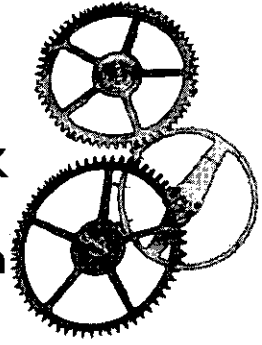


The Sociology of Work

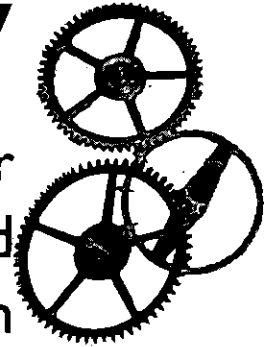
Introduction



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Race, Ethnicity and Labour Markets: Recruitment and the Politics of Exclusion

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I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up, live out the true meaning of its creed: we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.

Martin Luther King, 27 August 1963

Introduction

This chapter provides an introduction to the debates on ethnicity, race and racism at work. It begins by examining the theoretical controversies surrounding the terms themselves and then analyses the classical model of labour markets – which suggest that skin colour, cultural origin and ethnic allegiance are irrelevant to success at work. The problems of this suggestion, and the assumption that all ethnic minorities can be placed in the same collective category ‘black’, are then discussed, along with various accounts for the patterning of rewards and recruitment. Finally, the experience of minority workers in trade unions in Britain and the USA is considered.

divided into discrete groups in order to legitimate inequality between these groups – physical differences exist within all societies. However, the paramount point is that some features are selected by certain powerful members of such societies as ‘ethnically significant’. Conventionally, little attempt is made to ensure that the worst jobs and housing go to those of us with large ears or those who are bald or spotty, but in Europe and North America those with dark skins are often treated just as inequitably (except, of course, in the ironic practices of white racist sunbathers). Racism, therefore, ‘categorizes the “other” as inherently different and typically inferior . . . and involves the disadvantageous treatment of the “other”, whether intentionally or not’ (Jenkins, 1988: 311). What this chapter does is to explain how this racism manifests itself in and at work.

Ethnicity

One way of approaching the delicate topic of race is to ignore it altogether and appropriate instead the term ‘ethnicity’ since this refers to cultural rather than physical or allegedly ‘natural’ differences between groups. Ethnicity is also significant in so far as many groups are discriminated against because of their cultural attributes rather than their skin colour or apparent racial differences. For example, almost all countries have ethnic minorities within them which remain the butt of discriminatory ‘jokes’ yet they are often physically identical with the majority population. Of course, not all groups that are discriminated against are minorities – the clearest counter-example being South African blacks – but it is more typical within Western capitalist nations at least for the ethnic groups to be minority groups as well. But if the evidence for racial difference, as opposed to ethnic/cultural differences, is marginal at the very best, why persist in the use of such a term? Perhaps the clearest answer relates to the experiences of people who are discriminated against because of their alleged racial distinction: the fact that the distinctions are false does not prevent the discrimination, and ignoring the issue on the grounds of its non-scientific status has seldom proved a resolution to such problems. And since, in 1995, 79 per cent of the white population in Britain believed that racial prejudice still exists we must assume the problem remains (ICM, 1995).

Indeed, a European Union poll in 1997 revealed that roughly one-third of the British population admitted they were racist (including 8 per cent who said they were ‘very racist’) – though this figure remains far below that for France, Belgium and Austria where half admitted to being racist (*The Guardian*, 20 December 1997). Nor should the issue of race be reduced to that of ethnicity. As Rex observes: ‘The attempt to assimilate racial to ethnic problems, therefore, often led to the interpretation of racial problems not as forms of conflict but as benign phenomena of difference’ (1986: 19). That is to say, that racial relationships have been, with few exceptions, conflictual, whereas ethnic relations exhibit a much wider span of reactions from (atypically) mutual admiration to outright hostility. But just as race has a dubious claim to objective existence, so too ethnicity is a socially constructed, and therefore contested, subject. Thus

both race and ethnicity may be better conceptualized as a resource which individuals and groups draw upon, and in so doing actively construct, rather than something which exists 'out there'. This does not imply that race is socially constructed only by superordinate groups and that this construct is applied to themselves and imposed upon subordinates, whereas ethnicity is self-constructed. Both constructs are socially constructed and capable of self-application or imposition from outside. Indeed, no categorical distinction can be made between them; rather it is the case that racial constructs are related *primarily* to physical features, while ethnic constructs are related *primarily* to cultural features like common forms of language, location, kinship and customs etc. (Geertz, 1963). In many cases the two will simply be indistinguishable in practice.

The relative importance of cultural aspects of ethnicity is manifest in the debates in the USA concerning the numbers of Native Americans in 2003. Many of the eighty separate Native American tribes challenged the 2000 Census, which established the numbers belonging to each tribe. Since the size of the tribe determines the level of federal support, there was a financial reason for reconsidering the tribal numbers, but it is also the case that claiming tribal identity has become a source of cultural pride which many people previously sought to hide. Exactly who can claim such an identity is itself determined more by cultural than by biological prerequisites. For instance, since the US Supreme Court ruled in 1978 that each tribe could define its own membership, the diversity of definitions has grown: the Cherokee nation demand that tribal members be descended from someone on the 1906 federal roll after the destruction of their reservation, while the Yakimas require at least one grandparent to be from the tribe. In 1910 just over a quarter of a million Americans were registered as Native American, and half of these were 'full bloods'. The 2000 Census suggested there were 2.5 million classified as 'wholly' Native American, and 1.6 million as 'part' Native American. Whatever the numbers, the point is to consider how the definition cannot simply be related to physical aspects of 'race' (Campbell, 2003b). Moreover, early work on the DNA analysis of 229 'black' men in the UK in 2003 suggested that 26 per cent had at least one 'white' male ancestor: in effect, many if not most of us would have great difficulty *disproving* a 'mixed' biological heritage, and, by implication, our identity is a social not a biological construct (McKie and Revill, 2003: 20).

Weber and exclusion

Weberian approaches to the general area are represented by reference to exclusionary mechanisms using status as a concept to include race and ethnicity. Just as small-scale social groups and coteries exist and reproduce themselves by excluding those without the necessary characteristics or possessions, so too racial or ethnic groups do the same, as do other social institutions such as trade unions or religious groups (Parkin, 1979). Groups are not restricted simply to rejecting the advances of outsiders, they may also attempt to invade the territory of those by whom they themselves are excluded. Trade unions, for example, may

operate with two different forms of exclusionary practice, or 'dual closure': they may attempt 'usurpatory' action against the employers and 'exclusionary' action against minority workers. In principle, exclusionary practices by one group tend to be associated with a priori legitimization of 'inferiority' and 'superiority' by the state (Parkin, 1982: 102), though at the level of the enterprise this need not be so. For example, the exclusion of individuals on the basis of non-possession of familial links, as in the printing or dock trades for many years, has seldom been approved by the state as such, but none the less retains its significance. The opposite method by which groups attempt to wrest control from existing exclusivist groups, Parkin's 'usurpatory' strategy, is represented by the Italian cigar makers of Tampa discussed below. The exclusionary line is the one adopted by Gordon (1972), Rubery (1980), Lee (1980), and Craig et al. (1982), but two rather different mechanisms need delineating here: on the one hand there is the conventional market-oriented exclusionary strategy of most groups in positions of power who retain power by excluding the majority irrespective of their characteristics, cultural or social; on the other hand are policies of exclusion focused directly on specific groups, such as women and ethnic minorities (Grint, 1988). In the first case fall the sectional methods adopted by many trade unions (Currie, 1979), but most notably craft unions, in which work-based privileges depend upon control over the labour market. The archetypal exclusionary mechanism here is the demand for all labour to be apprenticed, hence 'skilled', and for the number and form of apprenticeships to be controlled by the unions. Printers embody this kind of exclusionary approach and have reaped the benefits of limiting the labour supply for generations in the form of relatively high salary levels (Sisson, 1975; Open University, 1976). Such control has also played a part in the downfall of the printing unions as their strategic influence simultaneously pushed labour costs ever higher, inhibited the adoption of new technology and, therefore, made such technology inevitably more attractive to employers. In the second case fall the activities of unions determined to preserve privileges not just *for* their members but *against* particular out groups, sometimes even those who are members of the same union (Grint, 1988).

Institutionalized racism

The major problem with some exclusionary approaches, and Parkin's approach in particular, is the implication that social life is no more than a network of exclusionary and usurpatory groups. Where Parkin rightly criticizes Marxists for neglecting the existence of non-class issues, he merely inverts the image and denies the existence of all but groups actively excluding others. As many radical critics of putative pluralist societies have demonstrated, to concentrate on what is actively fought over at the level of overt conflict ignores that which embodies inequality of resources but is not revealed in any specific activity (Giddens, 1982a; Lukes, 1974; Clegg, 1989). This is particularly important in explaining **institutionalized racism**: a group dominated by whites may not

adopt overtly racist practices but if it simply recruits in its own image then what appear to be equal opportunities lead to unequal results (Rex, 1986: 108–18; Miles, 1989: 84–7). For example, the British police requirements for male recruits to be at least 5 foot 8 inches has indirectly discriminated against British Asians who tend to be rather shorter than British whites. The recent removal of this height requirement thus removes the institutionalized racism. Similarly, the British armed forces' requirements for all service personnel to wear protective helmets in combat zones effectively debars British Sikhs from joining the 200,000 existing forces – despite the fact that almost 200,000 Sikhs were killed or wounded fighting for Britain in two world wars. Few British trade unions, or indeed less progressive institutions, operate with overt exclusionary policies based on race or ethnicity yet the empirical evidence suggests that many are racist. Whether the racism is a reflection of members or institutional practices and policies is a separate issue (see for example, Virdee and Grint, 1994).

Marxism and racism

As discussed in chapter 4, the conventional Marxist approach to social stratification is to subordinate aspects such as gender, race and ethnicity to class: the former are derivative of, and therefore subordinate to, the latter. It follows that once class societies are abandoned in favour of socialist and classless societies, sexism and racism will wither spontaneously. The experience of non-capitalist societies, ancient and modern, suggest that nothing of the sort is likely and that discrimination based on gender and race or ethnicity, while it may not be completely autonomous of that derived from social class, is unlikely to disintegrate with the removal of class discrimination. That is not to say that the legitimations of discrimination are constant across time. For example, neither Greek nor Roman slavery was grounded in an ideology of racial inferiority. Rather they were both culturally legitimated: free people with political rights (i.e., men) were culturally distinct from the 'barbarians' they enslaved. In turn, this meant that even barbarians, black or white, could become cultured and hence attain equivalent status as the free citizens of Rome or most of the ancient Greek city-states (Snowden, 1983). Skin colour as a sign of status, therefore, is a more recent phenomenon associated more directly with the expansion of European powers into Africa and Asia from the fifteenth century, and before this through the development of general hostility between the Islamic and Christian worlds from the twelfth century (Daniel, 1975). Indeed, Hall (1992) argues that a European identity was itself partly constructed in and through the apparent differences between the Old World and the New World which became manifest in the European explorations of the Americas in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Even the slavery system of the West Indies and America operated within an ideological defence of enslavement that sought to justify it rather than simply take it for granted (Curtin, 1972). After all, had not the 'father' of British liberal thought, John Locke, argued in his 1690 *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*

that 'A Negro is not a Man' (see Segal, 1995)? For example, Africans were deemed particularly suited to work in tropical conditions, in contrast to Europeans; and since the Europeans regarded themselves as culturally superior to Africans, the capture of slaves was sometimes represented as a form of liberation for the slaves from the cultural depravities of their homeland (Barker, 1978; Miles, 1989).

This historical dimension is also important in situating the post-1945 immigrations against previous movements. Since one of the features of capitalism that distinguish it from slavery and prior modes of production is the formal freeing of labour it is likely that emigration and immigration take on a high level of significance. As such we should beware of linking immigration into Britain *per se* with immigration from the post-war Caribbean and Asian immigration (see Miles, 1990). That the language of immigration still conflates the phenomenon, and persists in labelling ethnic minority Britons as 'immigrants', illustrates the power of certain forms of discourse over others.

Since many ethnic minorities in contemporary Britain still do not occupy positions of equality with the white population it then becomes necessary to consider how various theories explain the persistence of divisions and inequalities. Marxist accounts like that of Castles and Kosack (1973) imply that the divisions between white and minority workers are representations of a transient hostility derived from competition within the labour market. Over time, the interests of minority and white workers will be perceived as converging and thus white working-class racism will disappear. The critical problem for such accounts lies in the assumption that the temporal dimension is the explanatory variable: workers of different races have to *learn* to combine and, over time, eventually they will do so. It may well be that experience is a significant educative medium, which in itself undermines any deterministic connection between social position and political activity, but the assumption of an inevitable and evolutionary progression, to a point where class interests prevail over racial interests, is premised on very shaky foundations; *when* do these interests coincide and what exactly are the mechanisms that deny the possibility of greater polarization between racial and ethnic groups rather than greater integration?

Making sense of racism

Marxist accounts often assume that racism is related to distorted or false consciousness: since the interests of the working class, irrespective of race, ethnicity or gender, are constructed through their exploited position, any denial of universal class interests may be explained by reference to misunderstanding or capitalist propaganda designed to divide and rule the working class. Yet racism may form what Miles (1989: 79) calls a 'relatively coherent theory' in so far as it 'explains' the subordinate position of the white working class by reference to the activities of the minorities. What is important here is that an ideology can 'make sense' of the world as interpreted by certain members of the white

working class. For example, the construction of the British Empire, and the concomitant destruction of indigenous African and Indian industries and political regimes, is explicable through a complex web of social, economic and especially military developments which the colonized did not have access to. But a simpler explanation, albeit an erroneous one, is that the Empire reflects the innate superiority of the white British 'race': the simple explanation makes sense of a complex phenomenon and serves to reproduce racism. The fact that this simpler explanation is empirically wrong does not prevent people from using it to make sense of the world (Miles, 1989: 80–1). Similarly, the fact that competition between different racial or ethnic groups in the labour market is severely limited by the different niches that each group tends to operate within does not debar individuals from explaining their racism by reference to assumed competition. It should be added further that racism cannot simply be related to the workplace since so many children, even as young as three and a half, have already recognized, adopted or rejected cultural attitudes concerning race and prejudice (Commission for Racial Equality, 1990). Nor are whites necessarily the most racist groups in the UK. In 1997 a survey for the Institute for Public Policy Research suggested that Asians and Jews were more concerned than non-Jewish whites about the prospect of a close relative marrying a person of Afro-Caribbean origin (IPPR, 1997).

It is assumed, then, that race or ethnicity is neither subordinate nor superordinate to class, nor indeed to gender. As argued in the previous chapter, the exact significance of any of the three major variables is an empirical question not one that can be settled a priori. Just because the existence and potential importance of ethnic minorities is acknowledged, it cannot be assumed that their ethnicity is the major influence or determinant of their particular position in the social structure or at work. The position of minority working-class women is not equivalent to minority middle-class men, nor is either of these two examples one which is permanent through space and time. For example, the number of middle-class minorities has grown quite rapidly in the last decade, especially in the USA; fifty years ago few minorities could have aspired to such a position. For example, between 1982 and 1994 the number of African-American households with an income above the national average (\$35,000 in 1995) doubled to over 1 million. On the other hand, young (14–35) African-American men are more likely to be in jail than in college; one in three is either in prison, on probation or awaiting trial, one is murdered every hour (a mortality rate that exceeds that of US troops in the Second World War) and 38 per cent of prison executions are of such men (Walker, 1995). Even at college African Americans, who constitute 13 per cent of the population, account for only 2 per cent of the PhDs awarded and have the highest drop-out rate at 50 per cent (Edmonds, 1995).

The rest of this chapter concentrates on three areas which may be considered pre-eminent in the analysis of race and ethnicity at work. The first section considers the part of the labour market in the perpetuation and elimination of racial discrimination; the second concerns the role played by management in discriminatory recruitment and promotion; the third covers the actions and attitudes of trade unions and workers in Britain and the USA.

Labour markets and racism

Classical models

The notion of markets is, of course, central to the machinations of the capitalist economy. In the **neo-classical labour market model** wages are determined by the direct relationship between the supply and demand of labour. Employers' demands for labour are determined by its marginal productivity and employees' actions are grounded in an equivalent form of economic rationality: the trade-off between costs and benefits in any particular job (Wootton, 1995; Marsden, 1986: 19–24). Although most of the work in this area has conventionally been regarded as the preserve of economists, sociological interest has been increasing lately and, in fact, dates back to the rise of functionalist accounts of stratification. Davis and Moore (1945) first developed the approach which asserted that rewards were differentially distributed in order to attract the most capable individuals into the most demanding jobs: without considerable reward those most qualified would have little incentive to undertake the most responsible jobs. The theoretical difficulties of functionalism are not the prime consideration here (see Giddens, 1977) but it is important to note how such theoretical limitations undermine the utility of this approach to labour markets. For example, functionalist accounts are unable to provide any criteria for estimating rewards other than that which exactly replicates the status quo: since rewards are functionally distributed, the existing position must be functional. No mental acrobatics in comparing the social value of nurses or teachers with indolent members of the landed gentry or drug dealers are necessary to know that the relationship between worth and reward is less than transparent. Indeed, it is only necessary to demonstrate that the rewards due to identically qualified white men and minority women are divergent to know that the functionalist model simply does not operate as an adequate explanation.

Dual labour markets

So how do employers decide what to reward employees? What are the criteria used for assessing the relative merit of individuals? A review of the evidence by Blackburn and Mann suggests that:

instead of using direct measures of ability, they [employers] use what the economic literature terms 'screening devices', that is, they assume that some readily observable characteristic [like race] can serve as an indicator of a certain degree of ability, and select according to that. The most common screening devices are race, sex, previous job history, age, marital status and [in countries where it is appropriate] years of schooling. (1979: 12–13)

This plurality of employment conditions, and its relationship to discrimination and exclusion, has been reduced to a rather starker binary system in several

approaches of late, all bearing witness to the development of 'dual labour markets'. **Dual labour markets** are divided between primary and secondary sections. The primary labour market tends to be restricted to large, profitable and capital intensive industries and enterprises which are often unionized, exhibit internal labour market structures of promotion etc., and pay relatively high wages. These organizations are comparatively isolated from the competitive market. The secondary labour market has the reverse characteristics and tends to be related to those with low skills and to women and ethnic minorities, as well as involving much seasonal, part-time and temporary labour. The terms primary and secondary relate to ideal types rather than empirically discrete cases and within both are several tiers so that, for example, the upper tier of the primary labour market comprises professional and managerial jobs whose skills and expertise provide such individuals with considerable chances for inter-firm mobility. The lower tier of this primary labour market still provides better rewards and conditions than those generally available in the secondary market, but the skills and expertise tend to be firm-specific. Beyond these distinctions it is also the case that a number of secondary labour jobs will exist within the primary sector, such as the office cleaners of financial corporations in capital cities. Concomitantly, the directors of firms in the secondary market will probably receive rewards well in excess of those earned by the lower tier of the primary market. Nevertheless, these specific counter-examples confirm, rather than deny, the validity of the general rule.

The growth of this division has been the subject of a number of explanations. First, it may be related to economic concentration, with the more stable and prosperous enterprises controlling higher percentages of the product market and therefore requiring greater levels of staff stability. Second, it may be linked to technical developments and hence to capital intensive firms where investments in training and experience put premiums on worker loyalty: the so-called 'golden handcuffs'. The seminal works of Doeringer and Piore (1971) and Berger and Piore (1980) are very influential within this approach, arguing that the emergence of firm-specific skills led inexorably to a segmented market. It is worth reinforcing the point, however, that firm-specific skills not only distil the 'gold' for their bearers but enact the 'handcuffs' too, for such restricted skills operate as controlling mechanisms over their owners since they are, by definition, of limited value outside the firm to which they are specific (Brown, 1982). Third, as Garnsey et al. (1985) have argued, it seems to relate to the pursuit of sectional exclusion as work groups, including trade unions, have sought to protect and advance their own interests, if necessary at the expense of others. But even these explanations, and the model they represent, still have to incorporate the dynamic element of change, for in some countries, especially Italy, once stable primary markets have succumbed to the dispersal effects of peripheralization (Sabel, 1982).

Although ethnic minorities do gravitate towards the secondary labour market the dispersal effects tend to be less salient than those which differentiate between the genders. Of course not all minorities work in the secondary labour market. For example, many football players in the English Premier League are black – though there are claims that such players are still paid less than their

white colleagues (Atkinson, 1997). In fact, ethnic minorities in Britain fare relatively well in comparison to some nations such as Switzerland, where guest workers account for 40 per cent of all factory workers; and in France, where the building trade, for example, is in some areas almost wholly staffed by immigrant workers (Castles and Kosack, 1973). It is, of course, possible to remain within the secondary market and yet derive a high level of earnings from it, though this typically means extremely long hours in rather unsavoury conditions, typically within textile mills or on assembly lines. There is, however, another important feature of secondary markets emphasized by Edwards (1979) among others: this is the very high level of insecurity, and in particular the disastrous impact that long-term unemployment can have upon individuals. Workers of ethnic minority origin have consistently suffered a disproportionately high level of unemployment, not merely since the rise of mass unemployment from the late 1970s but right through the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s (Brown, 1984; Modood, 1997b).

Disaggregating ethnic minorities

In 1945 there were approximately 30,000 non-whites in Britain; in 2000 there were approximately 3 million non-whites (Feldman, 2002: 23). In 2001, according to the Census, of the 57,104,000 people in Britain, 4,623,000 were from ethnic minorities, comprising 8 per cent of the total, and, as figure 20 reveals, the ethnic minorities are a very heterogeneous group, which poses a problem if we assume they can all be represented by the identity of 'black'. It is important here to note the differences which do exist between and within the ethnic minorities: to view them as disaggregated rather than aggregated. If the composite contingency model of stratification, which was introduced in the last chapter, is viable then considerable variation between individuals based on the specific and heterogeneous amalgam generated by the interrelationships

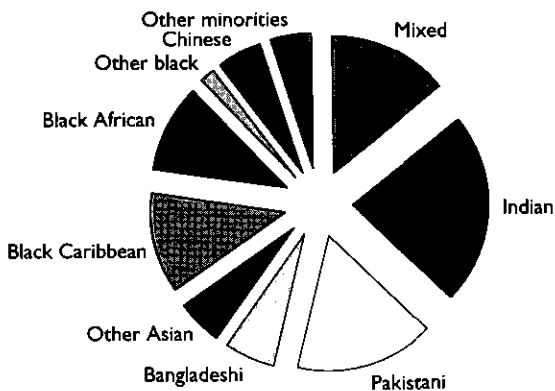


Figure 20 Ethnic minorities in Britain, 2001

Source: Census 2001, Office for National Statistics

between their class, race and gender should be apparent. Inevitably, the data for such an analysis is inadequate, in particular it is not possible to distinguish categories of class properly and for my purposes I have to rely on qualifications as a poor but necessary substitute; there are, after all, strong correlations between class and educational achievement (Halsey, 1986; Burgess, 1986; I. Reid, 1986) and between class, ethnicity and qualifications (Craft and Craft, 1983). A glance at the employment rates in 2001/2 in table 3 reveals some suggestive aspects.

Several points are worth raising here, in particular, the contrast between the employment rates of whites and ethnic minorities generally with regard to qualifications. For white men, overall, those without qualifications have an employment rate of just 58 per cent, compared to those with higher qualifications (A levels plus) who have an employment rate of 90 per cent. The same pattern holds for White women, at 48 per cent and 85 per cent respectively. For Pakistani women the figures are even more significant: only 7 per cent of Pakistani women without qualifications are employed while 64 per cent of those with higher qualifications are employed. The corresponding figures for Pakistani men are 53 and 82 per cent respectively. Similarly, Black African women without qualifications are significantly more prone to unemployment than Black African men. We can generalize from this table in two ways: first, qualifications make a huge difference to employment status irrespective of ethnic origin at the top end – the labour market is *relatively* disinterested in the ethnic origin of men with high qualifications, and although high qualifications help all women into employment, their ethnic origin and gender do matter more; second, the lower the qualifications, the more important become the gender and ethnic origin of the individual seeking employment.

Finally, it is important to note that where sample sizes are too small for statistical analysis the result is often the camouflaging of discrimination and inequality. Thus, minority women in particular tend to be omitted from labour market surveys, and consequently their situation at the bottom of the class, race and gender triangle tends to be underplayed if not completely ignored (Bruegel, 1989). Similarly there is considerable disparity between ethnic groups in terms of educational achievements, as represented in table 4 (p. 250), and this may be a pointer towards future employment success, even if the correlations between unemployment and qualifications may be tenuous at best.

In 2002 the groups gaining the highest collective scores, in terms of five or more 'good' GCSEs, were of Chinese (73 per cent) and Indian (64 per cent) origin. White children secured 51 per cent, while Bangladeshis achieved 45 per cent, Pakistani children secured 40 per cent along with black African children. The lowest scores (30 per cent) were achieved by children from Afro-Caribbean origins. Much of the responsibility for these disparities has been heaped upon schools and teachers, but, as Davey (2003: 4) points out, there are three unresolved problems. First, if teachers are responsible for driving *down* the scores of black children, it seems odd that they simultaneously drive *up* the scores of Chinese and Indian children. Second, since children spend only 15 per cent of their time in school, it seems odd that family background – and more especially peer-group pressure – are not taken into the equation. Third, if 70 per

Table 3 Employment rates by ethnic group, sex and highest qualification (UK), 2001–2 (%)

	<i>Males</i>				<i>Females</i>			
	<i>Higher qualification</i>	<i>Other qualification</i>	<i>No qualifications</i>	<i>All aged 16–64</i>	<i>Higher qualification</i>	<i>Other qualification</i>	<i>No qualifications</i>	<i>All aged 16–59</i>
White	90	82	58	80	85	72	48	71
Mixed	89	66	43	68	66	56	33	55
Asian								
Indian	91	67	60	73	80	56	36	58
Pakistani	82	60	53	61	64	29	7	24
Bangladeshi	76	53	51	55	—	27	—	17
Other Asian	83	64	46	67	80	46	—	52
Black								
Black Caribbean	85	68	50	67	84	63	45	65
Black African	79	56	31	61	75	48	15	49
Other Black	—	63	—	58	—	55	—	57
Chinese	84	57	68	66	74	47	38	54
Other	78	60	41	62	65	45	28	48
All ethnic groups	89	81	58	79	84	70	45	69

Source: Annual Local Area Labour Force Survey, Office for National Statistics

Table 4 Highest qualification held:^a by sex and ethnic group (GB), 2003 (%)

	Degree or equivalent	Higher education qualification ^b	GCE A level or equivalent	GCSE grades A*-C or equivalent	Other qualification	No qualification	All
Males							
White	18	8	31	18	12	13	100
Mixed	14	7	21	22	17	17	100
Asian	20	6	17	11	24	20	100
Black	19	7	21	16	23	12	100
Chinese	29	4	19	9	28	10	100
Other ethnic group ^c	23	6	11	7	36	18	100
All	18	8	29	17	14	13	100
Females							
White	15	10	18	27	13	16	100
Mixed	21	9	17	21	15	17	100
Asian	14	6	13	17	25	24	100
Black	13	12	16	21	24	13	100
Chinese	26	9	14	10	30	11	100
Other ethnic group ^c	14	9	11	10	34	22	100
All	15	10	18	26	14	16	100

^a Males aged 16 to 64, females aged 16 to 59^b Below degree level^c Includes those who did not state their ethnic group

Source: Department for Education and Skills, from the Labour Force Survey, 2003

cent of Afro-Caribbean children are 'failing' at school, what is it about the other 30 per cent that makes them succeed? The whole debate has a ring of the 'over-socialized man' (Wrong, 1961) about it: that is, the assumption that who or whatever is responsible for the parlous state of affairs, it cannot be the individual because they are constrained by social forces to the point where they have no power to control their own futures and should be regarded only as social aggregates. Moreover, as figure 21 below suggests, there is still no direct transition from qualifications at the age of 16 into full-time education beyond 16 because white participation rates in further education are the lowest of all ethnic groups. In effect, as Willis (1977) argued almost 30 years ago, pupils engage in actions that create cultures which, in turn, act against their educational interests. In effect, just as white working-class boys in the 1970s often recreated a white male 'factory' culture that inhibited their educational achievements, so too black working-class boys often tend to do the same 30 years later; thus to work hard at school is 'to sell out' and to 'act white' (Arnot, 2004: 6). Nevertheless, as figure 22 suggests, individuals are not discrete actors in the labour market but rather tend to be constrained and empowered by a variety of social influences, including ethnic origin. These figures relate to economic activity rather than employment, so they include self-employment. As

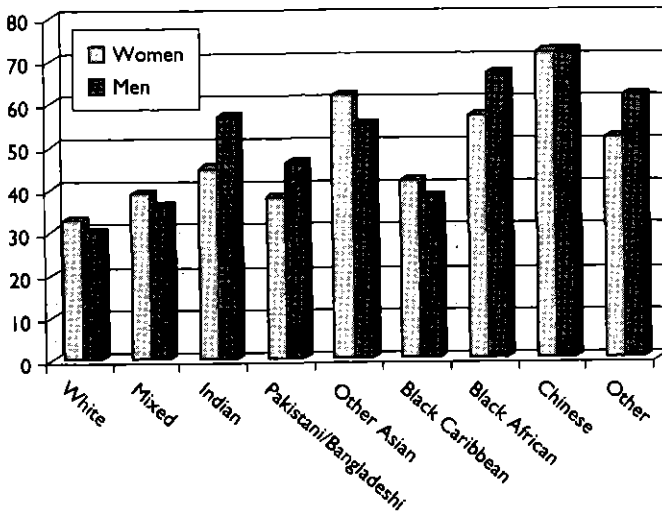


Figure 21 Percentage of 16–24-year-olds in full-time education by ethnic group and sex (UK), 2003

Source: *Labour Market Trends*, September 2003: 439

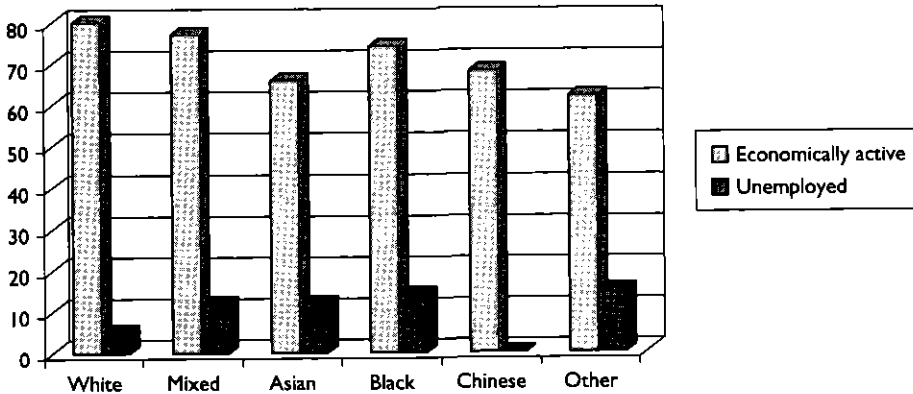


Figure 22 Economic activity by ethnic group (UK), 2003

Source: *Labour Market Trends*, December, 2003: 599

such, it is clear that the economic activity rate of the white population is the highest and the unemployment rate of the Chinese population is the lowest.

When we dig a little deeper into the relationship between occupation and ethnicity it becomes clear that some groups dominate particular occupations. For example, although whites clearly provide the vast majority of the labour force in absolute terms, figures 23 and 24 reveal first how whites are distributed across the occupational spectrum in absolute terms and then how the groups fit relative to each other in proportionate terms. (The data refer to England and Wales only.)

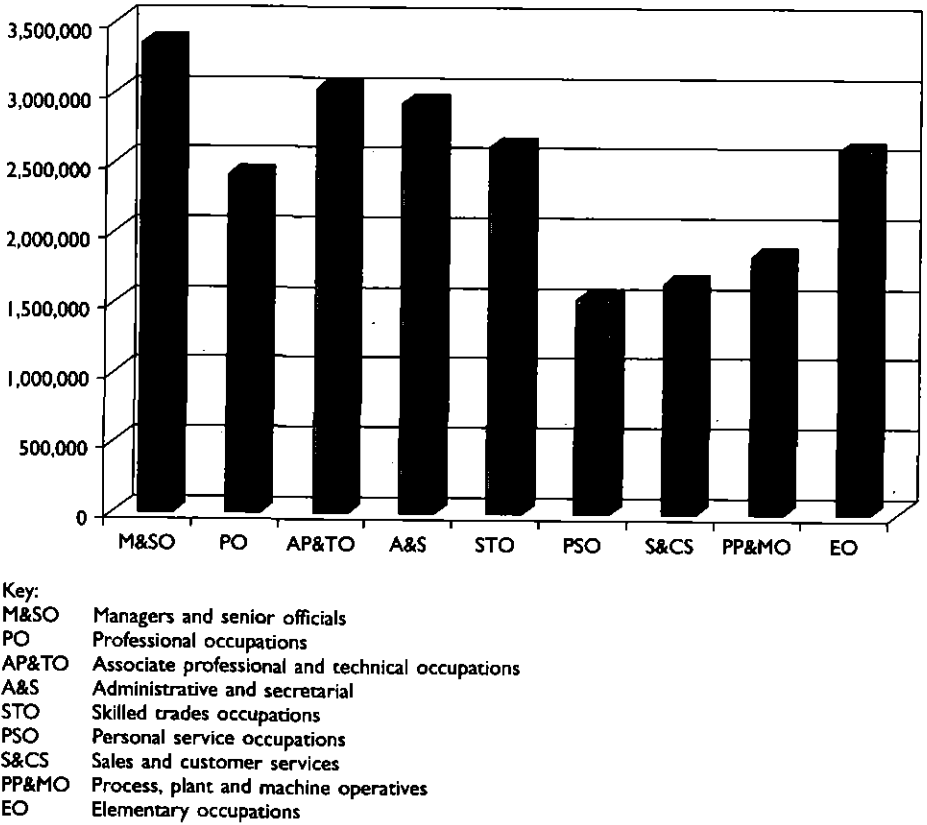
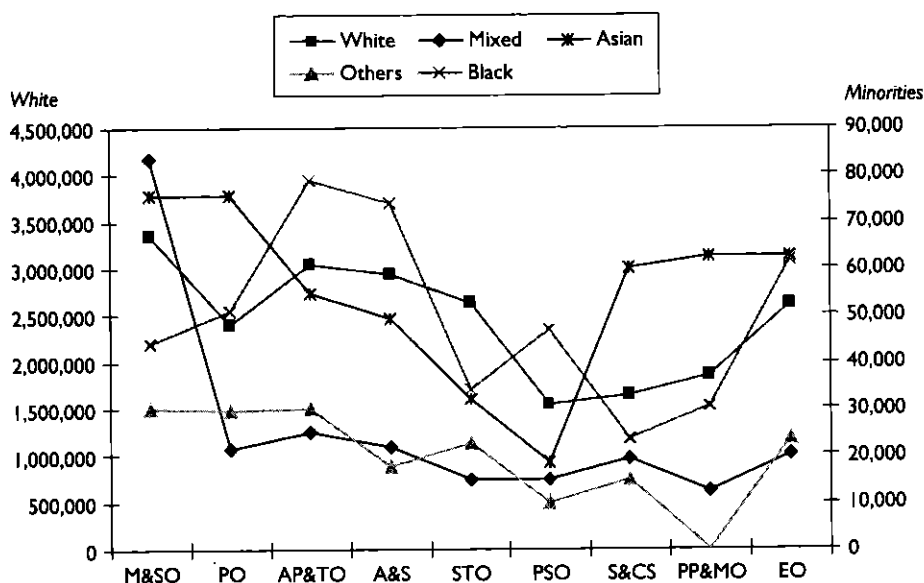


Figure 23 Occupation and ethnicity: white, England and Wales, 2003
 Source: 2001 Census. Reconstructed from Table S109

Taking into account that we are looking at the *pattern* of the lines rather than the absolute *level* of the lines in figure 24 to understand the proportionate level of occupations, and assuming – a large assumption – that the pattern of whites provides the template against which the ethnic minorities should be measured, several aspects are worth highlighting: first, while Asians are well represented at the ‘top’ of the occupation ladder on the left-hand side, they also appear in disproportionate numbers on the right-hand side, particularly amongst sales, operatives and elementary occupations. Second, the mixed group does well in management but not elsewhere. Third, blacks do poorly in terms of management, but are relatively well distributed in line with the pattern of whites elsewhere.

When we consider this data by gender, as in figures 25 and 26, white men are heavily over-represented in the managerial and skilled trades, a pattern almost mirrored in Asian men. For women, the most significant asymmetries occur with Asian women who are over-represented in the skilled trades and under-represented in personal services.



Key:
 M&SO Managers and senior officials
 PO Professional occupations
 AP&TO Associate professional and technical occupations
 A&S Administrative and secretarial
 STO Skilled trades occupations
 PSO Personal service occupations
 S&CS Sales and customer services
 PP&MO Process, plant and machine operatives
 EO Elementary occupations

Figure 24 Occupation and ethnicity: England and Wales, 2003

Source: 2001 Census. Reconstructed from Table S109

In short, neither ethnic origin nor class (manifest, admittedly weakly, in terms of qualifications) nor gender can predict employment status as independent variables. Only when these variables are reconstructed in a compound unity can we begin to make adequate sense of a very complex picture. Even then we need to go beyond the general level of social categories to that of interpretative influences to establish why identically qualified individuals might have very different experiences (see also Bruegel, 1989).

Internal and external labour markets

While these macro-level external market data are relatively transparent, many **internal labour market** constructs appear rather opaque in small and private enterprises, though they do become translucent within large-scale, and most notably public, bureaucracies. Thus, incremental pay scales, promotion by seniority, and internal recruitment to senior posts have long been the hallmark of

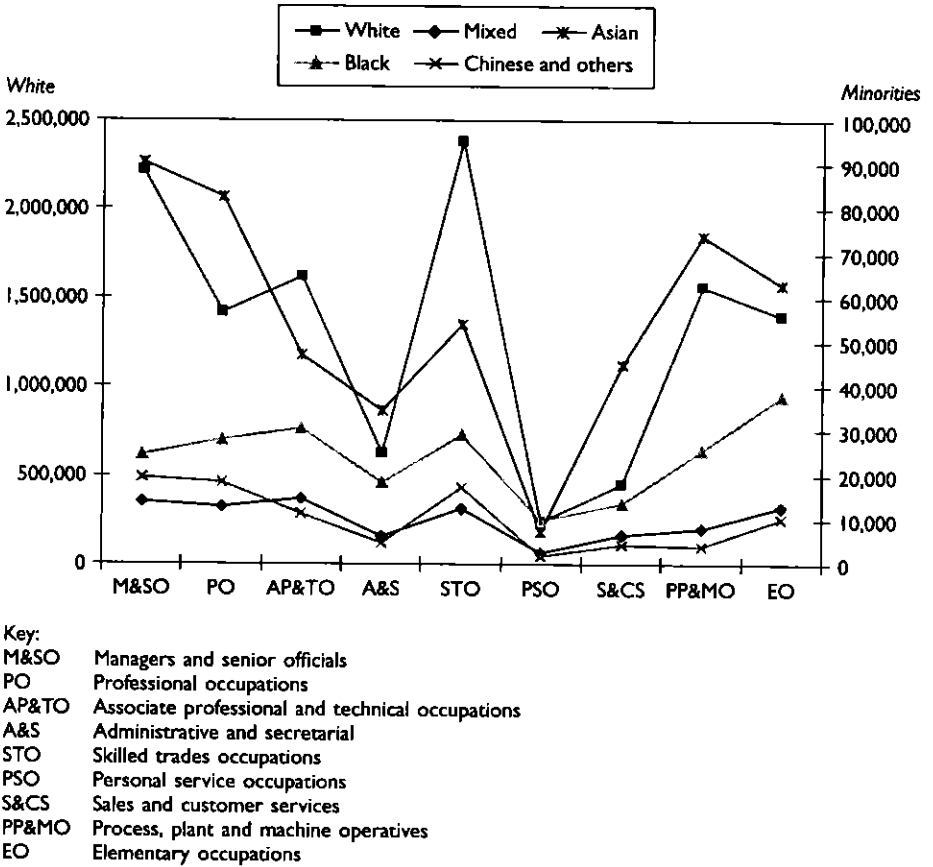


Figure 25 Men, occupation and ethnicity: England and Wales, 2003
Source: 2001 Census. Reconstructed from Table S109

civil services generally (Weber, 1978), with the British Post Office and British Steel providing particularly 'ideal' types (Grint, 1986; Brannen et al., 1976; Batstone et al., 1983, 1984) long before Japanese companies became noted for adapting such regimes (Grint, 1993). Such 'open' systems have often been associated with greater equality simply because discrimination of any sort is rather harder to hide and easier to disclose.

Other, smaller, firms may also be reliant upon their internal labour market, and a classic case is described by Mann (1973a) where a relocating firm takes a large proportion of its workforce with it. So are internal labour markets more appropriate to large stable bureaucracies or to innovative small firms? There is a strong possibility that widely divergent explanations may exist: the internal labour market of the British Post Office developed through the historical importance of its nineteenth-century middle-class clerks, its initial requirement for literate, honest and therefore relatively well-rewarded employees, and the need to provide some form of long-term incentive for individual acquiescence and

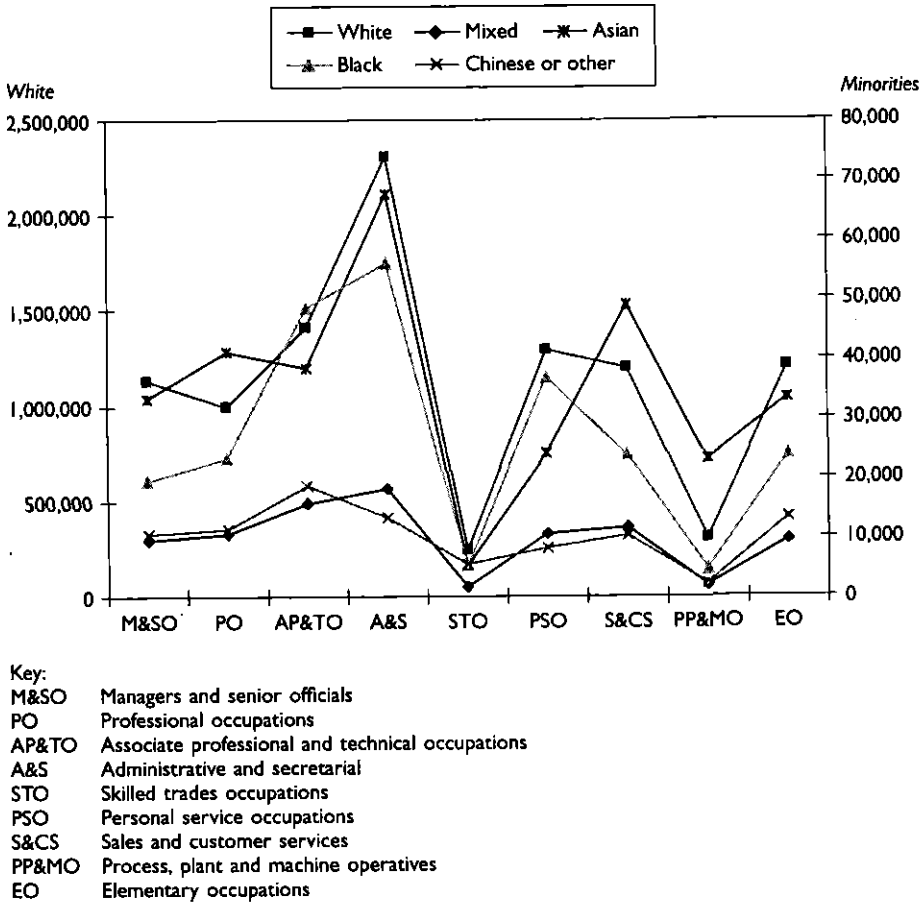


Figure 26 Women, occupation and ethnicity: England and Wales, 2003

Source: 2001 Census. Reconstructed from Table S109

loyalty (Grint, 1986). On the other hand, and despite the contrary arguments of Gordon et al. (1982), the segmentation of the labour market is not a recent phenomenon nor do firms facing rapid technological changes always require long-term loyalty from their employees; indeed, one of the advantages of technological change for employers is that it may well reduce the compunction for firms to retain labour by reducing the training periods associated with technology (Berger and Piore, 1980).

But if some enterprises exhibit clearly defined boundaries between internal and external labour markets the same cannot be said for all of them. Using the more volatile engineering sector as an illustration, Robinson and Conboy (1970) note how the complex combination, if not confusion, of internal and external markets led to an anarchic wage structure. Freedman's (1984) analysis of US labour markets, on the other hand, concentrates the apparent morass into fourteen more or less coherent segments within which wages are contingently

related to variables like size, workers' characteristics and forms of collective bargaining etc. Such apparent pluralism is directly challenged by radical labour market theories (e.g. Stone, 1974) which construe the market pattern as the premeditated outcome of a managerial strategy of control; labour exploitation is achieved through the ancient tactic of divide and rule. But it is not self-evident either why employers should discriminate against the relatively cheap labour of women and ethnic minorities in favour of white male, and therefore expensive, labour. A rather more sophisticated approach has been adopted by Gordon (1972), Lee (1980), Rubery (1980) and Craig et al. (1982). This group emphasizes the part played by strategic groups of workers themselves in rebutting the threat of deskilling, proletarianization and degradation, often at the expense of other less powerful groups. Even this reassessment of the radical conspiratorial approach is denied by the research of Blackburn and Mann (1979) into the labour market for unskilled male manual workers in Peterborough. For them the situation is simply too disorganized for groups to impose their own rational strategies upon the rest. Yet the limitations of the empirical focus, upon a group of unskilled (non-apprenticed) male employees that cannot be regarded as representative of the overall workforce, mean that the results of the study have to be treated with a degree of scepticism. Labour markets, then, are segmented in so far as women and minority groups (and the less skilled) tend to be at the receiving end of many discriminatory practices. Such discrimination is most transparent when immigrant or migrant labour is involved.

Migrant and immigrant labour

Piore's (1979) assessment of migrant workers suggests that underlying the apparent confusion of labour markets and most notably the market for migrant labour, where poor wages, conditions and security prevail, is an employers' strategy designed to circumvent a labour shortage. After all, immigration is seldom economically detrimental to the host nation. As Hawkins (1989) has pointed out, the doubling of Australian and Canadian populations through (selective) immigration over the last half century has boosted, not undermined, the wealth creation of these two countries and, because most immigrants tend to be adult and thus immediate potential employees, the host country avoids the social costs involved in their childhood and education. Indeed, there are few, if any, cases where immigration does act as an economic disadvantage to the host country, except perhaps in the very short term; the West German economic decline in 1961, exactly at the time of the Berlin Wall's construction, for example, can hardly be coincidental.

But why do migrant workers accept such terms of employment? Because, argues Piore, they are migrant workers and therefore have few employment rights, little industrial muscle, and even less intention of staying: they work to return home, not to create a new identity for themselves and, as such, approach work in an almost clinically instrumental fashion (Power and Hardman, 1978). Furthermore, what may be low-paying and subordinate jobs to indigenous workers in Britain, Germany or California may well be more attractive than their

equivalent opportunities in Pakistan, Turkey or Mexico (Leggett, 1968; Braham, 1980). Piore also asserts that such radical discontinuities in the labour market, which were originally restricted to peripheral areas of the economy, have become increasingly important within the core area. But this implies that the immigrant workers consistently seek the worst kind of jobs available, rather than the best. What is missing here, then, is any concern for the discriminatory practices of the indigenous population who act to keep immigrant workers out of particular jobs. Relatedly, what is critical here is to explain not why immigrant workers accept such poor conditions and rewards but why ethnic minorities, who are citizens of the countries where they work, also suffer similar fates at work. The assessment of the two groups need not begin from radically dichotomous positions. After all, a major difficulty with the neo-classical approach is to assume that shifts in the patterns of labour supply and demand lead to equivalent movements in rewards levels. But the neo-classical approach assumes an inherent scarcity of labour, while in reality alternative sources of labour are often available: immigrant workers, 'full-time' houseworkers, 'retired' or juvenile workers can be, and historically often have been, sucked into the labour market during periods of labour shortage, so that wages of existing employees need not be driven up (Gorz, 1970; Bohning, 1972).

This employer-driven model of labour market control is also relevant to the assessment of power and intent within the labour market because the radical labour market theories not only underestimate the part played by sectionalism in generating internecine struggle within the working class, but they also tend to overestimate the degree of corporate interest underlying employers. Although capital has interests which directly contradict those of labour, the reality, as Marx noted, is one of many capitals not a united capital (Marx, 1973a: 414), and it might be added that it is also one of many parts of labour. Thus, as Garnsey et al. have made clear, in coping with economic uncertainties: 'Wherever possible, employers providing primary employment conditions attempt to pass the costs and burdens of uncertainty on to *smaller firms*' (1985: 21; my emphasis). However imperfect the market for labour may be, it is still market-driven, in part at least, by competitive forces of one sort or another. This dispersal of costs is expressly relevant to the way core firms employing indigenous workers tend to push the burden of recession and economic malaise on to those secondary or peripheral firms employing migrant or ethnic minority labour (Piore, 1979), a policy also prevalent within Japan, except that dispersal is contained within the indigenous workforce (Nishikawa, 1980; Hanami, 1979).

Despite the economic constraints operated by the labour market in immigration, the political spectre of 'waves' or 'floods' of economic migrants is common parlance for politicians and the mass media, who deploy such images at will. For example, as the EU was due to expand its boundaries in May 2004 the popular British papers were replete with scare stories of thousands of East Europeans just waiting to 'breach' the British dam wall. In the event, of the 24,000 foreigners who signed up for work in the UK by June 2004, only 8,000 arrived after 1 May (Ford, 2004: 6). The precise pattern of immigrant workers to the UK – as measured by the number of work permits issued – between 1946

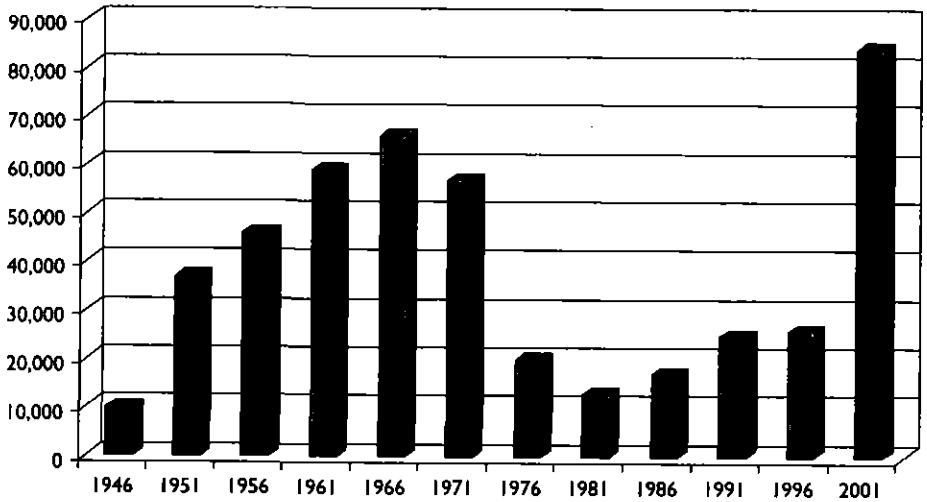


Figure 27 Work permits issued (UK), 1946–2001

Source: *Labour Market Trends*, November, 2003: 564

and 2001 is shown in figure 27 and it should be clear that the pattern relates very much to labour market demands of the host nation, coupled with political instability in the 'donor' nation. Contrary to some popular opinion, in 2002 the top three occupations where work permits were approved was not at the bottom of the occupational reward structure but the top: medicine (24 per cent), computing (17 per cent) and management (13 per cent) comprised the top three and over half the total. India (21 per cent), the USA (11 per cent) and South Africa (9 per cent) were the top sources for these. Indeed, somewhere around 35 per cent of all work permits are inter-company transfers rather than 'immigrants' seeking work (*Labour Market Trends*, November 2003: 563–69).

Rewarding labour

It should be clear at this point that although employers are in a competitive situation, and are therefore unlikely to collaborate with each other against general employee interests, this does not imply that delimited collaboration is impossible. Such collaboration may take one of several forms, from the mutual surveillance and avoidance of trade union militants through to corporate resistance to government policies via employers' organizations, but one form of co-operative endeavour recognizably reflecting labour market forces is the setting of minimum wages. Either through the medium of wages councils such as those which used to exist in Britain, or through mutual consent, firms in direct competition with one another have sometimes agreed to set minimum reward levels so as to remove labour costs from the competitive basket. Whether this provides

long-term benefits to either employers or employees is difficult to say, but there is certainly some evidence that it makes firms internationally uncompetitive (Craig et al., 1982; see also chapter 9 below). Nevertheless, the removal of minimum wage agreements could prove catastrophic for those employees without the collective support of trade union organization to replace the safety net, and most at risk are the very same employees that appear to be discriminated against from all angles: women, immigrants and ethnic minorities.

Another link between women, immigrant and ethnic minority workers is the patterning of collective rewards. In neo-classical accounts *individuals* are rewarded for their skills but in reality very few employers reward their employees on such a basis and tend, instead, to adopt blanket payment schemes grounded in putative 'going rates'. There are, of course, exceptions to this, either through individual piece rates or in differential schemes where juniors undertaking identical work to seniors are paid considerably less (Grint, 1988), but such patterns are atypical at the moment despite the current trend for individual contracts. Rather more typical is the inertial element of wages which, despite rapid and substantial fluctuations in labour market conditions, tend to remain stable through time (Routh, 1980). This kind of stability poses similar difficulties for a related facet of the labour market in which particular groups are disproportionately funnelled into a narrow band of employment areas, thereby leading to an oversupply of local labour and consequently poor wages and conditions. This 'crowding hypothesis', originally based on the work of Fawcett (1918), Edgeworth (1922) and Robinson (1934), often assumes exclusionary action by male trade unionists. Chiplin and Sloane's (1974) analysis disputes the utility of the overall relationship between crowding and low earnings and it is more reasonable to assume, at least in the case of women, that there is little if any connection between the patterning of labour market fluctuations and the level of collective rewards (Routh, 1980: 123; Grint, 1988).

One attempt to recombine the importance of individual merit with collective reward has been that encapsulated by **human capital theory**. This seeks to explain differentials between employees on the basis of their variant levels of productivity. In turn, these levels are explained through the degree of investment in training and education. Empirical accounts of this imply that it has some relevance and may be able to explain up to two-thirds of the inequalities of reward between individuals (Mincer and Polachek, 1974; Polachek, 1975). When applied to the differential between minority and white workers, holding qualifications constant, it is patently inappropriate, not just because the wage differentials undermine the theory's relevance (Brown, 1984; *Employment Gazette*, December 1985), but because, as an inquiry into British medical schools suggests, the ability of individuals to achieve qualifications may be dependent upon the colour of their skin (Commission for Racial Equality, 1988b). In this case minority students were twice as likely to be refused places as white students (Smith, 1988). In the US human capital explanations can only account for one-sixth of the improvement in African-American women's improvements in reward since 1940 (King, 1995); labour market restructuring was far more important.

More recent general empirical approaches to wage inequalities have also produced a rather more widely dispersed wage structure (Sloan, 1980; Cohn, 1985) but they have still failed to account for different levels of investment in education and training. In short, it may be that some correlations exist between levels of qualifications and rewards (though even this is severely limited with regard to some ethnic minorities) but why do some groups, and especially women and ethnic minorities, appear to choose this approach and invest relatively little in their human capital?

The two most conventional explanations suggest that the choice is 'rational' in either economic or biological terms. Becker (1985) takes the first line, insisting that since it is economically rational for couples to divide up their labour, it makes sense for one to specialize in the domestic sphere; and since women earn less than men in the labour market, it therefore becomes rational for women to devote themselves to domestic labour. This, of course, fails to explain why the labour market itself is gender-biased. The biological case for the subordination of women is made most forcefully by Goldberg (1993) who suggests that physiological differences supported by hormonal differences lead men to become more assertive, more aggressive and more competitive than women. Hence men have a greater motivation to climb the organizational hierarchy than women. The problem lies in the generalization of these approaches: it *may* be that men are stronger, more aggressive and more competitive – *on average* – but that doesn't explain the systematic discrimination against women nor the success of some women (see the review by Hakim, 1996).

A partial explanation can be given for some women, in so far as they have fragmented and discontinuous careers during their child-rearing period (Crompton and Jones, 1982; Garnsey et al., 1985; Walby, 1986a). If such women intend to concentrate upon these activities then it may be that investment in education is considered secondary to their primary role of motherhood. This does not explain why women, rather than women and men, become full-time child-rearers, nor does it account for employer discrimination against women without children. Indeed, it self-evidently collapses before the cases where women have a higher level of human investment, but a lower level of reward, than men in comparative jobs (Grint, 1988). Nevertheless, since it is collectivities rather than individuals who tend to set the patterns of reward, there is some evidence that employers operate through stereotypical pictures that regard all women as potential career breakers and reward them disproportionately. Such indiscriminate analysis can also be used to explain why employers continue to reward ethnic minorities as if they were migrant workers (Arrow, 1972). That said, it still is not clear that the correlations between human investment, or assumed human investment, and reward are necessary correlations. That is to say, although women and ethnic minorities may have lower qualifications than men and whites (and it has already been suggested that this does not hold for all groups), since many jobs do not require anything like the levels of skill acquired through training it may well be that qualifications are simply a mechanism for exclusion rather than a necessary precondition for the execution of work-related tasks. As Blackburn and Mann's study of manual workers concludes: 'the *absolute* level of skill of all but the very highest jobs is – to say the least

– minimal. Eighty seven per cent of our workers exercise less skill at work than they would if they drove to work. Indeed, most of them expend more mental effort and resourcefulness in getting to work than in doing their jobs' (1979: 280). This artificial relationship between human capital and employment is nicely exposed during times of social crisis, such as war, when apparently unqualified women and juveniles have taken over the jobs of skilled men at the war front with little if any deleterious effect upon levels of efficiency and productivity (Pagnamenta and Overy, 1984; Grint, 1986: 309–10; Boston, 1987: 185–218).

Two ramifications flow from this. First, it reinforces the importance of an analysis of the social construction of rewards, rather than an analysis based upon some hypothetical neo-classical account of the labour market. Second, it focuses attention directly upon the way particular groups exploit their market position to promote their own collective interests, at the expense of other, less fortunate, groups if necessary.

The domestic and the employment spheres

It should not be assumed that the constraints under which individuals and collectivities operate are only those derived from economic or political or technological sources outside the home. The exact nature of the link between domestic and wage labour is discussed elsewhere but it is important here to illuminate the difficulty of assuming either that the family operates autonomously from the world of employment or that the actions of agents within the family are somehow free of external constraints generated in and through the labour market. For example, although individuals may deny the ideological relevance of the nuclear family, complete with its mythical two children and full-time houseworker, it is extremely difficult to attempt to construct alternative lifestyles involving a shared responsibility towards housework and child-rearing. Not only were 22 per cent of families in Britain headed by single parents in 1997 (a threefold increase since 1971) but, on average, single parents spent half the time with their children that couples did (Office of National Statistics, 1997). It is not difficult simply in the sense of resisting the dominant ideology, but in guaranteeing career advancement or material security for either partner, and therefore for the family as a whole, should housework be shared equally (Freedman, 1984: 59–61). Family ideologies are also important in explaining the restricted employment opportunities of some ethnic minority women. Moreover, it does seem to be the case that the influence of powerful domestic ideologies within some ethnic minorities can undermine what might otherwise be more radical shop-floor systems of resistance by women workers (Westwood and Bhachu, 1989). That is not to say that family relationships are inherently constraining upon the freedom of individuals to move within the labour market. On the contrary, there is much empirical evidence to suggest that social networks grounded in familial and ethnically oriented relationships can play a decisive role in opening up, as well as inhibiting, job opportunities.

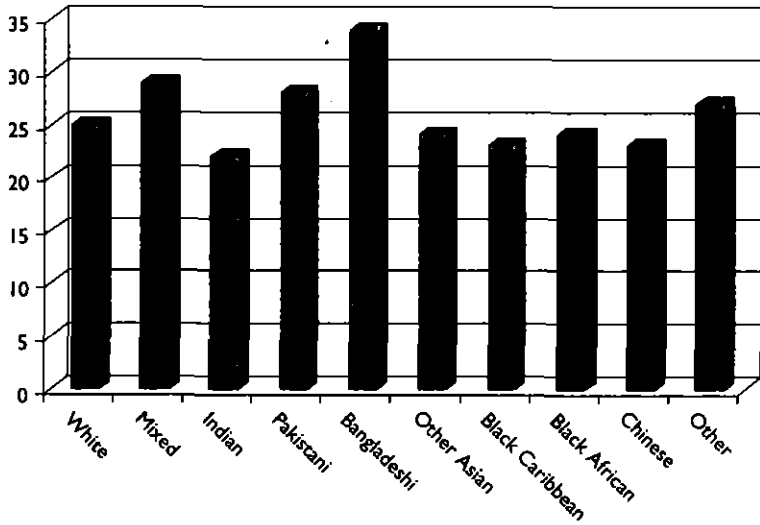


Figure 28 Self-employment and ethnicity (UK), 2003 (%)

Source: *Labour Market Trends*, December 2003

Ethnic enclaves

Ethnic enclaves are, of course, common in many industrial nations, especially those with large recently immigrant populations where initial language difficulties coupled with native hostility may well encourage new immigrants to seek employment within existing ethnic and family enclaves rather than within the wider labour market (Rimmer, 1972; Ward, 1985; Waldinger, 1985: 213–28; Evans, 1987). For some ethnic minorities the most viable market niche is self-employment in a small business. In Britain the East African Asian and Gujarati communities, in particular, have been remarkably successful in this avenue. In terms of self-employment, as figure 28 suggests, although there are no radical asymmetries in the ethnic patterning, it is the case that Bangladeshis lead the table in self-employment at 34 per cent of the total Bangladeshi population, whereas Indians and Chinese have the lowest proportions at 22 and 23 per cent respectively.

These figures hide a large gender differential: twice as many Indian men are self-employed as Indian women while the figure for self-employed Pakistani women is too small for a reliable estimate (cf. Huhne, 1988a; Foster, 1987; Brown 1984; *Social Trends*, 1989; Curran and Burrows, 1988). The proportion of self-employed Asian women is the same as the white proportion at 4 per cent. The Afro-Caribbean community, however, is markedly less involved in running the conventional stereotypical minority businesses like restaurants, corner shops and clothing ventures, though such stereotypes are very much part of the host mythology rather than an accurate reflection of the diversity of small businesses currently under minorities' control (Wilson and Stanworth, 1988; Ram

and Jones, 1998). That said, it is still the case that ethnic minority manufacturing entrepreneurs are disproportionately small in number, and one of the explanations appears to be the racism which such individuals face (Centre for Employment Research, 1990).

A major reason often given for the paucity of Afro-Caribbean small businesses is the allegedly looser family ties which inhibit the initial accumulation of start-up capital, though it does seem that the exclusionary activities of the host society are more important in restricting the employment opportunities for minorities (Jones and McEvoy, 1986). Once a low level of business tradition develops, however, it appears to be self-fulfilling and very detrimental to those seeking to break out of the spiral. A survey of the London borough of Lambeth revealed that 74 per cent of black Britons with Caribbean roots were unsuccessful in gaining start-up capital from banks, while only 13 per cent of those with Asian roots and 6 per cent of native whites were similarly rejected (Smith, 1988). There are (at least) two ways of explaining this differentiation. Either black Britons are simply not economically effective or bank lenders *interpret* them as bad risks. Since the economic activity rate of this group is the highest of all minorities (and for black women it is higher than for white women), the prime responsibility appears to rest with the interpretative activities of discriminatory bank lenders.

Despite the common assumption that minority businesses all tend to be small, family-based enterprises, there is now some evidence of substantial growth in all areas of the economy; though it does seem that while new ventures are aided by family ties they can often only develop properly by disentangling themselves from the family to attract external expertise and capital (Wilson, 1987). Nevertheless, despite the utility of family networks, workers of ethnic minority origin have long provided a substantial part of the secondary labour market with concomitantly poor working conditions, rewards and security.

Anti-discriminatory practices

In theory, a free labour market should ensure the efficient allocation of resources such that the only discrimination extant would be that based on the positive projection of efficient employees. As Lewis naively asserts, regarding minority Britons: 'precisely because it is colour-blind, the free market is their friend' (quoted in Rushdie, 1988). Of course, the very existence of the British Race Relations Act (1976), which forbids discrimination on racial grounds (defined as colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origins), and the similar American anti-discriminatory legislation from 1964 implies, among other things, that the operations of the 'free' market are systematically flawed. Not only do ethnic minorities find access to organizations difficult, but once inside they generally find themselves discriminated against for reasons that are social rather than economic in origin, and for criteria that include not just skin colour (Doeringer and Piore, 1971) but religious and political affiliation too. For example, the unemployment rate for Catholic workers in Northern Ireland is twice as high

as that for Protestant workers (Hearst, 1988; Jenkins, 1988): a manifestation of the troubles in Northern Ireland that have prompted the British government to enact the Fair Employment policy to halt discrimination against Catholics. This carries penalties far more severe than those liable for discrimination on the grounds of race or gender, though this has yet to prove significant in undermining discriminatory practices.

Note, though, that discrimination can take many forms. Take, for example, the following advert that relates to the recruitment of a primary school teacher in Lancashire (a Church of England primary school) in 2004. Listed under 'Essential Requirements', and above 'Excellent Team Player', is this: 'Enjoy working within the strong Christian ethos of the school.' Listed under 'Desirable Requirements', and above 'Evidence of working in innovative ways', is: 'Faith reference from someone who can verify your commitment to supporting a Christian ethos, i.e., from your church or head teacher about your school activities.' Now, apart from the fact that all state schools in the UK are funded from public taxation that is drawn from people of all faiths and no faith (even Peter Vardy's King's Academy in Middlesbrough, which teaches Creationism – praised by Tony Blair during his visit there on 5 March 2004 after he had made a speech about the dangers of religious fundamentalism that very morning – relies on the state for 80 per cent of its funding: see Adams, 2004: 20–8) – so one might argue that these should not therefore support the teaching of one faith above all others – there is an issue about discrimination against teachers from different faiths or no faiths for jobs paid for by the public purse. This might be better illustrated by replacing the word 'Christian' with some other exclusionary category. For example, would we not object if a job requirement was 'Enjoy working within the strong able-bodied ethos of the school', or 'should have a reference from someone who can verify your commitment to support a white ethos'? Or if, amongst the criteria for getting your child into school, was one stating: 'Parents who are involved in the work and worship of garage music'? or 'Parents who are involved in the work and worship of another anti-abortion organization'? That these criteria seem outrageous is testimony to the power of social norms at work in work: being a committed Christian in such organizations appears not as an interesting personal choice but as a manifestation of normality that excludes all others. ('Community schools' have no religious affiliation, are paid for by general taxation and account for two-thirds of all children's education in England. Voluntary schools come in different forms but are all paid for primarily by general taxation and tend to be faith-based – that is, controlled by a church – and account for almost all the remaining one-third of children's education in England. The largest numbers – in declining order of numbers – are Church of England, Roman Catholic, Methodist, other Christian, Muslim, Sikh, others. See, <<http://www.angelfire.com/nb/lt/docs/legal.htm>>. In 2003, 7.5 per cent of the population attended church on a Sunday on average though 12 per cent were church members.)

Even those nations which maintain more general policies of positive discrimination or affirmative action (such as the USA) still exhibit considerable levels of discrimination, as of course do those which do not, such as the UK. The

significance of the American system of legislative influence via the Supreme Court is indicative of what can be achieved. For example in 1990, New York's Police Commissioner, Benjamin Ward, was black; as was America's top military individual, Colin Powell, the Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and David Dinkins, the Mayor of New York. This does not mean that American minorities can expect equal treatment at work, far from it. Boston's (1988) review of the empirical evidence suggests that black workers are paid less but work longer hours than white workers across almost all areas of work and in all parts of the USA, though the wage differential is highest in the southern states. Yet some minority groups do seem to succeed within a potentially hostile host society. For example, Gibson's (1988) study of Punjabi Sikhs in America suggests that male, though not female, children, can and do succeed at school and in the labour market, especially in computer sciences and engineering.

However the paucity of such cases suggests their limited generalizability, and the wider view throws up a rather different conclusion: between 1970 and 1980 (a decade of affirmative action in the US educational system) the number of full-time black students enrolled in American colleges rose by almost 100 per cent, while their acquisition of professional, technical and managerial positions rose by 57 per cent between 1973 and 1982 (the comparative figure for the white population in the latter category was 38 per cent) (Macnicol, 1988). However, the material position of young unskilled urban blacks actually worsened during the same period, as the increased opportunities became monopolized by a new black middle class as the economic recession of the late 1970s and early 1980s took effect (Wilson, 1987). Moreover, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the legal framework upon which the American 'affirmative action' policies of equal opportunity are based, is now under direct threat from the new conservative majority on the US Supreme Court. Three times in 1989 the court upheld the position of white workers seeking to challenge the affirmative action policies for minorities, and the court ruled that the burden of proof in employment discrimination rests with the plaintiff rather than the employer (Walker, 1989).

Affirmative action policies have certainly had some effect. In 1970 just over 10 per cent of black US families had the equivalent of the US average family income. By 1994 (the last year the data are available) this proportion had doubled. However, the unravelling of affirmative action policies, most recently led by Ward Connerly, a black Californian, in getting proposition 209 passed (which forbids positive discrimination in appointment to state jobs or student selection) is already eating into the progress made in the USA. For example, in the University of Texas Law School, in 1996, 5.9 per cent of the students were black and 6.3 per cent Hispanic. But in 1997 these proportions had dropped to 0.7 per cent and 2.3 per cent respectively. Previously the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT), which is used to secure admission to US higher education, was routinely set lower for African Americans and Hispanics to compensate for prior discrimination at school and in society generally. For some individuals like Connerly this compounds rather than compensates for the problem since it can be interpreted as implying that minorities secure places above better qualified whites – rather than implying that, given an equal playing field, the minorities

would have outperformed the whites. In other words, the minorities in universities are the best minorities but still not the best Americans. But for others, such as Diana Soldana, president of the Chicano-Hispanic law students' association, the outlook is dire, as she says: 'It took us 30 years to get here, and it took them [US courts] 24 hours to dismantle any progress we have made' (quoted in Walker, 1997).

Yet there are clear limits to the potential regression on affirmative action. For instance, in 1994 Texaco settled a case of racial discrimination, brought by 1,400 black professional and middle managers, for \$175 million over five years, after a group of senior (white) executives were taped discussing the destruction of incriminating documents that documented the discrimination at work. In 1996 an African-American employee of Brand Services was awarded \$7.6 million for his experiences of discrimination, and several similar cases are pending. All of these have prompted US employers to tread carefully in this emotive area (Caudron, 1997). The temperature of this debate was clearly seen in April 2004 when the limits of multiculturalism as a strategic policy were debated by both Trevor Phillips, then Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality, and David Goodhart, then Editor of *Prospects* Magazine. (Goodhart's article is available at <http://www.prospect-magazine.co.uk/ArticleView.asp?link=yes&P_Article=12394>; Phillips's response is available at: <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/comment/story/0,3604,1148847,00.html>>; see also the debate in the *Guardian*, 26 February 2004.)

In short, labour-market-based racism appears to be a universal rather than British phenomenon in contemporary capitalist societies; from France (Linhart, 1981) to Australia (Kriegler, 1982) and the USA (Lash, 1984) it is as commonplace as it is pernicious. But to understand the process through which discrimination is produced and reproduced it is necessary to go beyond the labour market itself and examine several different aspects. Quite clearly, racism and discrimination are engendered and sustained by all manner of different societal forces, including the influence of the state and education (Coates, 1984: 155–91; Rex, 1986; Brittan and Maynard, 1984). But the limitations of space preclude a full analysis, and the next section concentrates upon an issue that is more axiomatically related to issues of work: recruitment.

Recruitment and racism

Grapevine recruitment

Among the clearest examples of the intimate links between home and work are the familiarly-based recruitment procedures, or 'grapevine recruitment' (Grieco, 1987: 33) used by many firms. Grieco's evidence relates to working-class recruitment but the mechanisms, of first constructing a family-based 'vacancy chain' and then solidifying it into the 'capture of opportunity' by a family, are not restricted to class-based exclusionary measures. The implication of this is that even those groups who are not in 'objectively' powerful positions through

their skills or control of apprenticeships etc. may still be able to influence the operation of the labour market. This familial base to the control over recruitment is control neither in class terms nor in gender terms but control in the interests of the family network. The ability of apparently weak market groups to intervene in their own future is well demonstrated in the case of Italian migrant labour in the cigar factories of Tampa. Mormino (1982) argues that despite being discriminated against, and notwithstanding the absence of cigar-making craft skills, Italian migrants managed to capture the cigar-making employment from the Hispanics. They did this by a minimalist strategy of secreting tobacco out from the factory, setting up self-help groups to acquire the necessary skills and, eventually, taking over the primary employment opportunities. Not only does this reveal the potential influence of out groups to transcend their weak market position but, equally important, it shows the limitations of assuming that work practices can be neatly decanted into either class antagonisms or gender antagonisms. It should be reaffirmed here, however, that the ethnic dimension is more powerful in the USA than in most European nations, though the experience of Turkish, Yugoslav or Irish workers etc. demonstrates that ethnic origin and identity is never an irrelevance. Thus, companies employing predominantly white workers, and those recruiting workers from the ethnic minorities, often tend to reproduce the dominant characteristics of their workforce by recruiting through existing family networks (Jenkins, 1985; Manwaring, 1984; Phizacklea, 1982; Brooks and Singh, 1979), and, originally at least, the isolation of language occasionally played some role in this exclusionary recruitment (Rimmer, 1972). It is not axiomatic, of course, that all individuals will make use of such familial networks to acquire employment. There is evidence of young Afro-Caribbean British workers refusing to accede to the utility of such networks since it implies reproducing the disadvantages suffered by their parents as immigrants. As black Britons their sights are set in line with white workers, not their parents, and as such the familial networks may appear to represent the very institutionalized racism they are trying to avoid (Dex, 1978-9; Jenkins and Parker, 1987). Here the structuring of work experiences through the filters of racism act to buttress the vicious circle of poor jobs, low living standards, and poor education leading back to poor jobs *ad infinitum* (Ashton, 1986; Braham et al. (eds), 1981).

This should not be taken to imply that grapevine recruitment is the most important method. Quantitative data on recruitment seldom provides sufficient evidence about how different ethnic groups seek employment but that which exists implies that the differences are only sometimes significant and even then seldom crucial. For example, 39 per cent of white and minority workers seek work through job centres and around 20 per cent of each via newspaper advertisements or direct to employers; however a higher proportion of whites (28 per cent) than minorities (22 per cent) use the situations vacant columns in newspapers, and more minorities (15 per cent) than whites (10 per cent) use personal contacts (*Employment Gazette*, March 1990). What these data do not tell us, of course, is what happens when different individuals have got past the approach stage and have applied to employers for employment. What role do managers play in perpetuating or undermining discrimination?

Managerial practice

If the recruitment procedure is designed to reproduce the ethnic homogeneity that already prevails there, then analysis of the gatekeeping role of management may well be irrelevant. Since very few private firms in Britain undertake ethnic monitoring it is also difficult to know just how widespread managerial racism really is; but the refusal of organizations to monitor their ethnic mix, on the grounds that everyone is equal, is akin to the problematic status of the neo-liberal market model: the point is that everyone does not *enter* the market as equal, nor does the market operate along meritocratic principles. Jenkins's (1985, 1988) research suggests that managers involved in the recruiting process have a hierarchy of criteria for acceptability. The primary criteria involve appearance, manner and attitude, and maturity. Secondary criteria relate to 'gut feeling', employment history and experience, the ability to fit in, age, speech style, literacy and marital status. Tertiary criteria concern references and English language competence. In several areas minority workers are likely to face discrimination: they are less likely to fit the stereotypical 'married, two kids and a mortgage' pattern that recruiters seem to seek; their accent may well be regarded by white recruiters as inferior to white speech patterns; and they are less likely to 'fit in' to the existing organization, given the prevailing work-group racism discussed above. In short, minority workers suffer the ignominies commonly associated with disparaging racial stereotypes. In many ways it seems that a large number of recruiters do not perceive themselves to be racist but prefer white workers on the grounds of expediency: the white workforce is racist, therefore, irrespective of their own liberal notions of 'fairness'; white recruiters fear the consequences of recruiting minority workers (Jenkins, 1985). Inevitably, the refusal to challenge assumed racism actually facilitates its reproduction; thus the self-proclaimed liberalism acts merely as a conduit for the perpetuation of racism.

Given the conventional recruitment procedures in many manufacturing firms – word of mouth and social networks – even overtly racist recruiters may never need to execute racial discrimination in any open manner because the method of recruitment preselects ethnic minorities out of the pool through employee screening: a method of some value to US companies too (Rees, 1966). This informal recruitment also implies that surveillance by state agencies is more difficult; even where identically qualified individuals are interviewed the emphasis placed upon the subjective assessment of the interviewer may ensure that the minority interviewee is not selected. A partial solution to this subjectivism is to formalize the procedure, and though this may be not the means to eliminate racial discrimination in the recruitment process, it is seen by Jenkins as a means by which its effects can be reduced (1985).

Ethnic origin and the professions

When we delve below the very general occupational categories, the significance of ethnic factors is reinforced. For example, although 8 per cent of the British

population under 16 is from the ethnic minorities this category provides only 2 per cent of the nation's teachers. Moreover, minority teachers were over-represented in shortage areas, or outside mainstream teaching, and more were employed at the lower end of the salary scale than white teachers (Commission for Racial Equality [CRE], 1988a). Other professions are also likely to reproduce the existing imbalance of employees. There are, for example, no ethnic minorities among the top three grades of the British Civil Service, and within the top seven grades there are only 207 out of 18,644 (1 per cent). This is not because ethnic minorities have avoided work in the Civil Service; on the contrary about 4 per cent of the total are minorities (Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, and West Indians make up about 1 per cent each with a further 1 per cent for all other minorities), marginally higher than the proportion for the total working population (Hencke, 1989).

Another CRE investigation, this time into chartered accountancy, found that members of ethnic minorities were three and a half times less likely to be offered a job than white applicants, and the discriminatory practices occurred at all levels of the screening process (Commission for Racial Equality, 1987). There were in 1997, only two non-whites in the top four grades of the Civil Service and only 58 out of 3,000 formed the next grade (Travis, 1997). Relatedly, there are a mere 1.9 per cent of probation officers and 0.9 per cent of police officers who are minorities. Yet progress is being made in the UK: on 5 January 2004 Mike Fuller became the first black chief constable in the UK, as head of the Kent police. Fuller, who founded the Metropolitan Black Police Association in 1993, was born to unmarried Jamaican parents in south London and was brought up in a children's home in West Sussex. There were only five black cadets with him when he joined the Metropolitan Police in 1975; now there are more than 1,650 officers from various ethnic minorities (Cowan, 2004). Ironically, his appointment coincided with an official inquiry into allegations of racism by Scotland Yard (Muir, 2004: 8), and the removal of the head of a £20 million Metropolitan Police programme aimed at tackling racism – because of alleged racism (Thompson, 2004: 13).

Only 1 per cent of solicitors derive from the minorities and most of these work in the smaller law firms, and there are only two minority circuit judges (Dyer, 1988; NAPO, 1988; Home Affairs Committee, 1989). The situation has caused such embarrassment that the Bar Council, and indeed the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services, has called for recruiters to delete requests for photographs from applicants. In prisons, of 28,000 officers, only nine principal officers were black in 1997 and only six have made it to junior governor. There has never been a black governor of a British prison (Mills, 1997). In sharp contrast, at the receiving end of the law, 20 per cent of prisoners are from the minorities and racism appears to be an intrinsic part of the prison service according to an unpublished study completed for the Home Office in 1986 (BBC, 1988). Even prior to conviction it appears that minorities are twice as likely as whites to be imprisoned yet twice as likely to be acquitted too (*The Guardian*, 18 December 1989).

Job search

In terms of the general recruitment of non-university graduates it appears that a wide disparity exists between the 70 per cent of white graduates in employment twelve months after graduation compared with less than half the graduates from ethnic minorities (Brennan and McGeevor, 1987). In what Modood (1997b: 144) calls 'the ethnic penalty', a glass ceiling actively inhibits most ethnic minorities from achieving the highest positions – even though Chinese and African Asians are more likely than whites to be earning in excess of £500 per week. Yet the informality of network recruitment also operates to perpetuate the supply of labour for ethnic businesses, and to ensure that competitors are disadvantaged, as Kim (1981) has demonstrated with regard to Korean businesses in New York, and Light and Bonzicich (1988) *vis-à-vis* Korean entrepreneurial success in Los Angeles. Despite the under-representation of minorities in the professional sections of the public sector, it is still here, where recruitment is more often associated with advertising and bureaucratic procedures, that minority workers are generally more likely to receive a greater degree of equality of opportunity; though as the evidence cited above reveals, this may well be a long way short of equality of opportunity. Indeed, since it tends to be those jobs which cannot be filled by word of mouth that end up in the state employment services, and since some of these often tend to be the least attractive jobs, minority workers are provided with fewer and less attractive jobs to choose between. In addition, according to the Manpower Services Commission (MSC), almost half of the Afro-Caribbean people using job centres claimed to have suffered racial discrimination in the search for employment, while almost a quarter of Asian job seekers said the same. The Youth Training Scheme (YTS) has similar overall results: less than 1 per cent of those on YTS schemes were from the minorities in 1987 or 1988, though some companies, such as Dixons, Abbey National and Marks and Spencer were radically more responsive to the needs of minority youths than were most British companies (Sousa, 1988; Hyder, 1989). Similarly, while 69 per cent of all those leaving the YTS found employment, only half of the Afro-Caribbean and Asian youths did so (Manpower Services Commission, 1987).

It would seem that, under many conditions, it would be rational, that is in their own self-interests, for managers to construct a more formal and less prejudiced approach to recruitment. After all, if discrimination hinders the recruitment of the most qualified and suitable individual for the particular job then it must be against the interests of the company: not just morally but economically too. This is exactly the code of conduct spelled out in numerous Confederation of British Industry (CBI) (1970, 1981) reports. In fact, as Jewson and Mason (1986) point out, formality can actually provide the cover for more, rather than less, manipulation of the recruitment procedure. Concomitantly, reducing informal procedures may actually undermine some of the shop-floor patterns of trust between managers and workers. Since there can never be a sufficiently universal rulebook to cover all contingencies there clearly is a problem regarding the manipulation or misinterpretation of rules. However,

the ordinarily superior record of public employment to private employment regarding ethnic minorities suggests that formality should not be cast aside because of its inevitable problems.

Racism in the community

Several studies have demonstrated the disadvantages associated by white employers with ethnic minorities in the recruiting world, but few more vividly than the experiments using fictitious matched pairs of identically qualified white and minority workers. The surveys of Daniel (1968), Jowell and Prescott-Clarke (1970), Smith (1977), the 1988 BBC documentary series based in Bristol and the 1997 BBC survey of the NHS reveal the high levels of racial discrimination that masquerade behind the often liberal façades at work and in the wider community. A BBC survey in 2004 involved CVs from six fictitious applications being sent to 50 employers, where the qualifications and experiences were identical but the names were constructed to represent two white candidates (Jenny Hughes and John Andrews), two black candidates (Abu Olasemi and Yinka Olatunde) and two Muslim candidates (Fatima Khan and Nasser Hanif). While 25 per cent of the white candidates were offered interviews, they were offered to only 13 per cent of the black candidates and to a mere 9 per cent of the Muslim candidates (see <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/3885213.stm>>).

In 2000, a survey commissioned by the Department of Health suggested that half of frontline NHS staff from ethnic minorities had been subject to racial harassment by patients and the public in the previous year, and four years later the Royal College of Nursing published a survey showing that nurses from the ethnic minorities were twice as likely as their white colleagues to be underpaid. In the same year 8.4 per cent of the 1.3 million NHS staff were from ethnic minorities but they only accounted for 1 per cent of NHS CEOs. Sir John Blofeld's 2004 inquiry into the death of David 'Rocky' Bennett, a Jamaican-born Rastafarian who died while being forcibly restrained on a floor by four mental health nurses in 1998, concluded that institutional racism was a 'festering abscess' in the NHS (Carvel, 2004c: 6). Even the British Medical Association (BMA) has admitted that 'widespread discrimination' exists against doctors from ethnic minorities, against women doctors and against gay and disabled doctors (Carvel, 2004c: 7).

In some areas, at least until fairly recently, discriminatory policies were much more explicit, bordering on a system not dissimilar to South African apartheid; as a representative of one engineering firm put it, the firm had: 'a policy never to employ a coloured man in a position . . . where in the course of events he would rise to a position where he would give orders to a white man' (Wright, 1968: 75–6). Another method for taking advantage of ethnic differences is that of occupational segregation. This was particularly prevalent in the USA in the early part of this century, when employers both segregated and mixed different ethnic groups with the explicit intention of increasing or decreasing levels of hostility and competition between ethnic groups. The nearest equivalent practice in the UK has been that enacted by employers in Northern Ireland to set

Catholics against Protestants (Jenkins, 1988: 316–19). The undermining of any labour solidarity that appeared to be fostering union sympathies appears to have been a primary aim of this divide and rule strategy (Gordon et al., 1982: 141–3). But occupational segregation has more commonly been associated with the sucking in of immigrant labour to replace indigenous workers who refuse to undertake the most arduous and poorly paid jobs. In some circumstances this almost leads to separated labour markets, for example the predominance of minority staff on the London Underground (Rex and Tomlinson, 1979). In other cases it is minority or immigrant workers who undertake specific tasks within enterprises, such as night work and shift work (Smith, 1974). But whatever the division, and however unwilling the white population appears to be to undertake certain jobs, this seldom appears to remove the resistance or discrimination of white workers (Ward, 1978).

Employers and racism

In Britain, employers' attitudes towards ethnic minorities even seem to relate to the recognition of trade unions. Recently, union recognition in enterprises where more than 10 per cent of employees are minority shows some degree of decline. Since 1980 even fewer such employers recognize trade unions, irrespective of the general decline in trade union membership and influence. Indeed, ethnic minority workers were employed in substantial numbers in fewer enterprises, primarily because of the collapse of staple industries which employed them and because of the selective shake-out of minority labour mentioned above (Millward and Stevens, 1986: 65–99). Thus, ethnic minorities started out from a position of structured subordination in the labour market, and the economic malaise of the early 1980s has merely served to compound the disadvantages (Smith, 1981; Thomas, 1984). But why should management be concerned about the ethnic content of their workforce when considering union recognition? Are unions, or rather union members and ordinary workers, responsible for the perpetuation of racism or the boosting of reward levels to undermine the economic rationale for employing workers from the ethnic minorities? Answers to this kind of question are developed in the final section of this chapter.

Trade unions, workers and racial discrimination

Trade unions and exclusionary theory

The assumption that class issues, or even just trade union issues, cut across, and are more important than, racial or ethnic issues has a long and ambiguous pedigree. The prioritizing of class above race and gender has already been discussed but it is important to note the continuing relevance of this outlook on the contemporary academic study of work. For example, both Kornblum (1974) and Burawoy (1979) insist that white workers' racism is subordinated

to, and generated by, the imperatives of a specifically capitalist mode of production. Since minority wages are usually lower than white workers' wages it might seem paradoxical that capital should provide support for a form of discrimination that delimits the opportunity to maximize profits: if minority labour is cheaper then employers should not accept racism among their majority labour force. Three explanations for this paradox are possible. First, it may be that employers are unwilling to risk industrial action on the part of their majority workers by recruiting minority workers. Second, it has been argued that by encouraging racial discrimination within the workforce employers can actually persuade both majority and minority groups to accept rates of reward that are lower than those applicable where non-discriminatory practices operate (Perlo, 1953). Third, it may be taken as a management strategy of divide and rule to ensure that, irrespective of individual rewards, no collective action would occur. Such a strategy has been well documented in the USA over a long period of time (Piven and Cloward, 1977; Gordon et al., 1982).

Whether the exclusionary tactics that do exist, linked to the retention of demarcation boundaries, job allocation and recruitment controls, are beneficial to trade unions in the long run is questionable (Pagnamenta and Overy, 1984: 124-49; Guerin, 1979; Davis, 1985) but not the issue here. At the risk of repetition, what is important is to note how such exclusionary tactics become appropriated for use against specific groups of workers. That is to say that powerful groups of (usually) male, white and skilled workers operate discriminatory bans against (usually) women and ethnic minorities, but retain the camouflage of 'market-based', and therefore avowedly 'legitimate' exclusion. The implications of this for viewpoints on the relationship of class of work are covered in chapter 5; this section considers the impact it has on race and work, particularly with regard to Britain and America.

The British experience

Despite the frequent allocation of left-wing labels to British trade unions, their exclusionary strategies and tactics against ethnic minorities have a long history. Although Elizabeth I seems to have been responsible for the first attempt to repatriate black people from England in 1596, racism within the indigenous British workforce is nothing new (Fryer, 1988). Documented reports of racist attacks by British workers upon Irish workers in the nineteenth century, then Jewish workers at the turn of the century, long predate the disparagement of ethnic minorities from the Commonwealth (Miles and Phizacklea (eds), 1979). The TUC has, until very recently, also been prominent in acting against minority workers; for example, as early as 1892 it made a declaration in favour of controlling 'alien' labour. In fact, one of the first black British labour leaders appears to have been William Cuffay, a tailor and one of the Chartist leaders (Meade-King, 1986), but the last century and a half has not witnessed the universal 'brotherhood' for which they stood. Black workers had already reached a relatively high number in England by 1830, when a black community of between

ten and fifteen thousand existed, and two black men, William Davidson and Robert Wedderburn, were actively involved in the working-class politics of the day (Fryer, 1984). But ethnic conflict was most easily generated where ethnic origin could be coupled with religion: a volatile mix that often disrupted unionism in Ireland, Scotland and the north-west of England as the Protestant orange tinge to trade unionism transformed it into political unionism (Foot, 1965; Neal, 1988).

One of the earliest cases of official trade union hostility to their *own* minority members in Britain is that of the National Union of Seamen who were disinclined to support their minority members against the 1925 Special Restrictions (Coloured Alien Seamen) Order (Bhavnani and Bhavnani, 1985: 151–2). Even Ben Tillett, an avowed socialist and radical union leader of the London dockers at the turn of the nineteenth century, was equivocal about the arrival of Jewish immigrants: ‘Yes, you are our brothers and we will stand by you. But we wish you had not come’ (quoted in Meth, 1973: 5). Similarly, the population as a whole seems to have been at best ambiguous about the status of the Jews. The Anglo-Boer War was blamed by Keir Hardy and a substantial proportion of trade union leaders on the Army, composed as it allegedly was ‘largely [of] Jews and foreigners’ (Rhodes James, quoted in Fox, 1985: 210). Even during the Second World War indigenous anti-semitism was ever-present among the British working class, though they do not seem to have been as anti-semitic as the government feared or the gutter press assumed (Kushner, 1989).

With the influx of migrant labour to Britain at the end of the Second World War it might have been expected that competition for employment would provide the fertile ground for the construction of exclusionary strategies by indigenous workers. In fact, the persistent labour shortage, and funnelling of West Indian immigrants in particular into the unskilled jobs in the public and service sectors that were the most riven by shortages, ensured that there was little direct competition between white and minority workers. In the North and Midlands where many Asian workers found manufacturing jobs, particularly in textiles, the general pattern was one where white employees left, leaving vacancies for Asian workers, rather than one where cheaper Asian workers pushed white workers out of the labour market (Peach, 1968).

This did not deter the production and reproduction of racist attitudes by trade unionists and white workers alike, grounded in the putative threat to white jobs and indigenous culture (LATC, 1984; Mayhew and Addison, 1983: 333), and represented by the likes of Enoch Powell’s ‘rivers of blood’ speech in 1968 on the political right. It should not be forgotten that he was supported by London dockers and (the alleged political left has argued) by the Labour Party – in and out of office – through their support for, and enactment of, various immigration controls based on racial origins (Joshi and Carter, 1984; Bhavnani and Bhavnani, 1985). Nor did it inhibit the General Council of the Trades Union Congress from adopting policy statements that explicitly linked the existence of immigrant workers to the issue of the ‘coloured problem’ (Phizacklea and Miles, 1987), despite condemning ‘all manifestations of racial discrimination’ three years earlier. Such racist attitudes were also made manifest in the TUC’s support for both Conservative and Labour immigration legislation (Miles and

Phizacklea, 1977: 21–39). In fact, the first shift within the TUC from the ‘problem of integration’ to the ‘problem of racism’ did not occur until the 1973 Trades Union Congress, when the triple forces of anti-racist rank and file movements, the burgeoning number of strikes against trade union racism by ethnic minorities themselves (Commission for Industrial Relations, 1974; Moore, 1975), and the rise of the neo-fascist National Front coerced the TUC into belated reaction. Since then the TUC has instigated policy documents designed to undercut racism within its own ranks (Trades Union Congress, 1983a, 1983b), but not until the 1989 Trades Union Congress did the anti-racist resolution, originally agreed in 1984, acquire a rule providing for expulsion for ‘deliberate acts of unlawful discrimination’. It remains to be seen whether this will have any major impact.

The apparent demise of labour solidarity and collectivism in Britain, most recently associated with the era of Thatcherism, has often been linked to the crumbling of social democratic and liberal ‘morality’; in its place has arisen, it is alleged, a harsh Darwinian jungle bereft of morality and, therefore, ill-disposed towards social reforms of all kinds (Hobsbawm, 1981; Offe, 1984). This assumes the existence of prior forms of ideological solidarity that, in fact, seldom seem to have prevailed. Thus neither an entire society, nor the working-class elements of it, appear to have been held in place by unitary ideologies (Mann, 1970; Abercrombie et al., 1980; Held, 1987: 221–42; Marshall et al., 1987). This does not imply that trade unions in Britain or the USA are inherently and irrevocably sectionalist, exclusive and racist; the examples of the Knights of Labor and periods in the UAW’s history in the USA (see below), and recent support by some British unions (most notably the National Association of Local Government Officers, NALGO) for anti-racist policies, suggest that a contradictory amalgam of sectionalism, exclusivity, solidarity and collectivism is a more accurate description of the historical role of the labour movement in most capitalist countries.

Such an amalgam also misrepresents the apparent solidarity of ethnic minorities. Although white assessments tend to assume a solidarity among heterogeneous groups like ‘Asian’ workers and ‘black’ workers, in reality they are often as disunited as any other apparently homogeneous group. For example, Asian workers are more likely to be organized through their regional and national loyalties than any putative supraethnic loyalty: the Indian Workers’ Association, the Pakistani Workers’ Association and the East Pakistani Welfare Association etc., rather than the Asian Workers Association (Brooks and Singh, 1978–9).

Much of the empirical research suggests that, despite members of ethnic minorities being favourably inclined towards trade unions (Lee, 1987: 145–7), white members of unions are generally less enthusiastic about anti-racist issues than their national officials (Radin, 1966; Commission for Racial Equality, 1981; Miles and Phizacklea, 1978), and, in many instances, racist themselves (CARE, 1981). An example of this appears to be the perpetuation of the ‘black problem’ attitude of trade union officials. That is to say, just as the early post-war union officials assumed that any problems arising out of racial conflict were ‘coloured problems’, rather than ‘white problems’, so it appears that the failure of anti-racist policies is blamed on the failure of minorities to participate

in unions. Certainly Lee's (1987) evidence suggests that very few trade union officials regard the involvement of minority members as a union responsibility. Rather, minority workers are defined by their class not their colour; as Vic Feather, a former general secretary of the TUC, noted in 1968: 'If coloured immigrants are unwilling to integrate or are unable to secure acceptance as they are, we shall have, instead of integration, permanent and weakening division among workpeople' (quoted in Meth, 1973: 23). This is reflected in: the refusal of many white union officials to take issues of racial discrimination seriously; their hostility towards minority caucuses within unions (the most prominent exception to the rule here is NALGO: see Virdee and Grint, 1994); and the lack of interest which appears to prevail in support of minority officials. Individual minority workers who do make it into the union hierarchy at any level emerge despite, rather than because of, the 'support' from union officialdom (Lee, 1987: 150-3). This is not to disparage the activities of a minority of white shop stewards and union officials, but what evidence does exist suggests that anti-racism in practice is critically dependent upon the existence and actions of a caucus of minority activists, often operating in relative autonomy from the main union (Virdee, 1990).

A useful litmus test for the distinction between anti-racist rhetoric and reality is to compare official pronouncements with public policies. It may be easier for a full-time official to declare her or himself an anti-racist than for the local shop steward because the full-time official may not have to deal with the level of racism apparent within the British working class. It is, therefore, worth acknowledging the extent to which trade union bureaucracies are themselves staffed by white employees. While there is little systematic evidence on this, because very few unions have adopted ethnic monitoring, it is apparent that where studies do exist they disclose a depressingly conservative picture of grossly under-represented ethnic minorities (NUPE, 1985). The situation is worse than it appears at first sight because the level of union density among ethnic minorities is actually substantially higher than the equivalent figure for white workers (Lee, 1987: 145-6; Modad, 1997b). In 1986 only thirteen of the main thirty-three British unions had any minority officials, and many had only a token minority leader. There are exceptions of course, and Bill Morris, the General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union, is the most senior minority union official at the time of writing. But although 56 per cent of minority employees were unionized in 1986, compared with 47 per cent of white employees (the corresponding figures in 1997 were 40 and 33), only 4 per cent of minority men held elected posts within their unions, compared with 11 per cent of white men. The figures were identical for white and minority women at 2 per cent (Policy Studies Institute, 1986).

Majority group hostility to ethnic minorities in the 1980s was still very evident (Willmott, 1987). Not so much in official discrimination but in the disproportionate levels of material disadvantage experienced (Brown, 1984), and more personal, unofficial, tacit and even unconscious ways, such as the self-allocation of social class. Indeed, the TUC has made strenuous efforts to eliminate racism at work where it can - see, for example, the TUC's 2003 report *Black Voices at Work* (available at <<http://www.tuc.org.uk/equality/tuc-6519-f0.cfm>>).

However, support for, and satisfaction with, trade unions in the 1990s remained high (Modood, 1997b: 136–7). In Lash's study of the USA the vast majority of white respondents placed themselves in an intermediate class above the 'poor', a label which they strongly associated with ethnic minorities (1984: 86), and a manifestation of the absence of labour solidarity. So is the general American experience any better?

The American experience

In the USA racial conflict between workers was evident through much of the nineteenth century, and while white workers seemed unwilling to support the slavery abolitionists' movement, abolitionists also appeared to denigrate the utility of any labour movement (Guerin, 1979: 144–6). As Du Bois noted: 'the abolitionists did not perceive the new subordination to which the worker was subjected by organized capital, while the workers did not understand that the exclusion from the working class program of four million workers was a fatal omission' (quoted in Guerin, 1979: 145). There were labour leaders who espoused progressive social policies on race, such as William H. Sylvis, leader of the National Labor Union in the 1860s, but the general practice of discrimination remained, buttressed by black support for the Republican 'liberators' from slavery, and white labour antagonism towards the same party perceived to be the representative of big business. This conflict, between the putative exploiters of class and the exploiters of race, is aptly captured by the dichotomous positions taken up by black and white employees of the Pullman Company in the 1894 strike. White workers struck, but their American Railway Union's (ARU) discriminatory policies, in sharp contrast to the more racially liberal policies of the Pullman Company, led black workers to resist the strikers. As Eugene Debs, the ARU's leader, so characteristically argued: 'there is no black question independently of the working class question . . . we have nothing special to offer the negro' (quoted in Guerin, 1979: 149).

The Knights of Labor, a progressive general union, did propose anti-racist programmes and recruited up to 60,000 black members by 1896, but they were quickly undermined by the sectionalist traditions of business unionism promulgated by the likes of Gompers and the American Federation of Labor (AFL). Not that the trade unions were sole repositories of racism of course, nor that the discrimination was restricted to blacks; the Irish, Catholics, Jews and women were commonly regarded by the English Protestant male hierarchy in America and England as legitimate scapegoats. Such exclusionary practices, in America particularly, merely fostered the strike-breaking activities that black workers were often recruited for by white employers, especially during the bitter steel disputes in the period immediately following the First World War. Yet greater levels of discrimination were practised against non-American-born workers; for example, the Arizona Legislature passed the Alien Labor Law which stipulated that 80 per cent of all workers in the state must be American born: a measure explicitly designed to stem the influx of Mexican and Chinese labourers (Hoefler, 1984: 39). Nor was racism restricted to the passing of legislation: in

1919 twenty-five major race riots took place in the USA as mass unemployment greeted many of the black war veterans. Among the more than seventy blacks lynched by white mobs during this time several were still wearing their army uniforms (Woodward, 1974).

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) made several vain attempts to interest the AFL in a multi-racial movement, but the United Mine Workers were almost alone in carrying out such policies in some parts of the country. This progressive platform also framed the original structure of the Congress of Industrial Organization (CIO), set up in 1935 against the background of recruiting conflicts between the craft unions, represented by the leadership of the AFL, and the industrial unions, represented by the rebel CIO. Thus in CIO affiliates, like the United Automobile Workers (UAW), both black and white workers were involved in strike action and social struggles throughout the 1930s and 1940s. Inevitably, perhaps, some employers made attempts to undermine the incipient unity: first, by recruiting black workers instead of white workers because of the formers' traditional antipathy to trade unions; and second, when this failed, to promote the AFL instead of the CIO. Ford, in particular, was an exponent of this tactic.

The fusion of the AFL and CIO in 1957 did little to further the cause of black workers, and, while many unions eventually voiced support for the civil rights movement, only the UAW among the large unions pursued this with any vigour. Since US unions have never recruited a majority of white workers, let alone black workers, the continued discrimination against black workers represented by their disproportionate presence among the working class (Wright, 1985: 201) is clearly not the sole responsibility of the unions. Exactly how black workers should respond to this situation, which poses the interests of class and race as alternative rather than complementary forms of organization, is not self-evident. Neither integration nor separate organizations have proved overwhelmingly successful and while separate black sections of 'white' organizations may well be a prerequisite to any kind of substantive advance it is also the case that separate organizations can be, and have been, easy to isolate and ignore or have stimulated a white backlash (Wrench, 1985; Virdee, 1990; Virdee and Grint, 1994).

Of course, in the USA the great ethnic variety and wave-like periods of immigration brought favourable conditions for the pursuit of trade-union-organized sectionalism (Nelson, 1975), as indeed they have done across the capitalist world ever since (see Cohen, 1988), and the numbers involved were enormous: in 1852 over a thousand people a day were leaving from Britain alone for the USA (Armytage, 1981: 70), and Tranter (1973) estimates that between 1841 and 1939 8.6 million people emigrated from Britain – a third of the natural increase. The importance of the ethnic/family dimension to American patterns of work, particularly during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, should not be underestimated: trade unions and business organizations were just as likely to be marshalled under their ethnic banners as their craft or class banners; thus the United German Trades and the Italian Chamber of Labor were commonplace during this period (Pelling, 1960: 213). Yet the ethnic mix which this generated in the USA, and the exclusionary reaction of American

labour, have been considered, by Selig Perlman (1928) for example, as demonstrable proof of the 'maturity' of US unions. These strategies originated, according to Pelling (1960: 212), in attempts to restrict the competition of Chinese labour in California, and there were various methods involved, from constitutional bars on non-white workers to making US citizenship a pre-requisite for membership. In fact, the Chinese immigration into Hawaii's sugar plantations at the end of the nineteenth century is a useful example of the problems involved in banning particular groups while still requiring immigrant labour. With 50,000 Chinese labourers in Hawaii by 1898 and further immigration banned by an Exclusion Act of 1892, Japanese labourers were encouraged as replacements, at least until they outnumbered the Chinese and were deeply implicated in a rash of labour disputes, whereupon Koreans were sought out to supply the ever-expanding sugar plantations (Patterson, 1988). Where such groups have remained *in situ* and developed ethnic businesses, they have proved extraordinarily difficult recruiting ground for unions; not just because of the language problem but because ethnic businesses tend to be small, culturally homogeneous units where employer and employee often work side by side and where the class-based claims of union recruiters are devalued both by the ethnic allegiances and the general lack of interest of most unions in aspects of ethnic discrimination. A further problem for unions lies in the essentially ambiguous and often transient status of immigrant workers and those from established ethnic minorities: it is not merely geographic mobility that is common, but social mobility, between employer and employee, is also relatively widespread, a pattern that stretches across national boundaries (Morokvasic, 1987).

It can only be concluded that white workers, trade unions and trade unionists in the USA and the UK bear a major responsibility for not attacking – and by default, therefore, for the preservation of – racism at work, as Phizacklea and Miles argue: 'there remains very little real evidence that organized labour in Britain has seriously confronted the issue of racism within its own ranks and the reality of material disadvantage amongst those who have been the object of racism and discrimination' (1987: 117). Nevertheless, trade unions cannot be isolated from the environment within which they operate. If the environment is racist and the trade unions have to work within it but cannot transcend it, then the responsibility for the perpetuation of racism lies not just at the door of the union movement. Indeed, the most recent evidence suggests that workers with ethnic minority origins are better paid when they work within unionized enterprises than in non-unionized enterprises in so far as wage differentials based on race are narrower (Metcalf, 1989). Trade unions may not have exerted themselves in the fight against racism at work until relatively recently but they have had a measure of success and, given the hostile environment within which they operate, must take at least some credit for positive action.

Summary

This chapter has attempted to demonstrate the interleaving of socially structured forces and the influence of agents in the labour market by highlighting

several related features of race and ethnicity. It should be apparent that the material position of ethnic minorities, and the associated levels of racial discrimination, cannot be explained simply by reference to a neo-liberal market model where only individuals and the forces of supply and demand exist. Nor can the discriminatory practices of white employers or employees or trade unions be singled out. Rather, the practices of various agents need to be situated within their appropriate socially structured context to illustrate both the contingent openings appropriated by different work groups and the more permanent features of social exclusion that appear to persist in all market-based societies. Racial discrimination in the labour market is not a feature unique to capitalist economies nor to capitalists; nor, it has to be said, are trade unions unambiguous promoters of racial equality or inequality. It is this very fluidity that makes the apportioning of causation and responsibility so difficult. But undergirding the fluidity remains a stability based upon the principle of work as a social phenomenon: neither racism nor racial equality are simply the products of individual attitudes, instead they depend upon a complex web of socially constructed institutions and socially organized agents. And while racism remains a critical problem for society it is the case that patterns of inequality are changing in response to increased human capital by minorities (specifically educational qualifications) and to labour market restructuring (specifically the decline in unskilled jobs). The consequences of this are beneficial for some groups – Afro-Caribbeans, Indians and Chinese – but not for Pakistanis or Bangladeshis for whom the future remains bleak.

Exam/essay questions

- 1 Is racism at work inevitable?
- 2 To what extent are labour markets 'colour-blind'?
- 3 What are the advantages and disadvantages of black workers organizing independently of trade unions?
- 4 Class, race or gender – which aspect of identity is the most important for explaining the opportunities and constraints facing individuals at work?
- 5 'It doesn't matter which ethnic minority you belong to – you are discriminated against on the basis of being "black".' Discuss.
- 6 Why is institutionalized racism at work so difficult to eradicate and so pernicious in its effects?
- 7 'Scientifically speaking there are no homogeneous "races" and to continue to use the term "race" simply perpetuates the myth and foments prejudice and discrimination.' Discuss.
- 8 How can we best make sense of racism?
- 9 Is education or 'affirmative action' the best way of overcoming racial discrimination at work?
- 10 Historically, labour market restructuring, not the accumulation of human capital has provided the quickest route out of poverty for most ethnic minorities – what does this imply for the future?

Further reading

The most up-to-date compilation of data on ethnic minorities in Britain is Modood et al.'s *Ethnic Minorities in Britain* (1997). Fryer's *Staying Power* (1984) is a valuable history of black people in Britain, while the best comparative history of slavery is Segal's *The Black Diaspora* (1995). For an introduction to the complexities of the theoretical debate, readers could try Solomos's *Race and Racism in Contemporary Britain* (1989), Miles's *Racism* (1989), Banton's *Racial Theories* (1987) and Gilroy's *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (1987). A review of racial violence and harassment is provided in Virdee's *Racial Violence and Harassment* (1995).