practical measures which aim to create a more equitable workplace environment for underrepresented groups. Accordingly, it has addressed where possible, the stakeholders' concerns explored in chapter 5, as well as the weaknesses identified in the RfP diversity toolkit case study. Its alignment with the needs of industry has been further assured by means of an iterative process of development through extensive liaison with the ICEfloe committee and a workshop of influential industry stakeholders.

Whilst the code has provided a practical and systematic policy framework offering guidance on all aspects of equal opportunities good practice, it has also addressed specifically, the implementation of diversity and equality within the construction industry. In particular, it has suggested mainstreaming and partnering to address the industry's exclusionary structure and culture respectively.

That the industry has validated the code is a useful starting point for engagement with the diversity and equality agenda. However, the key challenge is to convince companies to take action. Furthermore, the impact of code on equality and workforce diversification rests on the action and commitment of the ICE.
CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

8.1 Introduction

This research aimed to explore the industry stakeholder attitudes towards diversity and equality and identify their implications for workforce diversification and workplace equality. This was to be achieved by means of an ethnographic qualitative study to gain an in-depth understanding of stakeholder views on women and ethnic minorities working in the construction industry. The aim to construct a framework of practical policy initiatives to tackle inequality and encourage greater diversification of the construction industry labour market was also achieved through the development of a diversity and equality code of practice grounded in the research findings. This chapter now presents the conclusions of the research and assesses the extent to which the original objectives of the research have been met. It also provides a discussion on the limitations of the study, and offers guidance as to the direction future research could take in order to develop the area further.

8.2 Conclusions of the research

The construction stakeholders interviewed in this study demonstrated their preference for employing white non disabled men like themselves. This confirmed previous research which identified the industry’s homogeneous recruitment practices. However, this research observed that underrepresented groups were granted contingent inclusion (Glover, 1999) in the industry. For instance, women were admitted in predominantly office based roles within the construction professions and ‘softer’ trades such as painting and decorating within the craft and trade occupations. This preserves the rest of the industry for men and protects against a loss of occupational prestige for the men. Furthermore,
women's and ethnic minorities' opportunities were restricted by limiting their acquisition of the necessary skills and experience, such as site experience which was depicted as necessary for ongoing career progression in many careers paths within the industry.

Most of the informants tended to operate from a stereotypical perspective. For instance Black people were seen to have a 'chip on their shoulder', women were viewed as incompetent and too 'soft' and disabled people were assumed to be a health and safety risk. This indicated a lack of knowledge and awareness of those who do not fit the white, male stereotype. These stereotypes were also used to justify workforce homogeneity. In particular, discrimination on the grounds of sex and disability was legitimised and justified in that both women and disabled people were seen as unsuitable for site work.

This research found that disabled people have been excluded from the diversity and equality agenda. This was justified by references to access barriers and health and safety obligations. Disability was therefore seen as a reason for leaving the industry.

The research also exposed stakeholder perceptions of equal opportunities policies. Most informants expressed support for a same treatment approach to equal opportunities. However, they were less supportive of the implementation of formalised bureaucratic procedures to deliver this. This highlights a gap between rhetoric and practice. Informants were particularly hostile in their views on approaches to equal opportunities which treat underrepresented groups differently by providing support for their differential needs. Furthermore, in appearing to support equal treatment, the liberal, free market and pragmatic rhetoric of colour-blind racism allowed the construction stakeholders to defend white male supremacy in an apparently non-racial/sexist manner.

The concept of diversity for the ongoing career development of underrepresented groups in the industry was also explored. However, rather than presenting an opportunity to drive forward the equality agenda, the term was generally misunderstood amongst the majority of informants. Furthermore its associated business case was found to be an ineffective driver for diversity and equality within the construction sector.
The industry's structure, in particular, the organisation of work in the industry, maintains its white male preserve. It sustains the dominance of the male career model which limits the opportunities for the introduction of flexible working practices necessary to attract and retain women. The reliance on a transient and mobile workforce undermines the implementation of equitable recruitment procedures and flexible working policies. In addition, the nature of site work was seen to create and reinforce physical barriers for women and disabled people. Clearly, the structure of the industry benefits white non-disabled men and is key to the industry's failure to deliver equitable working practices.

The research findings confirm that the overall culture of the industry is one that is hostile to women's and ethnic minorities' presence and consists of both overt and covert resistance by white men. To succeed in the industry, women and ethnic minorities are expected to conform to the dominant culture and outperform their white male peers. The ingrained culture of the industry is also a barrier to accepting the need for change.

Confirming previous research, the construction industry has been found to reproduce a white-male oriented structure and culture in which non-traditional entrants face discrimination. Although it is important to acknowledge the separate disadvantages of women and ethnic minorities, it has been useful to analyse sexism and racism together as there are many areas which overlap. Indeed the construction industry forms an arena where manifestations of sexism and racism intersect, overlap and interpenetrate within the industry's structure and culture. Thus, the structure and culture of the sector are inextricably linked and mutually reinforcing entities, which shape the processes and attitudes through which sexism, racism and disablism pervades the industry. The findings reported in this thesis suggest the prevalence of cultural and institutional racism and sexism. Positive change therefore demands recognition of the need to dismantle structural barriers to inequality as well as to propagate an inclusive culture to support it.

Chapter six found that the industry's change agenda has made little impact on the composition of the construction industry. Diversity and equality initiatives have failed to tackle the issues described above. Accordingly, the ICE code of practice has addressed these issues where possible. It has also responded to the failings of previous diversity and equality initiatives. Subsequently, the code
provides a construction industry orientated framework of good practice diversity and equality policy initiatives aimed at addressing exclusionary processes and behaviour. It also advocates raising awareness of diversity and equality issues as well as comprehensive diversity and equality training which not only challenges race and gender stereotypes and reframes negative attitudes, but equips people with the skills to work effectively with people from diverse backgrounds. Furthermore, mainstreaming and partnering are proposed as examples of integrated initiatives which facilitate implementation by creating a structural and cultural environment conducive to diversity and equality.

However, whilst the content of the code is important for engendering greater diversity and equality, the role of the ICE in promoting it is an important one. As an industry leader, the ICE is instrumental in driving change within the industry. Issuing such a code of practice which members are required to sign up to as a condition of their membership, sets the standard for diversity and equality. It also demonstrates leadership and a commitment to change from the top. Furthermore, if the industry's other professional institutions were to take a similar approach this would demonstrate the strategic importance of diversity and equality in the industry, and a commitment to positive change in this area.

8.3 Achievements of the research

8.3.1 The achievement of the research aims and objectives

The objectives of the research developed in chapter 2 of the thesis are restated overleaf. Each objective is individually discussed in the following sub sections.
Research objectives

i  To explore women's, ethnic minorities' and disabled people's experiences within the context of relevant stakeholders' perspectives on diversity and equality

ii To explore the impact of the structure and culture of the construction industry on diversity and equality

iii To evaluate the industry's attempts to address inequality and to diversify the construction workforce

iv To construct a framework of practical policy initiatives to address the factors emerging from the study which have led to the exclusion of women, ethnic minorities and disabled people

v To validate and refine the framework of policy initiatives

8.3.3.1 Objective I

This objective has been satisfied through the analyses of the views of construction stakeholders as presented in chapter 5. Overt and covert resistance to workforce diversification was found to exist in the industry. Furthermore, racial and gender stereotyping allowed informants to exhibit prejudicial views, support positions which maintain white male privilege and blame women and ethnic minorities for their perceived self exclusion. This links to previous research which has shown that women and ethnic minorities in the industry experience a 'chilly climate' (Bagilhole 2002) consisting of discrimination, harassment and a lack of equality of opportunity (Dainty 1998; Royal Holloway 1999; Bagilhole et al 2001; Ellison, 2001; Whittock 2002; Agapiou 2002; Clarke et al 2004; Steele and Sodhi, 2004).

Furthermore, that the research did not produce a robust understanding of disabled people's employment within the industry is a finding in itself. Disability was seen as being in conflict with health and safety and the physical nature of site work. Thus disabled people were excluded from the diversity and equality agenda inferring that disability was considered a difference too far.
8.3.3.2 Objective ii

This objective was also met through the in-depth interviews conducted with industry stakeholder representatives (chapter 5). The interviews showed that underrepresented groups were expected to adopt the industry’s macho culture, values and traditions. Also, that the industry retains a white, non-disabled and male-coded structure through which existing members are keen to defend the status quo. Furthermore, the interplay of culture and structure shape and maintain the processes and attitudes through which sexism and racism pervades the industry.

8.3.3.3 Objective iii

Realisation of this objective was achieved through a desk based survey and a case study. These showed that overall, the industry’s approach to addressing workforce diversity has been relatively unsuccessful given that they have failed to address the issues presented in chapter 5. For instance, the structural and cultural context of the industry has been ignored. Also, that initiatives have mainly concentrated on women and to a lesser extent ethnic minorities. There have been no initiatives aimed at disabled people’s inclusion in the industry. This confirms previous findings that disabled people have been excluded from the industry’s diversity and equality agenda.

8.3.3.4 Objective iv

This has been met through the development of a code of practice to address the structural and cultural barriers identified in the research as impeding the delivery of equal opportunities and diversity. This has sought to address behaviour as well as the industry’s exclusionary structure and culture. As well as addressing the findings emergent from this research, the code was developed by means of an iterative process with the ICE to ensure that it remains grounded in the needs of the industry.
8.3.3.5 Objective v

This objective was satisfied through a validation workshop which was attended by nineteen influential industry stakeholders and potential change agents as well as experts from the field of higher education. The workshop participants provided feedback on the merits and demerits of the policy framework and suggested how it could be improved. Residual issues that had not been addressed by the code were also identified. Some of these reflect the issues arising out of the research as a whole, and have therefore been included later in this chapter as recommendations for further research.

8.3.2 The fulfilment of the research propositions

In pursuance of the research objectives, five propositions were developed to direct the research efforts and act as a focus for data collection and analysis. The validity of each of the research propositions is assessed below.

8.3.2.1 Proposition 1

The first proposition was that: construction stakeholders hold negative views on women, ethnic minorities and disabled people working in the industry. This proposition was supported in that the stakeholders operated from a stereotypical perspective. Furthermore, the research identified a high level of resentment amongst informants toward greater diversification of the construction industry.

8.3.2.2 Proposition 2

The second proposition was that: underrepresented groups' experiences in the construction industry are to some extent, determined by its culture. This proposition was also supported. The findings demonstrated the patriarchal nature of the construction industry which reinforces men's and women's distinctive roles within the industry. In addition, white men appeared to be active in creating an environment where underrepresented groups 'don't flourish' (see Kanter, 1977). In this way, racism and sexism is institutional rather than personal. Stakeholders expected underrepresented groups to conform to the values and traditions of the
construction culture in order to survive in the industry. Furthermore, the majority of informants took pleasure in working in an all male environment. Indeed, there was little political will to change the demographics of the construction workforce.

8.3.2.3 Proposition 3

The third proposition was that underrepresented groups, experiences in the construction industry are to some extent, determined by its structure. This proposition was supported in that institutional structures were found to disproportionately impact on underrepresented groups. These included, informal recruitment processes, organisation of work in the industry, reward systems, the need for geographical flexibility, tight profit margins and poor working conditions. Industry structures and processes also create a challenging environment for the implementation of equal opportunities and diversity policies, practices and procedures. For instance, the need for rapid project mobilisation and deployment, accounting for changing needs throughout the project lifetime, the practicalities of providing welfare on site and project size and duration were found to undermine the delivery of equal opportunities and diversity policies within construction organisations.

8.3.2.4 Proposition 4

Proposition 4 was that the industry’s attempts to address inequality are misguided and ineffective in addressing equality of opportunity. This proposition was supported in that industry initiatives aimed at diversifying the construction industry have failed to address the exclusionary processes, attitudes and behaviours at the route of inequality identified in chapter 5. Furthermore, chapter 6 criticised the industry’s approach for lacking strategic vision.

8.3.2.5 Proposition 5

The fifth proposition was that opportunities for underrepresented groups can be improved through a set of integrated policy initiatives which address cultural and structural determinants of inequality. This proposition was partially supported by the research. Indeed, that the policy framework was developed in response to the
research findings and the needs of industry suggests that its implementation will improve equality of opportunity. Accordingly, it encompassed initiatives which focused on challenging processes and behaviour as well as those which focussed on cultural change. However, this study did not set out to examine the practical impact of the code. Thus, investigation of this proposition can only be fulfilled through a longitudinal study which monitors the effectiveness and impact of such a framework of integrated policy initiatives on workforce diversification.

8.4 Contributions of the Research

In addressing the need for an empirical study to provide a more holistic understanding of equality and diversity within the construction industry, this research has made several contributions which are discussed below.

8.4.1 A contribution to the theoretical understanding of equality and diversity in the construction industry

The major shortfall of the literature, emphasised in chapter 1, was the lack of adequate research into the attitudes of industry stakeholders who are responsible for driving and implementing change in the industry and the potential impact that this has on diversifying the industry's workforce. This thesis represents the first attempt to examine the views of relevant stakeholders on workforce diversification and the barriers to equality and diversity policy implementation. Accordingly, this research has provided a more holistic understanding of equality and diversity in the construction industry from which future initiatives to address the lack of diversity and equality in the industry can be developed.

In attempting to examine three strands of equality in the construction industry, that of gender, race and disability, the unit of analysis of the research was original. Although, the findings on disability are deficient within the study, this is significant in that it demonstrates the extent to which disabled people have been ignored and disregarded by the industry. Indeed, this presents a barrier to exploring issues of disability in construction further.
The findings have supported the theoretical perspectives on the underrepresentation and underachievement of women and ethnic minorities in the industry discussed in Chapter 3 and, through exploring the stakeholder dimension, given them greater substance. For instance, it supports previous research findings that unfair and discriminatory practices and procedures, sexist and racist attitudes and the work environment prevents minority participation and retains the industry as a white-male domain.

It has also observed some similarities in the exclusion of underrepresented groups including stereotypical assumptions, prejudicial attitudes and behaviour, discriminatory practices and an uninviting work environment. Furthermore, the study has uncovered a widespread resistance to the equality and diversity agenda both in terms of 'hearts and minds' engagement and implementing policy and practice.

This thesis supports the theoretical perspective that the industry's white male dominated culture and male orientated structures militate against women's and ethnic minorities' access to, and progression within, the industry. This study has developed this debate by bringing to light the mutually reinforcing relationship of structure and culture. Indeed, manifestations of sexism and racism intersect, overlap and interpenetrate within the industry's structure and culture. Furthermore, structure and culture are inextricably linked and mutually reinforcing entities. The ingrained culture of the industry is also a barrier to accepting the need for and implementing structural changes because 'this is the way it's always been'. Accordingly, this thesis has demonstrated how the interplay of structure and culture shapes the position of women and ethnic minorities in the industry, and, how it effectively undermines the implementation of policies and practices to deliver equality and diversity. It therefore provides greater substance to the theory of institutional discrimination against non-traditional entrants in the construction industry.

The study has also added to theoretical debates about the drivers for organisations to engage with the equality and diversity agenda. It has identified the failure of rhetorical business arguments and discussed the need for a more sophisticated and empirically valid business case for diversity. As part of this,
there is an opportunity for public sector clients, through contract compliance, to drive equality and diversity further up the industry's strategic agenda.

8.4.2 Practical contribution

A practical outcome of the research has been the development of a framework of integrated policy initiatives for greater diversification of the construction industry (see Appendix C). These have addressed the need for structural change and behavioural compliance in addition to attitudinal and cultural change.

8.5 Limitations of the study and recommendations for further research

As with all research, the findings have limitations. The three main limitations of the study were time and resource constraints, restrictions in sample size and the potential for bias in conducting and analysing the qualitative interviews. The research was conducted within a three year period. Thus, the achievement of successful results required that tight timescales be adhered to. Along with a lack of resource, this inhibited the level of respondent validation undertaken which may have yielded deeper insights into the issues emerging later in the study.

The findings and recommendations of the research were based upon the views of a limited number of construction industry stakeholders. Thus, only tentative conclusions can be drawn about the nature of equality and diversity within the construction industry. The study by no means uncovers all of the contributing factors that affect the delivery of equality and diversity in the industry. At an organisational level, the findings do not necessarily exemplify the view of the whole organisation which the informant represented. However, such limitations do not undermine the significance of the research findings as it was not the intention to generalise to the industry at large, but to highlight and explore issues and provide insights into how they might be tackled.
8.5.1 Recommendations for further research

It is important that research is continued into diversity and equality in the construction industry so that the work environment can be manipulated to enhance opportunities for women, ethnic minorities and disabled people. This research has led to many potential issues which require further investigation as follows:

**Drivers of diversity and equality**

This study has shown that diversity and equality remain well down the strategic agenda, even of companies fully committed to good people management practices. Hence, a key challenge is to convince construction companies to embed diversity and equality as an integral part of good employment practice. However, this research found that construction companies have failed to recognise the advantages of diversifying the workforce. Thus the scope and impact of the business arguments for workforce diversity requires further investigation.

The findings of the research indicate that a more sophisticated case needs to be developed since there will be different business drivers for different kinds of employer. Indeed, the construction workforce is made up of many different elements, (for example, different occupations, different industrial sectors, manual and non manual, public and private sectors). Thus, future research could usefully examine how these different elements which make up the construction workforce might respond differently to the diversity and equality agenda as well as investigate how the drivers might be different for the different elements. In addition, future work could examine whether different aspects of diversity (for example, gender, race, disability and so on) might be more relevant and or possible for some elements of the workforce than for others.

In addition, at a micro level, there will be different business case arguments for diversity and equality within the different levels and functions of an organisation. For instance, there will be different drivers for diversity and equality across strategic, managerial and operational levels, as well as across different parts of
the organisation such as human resource management and procurement functions.

Clearly these investigations are important in order to develop the rationale that underpins the diversity theme and to explore how this should be more effectively communicated throughout the industry.

**Structural Investigations**

The research reported in this thesis has identified aspects of the construction industry’s structure that render it a problematic environment in which to deliver effective equal opportunities and diversity policies, practices and procedures necessary to attract and retain underrepresented groups. Accordingly, the implementation of working arrangements under which women, ethnic minorities and disabled people are more likely to succeed, should be investigated further. For example, research is required to understand how work-life balance policies and flexible working arrangements can be successfully delivered within the context of industry’s complex, demanding and fragmented supply chain.

**Cultural Investigations**

This research has shown that culture change in the industry is fundamental to improving access and opportunities for underrepresented groups in the industry. This thesis has referred to the role of training in achieving culture change, with particular emphasis on the acquisition of the skills necessary to work effectively with those who are different, reframe negative thoughts and improve conflict management (section 7.3.11). In addition, skills auditing, attitude surveys and assessments of the costs of current working practices for the health and effectiveness of male employees have been suggested (section 7.4.1). The importance of middle rank leadership in achieving culture change has also been recognised (section 7.4.1). Subsequently, there is now a need to research and monitor the effect of these strategies in engendering a cultural shift at organisational level.
Policy implementation

A practical output of this research has been the development of a framework of integrated policy initiatives as required to improve the industry for underrepresented groups. Using action research, the process of adoption of the code of practice by the ICE, as well as its implementation throughout the civil engineering profession could be studied in order that valuable lessons can be learnt for the development of future policy initiatives in this area.

Health and safety

Finally, the findings of this study suggest that the health and safety issues faced by underrepresented groups in the UK construction industry should be explored so that practical recommendations and actions can be developed. Improving conditions for underrepresented groups in construction will not only help to ensure their health and safety, it will also serve to attract and retain them.
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APPENDIX A

STAGE 1 INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

"MULTI STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS OF EMPLOYING WOMEN, ETHNIC
MINORITIES AND DISABLED PEOPLE IN THE UK CONSTRUCTION
INDUSTRY"
MULTI STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS OF EMPLOYING WOMEN, ETHNIC MINORITIES AND DISABLED PEOPLE IN THE UK CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Background Information

What is the nature of your firm?
When was it established?
What is your annual turnover?
Do you have a HRM department?
Do you have a equal opportunities/diversity policy? If so, how are they implemented/ monitored?
How many people do you employ?
As a rough guess, how many women, people from minority backgrounds, disabled people do you employ? And in what positions?
Do you have problems recruiting skilled/ committed people? Details, i.e. When did the problem start? How acute? At a particular level/experience?

Recruiting and attracting women, ethnic minorities and disabled people

Do you get any applications from women, ethnic minorities and disabled people?
If so how many?
Why do you think this is the case?
How do you feel these minority applicants perform in interviews and promotion procedures?

What do you think are the problems employers face in attracting women, ethnic minorities and disabled people to the construction industry?

Prompts:
- Image?
- Male dominated culture?
- Career knowledge amongst children and adults
- Recruitment practices and procedures
- Sexist attitudes
- The work environment

Have you ever made any attempts to employ or increase the number of women/ethnic minorities before? How successful have these initiatives been and why?

Employing women, ethnic minorities and disabled people

What are your experiences of/attitudes towards employing women, ethnic minorities, disabled people and older people?

- Positive/negative?
- Can you give me an example?
- Do you think they need special treatment?

Retaining women, ethnic minorities and disabled people

Are women, ethnic minorities older and disabled employees more difficult to retain?

If so why do you think this is?

What do you think are the problems employers face in retaining women, ethnic minorities and disabled people to the construction industry?

Implementing equal opportunities and diversity

What do you understand by ‘diversity’?
Do you like the term? If not, why? Is ‘equal opportunities’ preferable?

How do you feel about implementing equal opportunities practices/procedures? Including:

- Equal opportunities/diversity Policy
- Complaints procedures
- Support arrangements including:
  - Welfare
  - Networks and Clubs
  - Mentoring
- Facilities and Working Conditions
  - Types of food
  - Disabled access
  - Female toilets
  - Recognition of prayer times

Workforce Issues

How do you think your workforce would respond to the implementation of the equal opportunities practices and procedures we discussed above?

What have been or do you think would be the responses of your employees to a more diverse workforce (i.e. more women, ethnic minorities and disabled people)

Do you think that women, ethnic minorities, disabled and older people will fit in and be accepted within the company workforce and the rest of the supply chain, including sub-contractors and clients?

Would increasing the numbers of women, ethnic minorities and disabled people in your company have an adverse effect on the majority of your employees? And would this matter? If so why?

Are these problems different for site workers and professionals? If so what are the different problems? If no, why?
The Importance of workforce diversity

What do you think the potential benefits of a diverse workforce are or would be? Are there any disadvantages?

What qualities do you think women, ethnic minorities and disabled people could bring to the construction industry?

Do you think workforce diversity is important to the future performance of the industry?

*Prompts: Skills shortages/demographic changes  
Business case  
Social responsibility*

Attitudes to change

Would you want to change the under representation of women, ethnic minorities, disabled and older people in construction? If so, HOW?

What are the problems you think you would face?
APPENDIX B

STAGE 2 CASE STUDY INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

PERCEPTIONS OF/EXPERIENCES OF USING THE RESPECT FOR PEOPLE 'DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE' TOOLKIT
CASE STUDY: PERCEPTIONS OF/EXPERIENCES OF USING THE RESPECT FOR PEOPLE ‘DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE’ TOOLKIT

Background Information

What is the nature of your firm?
When was it established?
What is your annual turnover?
Do you have a HRM department?
Do you have a equal opportunities/diversity policy? If so, how are they implemented/monitored?
How many people do you employ?
As a rough guess, how many women, people from minority backgrounds, disabled people do you employ? And in what positions?

Evaluation of the diversity toolkit

What are your reasons for using/ or not using the diversity toolkit?
What are you overall impressions of the toolkit?

For companies that had used the toolkit:

- What were the level of resources used complete the toolkit? (i.e. time, staff) Where these sufficient?
- Who was responsible for using completing the toolkit?
- How is it being used?
For each section of the Toolkit:

How relevant is this?

Should it be in there?

To what extent do you think it should be implemented?

Do you like the wording?

How easy is it/ do you think it would be to use?

What do you think it is trying to achieve?

General questions

Do you think the toolkit is useful as a guide for formulating good equal opportunities policies? If so, to what extent?

How effective do you think the toolkit is a mechanism for improving diversity in the workplace?

Do you think the scoring system is fair/effective?

For companies that have used the toolkit:

- Have you changed or increased your equal opportunities policies since using the toolkit? If so, how and why?

Criticisms

Can you identify any specific problems with the toolkit? Please specify.

Could you suggest ways to improve the toolkit?
Opportunities

Is it useful to have a separate toolkit for diversity?

Should diversity be incorporated into the other RfP toolkits?

Do you think this mainstreaming approach is more effective?

What effect would this have on:-

a) the effectiveness of increasing the diversity in the workplace,

b) making the issue more relevant and acceptable to more firms?
APPENDIX C

ICE DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY CODE OF PRACTICE
Contents

1. Introduction ............................................................................................................................. 2
2. Purpose of the code ................................................................................................................ 2
3. The importance of diversity and equality ................................................................................ 3
4. ICE Equal Opportunities Policy Statement ............................................................................. 4
5. Responsibilities ....................................................................................................................... 4
6. Implementing this Code of Practice ........................................................................................ 5
7. The Code and Good Employment Practice ............................................................................. 6
8. Influencing the Supply Chain and Projects ............................................................................. 6
9. Small Businesses ................................................................................................................... 7
10. Recruitment and Selection ................................................................................................. 7
11. Retention ............................................................................................................................ 8
12. Work Life Balance .............................................................................................................. 9
13. Help with Equality Legislation ............................................................................................. 10
14. Harassment and Bullying ................................................................................................... 12
15. On-site Behaviour ............................................................................................................... 13
16. Raising Awareness of Diversity and Equality ..................................................................... 14
17. Monitoring your Workforce Profile ...................................................................................... 15
18. Future Intentions ................................................................................................................. 16
19. Positive Action .................................................................................................................... 16
20. Culture Change .................................................................................................................. 17

Appendix 1: Help Sheet- Glossary of Terms and Useful Links ....................................................... 18

Appendix 2: The Legal Framework ................................................................................................. 28
1. Introduction

The Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) and ICEfloe, the ICE’s equal opportunities committee, recognises that various forms of discrimination exist within the civil engineering and construction industry. Through this Code of Practice, ICE and ICEfloe aim to raise awareness and promote equality and diversity for the enhancement of the civil engineering and construction profession.

To promote a fair and equitable work environment, the Code covers all kinds of potential discrimination against individuals and groups based on race, colour, gender, disability, age, sexuality and religion and belief.

2. Purpose of the code

This Code aims to provide a policy framework and practical guidance for ICE staff, members and employers on the provisions of equality legislation and their implications. It outlines how they can implement policies to eliminate discrimination and enhance the quality of working life within the industry.

The aims of this Code are threefold:

- to contribute to the elimination of discrimination in employment, in addition to promoting equality and diversity within the Civil Engineering profession
- to provide guidance on how to comply with equality legislation¹
- to provide a practical implementation mechanism for the ICE policy statement (see section 4).

The Code recognises that the civil engineering and construction industry differs from other industries in certain important aspects. Accordingly, this code aims to provide an engineering and construction industry focused equality and diversity policy framework to guide and enthuse engineers to take practical action.

¹ This Code does not impose any legal obligations itself, nor is it an authoritative statement of the law. However, if its recommendations are not observed, this may result in a breach of equality legislation.
Appendices include a glossary of terms, useful links and an overview of equality legislation to provide further information.

3. **The Importance of diversity and equality**

Employing a socially representative workforce potentially helps to:

- **Circumvent skills shortages and demographic changes**
  Currently the engineering and construction sector is recruiting from a shrinking pool of white male recruits. Women, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities are a major and essential part of the UK workforce.

- **Widen the recruitment pool from which to select the most suitable person for the job**

- **Win public sector work**
  Some public sector clients have rigorous equal opportunities requirements. Furthermore, the public sector has a legal duty, known as a positive duty, to promote good inter-race relations and racial equality in their contracts under the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000. A positive duty is to be introduced for disability and gender

- **Facilitate positive relationships within the supply chain**
  Businesses with a diverse workforce are likely to attract a wider customer base. They have the ability to recognise new potential markets and provide a better service to meet individual needs through improved understanding and respect for clients from within the community.

- **Avoid expensive and time consuming industrial tribunals**
  Applicants to posts and employees can make a claim to an employment tribunal if they feel that they have been discriminated against on grounds of sex, race, disability, sexual orientation or religion. If the tribunal upholds a complaint, it may award compensation or recommend some other course of action to address the effects of any discrimination.

- **Promote social justice and corporate and social responsibility**

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2 Women now account for around half of the national workforce; ethnic minorities comprise 8% of the population; and there are 8.6 million disabled people in Britain, one in seven of the population.
These concepts are of increasing importance within the construction sector. It has been acknowledged that in developing the fabric of society, the construction sector must represent the interests of our diverse population.

In some cases, an initial cost may be involved in adapting current practices to ensure equality and fairness, but this should be more than compensated for by better relationships, improved use of human resources and enhanced organisation image and profile.

4. ICE Equal Opportunities Policy Statement

ICE is committed to equality and diversity. We value the diversity that men and women with differing backgrounds, skills and abilities bring to the Institution. We will endeavour to foster an environment free from harassment and unfair discrimination in which individual potential can be cultivated, so that everyone associated with the Institution can act against prejudice with open and critical minds.

It is our policy to:

- increase awareness of equal opportunities through training and the media
- research and reduce obstacles to equal opportunities
- challenge and root out discrimination if it occurs
- monitor and keep under review ICE policies and practices within the Institution to ensure the promotion of equal opportunities.

This policy applies to all ICE staff and applicants. ICE encourages its members to adopt this Code of Practice or similar equal opportunities policy in their workplaces and embed, where possible, its principles through the supply chain.

5. Responsibilities

This Code of Practice applies to all those associated with ICE including employees, members and employers who are members of the Institution.

Individual's responsibility
Individuals have responsibilities to refrain from harassment, intimidation or victimisation on the grounds of race, age, gender, sexuality, disability or religion. Furthermore, they can assist in preventing discrimination and promoting equality and diversity through the effective implementation of equal opportunities policies, cooperating with measures introduced by management to ensure equality and non-discrimination and drawing the attention to suspected acts of discrimination.

**Employer's responsibility**

Under current law, the primary responsibility to ensure there is no unlawful discrimination rests with employers. It is therefore recommended that employers should adopt, implement and regularly review their equality and diversity policies and practices to ensure that there is no unlawful discrimination and that equality of opportunity is genuinely available. Employers should ensure that this policy is implemented fairly and is available to all employees.

### 6. Implementing this Code of Practice

An equality and diversity policy must have the active support of senior management, supervisory staff and other relevant decision makers (such as line managers). To ensure the policy is effective, it is recommended that:

- it is clearly stated and where appropriate, included in a collective agreement
- overall responsibility for the policy is allocated to a member of senior management
- it is known to all employees and if possible all applicants
- training and guidance for supervisory staff and other relevant decision makers (such as line managers) is provided to ensure they understand their responsibilities under the law and company policy
- diversity and equality is mainstreamed and incorporated into all policies
- diversity and equality monitoring be carried out on a regular basis to check how well policies, procedures and practices are working, and follow up action be taken where necessary.

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3 Mainstreaming diversity and equality is essentially concerned with the integration of equal opportunities principles, strategies and practices into the everyday work of an organisation from the outset, involving everyday policy actors.
It may be useful to establish a Diversity and Equality Working Group to determine how an organisation can best serve the needs of all staff. All staff should be welcome to attend.

7. The Code and Good Employment Practice

Many of the Code's provisions show the relationship between equality and diversity and good employment practice. For example, fair and equitable recruitment and selection procedures not only help to remove unlawful discrimination but also to ensure that individuals are appointed on merit.

By implementing the Code of Practice you will be taking steps to:

- promote equality and diversity.
- promote good relations between people of different racial groups, between men and women, disabled and non-disabled people and people of all ages.
- promote an inclusive culture within the engineering profession.
- eliminate all forms of discrimination.

8. Influencing the Supply Chain and Projects

In working towards a fair and equitable industry, it is important to embed the principles and practices contained within the Code throughout the supply chain and at project level wherever possible. ICE members and employers should request and/or require suppliers, and supply chain partners to conform to this Code, especially small companies who may not be aware of equality legislation or good equality and diversity practice. The principles contained within this Code of Practice should also be included within partnering arrangements wherever possible.

It may be helpful to consider whether supply chain partners and organisations possess a well-communicated and effectively implemented equal opportunities policy. If not, they should be advised to sign up to this Code of Practice and/or comply with the spirit of the Code.
9. Small Businesses

This Code addresses the civil engineering and construction industry in general and it will therefore be necessary for employers to adapt it in a way appropriate to the size and structure of their organisation.

Smaller businesses will require much simpler procedures than large organisations with complex structures and it may not always be reasonable for them to carry out all the Code’s detailed recommendations. However, small firms should ensure that their practices are consistent with the Code’s general intentions and treat their employees fairly and equitably.

10. Recruitment and Selection

The primary aim of the recruitment process is to employ the most suitable person for a vacancy. This section of the Code describes good recruitment practices, which should help eliminate unlawful discrimination by establishing and using consistent criteria for selection, training, promotion and redundancy.

Informal recruitment procedures can unwittingly exclude high calibre candidates, and relying on the company grapevine may be illegal. Preparation and care taken at each stage of the recruitment process can bring real benefits. Successful recruitment will:

- improve retention and reduce recruitment costs in the longer term
- promote effective management
- increase morale
- reduce disciplinary problems.

The following points comprise a framework of recommendations from which an equitable and consistent recruitment policy can be developed:

- it is unlawful to use recruitment methods which exclude or disproportionately reduce the numbers of applicants of a particular sex or racial group. Employers should take steps to ensure that the vacancy reaches as wide a pool of potential applicants as practicable. In order to demonstrate commitment to equality of opportunity, it is recommended that where employers send literature to
applicants, this should include a statement that they are equal opportunity employers

- review company literature to avoid excluding people from underrepresented social groups and reinforcing stereotyped roles, for example ensure jobs are not presented as being exclusively 'for men' or 'for women' 

- in order to avoid indirect discrimination it is recommended that employers do not confine recruitment to agencies, job centres, careers offices and further and higher education institutions without good justification. These sources may attract only certain types of candidate  

- prepare an objective job description covering the main duties and responsibilities of the job role and ensure this is regularly updated. Consider whether the work could be carried out through flexible working arrangements. Outline the skills and knowledge which candidates must be able to demonstrate using only necessary and relevant criteria required to do the job. This can be used as the basis for adverts, an application form, to structure the interview, and to help compare candidates objectively 

- ensure each individual is assessed according to his or her personal capability to carry out a given job role. Do not assume for example, that men only or women only will be able to perform certain tasks 

- in interviews avoid any questions which a candidate may perceive as unfair or discriminatory. Only ask candidates for information which is relevant to the job 

- review the use of occupational tests to ensure they are an appropriate and unbiased means of assessing the skills and attributes necessary for the job. Methods of testing should be accessible to people with disabilities where reasonably practicable 

- ensure all those responsible for any aspects of recruitment are aware of the policy, are adequately trained in implementing it and are instructed not to discriminate. For example, ensure staff are given guidance or training on the effects which generalised assumptions and prejudices about race can have on selection decisions.

11. Retention

Retaining competent employees makes good business sense. Not only will costs be saved on recruitment, but retention will also raise the profile of the business for being a good employer. This section of the Code describes good employment practices, which
will help improve retention and eliminate unlawful discrimination. Consider implementing the following:

- keep channels of communication open with all staff and ensure there is someone responsible for addressing any problems or complaints. Implement a policy on harassment and bullying and ensure this is well communicated and understood throughout the organisation (see section 14)
- apply the same consistent and equitable recruitment principles to promotion, transfers and training. Ensure that opportunities for promotion and training are made known to all staff on a fair and equal basis, and that systems and criteria for identifying and selecting employees are reviewed regularly to ensure they are fair
- any staff responsible for performance appraisals should be trained and instructed not to discriminate. Assessment criteria should be examined to ensure they are fair and equitable
- review all terms of employment, benefits, facilities and services to ensure there is no unlawful discrimination
- ensure that welfare facilities meet the needs of all employees where possible. This might include the provision of female and disabled toilets, disabled access, recognition of prayer times and allocation of a prayer room.
- fully induct new employees into the workplace and ensure they are familiar with the firm’s equality and diversity policy and their responsibilities within that policy
- consider flexible working (see section 12).

12. Work Life Balance

Flexible working arrangements make good business sense to enable employees to achieve a better work-life balance. A better quality of life for employees increases employee commitment, morale and loyalty, and reduces absenteeism, staff turnover, sickness and stress. Enlightened organisations have noted an increase in their staff productivity and, have saved thousands of pounds in recruitment costs because their staff are happier. In addition, new ways of working will make the best use of staff and other resources including expensive equipment and office space; and increase the

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4 See Department of Trade and Industry (March 2003) "The Business Case 50 success stories" [http://164.36.164.20/work-lifebalance/pdfs/pdf_wlb1_4_03.pdf](http://164.36.164.20/work-lifebalance/pdfs/pdf_wlb1_4_03.pdf)
organisation's ability to deal with industry change. The following points should be considered:

- formulate a work-life balance or flexible working policy to reconcile operational needs of the organisation with those of the workforce. Secure the commitment of management, develop written procedures for implementation and monitoring and ultimately communicate the policy throughout the organisation. It may be useful to consult widely with staff and run a trial programme to gain initial experience and feedback.

- where practicable, introduce flexible working hours, part-time working, job share or working from home and offer time off for religious needs.

- ensure that employees are assessed on the quality of work they produce rather than the hours they are at their desk. The take up of work life balance strategies will remain low if it is believed that taking advantage of them will be interpreted as lack of commitment.

- personal leave arrangements should be adequate and available to both sexes. Do not assume that men may not need to undertake domestic responsibilities.

- note that employees have the legal right to work flexibly in order to care for a child and that the employer is under a duty to consider the request seriously.

13. Help with Equality Legislation

The ICE Code of Practice is designed to assist ICE, its members and employers to fulfil their legal obligations. This section of the Code provides an overview of responsibilities under the current legislative framework. This is not, however, intended as a comprehensive description of equality legislation and employers are advised to consult the relevant acts and amendments.

Maternity Law

- applies to all employees regardless of time served or hours worked

\[5\] For the wide-ranging scope of flexible working arrangements and further advice see www.dti.gov.uk

\[6\] Adapted ‘Equal Opportunities is your Business too’ (1999) http://www.cre.gov.uk/pdfs/eoiybt.pdf

\[7\] For a useful overview of equality legislation see Appendix 2
DRAFT

- allows employees time off for antenatal care
- provides additional health and safety for pregnant employees
- allows the employee to return to her job after a period of maternity leave
- dismissal because of pregnancy, or a reason connected to her pregnancy is illegal
- under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 discriminating against a woman because she is of childbearing age and may become pregnant is unlawful.

Health and Safety

- provide personal protective equipment to fit all employees
- make reasonable steps to reconcile situations where cultural and religious needs conflict with existing work requirements, for example accommodating religious and cultural dress codes (where health and safety permits)
- review company policy, giving serious consideration to any significant differences in treatment between men and women, ethnic minorities, disabled people and older people. There should be well-founded and relevant reasons if such differences are maintained or introduced
- consider use of alternative or additional methods of communication where employees find it difficult to understand health and safety requirements

Equal Pay

The law on equal pay covers both men and women. Ensure male and female employees (regardless of race or disability) are receiving equal pay if employed to do work that is:

- similar
- rated as equivalent, through job evaluation
- of equal value in the demands and responsibilities required of them.

Reasonable adjustments
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Make reasonable adjustments to working practices or arrangements which put disabled employees or job applicants at a substantial disadvantage.⁶ (see Appendix 1 for definitions of disability and reasonable adjustments).

14. Harassment and Bullying

The Code recognises that the engineering and construction sector is traditionally and currently dominated by white non-disabled men, hence due to prejudice and lack of awareness by some, problems of harassment and bullying of underrepresented groups may be more prevalent.

Everyone should be treated with dignity and respect at work. Bullying and harassment of any kind should not be tolerated. Note that under the equality legislation harassment may be considered discriminatory.

Consider formulating a policy on bullying and harassment. This need not be over-elaborate especially for small firms but should include:

- a statement of commitment from senior management that bullying and harassment will not be tolerated and that incidents may be treated as disciplinary offences
- examples of unacceptable behaviour
- disciplinary and grievance procedures (formal and informal, including timescales for action, see below for a grievance procedure framework)
- investigations procedures including timescales for action. Personnel officers should be trained to undertake harassment investigation
- training for managers on how to keep the workplace free from harassment and how to handle complaints, and training for employees concerning their rights to be free from harassment
- protection from victimisation and confidentiality of any complaint
- reasonable steps to prevent/eliminate harassment by customers, clients, sub contractors and suppliers
- how the policy will be implemented monitored and reviewed.

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⁶ British Standard BS8300:2001 “Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the need of disabled people – Code of Practice”, explains how the built environment can be designed to anticipate and overcome restrictions that prevent disabled people from making full use of the premises and their surroundings.
Grievance procedures

Grievance procedures need only have two stages: firstly, the individual raises the grievance informally with immediate supervisor or manager. If the matter is not resolved, the second stage is for the individual accompanied by a colleague or trade union official if desired, to raise the grievance formally with the employer. It can help clarify the issue if the grievance is written down.

It is good practice to ensure that:

- grievances are handled promptly, normally within 5-10 working days
- disciplinary action is applied fairly and consistently regardless of race, gender, sexuality, religion, disability or age
- deliberate acts of unlawful discrimination by employees are treated as disciplinary offences.

For very small companies it may not be feasible to have a two-stage grievance process. In these cases, it is especially important that grievances are dealt with in an impartial way. For example, where a relationship has broken down, it may help to seek external advice or help from a facilitator.

15. On-site Behaviour

The Code recognised that construction sites can represent extremely hostile and intimidating environments. Consider formulating a Code of Conduct for site workers, this need not be over-elaborate but should include:

- senior management commitment that prejudice and discrimination will not be tolerated and that incidents may be treated as disciplinary offences
- a collective agreement that all site workers are required to behave in a way that promotes good relations between men and women, disabled and non disabled people and people of all races, religion and sexual orientation
- zero tolerance of sexist and racist language and behaviour, aggressive behaviour, bullying, intimidation, harassment and abuse
- prohibition of sexually derogatory images of women
- an expectation that all site workers must be treated in a fair and non discriminatory way and be respectful of people’s differences
- protection from victimisation and confidentiality of any complaint
reasonable steps to prevent/eliminate discrimination and harassment by customers, clients, sub contractors and suppliers

training for site managers and supervisors on how to implement the policy and handle complaints, and training for employees on what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and on their rights to be free from prejudice and discrimination

how the policy will be implemented monitored and reviewed.

In addition, diversity and equality must be mainstreamed into all health and safety practices and procedures (see section 13 of this Code of Practice).

Managers should take reasonable steps to ensure that welfare facilities meet the needs of all site workers. This might include female and disabled toilets, disabled access, recognition of prayer times and different kinds of food.

16. Raising Awareness of Diversity and Equality

Training in equality and diversity plays a number of important roles in an organisation. It can be used to help brief senior managers who are developing the policy; to convince key staff of the benefits of the policy and gain their support; to deliver advice, information and skills essential to the effective implementation of the policy. Hence, it is important that all staff within an organisation, including managers, receive diversity and equality training.

Diversity and equality training should:

- explain the importance of equality and diversity polices and procedures
- increase awareness of the existence of discrimination, prejudice and stereotyping
- examine the nature of discrimination, both direct and in-direct, and the ways in which it can occur
- allow men and women to explore the limitations of their current roles and behaviour and develop solutions both in relation to business requirements and their life outside work
- provide the workplace skills necessary to work effectively with those who are different
- empower managers and employers to reframe negative thoughts and improve their conflict management
- provide information and advice on equality legislation
increase awareness of the abilities and potential of disabled people and the assistance that should be made available in the employment of disabled people

explain to employees what is expected of them in terms of behaviour and assisting them to behave in a non-discriminatory way.

For advice on carrying out equality and diversity training consult the Institute of Personnel and Development or the Race and Equality Advisory Service.

17. Monitoring your Workforce Profile

Employers should regularly monitor policies to assess whether they are working in practice. Ensure data is collected in adherence to the Data Protection Act and reassure employees of the usefulness of personal information to facilitate fair and equitable working practices.

Consideration should be given to setting up a joint management review committee to involve management and the workforce representatives to secure their commitment and collaboration.

You should keep records on:

- the gender, race, disability and age of your workforce. When asking for this information respect people's sensitivities, keep information confidential and let staff know why you want the information
- job applicants and appointed persons
- rates of pay.

A basic analysis of this information may identify areas which may need particular attention, for example whether members of a particular group:

- do not apply for employment or promotion, or that fewer apply than might be expected
- are not recruited, promoted or selected for training and development or are appointed/selected in a significantly lower proportion than their rate of application
- are concentrated in certain jobs sections or departments carrying a lower pay, status or authority.

See Appendix 1 for contact details.

The Act can be found at http://www.hmso.gov.uk/acts/acts1998/19980029.htm
If any of the above apply, the reasons for this should be investigated. If direct or indirect discrimination is found action must be taken to end it immediately.

18. Future Intentions

ICEfloe will continue to work towards promoting equality and diversity and eliminating unlawful discrimination through its capacity to raise awareness within the engineering profession. ICEfloe will endeavour to promote good practice and support ICE in leading the engineering profession by example. In particular it will:

- support, promote and encourage equality and diversity initiatives
- subject its policies to continuous assessment and review in order to examine how they will affect under-represented groups
- monitor the recruitment and progress of all ICE staff paying particular attention to women, ethnic minorities and disabled people
- take positive action wherever possible to support this code of practice and its aims
- offer guidance and help on equality and diversity issues to all individuals, members and employers associated with the Institution
- publish this policy widely.

On-going review of progress towards a representative, fair and equitable Civil Engineering profession, including this policy and Code of Practice will be made available on the ICEfloe website.

19. Positive Action

Positive action is the deliberate introduction of measures to eliminate or reduce discrimination or its effects. It is not about special treatment for any one particular group but the fair treatment of all people. It is concerned with levelling the playing field so that everyone has access to the same opportunities. The qualification floor remains the same.
Positive action is not the same as positive discrimination, an example of which would be promoting someone purely on the basis of his or her gender.

The law does not compel employers to take positive action, but it allows them to do so. For example, under the Sex Discrimination Act (SDA) single-sex training initiatives either to equip women for jobs usually carried out by men, or to return to work after a period at home looking after children or other dependants, are permitted. The SDA also permits special encouragement to women only, or to men only, to apply for jobs most commonly done by members of the opposite sex.

Positive action measures are important for the development of equality and diversity practices. The following are suggestions of positive action measures your organisation may want to consider:

- encouraging people from under-represented groups to apply for job vacancies
- promotion or transfer opportunities using 'statements of encouragement' in adverts to encourage applications
- promoting the engineering profession to young women, ethnic minorities and disabled people through presentations to schools and careers fairs
- supporting, mentoring and/or sponsoring women, ethnic minorities and disabled people on university courses
- encouraging educational institutions to play their part in addressing the under representation of women, ethnic minorities and disabled people studying engineering and related courses

20. Culture Change

This Code recognises that cultural change is fundamental in order to provide a fair and equitable workplace environment for all employees. This requires all individuals and organisations to demonstrate their commitment to change through public statements, policy and action.
Appendix 1: Help Sheet- Glossary of Terms and Useful Links

Age discrimination (Ageism)

Age discrimination occurs when people are excluded from doing certain things or treated less favourably because of their age. Ageism can be a result of stereotyping. For example a person could be judged to be too young or too old to do a certain job because 'young people are unreliable' or 'you can't teach an old dog new tricks'.

It will be illegal to discriminate against anyone on the grounds of age by 1st October 2006.

Corporate social responsibility

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) sets the framework in which organisations and businesses must operate to meet the ethical, legal, commercial and public expectations that a society has of any organisation. As a result, organisations may need to undergo a major cultural change to become socially, environmentally and economically responsible towards their employees, shareholders and the stakeholders involved. CSR takes into account the social impact an organisation has on the community both local and global.

Bullying

Bullying can be defined as offensive behaviour which violates a persons dignity, or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading or offensive environment which humiliates or undermines an individual or group. Such behaviour can be vindictive, cruel or malicious.

Burden of proof

In cases of discrimination at work on the grounds of sex, race or disability, the person or organisation alleged to have committed the act of unlawful discrimination must make the case that discrimination must make the case that discrimination did not occur.
Disablism

Prejudice against disabled people.

Disability

A person has a disability if she or he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

The disabled people's movement supports a social model of disability. This distinguishes between impairment and disability. Impairment is a condition of body or mind such as lacking a limb, being partially sighted or experiencing depression. Disability is the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in society on an equal level with others owing to social, economic, physical and attitudinal barriers. An example of this would be someone who is sight impaired and who can only read written material if it is in large print would be disabled in situations where the large print is unavailable.

Reasonable adjustment

Employers must take any reasonable steps to change working arrangements or physical features of the premises to ensure that disabled people are able to work on a particular job.

The following are some examples of reasonable adjustments in recruitment and employment given in the Disability Discrimination Act:

- making adjustments to premises, see section 13
- reallocating part of a job to another employee
- transferring the disabled person to fill an existing vacancy
- altering the person's working hours
- assigning the person to a different place of work
- allowing absences during working hours for rehabilitation, assessment or treatment
- supplying additional training
- acquiring special equipment or modifying existing equipment
modifying instructions or reference manuals
modifying procedures for testing or assessment
providing a reader or interpreter
providing additional supervision.

Factors which may have a bearing on whether it will be reasonable for the employer to have to make a particular adjustment include:

- how practical it is
- the financial and other costs of the adjustment and the extent of any disruption caused
- the extent of the employer's financial or other resources
- the availability to the employer of financial or other assistance to help make the adjustment
- how effective adjustment is in preventing the disadvantage.

Diversity

Diversity recognises that there are visible and non-visible differences between people which will include factors such as sex, age, background, race, disability, personality and work style. Harnessing these differences should create a more productive environment, in which everyone feels valued, where their talents are fully utilised, and in which organisational goals are met.

Direct discrimination

Means treating one person less favourably than another on the grounds of that person’s gender, race, disability, age, sexual orientation. Direct discrimination is unlawful (see Appendix 2).

Flexible working

Parents of children aged under six or disabled children aged under 18 have the right to apply to work flexibly and their employers have a duty to consider these requests seriously.

Flexible working is defined as

- a variation to the hours currently worked
• a variation to the times when a person is required to work, or
• working from home

Equal opportunities

The simplest and most common definition is not treating anyone in a blatantly discriminatory manner. There are two main types of equality encompassed in equal opportunities. **Equality of treatment** is concerned with treating everyone the same, whilst this is certainly an important aspect of reducing disadvantage, it can be argued that it is insufficient. It does not recognise the different needs and capabilities of different people, and that people who are competing do not all start from the same point. Therefore, **equality of outcome** permits the application of different policies or processes to different social groups to address the disadvantage these groups face in the beginning resulting in an approach based more on desired outcomes and results.

Equal pay

Under the Equal Pay Act, men and women must receive the same level of pay for equal work or work of equal value or work regarded as equal under headings such as effort, skill, responsibility and decision making. Any differences must be objectively justifiable by reasons unrelated to gender. This assessment will normally involve a process of job evaluation which must be analytical and free of sex bias.

Genuine occupational requirement

An exemption under the Sex Discrimination Act and Race Relations Act that allows an employer to advertise job vacancies for one sex or one race only in very specific circumstances, usually when employees are providing personal services.

Glass ceiling

The glass ceiling is a metaphor for an invisible barrier which prevents suitably qualified women from advancing upward into senior positions in the organisations. Women can see but not reach the high level jobs.
Harassment

Inappropriate conduct or unwanted attention that may affect the dignity of an employee at work. It involves someone behaving towards another in a way that is likely to embarrass, humiliate, intimidate and anger.

Indirect discrimination

This occurs where the effect of certain requirements, conditions or practices imposed by an employer has an adverse impact disproportionally on one group or other.

Mainstreaming

Mainstreaming is about making the concept of equality central to all policy and decision making, and not just those areas or functions which appear to have obvious impact on equality.

Monitoring

The process of collecting and analysing information about ethnic origin, gender, age, etc. to ensure that all groups are fairly represented and to identify where steps need to be taken to ensure this.

Multiple discrimination

Generally, people belong to not just one community, but several. This can make them the target of prejudice on more than one level. For example a Black man who is disabled may experience racism and disablism.

Paternity Leave

Leave for the father of a newborn baby.

Positive action

Action to address under-representation which allows an employee to:

- provide facilities to meet the special needs of people from particular racial groups, women and people with disabilities in relation to their training education or welfare; and
target job training at underrepresented social groups in a particular area of work, or encourage them to apply for such work.

Positive action does not constitute positive discrimination which gives people jobs purely because they are women or ethnic minorities. Positive action is about ensuring people can compete equally with other individuals. Positive action can be as simple as encouraging underrepresented groups to apply for jobs and communicating that people will be judged at all time according to individual merit and capability.

Prejudice

Prejudice is an adverse judgement, conviction or opinion formed beforehand or without knowledge or examination of the facts. Prejudice often leads to discriminatory behaviour.

Quota

An example of a quota would be the requirement to achieve a fixed percentage of female employees within an organisation by 2010. However, in the UK quotas are illegal, as fixing a quantity would inevitably lead to discrimination/less favourable treatment. However, setting targets is not unlawful, as they can be achieved through legitimate positive action measures.

Racism

Racism is the belief that some races are superior to others based on the false notion that different physical characteristics such as skin colour or ethnic background make some people better than others.

Religion or belief

Employers should not discriminate on the grounds of religious belief under the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003.

Sexism

Prejudice against women.
DRAFT

Stereotyping

Stereotyping involves hostile or negative attitudes towards a social group, based on generalisations, derived from hearsay or incomplete information e.g. certain work is suitable for one sex or the other.

Transsexual person

A transsexual person feels a consistent and overwhelming desire to transition and fulfil their life as a member of the opposite sex to their birth gender. Once a person has transitioned, they can legally assume the other gender and cease to be transsexual

Victimisation

Victimising someone because they have made a complaint of discrimination, or are thought to have done so; or because they have supported someone else who has made a complaint of discrimination.

Work/Life balance

Work/life balance is about adjusting working patterns and developing initiatives, policies and procedures to enable employees to do their jobs and at the same time provide flexibility to handle personal and family concerns, and pursue activities outside work.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisations and Initiatives</th>
<th>Website</th>
<th>Telephone</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.acas.org.uk">www.acas.org.uk</a></td>
<td>020 7396 5100</td>
<td>ACAS provides guidance to enable organisations to effectively manage equality and diversity through a range of Equality &amp; Diversity seminars, a network of free telephone help-lines and publications on a wide range of equality and legislative issues many of which are available online.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change the Face of Construction</td>
<td><a href="http://www.change-construction.org">www.change-construction.org</a></td>
<td>020 7724 6735</td>
<td>Change the Face of Construction is a project dedicated to encouraging greater diversity across all sectors of the construction industry. The website provides a hub for sharing information and ideas, improving communication and pushing for change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIC (Construction Industry Council)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.cic.org.uk">www.cic.org.uk</a></td>
<td>020 7637 8692</td>
<td>CIC encompasses an Equal Opportunities Panel to support and advise professional members. One initiative is the production of the 'Building Visions' video aimed at promoting the construction professions to schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.cipd.co.uk">www.cipd.co.uk</a></td>
<td>0208 971 9000</td>
<td>The website provides good practice guides and fact sheets on age, religious, sex and sexual orientation discrimination and harassment. Various reports and publications including disability and employment can be accessed. Guidance on legal obligations under equality legislation is also provided. CIPD also run training courses such as 'Discrimination, Diversity and the Law'.</td>
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<tr>
<td>CITB (Construction Industry Training Board)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.citb.co.uk">www.citb.co.uk</a></td>
<td>01485 577577</td>
<td>The website provides advice on legal and business issues in diversity, and guidance on recruitment, training and qualifying the construction workforce.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRE (Commission for Racial Equality)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.cre.gov.uk">www.cre.gov.uk</a></td>
<td>020 7939 0000</td>
<td>Encourages fair treatment and works to promote equal opportunities for everyone, regardless of their race, colour, nationality, or national or ethnic origin. Also works with public bodies, businesses, and organisations from all sectors to promote policies and practices that will help to ensure equal treatment for all.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DFES (Department for Education and Skills)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.dfes.gov.uk">www.dfes.gov.uk</a></td>
<td>0845 602 2260</td>
<td>Produced a non statutory Code of Practice on age diversity in employment covering non ageist approaches to recruitment, training and development, promotion, redundancy and retirement. The code is accompanied by detailed guidance and case studies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>DRC (Disability Rights Commission)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.drc.org.uk">www.drc.org.uk</a></td>
<td>08457 622 633 The DRC provide an advice and information service for disabled people, employers and service providers. It can help solve problems without going to a court or employment tribunal and produces publications about rights for disabled people and good practice for employers and service providers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>DTI (Department of Trade and Industry)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.dti.gov.uk">www.dti.gov.uk</a></td>
<td>020 7215 5000 Website contains detailed guidance and information on all facets of equality issues. The Women and Equality Unit is part of the DTI.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employers Forum on Age</td>
<td><a href="http://www.efa.org.uk">www.efa.org.uk</a></td>
<td>020 8765 7597 EFA is an independent network of employers offering members advice and practical support on managing the skills and age mix of their organisation via workshops and seminars. It also represents the employers' voice to the Government. EFA have produced a policy review toolkit covering all aspects of employment policy to aid compliance with the forthcoming age discrimination legislation.</td>
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<td>Employers for Work-Life Balance</td>
<td><a href="http://www.employersforwork-lifebalance.org.uk">www.employersforwork-lifebalance.org.uk</a></td>
<td>020 7420 3847 An employer led organisation with the belief that work-life balance is a relevant and valuable business concept. Operates a detailed and resourceful website consisting of advice, good practice guidelines and papers discussing aspects of work-life balance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>EOC (Equal Opportunities Commission)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.eoc.org.uk">www.eoc.org.uk</a></td>
<td>0845 601 5901 The EOC is the leading agency working to eliminate sex discrimination. In order to put equality into practice, the EOC is working with employers to provide practical information and tools, including an Equal Pay Kit and guides on preventing discrimination in job evaluation and performance-related pay. The Equality Exchange network helps employers to keep up-to-date and share best practice with an email newsletter and special events.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employers' Forum on Disability</td>
<td><a href="http://www.employers-forum.co.uk">www.employers-forum.co.uk</a></td>
<td>020 7403 3020 The Forum is a recognised voice on disability as it affects employers and service providers. It works closely with government and other stakeholders, sharing best practice to make it easier to employ disabled people and serve disabled customers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesbian and Gay Employment Rights</td>
<td><a href="http://www.lager.dircon.co.uk">www.lager.dircon.co.uk</a></td>
<td>020 7704 2205 Offers training and consultancy to organisations which are committed to improving their policies towards issues of sexual orientation and diversity in the workplace</td>
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<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>Website/Link</td>
<td>Phone Number</td>
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<td>Equality Direct</td>
<td><a href="http://www.equalitydirect.org.uk">www.equalitydirect.org.uk</a></td>
<td>0845 600 3444</td>
<td>The service is designed to give business managers easy access to authoritative and joined-up advice on a wide range of equality issues. The service includes an informative website and a help line number.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Job Centre Plus</td>
<td><a href="http://www.employmentservice.gov.uk">www.employmentservice.gov.uk</a></td>
<td>See local directory</td>
<td>Formerly the employment service. Provides information and advice to employers to support them in the adoption of good employment policies and practices in the recruitment, retention, training and career development of disabled people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Line</td>
<td><a href="http://www.languageline.co.uk">www.languageline.co.uk</a></td>
<td>0800 169 2879</td>
<td>Provides language services to public sector organisations in the UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race and Equality Advisory Service</td>
<td><a href="http://www.acas.org.uk">www.acas.org.uk</a></td>
<td>08457 47 47 47</td>
<td>REAS provides a national network of experienced advisers who offer face-to-face advice to assess current policies and practices, recommend improvements and help put them in place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-Life Balance Campaign and Challenge Fund</td>
<td><a href="http://www.dti.gov.uk/work-lifebalance/">www.dti.gov.uk/work-lifebalance/</a></td>
<td>020 7215 6249</td>
<td>The Work-Life balance team provides support to business for the adoption of Work Life Balance polices and disseminates best practice and case studies of business who have benefited from addressing work life balance. The Challenge Fund is a resource to help employers develop and implement work-life balance strategies that will benefit the business, customer and employee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2: The Legal Framework

This section provides a summary of key legislation relating to equality and employment. It is not a definitive guide to the law.

Sex Discrimination Act 1975
This deals with discrimination on grounds of sex or marriage and applies to men and women.

In employment...

Employers must not discriminate on grounds of sex, marriage or where a person has undergone (or intends to undergo) gender reassignment.
This applies to recruitment, treatment in the job, chances for promotion and training, dismissal or redundancy.

Equal Pay Act 1970
Under the Equal Pay Act (EPA) women must be paid the same as men when they are doing similar work or equal of equal value and vice-versa.

The EPA applies to pay and other contractual matters where a woman and a man are doing like work or work which is of equal value.

The Equal Opportunities Commission has produced a code of Practice on Equal Pay which gives practical guidance to employers.
Race Relations Act 1976
This makes discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, nationality (including citizenship), ethnic or national origin unlawful. The law covers people from all racial groups, including white people.

Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
This strengthens the Race Relations Act 1976 to include public functions, even if those functions are carried out by a private business. The general duty expects public authorities to take the lead in promoting equality of opportunity and good race relations, and preventing unlawful discrimination. A public authority remains responsible for meeting this duty when it contracts with a private business to carry out any of its functions. Private contractors will need to bear this in mind.

Disability Discrimination Act 1995
This deals with discrimination against disabled people. Discrimination occurs when someone treats a disabled person less favorably than someone else, without justification, for reason related to his or her disability.

Discrimination also occurs if, without justification, a 'reasonable adjustment' is not made to accommodate people with disabilities in order to help overcome the practical effects of their disabilities. It obliges an employer to consider removing the disadvantage caused by the nature of any individual disability, both for job applicants and employees.

The Act applies to all those who provide goods, facilities and services to the public. The employment provisions of the Act currently apply to employers with 15 or more employees, although from October 2004, it will be against the law for an employer of any size to discriminate against a disabled person because of their disability.

Employment Relations Act 1999
Under the Employment Relations Act most employees have the right to
- Up to 13 weeks unpaid parental leave
- A reasonable period of time off work to deal with an emergency involving a dependent.
- Women are also entitled to maternity leave and maternity pay if they become pregnant.
Maternity

The Employment Rights Act 1996, as amended by the Employment Relations Act 1999 and the Employment Act 2002, contain the framework for maternity rights. The details of these rights are set out in supporting regulations: the Maternity and Parental Leave etc. Regulations 1999 and the Maternity and Parental Leave (Amendment) Regulations 2002. However in brief all employees are entitled to:

- Time off for antenatal care;
- Maternity leave and the right to return to work;
- Maternity pay;
- Protection against unfair dismissal on maternity-related grounds.
- Employers must also take special measures to safeguard the well-being of pregnant women, those who have recently given birth within the last six months and those who are breastfeeding.

For further information on maternity consult:

- ACAS website www.acas.org.uk
- Department of Trade and Industry "Maternity Rights: A guide for Employers and Employees" publications www.dti.gov.uk
- Tiger website www.tiger.gov.uk
- The Maternity Alliance www.maternityalliance.org.uk

The Part-Time Working Regulations 2000

The aim of the regulations is to ensure that part-time workers are not treated less favourably in their employment conditions than full timers, unless this is justified on objective grounds. In brief, the regulations cover pay, employee benefits and holiday entitlement, training, redundancy and contractual maternity leave and parental leave.
The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003

Under the regulations it is unlawful to discriminate against workers on the grounds of sexual orientation, perceived as well as actual sexual orientation (i.e. assuming – correctly or incorrectly – that someone is lesbian, gay, heterosexual or bisexual), and association (i.e. being discriminated against on the grounds of the sexual orientation of those with whom you associate).

The regulations apply to all employment and vocational training and include recruitment, terms and conditions, promotions, transfers, dismissals and training. People are protected from, direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimization.

Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003

Under the regulations it is unlawful to discriminate against workers because of their religion or similar belief. The regulations apply to all employment and vocational training and include recruitment, terms and conditions, promotions, transfers, dismissals and training. People are protected from, direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimization.

The regulations also cover those without Religious or similar beliefs.

Age Discrimination Legislation

The Government has committed to the EU Directive to introduce age discrimination legislation by 2006. The Government aims to have legislation in place (but not in force) by summer 2005 to allow employers to prepare for the changes.

In 1999, however, the government introduced a Code of Practice on Age Diversity in Employment. This is a voluntary set of Good Practice standards to help employers recognise the business benefits of an age-diverse workforce. The Code encourages employers to make decisions that do not discriminate on the basis of age.

For further information, guidance and the Code of Practice on Age Diversity in employment consult the Age Positive website www.agepositive.gov.uk