SYMBOLISING POTENTIAL:

ETHNIC ORIGIN AND INCLUSION IN BRITISH

PERSONNEL DEPARTMENTS

by

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between ethnic origin and inclusion in British personnel departments has never been fully explored or explained. This thesis draws upon an exploratory questionnaire survey of personnel practitioners of ethnic minority origin, and case studies of personnel departments in five organisations in Britain, to identify how and why people are included in British personnel departments and the role of ethnic origin in determining that inclusion.

In order to do this the thesis draws upon a range of models of inequality, including both Marxist and Weberian. For various reasons, however - such as a failure to overcome the separation of action and structure, an inability to articulate change, and a failure to recognise that closure is an ongoing process - none of the existing models are found to be able to articulate or explain fully the processes and structures of inclusion identified by the research. The thesis therefore develops a new model, focusing upon the micro-level, which overcomes the limitations of those existing models.

The research reveals that inclusion is afforded to those who are able to *symbolise* to those with power over inclusion the type of *potential* which the latter parties desire them to possess. The ethnic categorisation individuals are accorded, it is shown, can function as one such symbol. However, where ethnic categorisation would not symbolise the potential desired, individuals may win inclusion by ensuring that they are categorised according to other criteria.

Differences in inclusion between different personnel departments are found to reflect the relative power of different parties in the organisations concerned to ensure that those included in personnel departments symbolise to them the type of potential which they desire of them. As a consequence, the relationship between ethnic minority categorisation and inclusion, and between other criteria and inclusion, can vary between different departments and different situations. The model thus permits explanation of who is included in a particular part of an organisation and how that inclusion has been achieved.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis seeks to explore the relationship between ethnic origin and inclusion in personnel departments in Britain. The terms 'ethnic origin' and 'ethnic minority origin', which are used throughout the thesis, are, however, problematic, commentators expressing a variety of opinions as to their definition and, indeed, utility. These debates are discussed in chapter one, and will be returned to throughout the thesis.

For the purposes of the primary research analysed here, the ethnic categorisation used is that adopted by the 1991 Census of Great Britain (Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, 1993), which has the advantage of permitting comparison with other government surveys, and of being familiar to the majority of the research participants. However, this is not to ignore the problematic assumptions upon which this definition is based (see discussion in chapter one), nor to accept an essentialist model of ethnic origin. Rather, it is recognised that definitions of 'ethnic origin' such as this are classificatory systems, and this is the sense in which the term will be used in the research analysis, discussion and conclusions. Thus by a 'person of ethnic minority origin' will be meant a person who categorises himself or herself, and / or is categorised by others, as being of ethnic minority origin. (Instances where self-categorisation and the categorisation ascribed by others differ, and whose categorisation is most significant for inclusion, will be discussed in later chapters).

Following the 1991 Census categorisation, again, the term 'white' will be used to describe those people who are categorised as belonging to the ethnic majority in Britain. However, in recognition of the fact that skin colour is not the only factor affecting ethnic categorisation, and that people who belong to the ethnic majority do not actually have white skin, the term is placed in inverted commas, except when it forms part of a quotation from another source. Other ethnic categories - such as 'black' - are generally avoided, except where they appear in quotations from other sources, or where the text particularly wishes to discuss or draw attention to the categorisation used by survey respondents. In such cases, the term is again - as in the preceding sentence - placed in inverted commas.

'Personnel departments' are defined as those departments which specialise in people management activities, including both those labelled as 'personnel management' and 'training'. A full exposition of the various roles and shifting definitions of personnel management will be found in chapter three.

Some limited evidence of ethnic minority under-representation and disadvantaging in personnel management exists: for example, data from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development[i], the professional body of the personnel management occupation, indicates that although people of ethnic minority origin comprised 4.5% of its membership in January 2000, they were disproportionately over-represented at the lower levels, representing 7.3% of student members (who do not have to be employed in personnel management in order to join) and under-represented at the higher levels, for which experience of personnel work at a managerial level is necessary. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that people of ethnic minority origin are disadvantaged when pursuing careers in personnel management (see for example Paddison, 1991; Ridley, 1995).

However, none of this evidence is sufficient to demonstrate the existence of ethnic minority under-representation in personnel management positions in Britain, nor its possible causes. Firstly - and as will be made clear later on in the thesis - membership of the Institute is often not a pre-requisite for entry to personnel management positions and so many personnel practitioners do not belong to the Institute, and it is therefore possible that the sample of personnel practitioners belonging to the Institute is biased. In the second place, if under-representation does exist, it may have a number of causes, not only disadvantaging as a result of ethnic minority origin; for example, it is possible that people of ethnic minority origin are less likely to wish to pursue personnel management careers than their 'white' counterparts.

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[i] The professional body for personnel practitioners, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, obtained chartered status in 2000. Most of the references to the Institute, both from primary and secondary sources, predate this development and therefore refer to the Institute of Personnel and Development.

Furthermore, although the anecdotal evidence suggests that disadvantaging is a factor in ethnic minority representation in personnel management positions, the validity of such anecdotal evidence is open to question; there may, for example, be factors other than ethnic minority origin which have led to the exclusion of those individuals, which they themselves have not recognised. Certainly, the fact that some people categorised as being of ethnic minority origin have been able to reach senior positions in personnel management (c.f.Overall, 1998) suggest that the relationship between ethnic origin and exclusion is not a simple one.

Aims of the Thesis.

This thesis is not intended to fill all of these gaps in current knowledge. It does not seek to identify the extent of ethnic minority representation throughout personnel departments in Britain, nor to explore the impact of supply-side issues, such as individuals' career choices, upon that. Rather, the first aim of this thesis is *to analyse the careers and experiences of personnel staff who categorise themselves / are categorised by others as of ethnic minority origin*, in order to identify the structures and processes which lead to inclusion in personnel departments and the relationship, if one exists, of ethnic origin to these. Fulfilling this aim forms the focus of chapter eleven. The second aim, which forms the focus of chapter twelve, is *to evaluate the ability of existing models of inequality to explain the findings of the research*. The third aim, which is addressed specifically in chapter thirteen, is *to develop, on the basis of the research undertaken, a new model which overcomes the weaknesses identified in existing models and may in future be applied to the analysis of inclusion in a variety of situations*.

In order to achieve these aims, the thesis will draw upon a variety of secondary research. The first three chapters will analyse a range of models which may prove useful for explaining the findings of the research; later chapters will then identify those which are most relevant and draw upon them to achieve the thesis' aims. Thus, chapter one will explore models of ethnicity and race, in order to identify different ways in which these may be conceptualised. Chapter two will look at models for explaining inequality, including Marxist models, neo-Weberian models of closure, and models of discrimination. Different approaches to addressing inequality in organisations will also be discussed. Following this, chapter three will analyse different models of personnel

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departments and careers, along with other models of career strategies and professions in general which may provide a basis for analysis of the particular strategies used by those who win inclusion in personnel departments. The possible implications of this analysis for equality in personnel management departments will then be considered.

Following the analysis of secondary research, and the analysis of the primary research questionnaire and case studies in chapters five to ten, chapters eleven, twelve and thirteen, as already indicated, will discuss findings in relation to each of the three aims in turn, drawing upon those models and concepts from the secondary research which are found to aid the aims' achievement. Thus in chapter eleven it will be explained that being categorised as of ethnic minority origin often has a negative effect upon inclusion in personnel departments, particularly where it suggests difference from those with power over inclusion. Chapter twelve will, however, show that existing models of inequality are incapable of explaining the findings – although the useful insights which may be gained from some of these models will be noted. Chapter thirteen will then draw upon the useful insights gained from the secondary research, and the new insights gained from the primary research, to present a new model which is capable of articulating and explaining the various structures and processes of inequality identified. Chapter fourteen will conclude the thesis by drawing together the various analyses contained within the thesis and presenting the particular ways in which ethnic origin specifically relates to inclusion in personnel departments in Britain.

Key Findings and Propositions

The analysis of the research findings will provide a new model of inclusion which recognises that people are included/ excluded on the basis of the potential they are believed to possess to enable the achievement of certain desired situations. Because potential, by definition, cannot be known, it has to be judged through symbols, and it will be argued that this provides the space for those seeking inclusion to become actively involved in the process of inclusion by influencing the symbols or criteria upon which that judgement will be based. Thus, although achieving a favourable judgement may be more difficult for those whose ethnicity is embodied and thus not amenable to change, it may be achieved by ensuring that judgement is based upon some of the other available criteria.

Moreover, the research analysis will reveal that there are various parties with power over inclusion - those who set the strategy of the organisation, the personnel managers, and other individuals - line managers, customers - outside the personnel departments - and that the potential they desire of those in personnel departments may differ. The problem for those seeking inclusion in personnel departments is thus to identify whose model of desired potential is more significant in a given situation, before attempting to ensure positive judgements of that potential. Correct identification of this, it will be asserted, is particularly problematic in some personnel departments, in which managers may publicly espouse a strategic model of desired potential in relation to increasing ethnic minority representation, whilst privately imposing their own definition, which ethnic minority categorisation does not symbolise. This, it will be claimed, makes assessment of the role of ethnic origin in inclusion - and thus assessment of the way in which available symbols of ethnicity should be used in attempting inclusion - particularly difficult for those seeking inclusion in some personnel departments.

CHAPTER ONE: MODELS OF ETHNICITY AND RACE

In order to achieve the thesis' aim of analysing the careers and experiences of personnel staff categorised (by themselves and / or others) as of ethnic minority origin, it is necessary to define what is meant by people of 'ethnic minority origin', and to identify those models of ethnicity and race which are most useful for the analysis of their careers and experiences. This chapter therefore explores existing models of ethnicity and race, providing a basis both for the definition of the concepts used in this thesis, and for the analysis of the research findings in later chapters.

The terms 'ethnic minority origin' and 'ethnic origin' have already been used in the introduction to this thesis. However, as already noted, these terms are problematic. In this chapter, therefore, existing models of ethnicity and race are analysed in order to clarify the concepts and their implications, and the ways in which those concepts are to be used in this thesis.

As Mason (1995) points out, there is no universally accepted definition of ethnicity. Nevertheless, 'if pressed for a definition, most academic commentators and policy makers would stress some sort of cultural distinctiveness as the mark of an ethnic grouping' (ibid.:12). Yinger (1976) for example, defines an ethnic group as:

> A segment of a larger society whose members are thought, by themselves and / or others, to have a common origin and to share important segments of a common culture and who, in addition, participate in shared activities in which the common origin and culture are significant ingredients (ibid.: 200).

This emphasis on cultural distinctiveness would appear to differentiate the concept of ethnicity from that of race, which is generally defined in terms of (actual or perceived) physical and genetic distinctiveness (c.f.Rex, 1986). Banton and Harwood (1975) discuss how the concept of race was developed to differentiate between different sectors of the human population in the 18th and 19th centuries, the common belief being that racial characteristics were fixed and unchanging from generation to generation.

In spite of Darwin's theories of evolution - which Banton and Harwood point out caused problems for this concept of race by showing that these supposedly genetic 'racial' characteristics were unstable and liable to change over time, and thus that 'racial' boundaries were not as fixed as had been asserted - attempts to classify individuals into races according to physical characteristics have continued, albeit with somewhat more recognition of evolutionary processes (see for example Baker, 1974, Molnar, 1975). Baker (1974) for example, classified the human population into 6 main races - Europids, Jews, Celts, Australids, Sanids and Negrids - based upon physical characteristics such as blood group, shape of skull, height, eye shape, nose shape, and skin colour. At the same time, a number of researchers explored the possible existence of associations between membership of such racial categories and cognitive ability (see again Baker, 1974; Jensen, 1975).

Such biological models of race have been heavily criticised. Geipel (1969), for example, presents a critique of various attempts to identify and isolate races in Europe, arguing that

> Whereas anthropologists in the past were likely to regard the coincidence of selected features in certain individuals as evidence of distinctive 'racial' entities, such traits are now looked upon as the separate expressions of specific evolutionary processes (ibid.: 7-8).

Baker himself acknowledges the existence of what he terms 'intermediates' - people who possess characteristics of more than one of his racial categories - and suggests that

> For practical purposes it may be found convenient to make an arbitrary decision as to the proportion of intermediates that are allowable if different races are to be recognized (Baker, 1974: 99).

Purported findings of associations between cognitive ability and membership of a given 'racial' category have also been widely discredited, partly as an inevitable result of the deconstruction of racial categories just discussed, and also on the grounds of methodological inaccuracies (see for example the discussion in Simpson and Yinger, 1985: 36-39).

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It is this discrediting of the concept of race, with its genetic and physical underpinnings, which has led to its replacement in many situations by the concept of ethnicity. Unlike race, ethnicity, as noted above, is generally perceived to be rooted in social and cultural differences rather than biological ones, and thus should avoid the determinism implicit within the models of race discussed above. As Rex (1986) comments, the physical characteristics associated with racial groups are in principal less malleable than the cultural characteristics associated with ethnic groups, and so membership of the latter might be expected to be less fixed than membership of the former.

The concept of ethnicity itself is, however, far from unproblematic, and the distinction between race and ethnicity far less clear-cut than such a simplistic analysis would imply. Although Van den Berghe (1967) argues that the distinction between racial and ethnic groups is 'analytically useful', he points out that 'In practice, the distinction between a racial and an ethnic group is sometimes blurred' (ibid.: 10). Similarly, Banton (1988) questions the usefulness of defining racial and ethnic groups in terms of physical characteristics and cultural characteristics respectively, arguing that a group defined as 'racial' may also have 'ethnic' characteristics, and that the relative importance of physical and cultural characteristics in group definition will vary according to the situation, and be itself culturally determined.

The difficulty of distinguishing between race and ethnicity in practice is compounded by the fact that a number of models list 'race' as one of the possible defining characteristics of an ethnic group. Simpson and Yinger (1985), for example, specify 'some combination of .. language, religious, ancestral homeland with its related culture, and race' (ibid.: 11) as marking an ethnic group as distinct from other ethnic groups in the society, while Gordon (1978) argues that it is 'race, religion or national origin, or some combination of these categories' (ibid.: 111) which create the socio-psychological 'sense of peoplehood' which defines ethnic groups (ibid.).

Such broad definitions of ethnicity and ethnic group make it possible to apply the terms to a wide variety of social structures. As Yinger (1986) points out, an ethnic group, according to the above definitions, could be a social group with a clear common origin and cultural background (Yinger gives the example of Oneida Indians) or a group of

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people with very different cultural backgrounds, but some similarity in terms of language, race or religion, such as Hispanics in the United States (ibid.:23). Cornell (1996), meanwhile, points out that the common equation of ethnicity with cultural attributes is often so broad that almost any group could be said to be an ethnic one. Such broad definitions, both Yinger and Cornell argue, obscure the fine details of the different situations, and prevent detailed analysis and comparison.

The British Concept of 'Ethnic Minority'

The model of ethnicity which has gained prominence in Britain, and which is used in the exploratory questionnaire conducted as part of the research presented here, draws heavily upon the kinds of physical characteristics noted above to be associated with the concept of 'race'. Rose (1976) argues that whether race, religion or national origin is the most emphasised criteria of ethnicity varies from society to society, and within Britain it appears that it is 'race' - or at least one of the most frequently used markers of 'race', skin colour - that is the most emphasised. As Mason (1995) notes, not all groups with distinctive cultures and national origins are included in the British definition of 'ethnic minority'; it is skin colour that is the essential defining characteristic.

Thus the classification of ethnic origin used by the British government's Office of Population Censuses and Surveys - and according to which respondents to the exploratory questionnaire were asked to classify themselves - includes 'White' as one ethnic group, and bases the classification of other ethnic groups upon a mixture of skin colour and national origins (for example, 'Black African', 'Black Caribbean', and 'Asian'.) However, the inclusion of 'White' as, invariably, the first ethnic group in the list means that all other ethnic groups are implicitly defined as 'non-White', regardless of any apparent basis in national origin; moreover, it is significant that in the 1991 Census tables (Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, 1993) 'Born in the U.K.' and 'Born in Ireland' are included as separate categories which cross-cut, rather than define, ethnic group, indicating that it is skin colour, rather than place of birth, which is paramount in the definition of ethnicity.

This supports Mason's contention that 'The essential characteristic for membership of an ethnic minority in this usage is having a skin which is not 'white'' (Mason, 1995: 15-

16). As Synott and Howes (1996) note of the similar Canadian concept of 'visible minority' (people who are non-white in colour and non-Caucasian in race), such a model 'sacrilizes sight and vision.... racializes many types of ethnic identification... biologizes the social in the construction of social reality' (ibid.: 156).

A further problem with essentialist models is their conception of racial and ethnic structures as completely separate from other structures. Geertz (1975), for example, identifies assumed blood ties, race, language, region, religion and custom as 'primordial attachments' which 'flow more from a sense of natural - some would say spiritual - affinity than from social interaction' (ibid.: 260). Disaffection based on these primordial criteria is conceived of as entirely separate and different from disaffection based on economic, class or intellectual criteria (ibid.: 261). For Gordon (1978) also, ethnic and racial groups exist independently of other social structures; for example he quotes an earlier work in which he claims that

> American society is 'criss-crossed' by two sets of stratification structures, one
> based on social status, economic power, and political power differences,
> regardless of ethnic background, the other a set of status and power relationships
> based precisely on division of the population by racial, nationality background, and
> religious categories (Gordon, 1951: 15-16, quoted in Gordon, 1978: 130-131).

Race and Ethnicity as Social Constructions

A key difficulty with the approaches to race and ethnicity outlined above is therefore that they seek to define the characteristics of 'racial" and / or 'ethnic' groups, and thereby imply that such groups are discrete entities with clear and relatively unchanging boundaries. This project, as the discussion above reveals, has resulted at one extreme in the imposition of essentialist racial or ethnic divisions, which ignore the possibility of other categorisations or of any relationship to other social structures, and at the other in the development of definitions of ethnicity which are so broad and ambiguous as to be of little use for sociological analysis.

One alternative conception of race and ethnicity conceives of racial or ethnic groups as social constructions. The interest for these theorists lies not in identifying the criteria of

membership of ethnic or racial groups, but in determining when a group is defined as ethnic or racial, by whom, and to what purpose? Jackson (1987), for example, argues that 'race is fundamentally a social construction rather than a natural division of humankind' (ibid.:6), while Allen and Macey (1994) suggest that the focus should be 'on social construction, not on reified essentialisms nor on reductionist models' (ibid.: 128). In a similar vein Miles (1982a) argues that 'There are no 'races' in the biological sense of there being distinct and discrete biological groups' (ibid.: 280). Like Jackson, therefore, Miles argues that the only valid analysis of race is an analysis of its use as an ideological construct; in other words, an analysis not of race, but of racism.

The attempt to define race and ethnicity according to physical and cultural criteria respectively is still apparent in some social construction approaches, the difference being that physical or cultural criteria are seen not as determinants of racial or ethnic groups, but as criteria around which such groups may be constructed. Thus Van den Berghe (1967) defines race as 'a group that is socially defined but on the basis of physical criteria' (ibid.:10), and ethnic groups as 'socially defined but on the basis of cultural criteria' (ibid.). For Rex (1986) the distinction to be made is between 'race' and 'ethnic' situations - the former consisting of situations of conflict or relative harmony in which group distinction is on the basis of 'physical (phrenological) characteristics' and the latter situations of conflict or relative harmony in which group distinction is on the basis of 'cultural characteristics' (ibid.: 22).

Other models, however, argue that race and ethnicity differ according to who is doing the construction. Thus Banton (1983: 106) argues that 'race' is largely used to categorise others, while 'ethnicity' is largely used by group members to identify themselves. Jenkins (1986a) takes up this point, arguing that

> Ethnicity is largely a matter of group identification [which 'takes place inside the ethnic boundary'] and 'race' or racism one of categorisation' (ibid.:177) - which takes place 'outside or across [the boundary] (ibid.).

Thus Jenkins proposes that 'ethnicity' and 'race' or racism are of a different order, the former being a general social phenomenon, and the latter a specific process which may be predicated upon the former:

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Racism may be viewed as a historically specific facet of the general social phenomenon of ethnicity. As such, it characterises situations in which an ethnic group dominates, or attempts to dominate, another set of people and, in the course of so doing, seeks to impose upon those people a categorical identity which is primarily defined by reference to their purported inherent and immutable differences from, and / or inferiority to, the dominating group (ibid.:178).

In a later work, however, Jenkins problematises this distinction with a claim that, although 'groups' are defined by their members, and 'categories' by outsiders, 'group identification... proceeds hand-in-glove with categorisation' (Jenkins, 1996: 87). It is therefore the interplay between the two processes, rather than the distinction between ethnic and racial groups, which should be the focus:

> Rather than reify groups and categories as 'things', we should think instead about social identities as constituted in the dialectic of collective identification, in the interplay of group identification and social categorisation (ibid.: 89).

As Wallman argues (Wallman, 1986), the debate concerning the distinction between race and ethnicity is ultimately found to be unhelpful. In order to avoid entering into that debate, therefore, the thesis presented here refers only to concepts of ethnic origin and ethnicity, recognising the different interpretations that may be placed upon those concepts, and makes no reference to concepts of race.

It is the 'social construction' model that underpins the American concept of 'minority groups'. Unlike in Britain, the American use of the term 'minorities' does not necessarily refer to numerical representation (Mason, 1995), but rather to power (Simpson and Yinger, 1985: 9). A 'minority group member', therefore, is a member of a group which occupies a subordinate position in society, regardless of numerical representation and - and this is a key difference from the British concept of 'ethnic minority' - regardless of the particular defining characteristics of the group. The process of being categorised by others with more power is therefore the key defining feature:

> From the perspective of the individual minority-group member, his status is characterized primarily by its categorical nature.... Whatever his unique

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characteristics he is treated, in the defining case, simply as one unit of a group by those of dominant status (Simpson and Yinger, 1985: 9).

Unlike in the dominant British model, the concern is therefore not with the essential characteristics of the group, but with the processes and power structures by which it is defined.

It is also this 'social construction' model that largely underpins the model of ethnic origin adopted by this thesis, as evidenced by its concern with ethnic categorisations rather than ethnic origin per se. Consideration of the power structures that underlie ethnic categorisations, and the uses to which ethnic categorisations are put, will therefore be important themes in the later chapters.

Social Anthropological Models

The move away from essentialist definitions of ethnicity is also found in the social anthropological models of such as Barth (1969) and Wallman (1986), with their focus upon the *boundaries* between groups rather than the *content* of them. Barth, for example, argues that ethnic groups are not primordial givens, but 'categories of ascription and identification by the actors themselves' (Barth, 1969: 10). (This, therefore, is the epistemological approach which underpins Jenkins (1986) and Banton's (1983) definitions of race and ethnicity in terms of ascription by group members and outsiders, cited above).

Barth's focus upon the boundaries between groups leads to a model which conceives of ethnic groups as shifting, marked out at different times and in different situations by different criteria. This explains both how people with certain different cultural traits might, in various times and places, be seen - by themselves and others - as belonging to the same ethnic group, and also how membership of ethnic groups can vary while the categories remain the same. Moreover, Barth argues that:

> Boundaries persist despite a flow of personnel across them. In other words, categorised ethnic distinctions do not depend on an absence of mobility, contact and information, but do entail processes of exclusion and incorporation whereby

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discrete categories are maintained despite changing participation and membership
in the course of life histories (Barth, 1969: 10).

A key feature of Barth's model is that it is situational: ethnic ascription is not fixed and
stable, but determined by the particular situation, in particular the need to compete for
economic resources. For Wallman (1986), also, race or ethnicity is a resource which
may or may not be used as a source of identification, and which may therefore change its
membership over time whilst retaining its boundaries. To illustrate this, Wallman gives
the analogy of a tea bag, which retains its boundary even though individual tea leaves
may have escaped.

Barth's work, however, has been subject to much criticism (see discussion in Jenkins,
1996). In particular, Jenkins criticises Barth's use of the concept of 'boundary' which,
he argues, implies a degree of structural continuity which is at odds with Barth's
argument, tending to emphasise the 'group' rather than the processes which create it.
Meanwhile Wallman (1986) criticises Barth for failing to explain adequately why ethnic
identification differs in different situations.

In an attempt to identify the contextual differences which lead to different patterns of
ethnic relations, Wallman explores both the structures - 'the framework of social or
economic or conceptual options available' (Wallman, 1986: 235) - and their organisation
– 'the pattern of choices made from among these options' (ibid.) - in particular
situations. In so doing, as Jenkins (1996) notes, Wallman moves beyond an analysis of
boundaries to an analysis of 'boundary *processes*' (ibid.: 98) - an analysis of the ways in
which structure and action interact to produce particular ethnic identifications in
particular situations.

British Models of Race Relations and their Critics
Like Wallman's, British models of 'race relations' such as those developed by Rex and
Banton profess to be concerned with both structure and action. As has been shown, a
key concern of such theories is the formation of groups around characteristics of race
and / or ethnicity (c.f. Banton, 1983: 106, cited above), and Rex (1986) argues that:

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'The study of race relations is ... inextricably tied up with the study of group formation generally and with the study of social class and status' (ibid.: 17). Rex's argument is that ethnic and racial groups are not groups per se, but quasi-groups which could give rise to group formation, perhaps to pursue shared interests in a market situation; however the potential of these quasi- groups to form groups requires a structural (economic or political) input if it is to be activated. (As Rex himself notes (ibid.: 28), this notion of 'latent' ethnicity is very close to the model of 'ethnicity as a resource' found in some social anthropological models). Significantly, therefore, Rex's model conceives of racial and ethnic quasi-groups firstly as the result of individuals acting to fulfil needs, and secondly as separate from - although interacting with - economic and political relations.

Such approaches, however, would also fall foul of Jenkins (1996) criticism of Barth, in that they still tend to foreground the 'group' or 'quasi-group' rather than the way in which it is formed. Miles (1982) is similarly critical of the way in which such models, whilst acknowledging that race is a social construction, give credence to it by setting it up as a valid field of enquiry. By so doing, he argues, such theories '[tend] to give explanatory primacy to supposedly 'race' related factors' (ibid.: 282). Gilroy (1998) also makes a plea for researchers to cease to contribute to the reification of the concept of race by using it as a critical concept. Instead of this, Miles argues that theories should look beyond the social construction to the structures which underpin it and all other social relations; 'social constructions', he argues, '...cannot be fully analysed and understood without drawing upon the underlying essential factors or relations' (Miles, 1982).

For Miles, these essential underlying factors relate to the capitalist system of production (Miles, 1982). Not only therefore does race not have explanatory primacy, but it 'cannot be shown to be essentially distinct from other social relations' (ibid.: 282), all of them having arisen from the same capitalist formations. Thus Miles and Phizacklea (1984) argue that:

> Racism may be one of the means through which class-exploitation is experienced
> and the struggle against racism may be one form of struggle against capitalist

domination - but these can never be autonomous or isolated from other means of exploitation and struggles against capitalism (Miles and Phizacklea, 1984: 171).

In a later work, Miles argues that the end of the feudal system of social relations with its belief in a divine order, and the rationalising tendencies of the market, necessitated a new justification for the persistence of inequality: racism (Miles, 1994: 206). Whilst noting that racism drew upon pre-capitalist images, therefore, Miles argues that it is a product of those emerging capitalist social formations (ibid.). Unlike Rex, therefore, Miles does not conceive of race as a *separate* phenomenum that *interacts* with economic and political structures, but as a *product* of those structures, without which it would not exist. As a consequence, Miles' analysis - again unlike race relations theorists, and unlike the social anthropological models discussed above - is almost entirely concerned with the structural determinants of race, and does not seek to analyse - indeed, appears to see no role for - human action.

However, in spite of Miles' criticism, Rex does seek to identify underlying causes of the social construction of race - the difference is that he does not find that in capitalist imperatives but, following Parsons, through reference to the culture system, social system, and personality system (Rex, 1986: 3-4 and 107-108). Thus Rex argues that the construction of 'race' and ethnic relations is influenced by an individual's personality, cultural norms, and 'the often conflicting goals of individual and group actions and the power which can be deployed in support of different goals' (Rex, 1986: 4). Rex's analysis of underlying causes, therefore, focuses on social action rather than on macro-level structures (even the 'social system', which Rex argues is what is meant by 'structure' (ibid.: 108) is conceived of largely in terms of individual and group goals and actions, and does not seek to impose a single structural explanation, which is what Miles (1982) believes is necessary).

The Plasticity of Ethnicity?
In recent years the focus upon the construction of boundaries between ethnic groups has become a dominant model (Cornell, 1996). These models follow researchers such as Barth, Wallman and Rex, rather than Miles, in exploring how and why ethnic boundaries

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occur in different situations. As in the former, social anthropological models, ethnic boundaries are seen to arise in order to enable fulfilment of material needs: Porter and MacLeod, for example, argue that second generation 'Hispanics' in the United States (according to state classifications) will start to use that ethnic identity 'instrumentally, stepping in and out of it at will' in order to improve their position in society (Porter and MacLeod, 1996: 544).

These models also follow Barth in arguing that ethnic groups may be marked by a multiplicity of different criteria, and that this in turn allows for movement across boundaries. Thus Porter and MacLeod argue that the people they study may claim to be 'Hispanic' on the basis of their parents' nationality, or 'American' 'banking on their unaccented English and the absence of observable physical traits' (ibid.: 544). Rao (1999) similarly notes the variety of cultural markers which inhabitants of Jammu and Kashmir use to construct different ethnic identities in different contexts, while Kibria (1998) finds that members of the so-called 'Asian-American' ethnic group resist the unidimensional categorisation the United States racial system seeks to impose upon them in favour of a multiplicity of identities and subgroups. These models thus adopt a model of multiple identities (Pheonix, 1998), recognising, as Hall argues, that

> All of us are composed of multiple social identities, not one. That we are all complexly constructed through different categories, of different antagonisms, and these may have the effect of locating us socially in multiple positions of marginality and subordination, but which do not operate on us in exactly the same way (Hall, 1991: 57).

One logical conclusion of this recognition of multiple social identities is to abandon the notion of ethnic groups altogether, and conceive of all points of identity as equal (as Gilroy, 1998, advocates). However, as Phoenix (1998) points out, this conceptualisation has been resisted by those seeking to maintain racialized hierarchies or to bring about political change (thus it has been argued that such a conceptualisation makes it impossible to see on what basis groups can be mobilised for action (Kibria, 1998), and 'impossible to get 'a fix' on anything' (Body-Gendrot, 1998: 856)).

Indeed, Cornell (1996) argues for a renewed focus upon the content of ethnic groups as well as the boundaries between them, pointing out that models which conceive of ethnic identity as merely a resource to be used as and when appropriate, like any other claim to identity, fail to explain the way in which some people cling to their ethnic identity even when it does not serve their material interests. Cornell's model presents four ideal-types of ethnic groups, based upon what it is that they share, and argues that their vulnerability to membership change varies according to the nature and extent of that shared content.

Jenkins (1997) also rejects the notion that ethnicity is infinitely variable and malleable. He re-emphasises the 'cultural content' of ethnicity, and argues that some cultural markers of difference matter more than others, ultimately for historical reasons. Thus 'there are limits to the plasticity of ethnicity as well as to its fixity and solidity' (ibid.: 169). Moreover, rather than seeing all possible points of identity as equal, Jenkins argues that ethnicity matters in particular because it 'means something to individuals' (ibid.: 168), it is 'imagined [i.e.socially constructed] but not imaginary' (ibid.: 169). In this way Jenkins' model seeks to bridge the divide between the materialist approaches of such as Miles and the action-oriented approach of Barth and his followers: ethnicity is socially constructed, but has 'real' effects.

Smaje's (1997) model similarly seeks to marry those two approaches, perceiving weaknesses in each. He criticises the element of determinism within the materialist approach, and its failure to explain how structure is reproduced by individual action. Moreover, he resists arguments that race is purely reducible to class. On the other hand, more action-oriented approaches, Smaje suggests, do little to clarify the ontological status of race, failing to articulate clearly how the social construction of race or ethnicity relates to material exclusion.

Smaje's proposed solution to this impasse is to turn to Bourdieu's theories of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1984). Racial and ethnic groups are therefore conceived by Smaje as symbolic kinship networks; networks that are symbolic and socially constructed, yet also (as Jenkins, 1997, also argued) provide categories for material exclusion. Crucial to his argument is the recognition of the symbolic nature of the networks:

The emergent or essentially unfinished and contested nature of symbols enables us to theorise the sense in which ethnicity may objectify a whole series of affective and structural identifications, without coupling the concept to historicist notions of a necessary directionality, as is generally the case in Marxist theory (ibid.: 321-2).

What Smaje proposes, therefore, is an epistemology, located at the symbolic level, which is capable of articulating the interaction of individual action and exclusionary structures.

Indeed, the concept of symbols will be important to the development of the thesis, which, as in Smaje's argument, will find in them a way of overcoming the divide between action and structure and of explaining how ethnic categorisations lead to inclusion or exclusion. Discussion of Bourdieu's model and the insights it provides will therefore form an important part of the analysis of models of inequality in chapter two.

Moreover, although, as noted above, this thesis adopts a 'social construction' approach to ethnicity, recognising that ethnic origin is a categorisation, and attempting to avoid reification of the concept by focusing upon when ethnic categorisations are used and their effects, in its initial stages it does employ some classification of ethnic origin itself so that responses can be compared. This - and indeed the first aim of the thesis - reveals the thesis's adoption of a model in which ethnic categorisations have limited plasticity (c.f. Jenkins, 1997). Nevertheless, the fact that there is some plasticity, the degree of it, why it arises, and the uses to which those seeking inclusion may put it, will be discussed in the final chapters.

CHAPTER TWO: SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND DISCRIMINATION

Given the stated aims of the research, it is now necessary to consider models which attempt to explain the unequal position of different social groups in the occupational structure. The key models identified here will be applied to the research findings in chapter twelve, in order to evaluate their ability to articulate and explain those findings.

Marxist Models

Many models of occupational segregation (see below) have their roots in Marx's analysis of the division of labour. Marx analyses the historical development of the division of labour in capitalist societies (see Marx and Engels, 1965: 64-77) and argues that 'with the division of labour.... is given simultaneously the *distribution*, and indeed the *unequal* distribution, both quantitative and qualitative, of labour and its products' (ibid.: 44). Thus the division of labour led to 'the splitting up of accumulated capital among different owners, and thus also the division between capital and labour' (ibid.: 82).

Such developments did not, however, take place without a struggle; on the contrary, Marx argues, the classes who are dispossessed inevitably struggle against those who dispossess them: hence the inevitable struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie (see for example Marx and Engels, 1967). Significantly, although Marx's analysis recognises that struggles are not only between the two key classes of capitalist society, proletariat and bourgeoisie, but also between factions within them, these factions are regarded as the remnants of previous forms of division of labour which will gradually cease to exist. Indeed, Marx argues that it is precisely the competition *within* the proletariat which hinders its ability to organise into a class and overthrow the bourgeoisie, and the removal of this internal competition is therefore essential to Marx's prediction of the future (ibid.).

One of the key features of Marx's analysis is thus its emphasis upon modes of production as the key determining feature of society: according to Marx,

The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure, and to which corresponds definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life (Marx, 1970, pp.20-1).

Although, as Crompton (1993) notes, Engels subsequently argued that the theory did not mean that the economic situation was the sole source of behaviour (Crompton, 1993: 26), Marx has been widely accused of economic reductionism (ibid). Indeed, it is clear that, even if the economic structure is not necessarily the *only* structure influencing action, it is nonetheless, according to Marx, the primary one, and this has been a significant feature of subsequent Marxist studies, such as Miles' analysis of racism, discussed above. According to Marx, therefore, all other social structures, such as those of race or ethnicity, are secondary to economic structures, merely influencing where people are located *within* those economic structures.

It is with this issue of the concentration of certain social groups - notably racial and ethnic - within the labour market that theories of labour market segmentation are concerned. Such theories argue that the labour market is divided into different types of employment, in which certain groups of people are disproportionately concentrated. Thus Doeringer and Piore (1971) seek to explain racial inequality in the labour market through the existence of dual labour markets, employment in one being stable and well paid, and in the other insecure and low paid. Although the development of dual labour markets is conceived of as a neutral, inevitable response to new technology, discrimination enters at the point of the allocation of different social groups to the different labour markets. Blackburn and Mann (1981), however, question the extent to which dual labour markets exist, arguing that ethnic segregation is not as complete as the model suggests.

Unlike Doeringer and Piore, Gordon et al (1982) argue that the development of segmented labour markets is not neutral, but rather part of capital's control mechanism, ensuring the continued fragmentation of the working class and thus neutralising its revolutionary potential. Although Gordon et al do consider segmentation according to

race briefly, arguing that ethnic minorities were used as cheap reserve labour in the secondary sector, their model cannot explain fully the existence of current barriers to the employment of people of ethnic minority origin; indeed, Gordon et al suggest that the ethnic minority presence in the secondary sector decreased in the 1960's, forcing employers to look to new sources of secondary labour (ibid.: 209). Moreover, both Gordon et al's and Doeringer and Piore's analyses conceive of ethnic minority group members and other workers as passive individuals, and fail to note the strategies adopted by the ethnic minority group members to gain access to the primary sector or the barriers presented by other, competing groups of workers.

The Marxist concentration upon economic structures has been found inadequate for explaining the existence of occupational segregation by a number of theorists (see for example Brittan and Maynard, 1984), in particular those concerned to explain the existence of sex segregation. Thus Hartmann, whilst working predominantly within a Marxist framework, finds it necessary to draw upon the concept of patriarchy - the systematic oppression of women - as well as that of capitalism, and argues that sex segregation is a result of an interaction between capitalism and patriarchy, from which both men and capital benefit (Hartmann, 1979). Others argue that capitalism developed within the context of patriarchy, and that the two have combined in complex ways to produce sex segregation (for example, Bradley, 1986).

Walby, however, criticises such theories of sex segregation for failing to recognise that the goals of capitalism and patriarchy can conflict - for example, when the employment of cheap female labour would threaten male jobs (Walby, 1988). Moreover, she notes that such theories neglect the concept of race, and its role in segregation (ibid.), arguing that 'not only must patriarchal and capitalist structures be taken into account when trying to explain sex segregation of the workforce, but racist ones also' (ibid., p.27).

However, Walby's early models have themselves been criticised for concentrating exclusively upon structure, and thus failing to 'explain how male domination is experienced, understood, challenged, and reproduced by both men and women' (Collinson et al, 1990 :51). This is largely a consequence of the predominantly Marxist framework of these models: in the first place, Marx was predominantly concerned with

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inter- rather than intra-class struggles, and so did not provide a framework for analysing internal class conflicts; in the second, his tendency - if no more - towards economic determinism similarly emphasised structure rather than human action.

In her more recent work Walby herself draws attention to the importance of action, noting that 'Social structures are constantly recreated and changed by the social actions of which they are composed' (Walby, 1997: 7), and analysing the collective and individual actions of women and men in order to understand how they have altered the structures of patriarchy (ibid.). In these later analyses, Walby thus argues for a rejection of 'structuralist theorisation' (ibid.: 5). Pollert (1996) similarly rejects models based upon what she refers to as 'abstract structuralism' which she argues conceive of gender, race, and class relations as independent structures, and thus - crucially - fail to identify how those existing structures may be changed. Indeed, Pollert argues that it is necessary to reject theorising around abstract concepts such as 'patriarchy' and instead to undertake micro-level empirical research, which will reveal how different structures mesh together (ibid.).

Brittan and Maynard (1984) also argue that oppression can only be understood through analysis of the concrete mechanisms or actions involved, and Cockburn suggests that 'something more can be learned by looking at small-scale local mechanisms within the workplace itself' (Cockburn, 1988, p.32). Whilst recognising the importance of macro-level concepts in providing the wider context for the research analysed here, it is this micro-level approach which this thesis therefore adopts through its use of case studies.

Through such an approach, Pollert hopes that the 'structure / action' divide will be overcome, avoiding both an over-emphasis upon structure and the 'fragmentation of post-modernism' (Pollert 1996: 655) by grounding the micro-level structures identified in material systems of production. (Indeed, this bridging of the structure / action divide, as already indicated, will be a key concern of the later chapters of this thesis.) Although Gottfried (1998) claims that Pollert fails to do this in her own article, this is a somewhat unfair criticism: Pollert's article is, after all, a criticism of existing approaches and a suggestion of a way forward, and is not itself intended to be the kind of empirical work she advocates.

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West and Fenstermaker's research (1995) does however attempt this kind of approach. The model they develop conceives of gender, race and class 'as ongoing, methodical and situated accomplishments' (ibid.: 30). Moreover - and in line with some of the approaches to ethnicity discussed in chapter one - they argue that 'individuals inhabit many different identities' (ibid.) and that 'gender, race and class are only three means (although certainly very powerful ones) of generating difference and dominance in social life' (ibid.: 33). A similar point is made by Cockburn and Ormrod (1993), who, although they focus upon gender, argue that 'Gender is only one, albeit an important one, of the many aspects of identity that structure our personhood' (ibid.: 157).

Inevitably, a key concern of both Cockburn and Ormrod, and West and Fenstermaker, is the extent to which those identities can be manipulated through individual action, in other words, the extent to which structure drives action and vice-versa. Although Cockburn and Ormrod recognise the significance of social structures, they nevertheless argue that there is still room for a degree of individual 'choice':

> Powerfully though circumstances may shape it… identity is never wholly 'socially constructed'. Experiences are always creatively assimilated by a unique person. It is this element of creativity in the growth of self that introduces, beyond the 'givens', something of the elective' (Cockburn and Ormrod, 1993: 157).

West and Fenstermaker's articulation of the relationship between action and structure, meanwhile, is somewhat different, largely because of their different starting point. Rather than starting from a focus upon structure, as Cockburn and Ormrod do, and then conceptualising the ways in which those structures are overcome by individual choices, they start from a focus upon individual action, and explain how structures come to limit that. Thus they argue that different identities are accomplished in interaction with others, and 'may be stressed or muted, depending on the situation' (West and Fenstermaker, 1995: 33) – a suggestion which will be of use in the development of this thesis. However, as Jenkins (1997) does in relation to ethnicity, and as this thesis itself will do in later chapters, they find that there are limits to what can the individual can accomplish. For example, in relation to gender, they note that:

While individuals are the ones who do gender, the process of rendering something accountable is both interactional and institutional in character: it is a feature of social relationships, and its idiom derives from the institutional arena in which those relationships come to life (West and Fenstermaker, 1995: 21).

One further point from these two models may prove useful to the development of this thesis, and that is the notion that, in Cockburn and Ormrod's words, identity is influenced by both the 'material' and the 'representational'. Thus, West and Fenstermaker argue, one significant factor in relation to race is the 'notion that members of different 'races' *have* essentially different natures' (ibid.: 26; their italics). It is not only material differences, but also the way in which one is categorised and what that represents to others, which matters.

West and Fenstermaker themselves draw attention to the major criticism which could be levelled at their analysis (and, indeed, at most if not all analyses which have Marxist roots, such as that of Cockburn and Ormrod cited above): the fact that, although they argue that individuals belong to multiple categories, they focus only upon a limited number of pre-determined ones. Ultimately, therefore, they fail to meet Pollert's objective of revealing how different structures mesh together, and are unable to analyse the 'simultaneous' influences of category memberships upon individuals and how their effects differ in different situations, and thus explain how inequality is reproduced. To avoid this difficulty, and identify precisely the relationship between ethnic origin and inclusion, including its relationship to other criteria and structures which affect inclusion, this thesis will therefore need to identify the range of criteria which affect inclusion, rather than explore only the effects of a small number of pre-determined ones.

Weberian Models

In so doing, the thesis will adopt a more Weberian approach. For example, while Marx argues that class membership is determined by possession of property, Weber is less prescriptive, arguing that it *may* be based upon the possession of property, but also upon the monopolization of certain goods and services, or on membership of a 'social class', determined, Weber suggests, by various factors including position in the labour market,

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property and education (1978: 304-5). Furthermore, each of these various factors leads to a different class situation and thus potentially a different 'class' composition (ibid.:302).

Moreover, again unlike Marx, Weber does not perceive such classes as the only key structures of society. He also identifies the existence of status groups, these being groups which claim 'social esteem' (ibid.:306), on the basis of factors such as style of life, occupation, or 'hereditary charisma, by virtue of successful claims to higher ranking descent' (ibid.) Indeed, the differences and sense of honour which sustain ethnic groups are, according to Weber, analogous to those of status groups (ibid.: 391) - thus ethnic groups may be regarded as a form of status group. Moreover, status group membership may influence, but not determine, class position, and vice-versa, and in some societies, Weber argues, it is status groups, rather than classes, which are the predominant basis of social stratification.

A feature of both classes and status groups, according to Weber, is monopolisation. The privileged classes or status groups are interest groups who have succeeded in protecting their interests through monopolisation - of particular resources, powers, or status. These processes bear similarities with those detailed in Weber's model of closure (although, as Parkin (1979:44) has pointed out, the connection between social stratification, in terms of class and status, and closure, is never made by Weber himself.)

Weber describes the development of closure as follows:

> One frequent economic determinant is the competition for a livelihood -offices, clients and other remunerative opportunities. When the number of competitors increases in relation to the profit span, the participants become interested in curbing competition. Usually one group of competitors takes some externally-identifiable characteristic of another group of (actual or potential) competitors - race, language, religion, local or social origin - as a pretext for attempting their exclusion (Weber, 1978, p.341-342).

Having done this, Weber continues, the 'interest group' (ibid.:342) has

[A] tendency to set up some kind of association with rational regulations; if the monopolistic interests persist, the time comes when the competitors, or another group whom they can influence (for example, a political community) establish a legal order that limits competition through formal monopolies (ibid.).

Unlike the Marxist framework, therefore, Weber's model of closure can be based around any characteristic. Moreover, and consequently, it focuses more closely upon the *actions* by which access to resources is restricted and economic structures created. The fact that this model can articulate inclusion based upon any criteria makes it useful for this thesis. Furthermore, the separation of the closure process into actions and criteria (structures), provides an important tool for the initial analysis of the research presented here.

Another aspect of the closure model which may prove significant to this thesis is the fact that, according to Weber, the members of the in-group are active participants in a struggle to secure scarce resources, selecting themselves the characteristics upon which exclusion is to be based (Weber notes that 'It does not matter which characteristic *is chosen* in the individual case: whatever suggests itself most easily *is seized* upon' (ibid.) - my italics). Moreover, those who are excluded are not passive victims: Weber specifically notes that 'such group action may provoke a corresponding reaction on the part of those against whom it is directed' (ibid.).

Other researchers have also made use of this model. Parkin (1979) draws upon both Weber's models of closure and of class and status groups to develop an alternative to Marx's model of class relations, and argues that

It becomes increasingly less possible to operate with models of class based predominantly on categories drawn from the division of labour, property ownership, or the productive system, when the political character of collective action is conditioned by the social and cultural make-up of the groups involved (ibid.:42).

Through using Weber's models, therefore, Parkin seeks to create 'a single framework of ideas and a common vocabulary with which to conduct the discourse on structural inequality in all its familiar guises' (ibid.). The only distinction that Parkin makes

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between different forms of closure is between that which is based upon 'collectivist' criteria and that which is based upon 'individualistic criteria', the former leading to the 'structural inequality' cited above, producing a 'subordinate group of a *communal* character'; ibid.:68; my italics. This distinction will be referred to later in the research analysis.

The advantage of Weber's model of closure, Parkin argues, is that it provides a framework for the analysis of both inter- and intra-class conflict, and this flexibility again makes it useful for analysing the research undertaken here. Indeed, the closure model Parkin develops 'proposes that intra-class relations be treated as conflict phenomena of the same general order as inter-class relations, and not as mere disturbances or complications within a 'pure' class model' (Parkin, 1979: 113). Indeed, like Weber, Parkin avoids defining class in terms of any one social structure, arguing instead that 'the mode of collective *action* is itself taken to be the defining feature of class' (ibid.; my italics).

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that both Parkin and Weber have been criticised for over-emphasising the action of closure and failing to analyse the structures which underpin it (Murphy, 1984, 1988) - indeed, Parkin himself expected such criticism (Parkin, 1979: 112-5). Witz (1988), for example, argues that 'The social sources of unequal bargaining powers in the labour market must be identified' (ibid.: 89), while Kreckel (1980) notes that

> The sociological discussion of phenomena of social closure has not so far been
> able to provide a systematic analysis of why certain groups within the labour
> sector of the labour market are in a better position to make successful use of
> strategies of closure than others (ibid., p. 531).

Clearly, any research using the model of closure will have to be careful to avoid such a pitfall. However, given that this thesis' aim is precisely to explain the relationship between ethnic origin and experiences and careers within personnel departments, it will not be possible to ignore such structures here, and it is therefore pertinent to explore the ways in which other writers have answered the question.

In an attempt to address the problem, Kreckel himself identifies five social mechanisms affecting bargaining strength in advanced capitalist labour markets, to which, he argues, different social groups are susceptible to different degrees (ibid., p.541). From this, he traces a "tentative typology" of the hierarchies operating within the capitalist labour market, which locates illegal immigrants at the lowest level, and people with academic managerial and professional qualifications at the highest (ibid., p.543-5). However, while this model may explain the relative power to effect closure between certain *occupational* groups, it fails to identify why some social groups, such as women, or particular ethnic minority groups, are better able to access the more powerful occupational groups than others, in other words, to identify the social structures which determine access to particular occupations. Indeed, Kreckel himself acknowledges that his typology does not incorporate racial, sexual or age distinctions (ibid.:545). It thus appears to be of limited use to this thesis.

By contrast, Murphy (1988) does look beyond the kinds of educational and occupational criteria identified by Kreckel and identifies property as the key underlying criteria or 'rule' of closure, upon which other forms of closure in capitalist society are either contingent, or from which they are derived. He argues that

> Much of the stratification of racial, ethnic, linguistic and religious groups in
> contemporary society does not have a distinct legal basis of racial, ethnic,
> linguistic or religious discrimination. Rather it is based on their differential
> historical accumulation of private property... and resulting monopolization of
> opportunities in the market through the imposition of the owners' language and
> cultural assumptions concerning competence on positions and careers (Murphy,
> 1984, p.556).

Murphy's model thus adds a crucial historical perspective to the analysis of closure, recognising that the criteria around which closure occurs are the result of past power struggles. However, even he appears to recognise that property does not in fact account for all racial or ethnic segregation, for he claims only that 'much' of the stratification on ethnic and racial grounds is based upon accumulation of property. Indeed, there is the possibility that racial or ethnic characteristics may have been a factor in determining who

had access to property in the first place, i.e. that the accumulation of property may derive from them, rather than the other way around. Certainly, it was Weber's contention that most groups who use social closure to monopolise access to resources do so initially on the basis of externally-identifiable characteristics, such as race, religion, and social origin (Weber, 1978, p.341).

The identity of the structures underlying closure - and, indeed, the extent to which their identification is necessary - is therefore a key area of debate within the literature on closure. A further area of debate concerns the categorisation of different mechanisms or actions through which closure is effected. Parkin, for example, identifies two types of closure: that based upon exclusion, the attempt to maintain or increase access to resources through subordination, and that based upon usurpation, the attempt by excluded groups to improve their position (Parkin, 1979). Kreckel refines Parkin's model through the addition of three other types of closure strategy: demarcationary, inclusion and exposure (Kreckel, 1980, p.541).

Murphy also distinguishes between 'exclusionary' strategies and the responses of the subordinated, but categorises the latter into two types: 'inclusionary usurpation' and 'revolutionary usurpation' (Murphy, 1984, p.560). In the former, the excluded group struggles 'to become included as incumbents represented in the present structure of positions in proportion to their numbers in the population,' whereas in the latter the excluded attempt to radically change the structure of positions within society (ibid.).

As the preceding discussion indicates, the above models differ in their ability to articulate the exclusion on the basis of race or ethnicity which forms the focus of this thesis. Those models which focus upon property as the structural source of exclusion either ignore or are unable to articulate adequately exclusion on racial / ethnic grounds, while the action-focused model of, for example, Parkin (1979) explains the process of exclusion but cannot explain the groups which are thereby excluded. Weber's analysis of ethnic groups, and their use as a basis for exclusion, however, may prove helpful.

Weber's definition of ethnic groups is

> Those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent
> because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of
> memories of colonization and migration; this belief must be important for the
> propagation of group formation (Weber, 1978: 389).

The key defining feature of an ethnic group according to this conception is therefore not
the shared possession of a common line of descent (Weber is quite explicit that the
existence of blood relations is irrelevant, ibid.) but the *belief* that there is a common
descent, which belief is then used to form a group and effect closure. According to
Weber, therefore, an ethnic group is a '*presumed* identity' which '*facilitates* group
formation' (ibid., my italics). Ethnic groups, in other words, exist precisely in order that
closure can be effected. (The influence of this model on Wallman's situational model of
ethnicity (Wallman, 1986) and Rex's notion of 'quasi' groups (Rex, 1986), discussed in
chapter one, is clearly apparent).

According to Weber, therefore, physical characteristics, customs and shared memories
are bases upon which a claim to ethnic identity may be based. Significantly, Weber
argues that physical and cultural similarities and differences give rise to group formation
and closure in exactly the same way. The only difference between the two types of
characteristic, according to Weber, is in the greater potential for those who are excluded
to assimilate characteristics which have a cultural foundation than those which are
founded in physical differences - a point which will be returned to in later analysis of the
effects of ethnic categorisation upon inclusion in personnel departments.

The Concept of Habitus

Some ways in which Bourdieu's models may aid this thesis have already been identified
in chapter one, and his theories are therefore explored in depth here. Bourdieu (1984)
uses the concept of 'habitus', 'the internalized form of class condition and of the
conditioning it entails' (ibid: 101) to explain the relationship between class and status
groups. He draws upon statistical data to analyse various indicators of 'life-style'
(broadly equivalent to Weber's concept of status) by occupational group. The use of
occupational classification is significant, as it reflect Bourdieu's contention that, in his

own words, 'the position in the relations of production governs practices, in particular through the mechanisms which control access to positions and produce or select a particular class of habitus (ibid.:102).

However, Bourdieu emphasizes that classes are not purely defined by their position in the relations of production, but also by a variety of other characteristics, such as gender or ethnicity, which may tacitly be used as criteria for selection or exclusion (ibid.). Ethnicity, for example, while not 'consciously taken into account in the nominal definition [of class], the one summed up in the name used to designate it' (ibid.103) is therefore nevertheless 'present in the real definition of the class' (ibid.). Other characteristics of the class habitus - social norms, cultural appreciation, for example - also form part of the 'real' definition of the class, and hence possession of cultural and symbolic capital supports possession of material capital.

It is the existence of this range of classificatory systems that provides the opportunity for those who are excluded from the class or class fraction to struggle against their exclusion. The theorists of closure discussed above argue that those who are excluded adopt strategies to gain inclusion; Bourdieu argues that these strategies consist of attempts to alter the way in which the individual or group is classified, or to alter the dominant classification by which exclusion is determined. Thus there is a struggle

> In which the stigmatized individual or group, and more generally, any individual or group insofar as he or it is a potential object of categorization, can only retaliate against the partial perception which limits it to one of its characteristics by highlighting, in its self-definition, the best of its characteristics, and, more generally, by struggling to impose the taxonomy most favourable to its characteristics (ibid.:476).

'Commonplaces and classificatory systems' Bourdieu goes on to argue, 'are thus the stake of struggles between the groups they characterize and counterpose, who fight over them while striving to turn them to their own advantage' (ibid.:477). Indeed, the link between classificatory struggles and access to material resources is made even more explicit by Jenkins, who argues that 'Struggles for a different allocation of resources and resistance to categorisation are one and the same thing' (Jenkins, 1996: 175).

Classificatory systems, Bourdieu argues, can be struggled over in this way because they are *symbols* of the classes defined in relation to production. Bourdieu thus argues that

> It is the relative independence of the structure of the system of classifying... in relation to the structure of the distribution of capital... which creates the space for symbolic strategies aimed at exploiting the discrepancies between the nominal and the real (Bourdieu, 1984: 481).

The implicit claim that 'occupational group' is an 'objective classification', reflecting the 'real' distribution of capital, and thus having a determining effect on future action, however, limits the usefulness of Bourdieu's model for this thesis. As Jenkins (1992) and LiPuma (1993) point out, Bourdieu's conception is thus ahistorical and deterministic, the agents' ability to change the existing order being found to be limited because the representation they themselves have of their position, and thus their ability to impose different classificatory systems, is itself a product of their position in the class structure (ibid.). Given his interesting analysis of the struggles over certain classification systems, the implicit claim that occupational classifications are not susceptible to such struggles, and indeed provide the foundation of the habitus, appears somewhat arbitrary and uncritical, particularly in the light of some of the literature on professions discussed in the following chapter, in which struggles over occupational classifications are a key focus. Moreover, in denying the possibility of change, it fails to explain how *some* people categorised as of ethnic minority origin *have* been able to win inclusion in personnel departments. As Calhoun argues, 'Bourdieu's theory is at its best, therefore as a theory of reproduction, and at its weakest as a theory of transformation. In this it shows its structuralist (perhaps even functionalist) roots' (Calhoun, 1993: 72).

Lash (1993) is similarly critical of Bourdieu's failure to develop a model of social change. Nevertheless, Lash argues that Bourdieu's notion of classificatory systems can provide an interesting framework for analysing the creation of new communities. Like Cohen (1985), who argues that community is largely a symbolic construction, which supports members' senses of identity, Lash argues that

To classify a la Bourdieu is not only to create invidious distinctions. It is also... to create collective identity.... There is a certain symbolic core to our judgements of taste - to the clothes we wear, our bodily habitus, our classifying practices -which are constitutive of collectivity. This creates the possibility of new communities.... (Lash, 1993: 205).

It is the gap between what Bourdieu termed the 'nominal' and the 'real' which creates this possibility for different symbols of classification (and thus different communities) to emerge. Indeed, Gherardi (1995), in her exploration of gender relations, argues that the gap between sexed persons and the symbols of gender by which they are classified not only creates the possibility for change, but 'can therefore provide a *stimulus* to culture change and to the emergence of new articulations of the content of the symbolic order of gender' (ibid.: 131; my italics).

Models of Discrimination

The contention (Cockburn, 1988; Collinson et al, 1990) that the production and reproduction of occupational segregation can only be understood through an analysis of the micro-level processes involved, and the fact that this is the approach taken by this research, was discussed above. As noted in the introduction, such processes may be a feature of either the demand for, or the supply of, labour.

It is widely acknowledged that supply-side processes contribute to the different occupational distribution of people from different ethnic groups: Modood (1997), for example, argues that 'It would be wrong to attribute diversity [of experience of ethnic minority groups] simply to the various elements of racism and racial exclusion' (ibid.:357). Supply-side factors such as motivation, support from other members of the ethnic minority group, and the status associated with particular jobs, are also significant (ibid.). However, as indicated in the introduction, it is with the micro-level processes on the demand-side that this thesis is concerned. These processes are analysed in models of discrimination, and it is therefore to consideration of those models that this chapter now turns.

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Definitions of 'discrimination' vary. Banton (1994), for example, defines discrimination as 'the differential treatment of persons supposed to belong to a particular class of persons' (ibid.: 1). He thus conceives of a group element to discrimination (although not necessarily grounded in biological differences), but does not perceive that it has to be 'unfair' (Indeed, Banton argues that the difference between disadvantage and discrimination is that the former is 'that which is to be explained' and the latter the possible explanation (Banton, 1994: 5)). Only once the existence of discrimination has been identified, Banton argues, should debates about whether the discrimination is morally justifiable or lawful be entered into. Thus, for Banton, discrimination can be further subdivided into that which is lawful or unlawful, and that which is morally justifiable or morally unjustifiable. For Edwards (1995), by contrast, discrimination refers only to those barriers which have an impact upon groups defined by biological / genetic characteristics and are 'unfair'. This is the definition which – as will become apparent in later chapters – is employed by those participating in the research analysed here when they refer to discrimination. In order to ensure consistency, it is this latter definition of discrimination which will therefore be used throughout the thesis.

Illegal discrimination in Britain is defined in the Race Relations Act 1976, the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. According to the Race Relations Act, it is illegal to discriminate against a person on racial grounds (these being defined as grounds of colour, race, nationality, or ethnic or national origin), although there are some exceptions to this, for example where race is regarded as a genuine occupational qualification. Both direct and indirect discrimination are illegal if they disadvantage members of a protected group, illegal direct racial discrimination being when someone is treated less favourably on racial grounds, and illegal indirect racial discrimination being when a condition, which cannot be justified, has a disproportionately negative impact upon members of a racial group.

Two models of processes of discrimination provide a useful basis for analysis of the research undertaken here. The first, found in the work of Benokratis and Feagin (1995) and Benokraitis (1997), is a tripartite model of sex discrimination, which may be usefully applied to discrimination on other grounds, such as ethnic origin (see for example Bento, 1997). The first type of discrimination identified is that of 'overt discrimination', those

practices which are easily recognised as discriminatory, such as direct discrimination in recruitment, and harassment. The second type is that of 'subtle discrimination', which is visible but rarely noticed, because such behaviour is regarded as natural. This form of discrimination, according to Benokratis and Feagin, 'can be innocent or manipulative, intentional or unintentional, well intentioned or malicious' (1986, p.30-31). The third type of discrimination in the model is 'covert discrimination', 'the unequal and harmful treatment of women that is hidden, clandestine, maliciously motivated, and very difficult to document' (ibid., p.31).

The second, based upon the point at which discrimination occurs rather than on the type of behaviour involved, is articulated by Greenhaus et al (1990). Focusing specifically on race discrimination - although again the model may be applied to other forms of discrimination - they distinguish between 'access discrimination', in which people are prevented from obtaining access to an occupation, and 'treatment discrimination', in which people are treated differently after they have obtained that access. As with any models there is a degree of overlap between the categories, with some types of discrimination fitting into more than one category. Nonetheless, these two models provide this thesis with a useful basis for examination of the mechanisms by which inequality is reproduced.

Access Discrimination

The existence of racial discrimination at the recruitment stage is well documented: Brown and Gay (1985), for example, find that a third of the employers studied discriminate against people of ethnic minority origin; Wrench's study of the careers service (Wrench, 1990) leads him to conclude that racial discrimination by employers and placement providers has a significant effect upon access to the most desirable jobs and YTS training places, and the 1994 Policy Studies Institute Survey reveals that 19% of the ethnic minority respondents believe that they have been refused a job for racial or religious reasons, and only 5% of white and 12% of ethnic minority respondents believe that no employers in Britain would refuse someone a job on racial or religious grounds (Modood, 1997: 130-1).

The Policy Studies Institute survey also reveals that unemployment rates for men and women of Caribbean and Pakistani / Bangladeshi origin are consistently higher than those of their white counterparts with the same level of British qualification (ibid.: 91), unemployment rates for people of Indian or African-Asian origin being usually higher, but sometimes similar or even slightly lower than those of their white counterparts. Indeed, Model's analysis of the 1991 census reveals that, once differences - for example in education - have been taken into account, all ethnic minority groups in England are at greater risk of unemployment than 'native whites' (Model, 1999). As Banton (1994) notes, such differences in demand, when the services provided by the different groups are apparently equally valuable, is 'evidence of discrimination' (ibid.: 13).

As these studies indicate, there is evidence that access discrimination on racial / ethnic grounds has continued in spite of the legislation outlawing direct and indirect racial discrimination. Often, however, the discrimination identified has not been 'overt' -to use Benokratis and Feagin's model- but rather 'subtle'. Noon, for example, found that a speculative enquiry from a person with an Asian-sounding name received a less informative and less encouraging response than one from a person with a traditional 'British' - sounding surname (Noon, 1993). As he notes:

> It might be argued that they [the personnel practitioners concerned] are blatant racists... Alternatively, and more generously, it could be argued that racism is so embedded in the value systems of people that lip service is paid to equality, but fundamentally racist feelings remain and are expressed subconsciously through their actions (ibid.: 45-46.)

Explanations for the continuing existence of access discrimination may help to identify the reasons for any such discrimination identified in this thesis, and the structures which underpin them. One explanation relates to the fragmentation of the organisation and the use of informal recruitment procedures. As Smith argues: 'Where the units are small and loosely controlled personnel procedures tend to be informal and therefore less checkable; for this reason, when discrimination does occur, it is less likely to be noticed by anyone outside the local unit' (Smith, 1981: 292). This is supported by Jenkins' finding that line managers tend to use informal procedures (Jenkins, 1986b), and Jewson

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et al's claim that 'where line managers predominate in the recruitment process, decision-making tends to be less articulated, less procedurally directed and more idiosyncratic' (Jewson et al, 1990: 8).

A second, related explanation is the use of recruitment criteria which emphasise 'acceptability' - i.e. ability to fit in which the rest of the workforce - as well as 'suitability' - the extent to which the requirements of the job are met (Jenkins, 1986b: 47). Acceptability criteria, Jenkins argues, include criteria such as appearance, manner, speech style, personality, and the manager's gut feeling. Such criteria, Jenkins argues, can be idiosyncratic - i.e. varying from manager to manager - or ethnocentric - i.e. the same for managers of the same ethnic background. Where criteria are ethnocentric, candidates have to conform to the dominant culture's criteria of acceptability, which means that ethnic minority applicants may be disadvantaged in organisations in which 'white' people predominate (Jenkins, 1986b).

One of Ballard and Holden's interviewees - a careers officer - thus argues that 'getting a job depends on assimilating a culture', and that 'Any member of a minority who wishes to retain a separate culture may be making it considerably more difficult for himself to get the kind of job which requires the sinking of cultural differences' (Ballard and Holden, 1981: 173). Jenkins research has, however, been criticised by Collinson et al (1990: 62) for relying purely upon manager's accounts of the selection process, and failing to prove empirically that managers do recruit according to the criteria identified.

The role of informal recruitment practices and acceptability criteria in reproducing inequality has been explored by other commentators primarily interested in sex discrimination. Collinson et al (1990) note the different treatment of male and female interviewees, with some requirements being relaxed for male employees, and rigorously imposed for females (ibid.: 195). Homans, in a study of clinical chemistry laboratories, finds that it is important for candidates to 'fit in' to the existing team; moreover, she argues, 'The notion of fitting in is given greater importance when selecting staff at higher levels, and it is therefore not surprising that women and blacks are under-represented in managerial positions' (Homans, 1989: 51).

Kanter (1993) argues that this requirement to conform leads to 'homosocial reproduction', in which 'the men who manage reproduce themselves in kind' (ibid.: 48), and thus 'management positions... become easily closed to people who are 'different'' (ibid.: 63). Like Jenkins she argues that managers often rely on 'outward manifestations to determine who is the 'right sort of person'' (ibid.: 48). This supports Weber's (1978) claim that closure is often based upon external characteristics, and indicates that the use of criteria of 'acceptability' provides a justification for this exclusion.

The use of acceptability criteria, however, is not the only mechanism by which initial access to an occupation may be closed to people who do not 'fit'. Even more subtle mechanisms include the use of credentials to ensure that candidates are already socialised into the occupation's dominant culture (see for example Johnson, 1972; Crompton, 1987) or come from the appropriate social group (c.f. Murphy, 1984). Greed, in a study of women in surveying, finds that it is important for would-be surveyors to fit into the subculture of the occupation, and that possessing credentials is a major indicator that they do (Greed, 1991). However, she questions whether the process of obtaining credentials imposes an occupational subculture upon would-be surveyors, or merely confirms who does and who does not already hold those occupational values, since people are often recruited to the occupation first and only subsequently sent to obtain credentials (ibid.).

However, while discrimination may occur at the point of selection, certain groups may be prevented from reaching that stage because of the recruitment channels used (Jenkins, 1986b). Thus, as Jenkins points out, companies which advertise vacancies predominantly internally or by word-of-mouth will tend to reproduce the existing status quo, excluding members of those groups who are not already employed by the company from even applying for the position. Similarly, Epstein (1970) argues that exclusion from professions is effected in three ways: the need for informal interaction to gain positions; self-exclusion by women (or other groups) themselves; and the use of the protegé system. Under the protegé system, sponsorship is needed to obtain access to the occupation, and this sponsorship, Epstein argues, guides women into less important positions.

A later analysis, this time of barriers to ethnic minority access to the solicitor's occupation, supports Epstein's claims, finding ethnic minorities to be concentrated in firms serving ethnic minority communities, because that is where they are able to find sponsorship (King et al, 1990). Moreover, King et al suggest that those ethnic minorities who do gain access to mainstream practice take on the culture and expectations of existing solicitors, and so do nothing to open up the occupation to people who do not conform to the existing subculture (ibid.) This finding supports Greed's claim that 'fitting in' may often be more important than formal credentials, those ethnic minorities who do gain access to mainstream positions being precisely those who demonstrate that they will conform to the existing subculture.

Treatment Discrimination

Acceptability criteria may also have a role to play in treatment discrimination, for example through their use in promotion decisions. (Indeed Jewson et al (1990) find that line managers -who it has been argued are more likely to use acceptability criteria - have more discretion over promotion than over initial recruitment.) Nevertheless, Jewson et al suggest that treatment discrimination may present less of a barrier to people of ethnic minority origin than access discrimination, arguing that 'Where ethnic minorities are able to gain access to the internal labour market they may be able to prove themselves in the course of work itself' (Jewson et al, 1990, p.8).

A variety of researchers, however, argue that treatment discrimination does affect careers even after initial access to the internal labour market has been achieved. Snizek and Neil (1992) point out that day-to-day discrimination influences productivity and career aspirations, and thus makes it impossible for those discriminated against to compete on an equal footing when promotion opportunities arise. Haslett and Lipman (1997) also note the significance of treatment discrimination in their study of careers in the legal profession. They find that the discrimination often takes the form of 'micro inequities', unequal treatments which are 'particularly ubiquitous because in each instance the harm seems too small to bother with' (ibid.: 38). Like Snizek and Neil, however, they find that: 'In the aggregate, however, they constitute a serious barrier to productivity, advancement and inclusion' (ibid).

Much of the subtle and covert discrimination noted by Benokraitis and Feagin (1986) and Benokraitis (1997) also takes the form of treatment discrimination: Benokraitis and Feagin argue that subtle sex discrimination, for example, includes 'supportive discouragement', in which people may be encouraged into dead-end jobs, or encouraged and then not supported; 'friendly harassment'; and 'collegial exclusion', in which people are isolated by, for example, being excluded from informal meetings (Benokraitis and Feagin, 1986). Examples of covert discrimination include tokenism, subverting people's credibility, or purposely undermining their positions (ibid.)

Kanter's analysis of a major corporation is one of the earliest studies of such subtle and covert treatment discrimination (Kanter, 1993). Kanter identifies a number of mechanisms which 'dominants' -those in the majority- adopt to assert their solidarity in the face of the 'token' - the person who is different from the majority. These include: emphasising cultural elements which they have in common and the token does not; drawing attention to the token's difference; keeping tokens away from some occasions, for example, by holding informal pre-meetings to which the token is not invited (ibid.: 222-226). Kanter also finds that tokens are not seen as they really are, but are forced into limited and caricatured roles by the stereotypical assumptions of the dominant group members (ibid.: 230).

Other studies have also illustrated how exclusion from desirable groups within the organisation can be effected through the use of humour (Collinson 1988) and gossip (Noon and Delbridge, 1993). Gossip, Noon and Delbridge argue, gives groups a sense of history, through the creation of folklore, and can lead to closure, as 'the outsider has little knowledge, if any, of the group's history and value system, and gossip can maintain this exclusion' (ibid.: 27). Noon and Delbridge also point to the contribution which technical language and jargon make to retaining the exclusivity of the group (ibid.).

Kanter's analysis of the token's position has been criticised for suggesting that the token's experience is explained entirely by the fact of being in the minority and is not affected by the particular social groups to which the token belongs. Zimmer, for example, argues that gender inequality outside the workplace means that male tokens have a very different experience from female tokens (Zimmer, 1988), and Williams

argues that the 'experience of tokenism is very different for men and women.... The crucial factor is the social status of the token's group - not their numerical rarity' (Williams, 1992: 263). Indeed, Williams suggests that men in predominantly 'female' occupations are advantaged because they are able to establish good relationships with male supervisors (ibid., p.259). Because being a man is perceived as a positive difference, Williams argues, men have an incentive to group together to assert their difference from women, whereas female tokens try to play down their gender, which is perceived as negative (ibid.). (This notion of men being advantaged by their close relationship with male supervisors reflects the protegé system discussed by Epstein, 1970 - see above).

Indeed, the role of mentoring or sponsorship in reproducing inequality has been much researched. Dreher and Ash (1990) and Ayree et al (1996) identify positive effects of mentoring on career advancement; Whiteley and Coetsier (1993) find that mentoring is related to the early promotion and work satisfaction of early career managers and professionals in Belgium, and Greenhaus et al (1990) find sponsorship has a direct effect upon promotability, and that higher levels of supervisory support lead to more effective job performance and greater career satisfaction. A survey of successful women managers by White et al (1992) finds that mentors help the managers' careers by providing psychological support, practical help, and advice on career plans - the significance of the latter being underpinned by another of their findings, that early career choices can have a damaging effect on the ability to reach senior positions.

The argument put forward by Epstein (1970) - that sponsors seek protegés with similar characteristics to themselves - has some support among studies of mentoring relationships. Alderfer et al (1980), for example, find that 'black' managers feel that 'white' superiors do not share growth and career-related information with them, and fewer 'black' than 'white' managers are told their 'promotability' rating. Indeed, Lefkowitz (1994) finds a tendency for 'white' and 'black' employees to 'drift' into being supervised by people of the same ethnic origin. Other studies suggest that, even where people of ethnic minority origin are in mentoring relationships, the benefits of the mentoring may be reduced if they have a 'white' mentor (Thomas, 1989; Thomas, 1990).

Research into sex discrimination similarly supports the argument that people are more likely to mentor those who share characteristics with themselves: Kanter (1993), for example, indicates that women have reduced access to sponsorship because of their gender, and Ibarra (1992) finds that male managers tend to network with people of the same gender. Indeed, Roper argues that 'with the replacement of family capitalism, mentors have replaced fathers, but the male lineage remains' (Roper, 1994: 80), and suggests that 'Much of the socialisation for management consists of homosocial play' (ibid.: 99).

These findings are, however, contradicted by other research. Greenhaus et al's survey finds that 'black' and 'white' participants report the same levels of sponsorship and supervisory support (Greenhaus et al, 1990), although it finds that the 'black' respondents feel less accepted in their organisations, and perceive that they have less discretion in their jobs than 'white' respondents, indicating (as Thomas, 1990 argues) that the sponsorship process may not be as beneficial for 'black' as for 'white' managers. Dreher and Ash (1990) find no difference in the frequency of monitoring activities experienced by male and female mentees. However, they do not measure the content of the mentoring activities; moreover, they themselves point out that the great similarity between the men and women surveyed -in educational and social background, etc.- might also be a factor. Indeed, Ensari and Miller (1998) argue that the positive effects of belonging to a similar category as members of the 'in-group' may, in certain situations, overcome the negative effects of belonging to other, different ones.

Existing literature on mentoring is therefore inconclusive, some of it indicating that those who belong to different social groups from those in senior have reduced access to mentoring, some of it that levels of mentoring for these groups are the same. Yet even in these latter studies, the careers and remuneration of the ethnic minority or female managers are shown to be different from those of 'white' and male managers - they are in less senior positions and earn less - indicating the possibility that mentoring relationships may be less beneficial for such employees (see Thompson, 1990; Greenhaus et al, 1990), perhaps because of other existence of other forms of discrimination. Indeed, Tharenou et al find that career encouragement (i.e. mentoring)

increases women's training and development more than it does men's, yet men receive higher returns from such training than women (Tharenou et al, 1994).

Another mechanism of treatment discrimination is the assignment of duties. Snizek and Neil (1992) identify not being given tasks outside the immediate job as a form of discrimination which can have significant effects upon future careers, and this is supported by White et al's finding that senior women managers attribute part of their success to being given challenges early in their careers by 'open-minded bosses' (White et al, 1992: 130.). Mai-Dalton and Sullivan also find that people are more likely to assign challenging tasks to others of the same gender (Mai-Dalton and Sullivan, 1981), thus supporting the notion that the nature of tasks allocated contributes to the reproduction of inequality.

Possible Reasons for the Exclusion of Difference.
Throughout the above models, people have been excluded from scarce and desired resources on the basis of some 'difference' from those included, such as difference of race (e.g. Doeringer and Piore, 1971), gender (e.g. Walby, 1988), 'some externally identifiable characteristic' (Weber, 1978: 342), or the 'habitus' possessed (Bourdieu, 1984). Clearly, explaining the reason for this exclusion of difference will be important if the thesis' aims are to be met, and the relationship of ethnic origin to inclusion / exclusion - if there is one - explained. The structuralist explanation for the use of such criteria, as revealed above, has been that they indicate membership of some primary group, notably a particular class defined by positions in the relations of production (c.f. Marx, 1970; Murphy, 1988, Bourdieu, 1984). An alternative explanation, however, looks to the psychological benefits to be obtained from excluding those who are different.

Collinson et al (1990) and Liff and Aitkenhead (1992) thus emphasise the vested interest which both men and women have in reproducing the status quo, because of its contribution to the maintenance of their social identities. Roper (1994), also looking at the exclusion of women, similarly argues that men do not necessarily choose recruitment criteria with the conscious intention of excluding women, but choose the criteria by which they themselves were admitted as 'the men's own identities as managers were

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founded on these requirements' (ibid.: 35). To change the recruitment criteria would be to question their own identity as managers.

The exclusion of people whose characteristics confer lower status has also been seen to occur to maintain the higher status of those included. Thus Cockburn (1988) notes the social pressure on individual men to ensure that they are in positions 'in which they are not directly comparable to women. If a man shares an occupation with a woman he feels his status tremble' (ibid.: 34). Indeed, studies in social psychology have indicated that group members are most likely to favour those whom they perceive to share similar characteristics to themselves precisely when they feel their current position to be insecure (Ellemers et al, 1990; Vanbeselaere, 1996).

The exclusion of 'difference', however, may serve business purposes also. Jenkins, for example, argues that the use of 'acceptability' criteria in the recruitment process does not always indicate an intention to discriminate against ethnic minority applicants (Jenkins, 1986b: 77) but may serve a business purpose, ensuring 'the recruitment of predictable, manageable workers, and the maintenance of control over the labour process and the daily routines of organisational life' (ibid.: 75). Some of the control problems which the managers in Jenkins' study fear relate to communication difficulties, or to fears that an individual might not fit in with - or be acceptable to - his or her colleagues, leading to industrial relations tensions. As West and Fenstermaker (1995) note (see earlier in this chapter), the expectation that people of different 'races' will have different natures is invariant.

Choosing to recruit (and therefore include) someone therefore involves trust, the judgement 'that the probability that he will perform an action that is beneficial or at least not detrimental to us is high enough for us to consider engaging in some form of cooperation with him' (Gambetta, 1988). Sometimes, Gambetta argues, co-operation may be secured through coercion or the threat of coercion.

However, as Perrow (1979) argues, there are some occupations which cannot be controlled by obtrusive means, because of the non-routine, discretionary nature of the work involved. In these cases, Perrow argues, behaviour is controlled and unexpected

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actions prevented through ensuring that people share the same premises. Moreover, he argues that people who have been through similar socialisation experiences are more likely to share the same basic premises. 'This' he argues 'is why social class, ethnic origins and social networks are so important - they make it more likely that certain kinds of premises will exist' (ibid.: 152).

Similar claims are made by Tajfel (1969) and Kramer et al (1996), the latter arguing that 'social categorization creates cognitive benefits that can operate as substitutes for other mechanisms on which trust is more usually predicated' (ibid.: 367). Thus also Lorber, in a study of women physicians, argues that

> Those whom the established members of a medical community are most likely to value as future members of their inner circle are usually those who are most like them in values, demeanor, upbringing and appearance, since these similarities are felt to be most likely to produce colleagues they can trust (Lorber, 1984: 7).

The contention that people are more likely to trust those who appear to be most like them is supported by Zucker's (1986) finding that social similarity may increase the propensity to trust. This finding is disputed by McAllister (1995), who finds no evidence that trust is greater between people of similar ethnic origins. However, it may be significant that all of his subjects were from a prestigious MBA programme, and so had that common experience as a basis for trust.

The significant point, as Dasgupta (1988) points out, is that trustworthiness has to be *inferred*. Thus Dasgupta argues that

> We wish to know the sort of person we are dealing with before we deal with him. But we will know it only imperfectly. We form an opinion on the basis of his background, the opportunities he has faced, the courses of action he has taken, and so forth. Our opinion is thus based partly on the theory we hold of the effect of culture, class membership, family line, and the like on a person's motivation (his disposition) and hence his behaviour... Our problem in essence is to infer the person's qualities from such data (ibid.: 54).

Similarly, Good (1988) argues that 'On first seeing someone, we immediately classify that person according to age, sex, and many other social categories. From this, and the briefest of details from our interaction, we rapidly draw inferences about his or her beliefs and the relationship between us' (ibid.:45).

Moreover, Good argues, 'Anything which contributes to a greater *sense* of knowing the other can contribute to the participants' belief in the possibility of mutual understanding' (ibid.:45; my italics), and hence to the development of a high level of co-operation (ibid.). Thus Lewicki and Bunker (1996) argue that shared group membership can enhance the frequency of cooperation, by increasing the sense of identification with the other's desires and interests.

The argument that trustworthiness may be inferred from perceived group membership is further supported by some of the literature on discrimination cited above. For example, Jenkins finds that judgements about the future performance of candidates are inferred from ethnic stereotypes rather than from their actual characteristics (Jenkins, 1986b), while Lorber argues that women physicians are not trusted because of their 'supposed [rather than actual] characteristics' (Lorber, 1984:8).

Humphrey and Schmitz (1996), however, argue that trust based upon shared characteristics, which they term 'ascribed trust', is of relatively low importance in transactions, and that trust based upon repeated exchanges is more significant (ibid.:14). Although they recognise that ascribed trust may be important initially, they suggest that the trust it engenders is limited, and trust grows as the people prove themselves to be trustworthy (ibid.) Such an argument would support the notion that ascribed trust may be an important factor in access discrimination, but would suggest that it should become less significant once the person has been employed, as Jewson et al (1990) suggest, above. That said, Good notes people's 'bias towards the preservation of a theory' (Good, 1988: 41), which leads them to seek confirmation of their preconceptions, and even to deny the potential disconfirmation offered by other evidence (see also Heider, 1958). This suggests that an initial judgement based upon shared characteristics may be adhered to in the face of some evidence suggesting its inaccuracy.

It is also, of course, possible that people from different social groups may indeed have different values or ways of operating, and therefore that negative judgements about predictability, the likelihood of doing things in the expected way, may be proved correct. Good (1988), for example, notes the 'numerous cases of gross misunderstanding between members of different cultures because they are orienting to different belief systems '(ibid.:46), a point underlined by writers on international management (see for example Trompenaars and Woolliams, 1999). Thus even if ethnic stereotypes are not involved, ethnic minority staff may be disadvantaged because they may not have been socialised into the culture, values and 'ways of doing things' of the existing, predominantly white management (Jenkins, 1986b).

Equal Opportunities Policies

As well as process of exclusion such as discrimination, processes which organisations use to try to increase the representation of people of ethnic minority origin will also affect the relationship between ethnic origin and inclusion. This chapter therefore now turns to consider the kinds of policies organisations have adopted to counteract the exclusion discussed above and to ensure 'equality of opportunity'.

Conflict over what constitutes equality of opportunity has been widely noted (Cockburn, 1989; Young, 1990; Jewson and Mason, 1986). As Young (1990) points out, there are differences of opinion regarding the substance of equal opportunities policies – 'equal opportunities for whom?' (ibid.: 34) -and also the instruments by which the change should be effected.

The first concept of equal opportunities which Young describes emphasises fair procedures, and attempts to preclude discriminatory recruitment decisions and remove indirect discrimination (Young, 1990: 32). As Young points out 'The aims of such a policy are regulatory rather than redistributive' (ibid.) Gregory (1987) terms this concept of equal opportunities 'formal equality', and argues that, in treating everyone identically, formal equality ignores the disadvantages of race and sex 'and so simply reinforces the substantive (i.e. material) inequalities that exist in reality' (Gregory, 1987: 5).

Gregory identifies a second concept of equality, which she labels 'substantive equality'. Proponents of this approach attempt to overcome the limitations of formal equality by compensating for past disadvantaging (ibid.). As Young notes, the goals of this type of equal opportunities are 'equal shares or equal outcomes' (Young, 1990: 33). In the employment sphere, therefore, it is about 'equal opportunity as a redistribution of employment in favour of previously excluded groups' (ibid.).

As Gregory notes, the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act and 1976 Race Relations Act primarily adopt a concept of formal equality. However, in the concept of indirect discrimination and the provision of positive action, Gregory argues, the legislation makes some attempt to produce 'substantive equality'. The positive action provision permits employers to encourage under-represented groups to apply for jobs, and to attempt to compensate for past disadvantaging by giving them separate training (c.f. Commission for Racial Equality, 1981), although, crucially, the concept of formal equality is not overthrown - actual recruitment decisions must still treat everyone equally (Gregory, 1987). Gregory, however, is sceptical of positive action's ability to deliver the substantive outcomes, arguing that 'positive action programmes as presently conceived in Britain can do little more than chip away at the edges of the problem' (Gregory, 1987: 6).

Jewson and Mason (1986) categorise equal opportunities approaches into 'liberal' - in which the main principle is fair procedures and the tool is positive action - and 'radical' - where the main principle is increasing representation, and the tool is positive discrimination. They argue that the liberal conception is unable to deliver changes in the employment of ethnic minority staff, and that such 'radical' outcomes are only achieved through the use of positive discrimination. However, they argue, both those who espouse the liberal conception of equal opportunities and those who espouse the radical conception are led to assert that 'radical' outcomes may be achieved through 'liberal' processes, liberals because they have to justify using the tool of procedural reforms; radicals because they have to claim that they are working within the law (ibid.: 325).

Many debates about positive discrimination have focused upon its morality (see for example Thompson (1973) and Fullwinder (1975)). Other analyses have focused upon

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the implications of using - and not using - positive discrimination (for example, Edwards, 1995, and Young, 1986). Edwards explicitly tackles the morality of positive discrimination, and argues that the concept of merit is so arbitrary that no great moral harm is done if race is included as a criterion of merit.

Instead, Edwards' criticism of positive discrimination focuses on his belief that it is not a suitable tool for compensating for previous disadvantaging, and that it is usually untailored, grouping all people of ethnic minority origin together, regardless of their very different experiences of discrimination. Law (1996) therefore argues that 'racial equality targets should embody an even proportional representation of minority groups, which reflects their differential positions and preferences' (ibid.: 196). However, he does not explain how such targets could be identified: as Edwards argues, 'we would not know when to stop because we have no vision of how things *should* look' (Edwards, 1995: 228).

Ultimately, however, Edwards decides in favour of positive discrimination, arguing that it should not be regarded as a compensatory mechanism, and can be justified simply because it increases ethnic minority representation across the workforce. In spite of this, he recognises additional problems arising from its implementation. One of these problems is that statistical representation tends to become the final goal of positive discrimination strategies - as implied in Law's model - whereas Edwards argues that statistical parity is just one step towards the ultimate goal of 'an equality of dignity and respect between all racial and ethnic groups' (ibid.: 228).

Another criticism of positive discrimination put forward by Edwards is that it is incompatible with the celebration of diversity, and thus can only go a limited way towards producing the equality for which he aims. Finally, Edwards argues that the use of positive discrimination does not engender respect for people of ethnic minority origin. His conclusion is that, although positive discrimination is justified and valuable, it should only be used for a limited period of time (ibid.).

Young (1986), recognising these problems, decides against positive discrimination. He claims that it 'is a politically suicidal goal for blacks to pursue and contrary to their long

term interest' (ibid.: 17), since it 'patronizes blacks and gives credence to theories of racial inequality' (ibid.). At the worst, Young argues, strategies of positive discrimination can lead to a backlash from white staff. Indeed, Anthias and Yuval Davis (1992) argue that people who are appointed through such strategies may find that their positions are undermined as part of that backlash.

Further criticism of positive discrimination comes from a review of an affirmative action (i.e. positive discrimination) programme for women in federal government in the United States of America. Although the programme has led to an increase in the number of women employed in the federal government, the women remain disadvantaged relative to male employees in terms of job status and pay (Benokraitis and Gilbert, 1989). Benokraitis and Gilbert argue that this is due to the affirmative action's inability to tackle subtle and covert forms of discrimination, and to remove attitudinal barriers (ibid.). This criticism is similar to that levelled at positive discrimination by Cockburn (1989), who argues that it '... seeks to give disadvantaged groups a boost up the ladder, while leaving the structure of that ladder and the disadvantages it entails just as before' (Cockburn, 1989: 217).

Rather than positive action or positive discrimination, therefore, Cockburn argues for a 'transformational' strategy, which 'looks for change in the nature of power, in the control ordinary people of diverse kinds have over institutions, a melting away of the white male monoculture. It is not just a numbers game but about quality' (ibid.: 218). Similarly, Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992) suggest that the exclusive focus upon overcoming discriminatory practices is misplaced, since disadvantage does not only result from discriminatory practices, but also from structures.

Evidence of a shift in equal opportunities strategies to this kind of transformational strategy is mixed. On the one hand, although local authorities' race equality policies were subject to some changes in the 1980s (Ball and Solomos, 1990), it is argued that this was due more to a change in the political climate and public opinion than to the discovery of a better equal opportunities strategy. (Young (1990), for example, finds a divergence in local authorities equal opportunities policies, some authorities shifting more towards a focus on equality of outcomes, others dropping such race-specific

measures because of the electoral costs.) Indeed, in the 1990s the Opportunity 2000 campaign promoted the greater use of positive action strategies, rather than new strategies, to increase the proportion of women managers.

On the other hand, during the 1990s an alternative approach to equal opportunities, 'Management of Diversity', was developed. This seeks to ensure that 'all employees maximise their potential and their contribution to the organisation' (Kandola and Fullerton, 1994: 49). Rather than focusing on disadvantaged *groups*, as positive action and positive discrimination strategies do, the new approach purports to focus on *individuals*, seeking to change organisational culture to empower *all* employees:

> [The organisation] will ensure that all employees have an understanding of how
> the organisation operates, what it values and how it expects employees to
> behave....: decision making is devolved to the lowest point possible; participation
> and consultation will be encouraged and management will listen to and act on
> what employees are saying; the need for experimentation is valued and
> encouraged, and people are allowed to fail; there will be an open, trusting
> environment in which there is an absence of prejudice and discrimination (ibid.:
> 50).

In the management of diversity model, difference is valued, and perceived to have organisational benefits (Herriot and Pemberton, 1995; Arrendondo, 1996; Kossek and Lobel, 1996), and recruitment procedures, reward systems, communication networks are all designed to encourage diverse contributions to the organisation (ibid.) Moreover, Herriot and Pemberton argue, diversity of all sorts is embraced - not just of gender, or ethnicity.

The question remains whether 'management of diversity' answers Cockburn's (1989) demand for a transformational strategy. Certainly, it embraces the need to change power relations through the development of an empowering culture, and recognises the importance of what happens once people are employed within the organisation. However, 'management of diversity' contains some ambiguities. For example, there is the possibility of conflict over the definition of diversity. The recognition that all individuals are different implies that diversity may exist along any of an infinite number

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of dimensions; however, as Litvin (1997) argues, discussion of 'Management of diversity' still focuses upon key social groups such as women, ethnic minority groups and the disabled (see for example in Kossek and Lobel, 1996; Arrendondo, 1996). Moreover, the various expressions of the model rarely indicate how greater diversity should be *developed*: the model is about managing existing diversity, not creating new diversity.

Furthermore, closer scrutiny of the management of diversity model reveals that it does not, in fact, call for organisations to embrace *all* forms of diversity: Herriot and Pemberton (1995), for example, exhort the organisation to identify and reward 'required' behaviours (ibid.: 210), and to 'encourage different ways of thinking *provided that individuals accept the concerns of the organisation*' (ibid.: 214; my italics). This reveals the limits of the transformation envisaged by the model: the overall capitalist power structures, values and ways of thinking of the organisation remain unchanged. Finally, it is unclear how 'management of diversity' will overcome the various problems which have led to the failure of other strategies of equal opportunities, which Liff and Aitkenhead (1992) identify as conflicts between differing groups and priorities, different understandings of what is meant by equal opportunities, and the positive social identity gained from excluding others.

The tension between the recognition of individuals' diversity and the achievement of social change, which the management of diversity literature fails to acknowledge, is articulated by Liff and Wacjman (1996). Looking at strategies for gender equality, they note that a 'stress on multiple differences shared by people, both men and women... would appear to deny any coherence to the category 'women'' (ibid.:87), and thus undermine the notion of women's collective disadvantage on which gender equality projects are founded (ibid.). Their solution, unlike that of the management of diversity model, is not try to reject the category 'women', but to retain it along with a recognition of the multiple identities it contains. As Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992) similarly argue in relation to ethnic groups:

> Only.... by considering how the racialization of ethnic boundaries takes place and
> by examining gender and class differences and exclusions, can the more concrete

issues of fighting the attributions and practices of exclusion and subordination be more effectively undertaken (ibid.: 198).

These analyses and criticisms of the various ways in which organisations may try to ensure 'equal opportunities' will be applied to the analysis of the case study organisations in later chapters, in order to clarify the effects of those organisations' approaches to equal opportunities upon inclusion. When combined with the application of the models of exclusion and discrimination, which have also been examined in this chapter, they will aid the development of a new model which overcomes any weaknesses identified in existing models and is capable of explaining any relationship between ethnic origin and inclusion uncovered by the research.

CHAPTER THREE: THE PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT OCCUPATION

This thesis, as indicated in the aims, is concerned particularly with inclusion in personnel departments. In order to understand this it will be necessary to understand the responsibilities and structures of personnel departments, and the nature of personnel careers. This chapter therefore explores models of these and identifies some of their implications for equality within personnel departments. Moreover, some of these models may provide a basis for explanation of any differences found in inclusion between different personnel departments in later chapters.

The personnel occupation developed from two main roots: welfare workers (Niven, 1967) and labour offices (Gospel, 1983). Niven describes how the work of factory welfare workers, employed at the end of the nineteenth century to look after the well-being of female employees, quickly expanded beyond immediate health and safety concerns to encompass a range of duties now associated with personnel departments, such as selection, training, consultation, and pay (Niven, 1967: 29). At the same time, the shift from subcontracted to directly-employed labour led to 'the introduction of new specialist personnel and new techniques' (Gospel, 1983: 8) for managing labour. Factory welfare workers soon became involved in some of the new labour management processes, resulting in their association being renamed the Institute of Labour Management (Niven, 1967: 84).

The history of the personnel occupation has been described as one of trying to emancipate itself from its 'welfare image' (Armstrong, 1984: 111), and the attempts by the welfare workers to take on new labour management responsibilities, and rename their association, formed part of this attempt. The role of personnel practitioners was further enhanced by increased employment legislation, full employment, government interest in industrial relations, and pressure from trade unions in the 1960s and 1970s, leading to increased demand for personnel specialists (Marks, 1978). Armstrong (1984) notes that these developments 'worked in favour of the personnel specialists' (ibid: 113) enabling them to use the threat of industrial tribunals and industrial action to take some of the control over labour from line managers.

Torrington and Hall (1998), indeed, identify seven stages in the historical development of the personnel occupation: that of the 'social reformer'; the 'acolyte of benevolence' - welfare workers-; the 'humane bureaucrat'; the 'consensus negotiator'; the 'organisation man', and the 'manpower analyst' (ibid.:8 - 11). Moreover, these styles, Torrington argues in an earlier exposition, 'are still present to a varying degree in different types of personnel post' (Torrington, 1991: 59), resulting in a great diversity of personnel positions, which may help to explain any differences in careers and inclusion in the personnel departments studied in this thesis. As the (now Chartered) Institute of Personnel and Development claims in its current careers literature, 'Personnel professionals in different organizations can have very different responsibilities even when they share the same job title' (Institute of Personnel and Development, no date: 1). Drucker (1961) interprets this diversity less generously, seeing it as an indication the occupation's lack of internal cohesion, and defining the occupation as 'a hodge podge' of different activities (ibid.:243).

Other models which illustrate the different ways in which personnel work has developed in different organisations may also prove helpful for explaining differences in inclusion between the case study organisations and their departments. Tyson and Fell (1986), for example, identify four historical traditions of personnel management which, they argue, have been adopted to differing degrees in different organisations: the 'welfare tradition', the 'industrial relations tradition', the manpower control tradition' and the 'professional tradition' (ibid.: 21-22). These traditions have resulted in three key types of personnel manager: the 'clerk of works', 'where all that is expected of personnel is the day-to-day operation kept on schedule' (ibid.:23); the 'contracts manager', where personnel managers advise line managers and interpret policy, and the 'architect', where personnel managers have a much more creative contribution, initiating and designing policy changes in the organisation.

More recent typologies of personnel management bear some similarity to Tyson and Fell's model. Storey (1992) proposes four types of personnel role: regulator, handmaiden (which between them relate roughly to Tyson and Fell's 'clerk of works' role, the distinction between the regulator and the handmaiden being that the later has a more subordinate role to line management than the former) adviser and change-maker,

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the former having strategic input but in an advisory capacity, the later fulfilling the more pro-active, 'architect' role envisaged by Tyson and Fell. Ulrich (1997c) also identifies four roles of personnel management, derived from two dimensions: whether the role is strategic or operational, and whether it is concerned with the management of people or the management of processes. However, unlike Storey, Ulrich argues that the personnel function in an organisation needs to fulfil all four roles; indeed, he criticises those who argue that personnel managers should seek only a 'strategic partner' role.

One point on which Ulrich has been criticised is his assumption that personnel managers can take on whatever roles they choose in organisations (see Proctor and Currie, 1998). Proctor and Currie, by contrast, argue that 'the role the function takes on will... be the result of a continuous process of negotiation with other groups' (ibid.: 1079). Other researchers recognise that the role personnel departments can take on is affected by a range of factors, which again may be significant for this thesis. Thus, as noted above, the growth of employment legislation and collective bargaining helped to increase the status and size of personnel departments in the 1960s and 1970s. The recessions and decline in collective bargaining in the 1980s and early 1990s have prompted further debates about the future of personnel departments (see for example Sahdev et al, 1999; Guest, 1982; Torrington et al, 1985). Sahdev et al (1999), for example, argue that the need to handle redundancy and reorganisation has 'provided opportunities to strengthen the strategic influence of HR staff' (ibid.: 920).

A final, somewhat more complex model of personnel departments' activities is provided by Hall and Torrington (1998). In their analysis of the 'human resource function' they look separately at the involvement of personnel departments in both operational decisions and 'human resources' strategy in each of the traditional areas of people management – recruitment, employee relations, health and safety, and so on – and identify four ways in which they may be involved. Firstly, they may make the decision alone; secondly, make it in conjunction with the line; thirdly, provide advice and consultancy, and fourthly have no involvement.

This model has the potential advantage of recognising that personnel departments may play different roles in relation to different areas of people management. However, Hall

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and Torrington's research results indicate a tendency for personnel departments to adopt a similar role in relation to each area, permitting them to generalise about their roles in a similar way to, for example, Tyson and Fell (see for example Hall and Torrington, 1998: 49-51). Given this, it is likely that the more generalised models of Tyson and Fell (1986) and Storey (1992) will be of more use to the analysis in this thesis.

Hall and Torrington also note the 'considerable change taking place in personnel management' (ibid.: 1). One of the factors seen by some to contribute to a change in the role of personnel departments is the growth of 'human resource management' - a debate which is explored below. Storey (1995) has defined human resource management as

> A distinctive approach to employment management which seeks to achieve competitive advantage through the strategic deployment of a highly committeed and capable workforce, using an integrated array of cultural, structural and personnel techniques (ibid.: 5).

Storey goes on to identify various 'key elements' of human resource management, which include the belief that employees are an organisation's key resource, the integration of human resource policies into business strategy, and the belief that human resource management is too important to be left to personnel specialists alone - and that line managers therefore need to be involved closely in it (ibid.: 5-6).

However, as Storey himself notes (1995) there is no single agreed definition of human resource management, a fact which inevitably causes difficulties for analysis of its effects (c.f. Guest, 1997). Blyton and Turnball (1992), for example, point out that the models of human resource management which have been developed differ both in the meanings they ascribe to human resource management and the emphasis which they place on different core components. Indeed, Legge (1991) argues that many of the supposed differences between personnel management and human resource management arise because a descriptive (personnel) model is being compared with a normative (human resource management) one. It is because of this lack of consensus over the definition and, indeed, conceptual status of human resource management that this thesis prefers to use the term 'personnel', as for example in 'personnel management', 'personnel department' and 'personnel practitioner'.

The managerialist approach of much research into human resource management has been widely criticised (see for example Truss et al, 1997; Delbridge and Lowe, 1997; Proctor and Currie, 1998). Indeed, Legge (1995) argues that claims that human resource management is different from personnel management have been given such prominence because academics, line managers and personnel managers can use the rhetoric of human resource management to increase their legitimacy.

However, whether or not 'human resource management' actually does increase the status of personnel departments has been the subject of much debate (see for example Beaumont, 1993; Torrington, 1991; Guest, 1987). Some commentators have predicted a decline in the status and number of personnel specialists, due particularly to the increased responsibilities given to line management (Lowe, 1992) and the use of external consultants. Thus Guest (1987) has questioned whether personnel managers would want to adopt human resource management because it implied 'giving personnel away' to line management (ibid.: 519), Tyson (1987) has argued that the personnel occupation is being 'balkanised' (ibid.: 530), 'invaded, sold-off, subdivided and put under lease to consultants, sub-specialists and line managers' (ibid), and Bennett et al (1998) argue that integration with general management presents threats for personnel specialists (ibid.)

By contrast, Monks (1992) argues that 'The adoption of HRM... seems to result in a higher status for the personnel function' (ibid.: 40), although it is unclear what impact this higher status for the *function* of managing people in organisations is having upon the personnel management occupation and its practitioners .Clark and Clark (1991) similarly argue that the increased use of external consultants, far from reducing the status of the personnel management occupation within the organisation, strengthens it, enabling personnel departments to shed some peripheral activities. However, although they argue that the use of external personnel consultants 'is not displacing personnel management as a professional status occupation' (ibid.: 15), they do note that these developments could lead to a breaking-down of the boundaries between personnel and general management, suggesting that personnel managers may become 'increasingly integrated into general management' as they progress up the organisational hierarchy (ibid).

Storey (1992) finds evidence that the growth of human resource management has had mixed effects upon personnel specialists. He finds that a number of personnel managers in the organisations which have adopted elements of human resource management 'have changed their approach from a 'rule-maker' and 'custodian of the procedure' stance, to a less assertive, advisory role' (Storey, 1992, p.170), whilst others have had the 'handmaiden' role imposed upon them, providing services as and when line management requests (ibid, p.172), or have found their traditional, pluralistic industrial relations roles undermined by business managers (ibid, pp.178-179).

The degree to which personnel managers have been able to adopt Storey's more proactive and strategic role of 'changemaker', however, is unclear: Storey finds that a number of them have 'aspirations to move in that direction' and can 'point to some initiatives which had a similitude to this position' (ibid, p. 187-188), but none that can actually be described as 'changemakers'. This finding is, however, contradicted by the results of Hall and Torrington's research, which suggest that 'the strategic involvement of the HR function, is both real and increasing' (Hall and Torrington, 1998: 107).

However, the 1990 Workplace Industrial Relations Survey and the 1998 Workplace Employee Relations Survey find little evidence that human resource management has had either a substantial negative or positive impact upon the personnel occupation. Sisson (1995), reviewing evidence from the 1990 Workplace Industrial Relations Survey and Company Level Industrial Relations Surveys, finds little evidence of an increase in personnel specialists' status, such as an increase in representation upon boards[i], but also little evidence of a decline in their numbers and influence. However, he does find evidence of increased fragmentation and 'balkanisation' of the personnel function, although he attributes this to general developments in management rather than to the growth of human resource management.

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[i] It is worth noting, however, that board representation is not necessarily a clear indicator of the level of involvement of personnel departments, for example in strategic issues, as Hall and Torrington (1998) note. Indeed, although their research contradicts the other research cited here, in finding an increase in board representation, they note that sometimes the personnel board member actually came from outside the personnel departments, and that personnel directors' membership of the board was often not automatic.

The 1998 survey does reveal some changes, but with mixed implications for personnel specialists (and again whether these can be attributed to human resource management is unclear): the number of workplaces employing a personnel specialist increased between 1990 and 1998, but the number of workplaces with personnel representation on the board fell (Cully et al, 1999). This finding (see footnote to preceding paragraph) is however contradicted by Hall and Torrington's findings, which appear to indicate a rise in board representation. Cully et al also however find 'little change in the functions performed by [personnel] specialists since 1984' (ibid.: 226). In this it does appear to be supported by Hall and Torrington's research, which moreover suggests that devolution of these activities progressed little between 1984 and 1994/5.

One explanation Sisson gives for the limited impact of human resource management is that it has only been implemented in a limited way in the United Kingdom. Although Storey (1995) finds evidence that many organisations have implemented human resource management initiatives, Sisson (1995) argues that these 'rarely add up to an integrated approach' (ibid.: 106), an argument supported by the take-up of human resources practices revealed in Poole and Jenkins' research (Poole and Jenkins, 1997), and again in the research reported by Guest (2000).

Careers in Personnel Management
As the literature above indicates, the personnel occupation is extremely varied, involving a range of different roles and duties. It is therefore unsurprising that criteria for inclusion in personnel positions may vary: as the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Service's information leaflet notes, 'Personnel management can be entered in a number of different ways' (AGCAS, 1999: 7). Both this and the professional body's own careers literature make clear that professional qualifications are not always necessary for inclusion: 'Institute membership is not an absolute requirement for entry to the profession' the professional body's current careers information notes (Institute of Personnel and Development, no date: 5), although the AGCAS argues that 'an IPD qualification is often preferred by employers, especially for middle and higher management posts' (AGCAS, 1999: 7).

However, the 1990 Workplace Industrial Relations Survey finds that a sizeable proportion of personnel managers in divisional and corporate headquarters of large private sector organisations are not professionally qualified (Marginson et al, 1993: 29). Even in Hall and Torrington's research, the sample for which was derived from people studying for the professional qualification, and which thus, as they themselves note, surveys only 'those organisations that sponsor the development of personnel/HR specialists' (Hall and Torrington, 1998: 4) 7% of personnel departments are found to contain no professionally qualified staff, and in only 43% are half or more of the staff professionally qualified. These findings suggest that the relationship between such qualifications and inclusion may be one factor which varies between personnel departments.

In spite of there being no defined entry requirements or career paths for the personnel occupation, however, Long argues that

> There is a hidden structure of requirements which are ignored to the detriment of promising careers. One of the major obstacles confronting career aspirants is access to these informal rules and expectations, constructive careers guidance and counselling being notable by its absence. The omission of certain personnel work experiences during early career, e.g. industrial relations, can prove a handicap (Long, 1984: 142).

Some more recent commentators have suggested that linear personnel careers may cease to exist: Ulrich (1997a), for example, argues that

> A career in HR will not be linear, but will be a mosaic of experiences. Linear models of careers talk about stages for HR professionals; mosaic career models build upon diverse experiences inside and outside the function... Mosaic careers prepare HR professionals as business partners more than as functional experts (Ulrich, 1997a: 7).

However, it is not clear that Ulrich's 'mosaic career' is required in all organisations: an interview with senior personnel specialists in People Management magazine (People Management, 1998) elicited the supporting opinions that, in order to progress, personnel

practitioners need to 'get experience of working in different environments' (ibid.), but also the opposite opinion that they need to be less generalist and 'have a deep specialism within the HR field' (ibid.). This suggests that different organisations have adopted different models, adding to the difficulty of identifying Long's 'structure of requirements': a suggestion which will be tested out by this thesis.

Some other models support Ulrich's (1997a) suggestion that personnel specialists may no longer be able to pursue linear careers. Tyson's (1987) claim that personnel departments are becoming divided into 'clerk of works' and 'architect' roles implies the growth of a two-tier structure of personnel positions with perhaps little possibility of movement between them. Indeed, Beer (1997) claims that personnel specialists may not have the capability to take on such a strategic role and that 'one alternative is to transfer into the HR function line executives who have shown success in leading organizational change' (ibid.: 540).

Moreover, other commentators predict that personnel management will be increasingly integrated into general management (Clark and Clark, 1991), resulting in an end to specialist personnel careers altogether. One of the interviewees in the 'People Management' article thus wonders 'whether there's going to be a personnel function as we know it' (People Management 1998: 34-5) and notes that some organisations have started to move towards that model.

The argument that personnel careers are becoming less linear reflects arguments that careers in general are changing (c.f. Hirsh et al, 1995; Kanter, 1989, Handy, 1992) towards careers in which 'Climbing the career ladder is being replaced by hopping from job to job' (Kanter, 1989: 299). This, Kanter argues, should be less problematic for professionals, because they are not tied to one organisation in the same way as bureaucrats, having acquired skills and knowledge that are transferable to other organisations, rather than purely firm-specific (ibid.: 311-312). (However, the kind of career Kanter associates with professionals, moving from organisation to organisation within the same functional area, is not the career pattern Ulrich envisages for 'HR professionals', which, in its focus on different jobs within the same organisation, is more akin to Kanter's model of the 'bureaucrat's' career.)

The difference between professionals and bureaucrats and their careers has, however, been the subject of much debate, as has the extent to which the personnel management occupation itself should be regarded as a profession, and thus how it relates to such models (hence Ulrich's suggestion that personnel managers will not follow Kanter's model of professional careers). In order to explore the changing nature of personnel careers, therefore, it is necessary to explore the extent to which the personnel management occupation may be regarded as a 'profession', and then, taking into account arguments about professional - bureaucratic careers, to consider the possible implications of these for careers and inclusion in personnel departments.

The Personnel Management Occupation - 'Profession' or Management?
Inevitably, opinions as to whether the personnel occupation is a 'profession' or not depend largely upon the definition of 'profession' employed. Some commentators define professions as occupations with particular inherent characteristics or 'traits'. Millerson (1964), for example, defines a profession as 'a type of higher-grade, non-manual occupation, with both subjectively and objectively recognized occupational status, providing a well-defined area of study or concern and providing a definite service, after advanced training and education' (ibid.: 10). Carr-Saunders and Wilson (1964) follow a similar approach, for example arguing that professions have particular constitutional traits such as professional associations.

Other commentators have adopted a more 'functionalist' approach to the study of the professions, and defined them in terms of the relationship between the professional and his or her clients. Thus Cheek (1967) identifies four characteristics of the professional relationship: it is privileged communication; no transfer of skills is intended; decisions are limited to the particular situation; and there is no appeal to an outside authority.

Roth (1974), however, criticises 'trait' theorists for their unquestioning acceptance of the images professions put forward of themselves, arguing that 'Sociologists... have become the dupe of established professions' (ibid.: 17). Johnson (1972) similarly argues that 'trait' approaches neglect the effects which powerful occupational groups, or

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governmental and academic organisations, might have upon the way in which an occupation is organised, and the type of work it involves.

Instead, Johnson looks to Weber's concept of closure - which has already been identified as being of use to this thesis - to analyse professions, arguing that 'A profession is not... an occupation, but a means of controlling an occupation' (ibid.: 45). In order for an occupation to be controlled in this way, Johnson argues, the occupation's skills must be in demand; moreover, the occupation must be characterised by the 'homogeneity of outlook and interest of its members' (ibid.: 53). Johnson's analysis also suggests that 'The association will... attempt to impose a uni-portal system of entry to the occupation in order to ensure that shared identity is reinforced by similar experiences of entry and socialization' (ibid.: 54).

However, such neo-Weberian approaches have also been criticised. Saks (1983) argues that they have 'little improved on the traditional practice of reifying elements of professional ideologies', (ibid.: 17), merely substituting the existence of closure for the traits of earlier theories. As Friedson (1983) argues, however, it is impossible to analyse professions without reifying them; the only way sociologists can avoid doing so, he suggests, is to focus upon the title 'profession' as a 'socio-political artefact' (ibid.:34), and the impact that employing such a title has had upon an occupation.

Niven (1967) and Marks (1978) assume that the personnel occupation is a profession because it has adopted some of the characteristics associated with professions, such as a professional body, thus clearly adhering to a 'trait' model of professions. This is also the definition adopted by the director of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, who suggests that the personnel occupation is a profession because it has 'a distinct body of knowledge, competence and practice that underpins what we do' (quoted in Crabb, 2000: 52).

Following Friedson's recommended approach, however, such texts may themselves be seen as part of the occupation's attempt to appropriate the title of 'profession'. Indeed, both Niven's (1967) and Mark's (1978) accounts of the rise of the personnel profession were published by the 'professional body', as were the director's claims. As Armstrong

(1984) notes, the history presented by such texts is inevitably one of a struggle leading to the successful achievement of professionalism (ibid.:110-111). It is to avoid becoming part of that political effort itself that this thesis avoids use of the label 'personnel profession' in its analysis.

Timperley and Osbaldeston (1975), by contrast, adopt a neo-Weberian approach, and thus argue that the personnel occupation is not a profession, because the occupational association has been unable to restrict entry to personnel positions to its members (see for example Marginson et al 1993, discussed above). Adopting a different model again, Watson (1977) argues that 'ideas of professionalism can be seen as ideological devices' (ibid.:117), and thus considers the ways in which personnel practitioners make use of the claim to professionalism, for example, to improve their career prospects. Thus it is possible that the claim to professionalism itself may be a way of achieving inclusion in personnel departments.

Watson's research therefore suggests that personnel practitioners' approach to the professional association is pragmatic rather than ideological: their interest in professionalism being 'not so much an *alternative* orientation to one which involves contributing to organisational goals as a *means towards making* such a contribution' (ibid.:138). As Watson points out, this finding appears to contradict work which suggests that there is a conflict between professions and management. Moreover, it suggests that, in order to win inclusion in personnel departments, personnel practitioners may demonstrate conformity to organisational goals and values, rather than alternative, 'personnel management' ones. This debate is therefore worth exploring in more detail.

Parsons (1954) was influential in developing the notion of professional-bureaucratic conflict, contrasting professional organisation with business organisation, and arguing that the two were based upon different principles. Growth in the number of organizational professions (Larson, 1977) and the proportion of salaried professionals (Child, 1982) has served to focus attention upon the potential for such conflict, and led commentators to debate the extent to which such 'professionals' have been bureaucratised or proletarianised (see for example Child, 1982; Davies, 1983; Murphy, 1990), and hence adopted organisational rather than 'professional' values and careers.

Child (1982), like Watson (1977), has argued that professionals have fewer conflicts of interest with managers than theories such as Parson's have suggested; indeed, in many cases, Child notes, professional membership is a tool for achieving management positions (ibid.:233). Wallace (1995) meanwhile, argues that professionals have managed to retain their autonomy within bureaucratic organisations through adaptation:

> In many ways, professionals have adapted to their new and changing employment situations and have maintained control and autonomy over their professional work..... Although salaried professionals must serve employers' goals, which necessarily limit their freedom to some degree, they have attempted to match the autonomy of professionals in other settings in terms of their discretion and control over the performance of their professional work tasks (ibid.:230).

Murphy (1990), however, argues that the niches professions have been able to occupy in bureaucracies have not been achieved *in spite* of the developments of capitalism and of bureaucracy, but through them, while Boreham (1983) argues that professions have been granted autonomy within bureaucracies precisely *because* they contribute to the hegemony of capitalist domination, the normative controls established by the professional associations being used by capital to control discretionary areas (ibid.:721-13). Rather than being in conflict, therefore, it is argued that such 'professions' and the bureaucracies they inhabit have a symbiotic relationship, depending upon each other for their survival.

Moreover, Larson (1977) argues that 'All professions are, today, bureaucratized to a greater or lesser extent. Organizational professions should not be seen, therefore, as sharply distinct from older and more independent professions, but as clearer manifestations of tendencies also contained within them' (ibid.:179). Larson goes on to identify two categories of organisational 'profession', which are distinguished from one another by the use they make of claims to professional expertise: for one, professional expertise is a means of acquiring power to counteract that of the bureaucracy; for the other, it is a means of justifying their bureaucratic power (ibid.). While for members of the former category there is conflict between their professional values and those of the

organisation – and thus potentially conflict over the values necessary for inclusion - therefore, for members of the latter category this conflict is not apparent, for it is through the bureaucracy that members of the 'profession' obtain their power.

Implications for Personnel Management Careers

Following her model of different categories of organisational 'profession', Larson suggests that career strategies may classified according to whether they make use of occupational or firm-specific skills. Analysis of such different career strategies may be useful in providing a model for analysing some of the criteria which people may use to win inclusion in personnel departments.

Brown (1982), for example, identifies three career strategies open to the middle classes: entrepreneurial, organisational, or occupational (ibid.). Entrepreneurial strategies are those in which a strategy of self-employment is adopted; organisational, those in which a career is pursued within a particular company, and occupational, those in which a career is pursued within a particular occupation, which may involve moving between companies. Like Kanter (1989), discussed earlier, Brown argues that ' 'Bureaucrats' or 'salaried administrators' have pursued organisational career strategies, and 'professionals' occupational ones' (Brown, 1982.: 128).

In a similar vein, Savage et al (1992) distinguish between three types of asset, upon which members of the middle class may draw in pursuing their strategies: property, cultural, and organisational. 'Professionals', they argue, make greatest use of cultural assets - notably educational credentials - thus 'professionalism can therefore best be understood as an attempt to translate cultural assets into material rewards' (ibid.: 22). Whereas managers' key assets are organisational, specific to the particular employing organisation - and thus provide limited security - cultural assets allow professionals to 'retain their autonomy from any particular employing organisation' (ibid.).

However, as both Brown and Larson note, people within similar occupational groupings may pursue different career strategies, some wishing to pursue occupational and others organisational careers (c.f. Brown, 1982: 129). Legge (1978) argues that this is the case with personnel practitioners, who they suggest adopt either a strategy of 'conformist

innovation' - accepting 'the dominant utilitarian values and bureaucratic relationships within the organization and [trying] to demonstrate the worth of his activities within this framework' (Legge, 1978:79), or of 'deviant innovation', where the personnel practitioner attempts to gain 'acceptance for a different set of criteria for the evaluation of organisational success and his commitment to it' (ibid.: 85). The former strategy will therefore draw predominantly upon organisational assets to achieve inclusion, and the latter upon cultural ones, to use Savage et al's (1992) model.

Long's (1984) survey of personnel practitioners also supports the argument that personnel practitioners may adopt different career strategies. 74% of male and 58% of female respondents in Long's survey have work experience in functions other than personnel - i.e. appear to have followed organisational strategies (to use Brown's (1982) model) - while 72% of male and 64% of female respondents have held three or more personnel positions, and most of them have changed employer to achieve that -i.e. appear to have followed occupational strategies.

Jenkins and Parker's analysis of recruitment processes provides further evidence of the variety of orientations of personnel practitioners (Jenkins and Parker, 1987). Jenkins and Parker find that personnel specialists do not always adhere to what they term the 'professional' model of recruitment, but countenance or support the informal and potentially discriminatory practices of the 'managerial' model. The particular model adhered to by a personnel practitioner, they argue, depends upon 'whether he or she has had a formal professional training in personnel management, upon the cultural ambience of the management sphere within the organisation, and upon the current status of the personnel function in terms of intra-organisational politics' (ibid.: 66).

The above analyses reveal the tensions inherent in the attempt to define the personnel management occupation as a whole in terms of particular assets or career strategies. An alternative, more individualistic model, which may therefore be useful to consider in this thesis, is presented by Martin (1998). In this 'nmc [new middle class] bricoloeur' model, career strategies are based not upon claims to *either* technical *or* organisational knowledge, but upon a 'bundle of idiosyncratic, personally held skills and abilities produced through combination of experience and formal education' (ibid.: 676). In such

careers, Martin argues, ' 'closure' is achieved not through formal restrictions such as credentials or internal labour markets but through the use of *networks* of contacts and employers to generate a *reputation* and *image*' (ibid.: 673), a model which accords with Watson's (1977) findings regarding the importance of credibility to personnel managers. Thus also senior personnel practitioners interviewed by People Management argue that 'It's all about personal credibility' (People Management, 1998: 31) which is developed through 'individual relationships' (ibid.)

As a result of the variety of manifestations of the personnel occupation in different organisations noted above, the personnel management occupation has been unable to achieve the consistent niche in bureaucracies which Murphy (1990), for example, associates with professionalism. As a result, it is argued that different assets may afford inclusion in different situations, and thus personnel practitioners in different organisations have adopted different, individual, career strategies appropriate to their situation. This argument, and the identity of the assets which do afford inclusion in different situations, will be tested out by this thesis.

Indeed, the number of articles in personnel management journals devoted to identifying ways for personnel practitioners to achieve organisational power in the future (see for example Prahalad, 1995; Fonda and Rowland, 1995; Truss, 1996; Armstrong 1996) or to proving that people management makes a crucial contribution to profitability (for example, West and Patterson, 1998; Ulrich, 1997b; Stroh and Cliguiri, 1998; Huelid, 1995) provides clear evidence of the occupation's search for a new organisational niche. Given that, according to Boreham (1983) and Armstrong (1984), it is the successful claim to some particular expertise in solving problems confronting capital which leads to an occupational group being granted power and autonomy, the administrative content of the personnel occupation, as in Tyson's 'clerk of works' role (Tyson, 1987) presents problems for personnel departments' desire for greater power and autonomy. The proposed future roles for personnel practitioners thus involve making a strategic contribution to the business, rather than undertaking administrative and technical roles (Armstrong, 1996; Beer, 1997), in other words, adopting a 'changemaker' (Storey, 1992) or 'architect' (Tyson and Fell, 1986) role.

In order to achieve this Beer argues that 'the older, administrative compliance and service oriented human resource activities will have to become more differentiated from the new strategic HR activities' (Beer, 1997: 51). By implementing such stratification, subgroups of the personnel management occupation may be seen to be following Armstrong's (1984) model in which 'The elites within a profession may attempt to monopolize for themselves the esoteric indeterminate aspects of professional practice, while delegating the routine elements to subordinates' (ibid: 116). Significantly for this thesis, struggles over inclusion / exclusion, therefore, may not only occur around entry to the personnel departments as a whole, but around entry to key areas of work within it also.

Equality within Personnel Departments

As noted in the introduction, research into equality within personnel departments is limited. However, the above analysis of different approaches to personnel management and the career strategies adopted by personnel practitioners carry a number of implications for equality within the occupation which are worthy of analysis here. Notably, personnel practitioners' struggle for organisational power, and consequent need to gain credibility within their organisations (Watson, 1977; People Management, 1998) may lead to them adopting or countenancing informal, potentially discriminatory practices (Jenkins and Parker, 1987). Thus Collinson (1991) argues that 'The preoccupation of personnel managers with securing credibility in the eyes of senior managers was a crucial factor influencing their reproduction and rationalisation of gender segregation' (ibid.: 73).

This need to conform to line managers' preferences is likely to be further exacerbated where a 'handmaiden' role is adopted (c.f. Storey 1992). Thus the personnel manager of one of Truss's (1999) case study organisations notes that 'we have... a strong steer from the Chief Executive' (ibid.: 186), which Truss notes means that they have to adopt an approach to human resource management which emphasises 'bottom-line performance' (ibid.: 184), even though that may not benefit women's careers in the way the company's equal opportunity statements would imply.

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Significantly, however, it is not only countenancing discrimination in recruitment to other functional areas that helps personnel practitioners to achieve credibility, but also discriminating in recruitment to personnel departments themselves. Watson (1977) finds that some personnel managers discriminate against applicants to their own departments - such as women - who they believe would lack credibility with managers in other functions, and consequently reduce the credibility of the personnel department as a whole.

The apparent open access to the personnel management occupation (Long, 1984) also has implications for equality. Brown (1992) argues that people of ethnic minority origin have found it easier to access what he refers to as 'professional' occupations than other occupations because entry to the former is based upon credentials, rather than upon managerial judgement, and thus can be achieved 'by individual work and study' (ibid.: 62). However, as noted above, such qualifications may or may not be significant in inclusion in personnel departments, at the discretion of those doing the recruiting, and thus such 'professional' career strategies may or may not be appropriate. This makes it difficult for those seeking inclusion to know the criteria upon which they will be judged, and makes it possible for those responsible for the recruitment to change those criteria in order to justify access discrimination.

Once initial inclusion in the personnel management occupation has been achieved, moreover, the evidence presented above suggests that exclusion may still take place as other personnel practitioners seek to stratify the occupation to enhance their own position. Legge (1987) thus argues that the history of the personnel management occupation reveals that 'if that occupation becomes recognized as no longer peripheral and as a valid contributor to strategic decision-making, then women, if not elbowed out, are politely pushed aside' (ibid.: 34).

In support of this argument, McKay (1986) finds that women are absent from senior positions in major organisations, and Long (1984) finds that female personnel practitioners were less likely to have responsibility for 'All activities which could be seen as offering an important contribution to organizational strategy' (ibid.:77). If, as has been suggested, personnel departments become increasingly stratified, women, at least -

and, if Masley (1995) and Sokoloff (1992) are to be believed, other disadvantaged groups such as ethnic minorities - are likely to be disproportionately located in the less strategic and less autonomous roles.

The literature presented in this chapter therefore suggests a number of models which may be used to analyse the personnel departments researched for this thesis, and may help to explain any differences in inclusion in them which are identified. Moreover, it already suggests several reasons why people categorised as being of ethnic minority origin may be excluded from personnel departments, which the thesis will test.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODS

In order to achieve the aims of this thesis, as defined in the introduction, a variety of research methods have been employed, and these are set out and analysed below. However, before embarking upon this discussion, it is necessary to offer the reader some background information on the research and the researcher. This is in line with Watson's (1994) advice that social researchers should 'reveal the hand' behind the writing and acknowledge their influence upon those they are researching and upon the construction of the research report, and also Coffey and Atkinson's (1996) recognition that 'We do not simply collect data, we fashion them out of our transactions with other men and women... we do not merely report what we find; we create accounts of social life' (ibid.: 108).

Thus it is relevant to note here that the research started as part of a project to increase the proportion of people of ethnic minority origin in personnel management positions, upon which the researcher was employed at the time, and a number of the initial research contacts were made during the course of co-ordinating that project. The fact that the researcher is 'white' also needs to be noted, and the possible implications of the researcher's ethnicity will be returned to at a later stage in this chapter. Like Watson (1994), 'I make no claim to be a neutral reporter, but I attempt a degree of objectivity by allowing readers to judge for themselves something of the way I influenced the events and accounts I am writing about' (ibid.: 7).

Selection of Methods

Existing studies of the disadvantaging of certain social groups in the workplace have used a variety of methods of gathering data. Quantitative analyses of existing statistical data on employment patterns have been used to identify significant variables (Power and Rosenberg's 1993 analysis of the U.S. National Longitudinal Surveys, for example, identified race as a significant variable on the returns 'black' and 'white' women received from training and education). Other researchers (for example Walby, 1988; Witz, 1988, 1992) have employed historical analyses of particular occupations to explore how employment patterns within the occupations have changed over time. Questionnaires of those employed within particular occupations and seeking information

about their career paths, qualifications, personal details, etc. have also been used, and several studies of women in personnel management have adopted this approach (Long, 1984; Monks, 1993; Gooch, 1992, cited in Gooch and Ledwith, 1996).

Other studies have attempted to analyse specific processes at the micro-level. Again, a number of researchers adopt quantitative approaches, undertaking statistical analyses of questionnaire responses or of organisational data to prove or disprove hypotheses of the effects which membership of particular social groups has on a particular aspect of organisational life (for example, Greenhaus et al, 1990; Ibarra, 1992). Other researchers, however, employ qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviewing. Thus the process of recruitment has been researched by interviewing those with responsibility for allocating jobs (Jenkins, 1986b, Lee and Wrench, 1987), and personnel careers have been researched through in-depth interviews with personnel managers (Watson, 1977; Storey, 1994). Other qualitative methods such as participant observation and ethnography are also common (for example, Cullen, 1994); and a number of studies draw on analysis of personal experiences of disadvantage (Thobani, 1995; Holder, 1995). Sometimes interviews and participant observation are combined (as for example by Collinson, 1991, who both interviewed personnel managers and observed them in practice).

Some studies combine a number of different methods in order to research a particular case study organisation or case study organisations, gathering data using a variety of methods and from a variety of organisational members. Itzin's study of gender culture in organisations, for example, draws upon a postal questionnaire survey of all women in the case study division, group interviews with women in different grades and types of work, interviews with managers (male and female) of different levels of seniority, equal opportunities monitoring data, and participant observation (Itzin, 1995). Kanter's case study involves a questionnaire survey of sales staff (all male at the time), interviews with women entrants to the sales force, group discussions with men and women from a variety of grades, participant observation, informal conversations (much of which, Kanter notes, took the form of stories and retrospective accounts of events), documentation, and analysis of appraisal forms (Kanter, 1993). As Kanter argues (ibid.),

gathering data from a variety of different sources and perspectives in this way can be used to test the validity of findings.

Like these, this thesis uses a range of methods in order to achieve its aims (see introduction). Firstly, an exploratory questionnaire was used to survey personnel staff who categorise themselves as being of ethnic minority origin. Secondly, case studies surveyed a sample of personnel departments in five organisations, using in-depth interviews with a range of different individuals (including those who categorise themselves or are categorised as being of different ethnic origins, different genders and different levels of seniority), company documentation, and observations made inside and outside the interviews. The reasons for adopting these methods, and their strengths and weaknesses, are analysed in more depth below.

Achievement of the research aims necessitated in addition in-depth analysis of existing literature on relevant theories, such as those on race and ethnic origin, the personnel management occupation, and social exclusion and discrimination, presented in chapters one to three. As the primary research progressed it highlighted other relevant literatures which were drawn upon to develop the new model of the processes occurring. Like Kanter, therefore, I 'worked back and forth between the literature and the field' (Kanter, 1993: 338).

Exploratory Questionnaire Survey

Although there is some existing literature analysing the careers of women in personnel management (Long, 1984; Legge, 1987; Storey, 1994; Gooch and Ledwith, 1996), and the contribution of personnel managers to unfair discrimination (Collinson et al, 1990; Collinson 1991), there is, as indicated in the introduction, very little literature analysing the personnel careers and experiences of people categorised as of ethnic minority origin, and what there is tends to be anecdotal. It was to fill this gap, and to permit comparison of the careers and experiences of such staff with existing models (thus contributing to the fulfilment of the first two aims of the thesis), that a questionnaire survey of those personnel staff was designed[i].

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[i] A copy of the questionnaire survey can be found in appendix one.

The questionnaire was therefore exploratory in nature, seeking data on a range of potentially significant issues such as career paths to date, future career aspirations, access to training and development, professional membership and so on. Respondents' opinions were also sought on a number of topics in order to see whether they corroborated the findings and theoretical models presented in existing literature. For example, respondents were asked whether or not they felt that their ethnic origin had ever affected their access to personnel positions, so that their personal experiences could be drawn upon, as in the research of Thobani (1995) and Holder (1995), and whether they perceived that their experience of working in personnel had been different in any way from that of 'white' personnel staff. Because of the exploratory aims of the questionnaire, such questions were kept as open as possible and respondents were asked to provide examples where appropriate. Biographical data was also sought, so that differential experiences and / or opinions could be analysed according to factors such as age and current position.

The choice of sampling method was affected by the lack of a formal group representing personnel practitioners of ethnic minority origin, and the consequent absence of a suitable sampling frame. It was therefore not possible to produce a random sample. However, this is not necessary for exploratory research (de Vaus, 1991: 77-79). The lack of a sampling frame also made it very difficult to obtain access to personnel practitioners of ethnic minority origin. The initial sample therefore consisted of 27 ethnic minority personnel practitioners with whom the researcher had already had contact during the course of her other work. Six of these existing contacts participated in a pilot survey, with the remaining 21 being sent the slightly modified final questionnaire. In total, 19 responses were received from this sample - a response rate of 70%.

Although this non random, availability sample was suitable for the aims of an exploratory questionnaire survey (de Vaus, 1991: 77-79), as wide a range of respondents as possible was desired to reduce the possibility of key factors or issues being ignored. A second sample was therefore generated through contact with a semi-structured sample of 50 private companies, local authorities and health authorities in geographical areas of high ethnic minority population. Personnel managers in these

organisations were contacted by telephone, and asked to circulate copies of the questionnaire to personnel staff of ethnic minority origin in their organisation[ii]. Of the fifty organisations contacted, 38 agreed to look at the questionnaire with a view to circulating it amongst appropriate staff. The 12 who refused did so because the personnel manager claimed that there were no personnel staff of ethnic minority origin in the organisation.

In total, 117 questionnaires were sent out to these organisations. 22 responses were received from 11 organisations (response rate is not meaningful here as there is no way of knowing how many staff had the opportunity to respond to the survey). Follow-up contact with the organisations from which no responses were received revealed that some had subsequently found that they contained no personnel staff categorised as of ethnic minority origin, while three others reported that it was against company policy to participate in external surveys.

In total, therefore, 41 responses were received from personnel staff categorised as of ethnic minority origin from 26 different organisations. The final sample included responses from people who identified themselves as being of a variety of ethnic origins, backgrounds, industries and levels of seniority (see appendix two for details of respondents). Responses were coded and analysed using a statistical analysis package, although the very small size of the sample means that correlations are rarely statistically significant and so must be treated with great caution. Responses from the two samples were analysed to discover whether there was any significant variation between the two samples' responses, but none was identified.

Findings from the questionnaire survey, as will be seen in chapter five below, identify a range of factors respondents perceive have affected their careers, of which ethnic origin is one. Attempts to apply various existing models to these findings indicated some

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[ii] Unfortunately this approach inevitably meant that the sample generated was, in the first instance, determined by those personnel managers' categorisations (although the individuals they categorised as being of ethnic minority origin subsequently had the opportunity to reject that categorisation). Given the lack of a sampling frame, however, this was felt to be the only workable method of extending the sample.

models which were more appropriate than others, and these were therefore used as frameworks for analysis of the findings.

Inevitably, the exploratory questionnaire did not provide a means of validating the claims of the respondents; nor did it enable the respondents' careers and experiences to be placed within their organisational contexts. As a consequence, it was not able to conclusively fulfil the first two aims of the thesis, or permit the development of a new model, which forms the thesis' third aim. In order to do this it was decided to conduct case studies of personnel departments in a sample of organisations.

Case Studies:
Selecting Sample Organisations and Negotiating Access

Since one of the aims of the research is to analyse the careers and experiences of personnel staff who categorise themselves / are categorised by others as of ethnic minority origin, a key criterion for case study selection was the presence of such people in the personnel departments in the organisation. Clearly, this had the effect of excluding from the sample any personnel departments to which no such people had been able to gain access, as in these organisations there would have been no way of surveying the careers of people of different ethnic origins, or assessing the effect of different ethnic origins upon processes occurring after entry to personnel departments.

None the less, in those organisations containing people of more than one ethnic origin it is still possible to compare the different groups' experiences of recruitment processes, *including* their experiences of rejection (a number of staff having failed to obtain personnel appointments, either at their first attempt to access personnel management, or in attempting to move to other personnel management positions). Moreover, as the case study analysis in later chapters will show, interviewing those individuals who *have* succeeded in entering personnel departments, and the reasons for their success, itself reveals a great deal about the impact of ethnic origin upon inclusion in personnel departments.

An additional criterion for case study selection was that the sample should cover a range of different industries, including representation from both the public and the private

sector, to allow comparison of the effects of the different organisational contexts, for example in terms of goals, structures, cultures, and political agendas. In addition, it was decided that at least two personnel departments should be studied from each organisation, so that departmental differences within each organisation could be analysed and taken into account.

The requirement for the organisations to include personnel staff of more than one ethnic origin greatly reduced the number of possible case study organisations; this, coupled again with the absence of a ready-made sampling frame of organisations with an ethnic mix of personnel staff, necessitated an 'opportunistic' approach to finding case studies (c.f. Buchanan et al, 1988). A mixture of purposive and availability sampling was therefore used to obtain the sample of organisations, a method which is suitable for the research aims of evaluating existing models of inequality and developing a revised model since working out the proportion of the population which have particular experiences is not intended (de Vaus, 1991: 77-79).

Attempts were made to negotiate access to some of the organisations which had assisted with the questionnaire survey and which were known to include personnel staff of different ethnic origins. Access was eventually secured to two of these organisations.

Attempts were then made to identify other organisations with an ethnic mix of personnel staff. Organisations were contacted on the basis of previous contact with myself or colleagues; having been involved in the professional body's equal opportunities committee (defunct by the time of the research), or rumours - sometimes third-or fourth-hand - that there were people of ethnic minority origin in personnel departments in the organisation. As far as possible - given the opportunistic nature of the sample - organisations were chosen to meet the above-mentioned criterion of providing a range of organisational types.

The chosen organisations were telephoned to find out the name of the most appropriate person to handle the research request - in most cases this was a personnel manager with particular responsibility for equal opportunities - and the named individual written a letter outlining the research project, and then telephoned for a response. Organisations

were asked to allow individual and private interviews with a small number of personnel staff of different ethnic origins, both genders and from a variety of levels of seniority, including, where possible, a personnel manager and the person with responsibility for equal opportunities, if such existed. An undertaking was made not to reveal the identity of individuals or organisations involved in the research. Where immediate access was not forthcoming (as will be seen below, this was the case in the vast majority of organisations contacted) attempts were made to set up face to face meetings to discuss it. Details were kept of each contact made with organisations, including notes of attempts to gain access, copies of letters, and notes of telephone conversations, so that the process of gaining access could be analysed.

Most of the organisations contacted could not be used as case studies because they had no staff of ethnic minority origin in any of their personnel departments. This was the case even with some of the biggest companies, in terms of employee size, in the country. Other organisations could identify just one such individual in personnel in the whole organisation. Although it might have been interesting to compare the experiences of lone personnel staff of ethnic minority origin with the experiences of personnel staff of ethnic minority origin in organisations where there are other ethnic minority personnel staff, it was decided that this would place great weight upon the experience of just one person in the organisation, and, additionally, could cause that person stress and discomfort (the stress and annoyance of being used as a token is well documented in literature on organisations, see for example Kanter, 1993). These organisations were therefore also rejected. However, some of those interviewed were the only member of their particular department of ethnic minority origin, while others worked in departments and organisations where there were a number of such personnel practitioners, and this permitted some analysis of the effects of different ethnic densities to be undertaken.

Even where a sufficient ethnic mix of personnel staff was employed, however, access was often difficult to obtain. One factor was turnover of people in gatekeeper positions: for example, access was successfully negotiated with the racial equality officer of one private sector organisation, who subsequently left. The process of negotiating access then recommenced with another racial equality officer who put up so many barriers that

eventually (after 15 months of contact with the organisation) it had to be accepted that no suitable access would be forthcoming.

The problem caused by such turnover, interestingly, appeared to be a manifestation of a deeper issue - that, given the sensitive nature of the research, access depended heavily on developing a relationship with, and gaining the trust of, an individual gatekeeper. Such a need to develop a relationship and establish trust may also partly explain why meeting face to face to discuss access was a key turning point in the negotiation of access for four of the case studies. Indeed, although no-one ever actually cited anxiety about what the research would uncover or what use would be made of the data as a reason for refusing access, the fact that anonymity had to be guaranteed before anyone would give access suggests that this was in fact uppermost in many people's minds.

Negotiating Access to Individual Interviewees

Eventually case studies were undertaken of five organisations, two local government, one private manufacturing, one private service sector, and one public utility which was in the process of being privatised. In each organisation, representatives of more than one personnel department were interviewed, and relevant documents gathered[iii]. Again, however, selection of interviewees was based partly on availability. Some gatekeepers described the personnel staff and asked the researcher whom she wished to interview; others provided a sample which met the afore-mentioned criteria (a mixture of ethnic origins, genders, and levels of seniority). In each of the latter cases, however, the researcher was able to negotiate subsequent additions to the sample. Once again, however, the non-random nature of the sample is acceptable given the aims of the research.

Again, given the sensitive nature of the research, access to interviewees was not always straightforward. Although only one person refused to be interviewed there may have been others who avoided contact of whom the researcher was unaware. The sample of interviewees was also affected by ethical considerations, notably in one instance where

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[iii] A breakdown of the number of people interviewed in each department, their occupational level and common ethnic categorization (ethnic minority or 'white') is given in appendix three.

the manager of one of the gatekeepers was initially unhappy that access had been granted. Although the gatekeeper decided that he still wanted the research to continue, and although formal approval for the research was then gained from his manager, it was decided that interviewing that manager, although useful for the research, might have caused the gatekeeper additional problems, and the decision was therefore made not to attempt to do so.

Wherever possible interviews were conducted in private (on only two occasions was this not possible, and this was with the agreement of the interviewee) and taped. Permission for interviews to be taped was refused in only one personnel department, by the department manager. In this case, extra notes were taken during the interview and immediately afterwards. Supporting notes were taken during the taped interviews, and notes on things said outside the interviews, observations, and other information received made immediately after leaving each organisation. A variety of relevant documents were also gathered from each organisation, such as departmental charts, policies and training materials.

Interview Methodology

It is pertinent, at this point, to clarify the interview methodology used during the research. As Pawson (1996) notes, interviews have tended to be perceived as one of two opposing types: either structured or unstructured. The interviews conducted as part of this research were neither of these two extremes. The interviewer entered the interview with a list of topics and possible questions which were starting points for further exploration with the interviewee, who was encouraged to debate the relevance of these issues and raise others he or she felt were more pertinent[iv]. The approach adopted was therefore one of 'active interviewing' (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995) in which respondents are treated as reasoning subjects, 'Not so much repositories of knowledge.... as.. constructors of knowledge in collaboration with interviewers' (ibid.: 4). The difference between this method of interviewing and standard approaches is well explained by Holstein and Gubrium:

[iv] A copy of a sample interview schedule is given in appendix four.

Whereas the standardized approach attempts to strip the interview of all but the most neutral, impersonal stimuli, the consciously active interviewer intentionally, concertedly provokes responses by indicating - even suggesting - narrative positions, resources, orientations, and precedents for the respondent to engage in addressing the research questions under consideration. The active interviewer sets the general parameters for responses, constraining as well as provoking answers that are germane to the researcher's interest. He or she does not tell respondents what to say, but offers them pertinent ways of conceptualising issues and making connections (ibid.: 39).

At the start of each interview, therefore, the purpose and reasons for the research were explained (this is in keeping with Pawson's 'theory-driven' approach to interviewing (Pawson, 1996), and throughout the interview the interviewee was prompted to participate in the construction of knowledge through being asked further questions, and having possible implications, explanations or alternative interpretations of what he or she said indicated to him or her. In this way I sought to 'channel' (ibid.: 306) the interviewee's construction of meaning.

This method of interviewing obviously has implications for the research findings. It does potentially give the interviewer a greater degree of input to the generation of meaning than is the case with other methods of interviewing. However, this does not necessarily result in meaning being corrupted, or more corrupted than it would otherwise have been: Pawson (1996) points out that interviewees always approach interviews with silent questions such as 'Who is this person?' 'Why am I being asked?' or 'What should I be saying?' (ibid.: 305) and adapt their answers accordingly. As Adams (1999) notes, research data is always 'the product of the relationship between the researcher and her informants' (ibid.: 360).

The type of people interviewed during the course of this research is also important: they were experienced personnel and training practitioners, with high communication skills and sufficient self-confidence to be able to present their own opinions and perspectives. This was helped by the way in which the interviews were conducted: firstly, people were

notified some days in advance of the aims and purpose of the interview, and so had been able to think about it and develop their own opinions in advance; secondly, efforts were made to ensure the self-confidence and trust of interviewees by asking non-threatening questions about their current job first, disclosing information from the researcher's own life, and so on. Indeed, the active interview process itself, with its mutual construction of meaning and sharing of experiences, was found to develop trust and increase the confidence of interviewees.

An additional implication of active interviewing was the potential it offered the interviewer to adapt questions and behaviour to suit the interviewee. Again, although this means that the interviewer's input into each interviews varied, it did help to develop the interviewer / interviewee relationship, ensuring that the interviewee felt comfortable and, indeed, understood what was being asked.

A further positive implication of this method of interviewing for the research findings was that it resulted in a deeper understanding than would have resulted from structured interviews, whilst being more focused than unstructured interviews. Having someone come to interview you is threatening - hence the questions which Pawson notes go through interviewees' minds (Pawson 1996); having someone come to interview you about race equality in your department is much more so. The people interviewed during the course of the research often wanted further clarification of the aims of the research before participating, and sometimes several minutes were spent discussing the research project with the interviewee before the interview could begin. Given the sensitive nature of the research topic, therefore, the active interview was judged to be the only interview methodology capable of eliciting useful data. Additionally, as Buchanan et al (1988) argue, it is important to 'communicate enthusiasm' to the interviewee, and this is greatly facilitated by the active engagement of the interviewer in the interview.

Ethical Issues in the Fieldwork
Dingwall has argued that 'ethical fieldwork turns on the moral sense and integrity of the researcher negotiating the social contract which leads his subjects to expose their lives' (Dingwall, 1980: 885). Ethical considerations are therefore important in any social research; however, they are even more important when the aspects of their lives revealed

by the subjects put them in a potentially vulnerable position, as was the case in this fieldwork.

During the course of the current research it became clear that researching the treatment of different social groups, particularly those based on ethnic origin, could indeed make some people feel vulnerable. There was therefore a moral and ethical obligation on the researcher, to ensure as far as possible the security of the interviewees.

One key vehicle for this, as already mentioned, was the guarantee of anonymity, so that the names of individuals and organisations concerned, and any details by which they might be identified, are withheld (c.f.Homan, 1991). Although this assurance permitted the research to be undertaken in the first place, and did not hamper the analysis of the findings, it does have some implications for the presentation of that analysis, certain useful illustrations having to be omitted because they would be likely to reveal the identity of the organisation or individuals within it.

Ethical considerations affected the research in other ways as well. As mentioned above, some possible avenues for exploration and some interviewees were rejected for ethical reasons. The decision was also made that it would be unethical to push interviewees to talk about areas which clearly made them feel uncomfortable, and so some answers were not probed as much as they perhaps could have been. However, although in some circumstances this strategy may have limited the findings, it did have the advantage of not alienating the interviewees; indeed, in most cases the interviewees returned to the problematic area in their own time.

Case Study Analysis

As the case studies were conducted over a considerable period of time (about two years in total), a degree of analysis inevitably took place while the fieldwork was still ongoing and, as indicated above, there was a process of moving between the literature and the field. This initial analysis focused upon evaluating the extent to which the various existing models and theories (discussed in chapters one to three) were able to explain the findings of the case studies, and the degree to which the case study findings corroborated and added to the findings of the questionnaire survey.

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Once all the case studies had been completed the interview transcriptions and other materials were then read and common emerging themes coded. The existing models identified as being most appropriate at the questionnaire and initial analysis stage were then applied to the findings, and ways in which they both fitted and did not fit the case study findings identified. From this secondary analysis a revised theoretical model was developed, emphasising the significance of organisational symbolism.

The next stage of the analysis then tested out this proposed model by exploring the different symbolism of the personnel departments and interviewees through detailed examination of the language used in interviews and documentation, corporate jargon, and stories told to the researcher, and also observations of dress, behaviour (both inside and outside the interview), the immediate environment and, indeed, the negotiation of research access. This examination was facilitated by the taping of interviews, since, as Jones (1996) has pointed out, this permits not only the analysis of general stories but also of the specific words used by the interviewees, tones of voice, repetitions, digressions, and so on. The refusal of permission to record interviews in one personnel department was therefore disappointing - although the refusal was in itself revealing about relationships in that organisation - but, as indicated above, was partly compensated for by very extensive notes - including direct quotations - made during the interviews and other extensive notes made immediately afterwards. The 'thick' description (ibid.) provided by these different data sources therefore permitted the identification of key symbols employed by the different personnel departments and interviewees, and thus enabled the validity of the proposed model to be tested.

Representativeness and Validity of the Findings
The notion of representativeness refers to the degree to which 'we can generalize from the sample that we have studied' (McNeill, 1990: 15). McNeill argues that the representativeness of research methods which do not involve systematic sampling, such as those used in this research project, is always open to question (ibid.:15-16). Clearly, it would be wrong to claim that the individual experiences identified in this research project are representative of the experiences of all other individuals, or that the case study organisations are representative of all other organisations. Some groups of

individuals which were not included in the research have already been identified: these include people who are the only ethnic minority personnel practitioners in their organisation; and people who have sought but not yet gained any inclusion in personnel management.

Likewise, the requirement for case study organisations to contain personnel departments with staff of a mix of ethnic origins meant in practice that not only were organisations with no ethnic minority personnel staff excluded from the case studies, but also small organisations, as only organisations with a large number of personnel staff were found to meet the criterion. The ability of organisations to choose whether or not they were included in the study may also have resulted in self-exclusion by organisations which knew they had particularly serious problems in that area, or no awareness or interest in it.

To criticise such qualitative research for not being representative in this way, however, is to miss the point of the research. This thesis does not aim to identify representative situations, and these are not necessary to the evaluation of existing models and development of a new model for which it does ultimately aim. As Watson argues of his research of managers:

> How representative of managerial work is this research among managers in just one organisation?..... This is to miss the point of detailed ethnographic or case study research. Getting very close to managers in one organisation is a means of generalising about processes managers get involved in and about basic organisational activities, rather than about 'all managers' or 'all organisations' as such (Watson, 1994: 7).

Indeed, Watson draws usefully on Yin's (1984) description of such research as generalising 'theoretically' rather than 'empirically'. It is in this sense of developing generalisable theories that this research aims to be representative.

The methodology also has implications for the validity of the research. Arguments about the validity of data produced by active interviewing, suggesting that it is no less valid than data produced by conventional interview techniques, have already been presented.

However, such relativist arguments would indicate that everything is equally valid. Hammersley (1993) suggests rather that assessments of research findings should be based upon judgements of their 'plausibility', by which he means 'consistency with existing knowledge whose validity is taken to be beyond reasonable doubt' and 'credibility', 'the likelihood that the process that produced the claim is free of serious error' (ibid.: 437-8). This research project meets both of these criteria.

As well as these external checks of validity, however, validity may be increased by checking individual findings against other findings within the same research project. In order to maximise the validity of the findings presented here different sources and types of data have been used, with cross-checking between different sources and different interviewees, and ensuring that any claims made are supported by a number of examples (c.f. Kanter, 1993: 337).

The Identity of the Researcher

A further point which some would argue limits the validity of this research is the researcher's identity as a 'white' woman. Various researchers have argued that closeness of identity between researcher and researched improves the data gathered, by facilitating greater research access and greater openness. Rhodes (1994) cites a common belief in American studies that response rates are higher if interviewers and interviewees are of the same race, and notes that

> Closeness of identity and, in particular, shared racial identity, is generally
> presumed to promote effective communication between researcher and subject
> and, conversely, disparate evidence to inhibit it (ibid.:550).

In a similar vein Mirza (1992) argues that she enjoyed greater access to those she was studying because, like them, she was young, female, and of West Indian origin, and Bhopal (1995) found that her identity as an Asian women 'enabled me to gain access into the private homes of South Asian women, speak their language and empathize with them' (ibid.:157).

What is clear from the above, however, is that ethnic origin is not the only characteristic of identity which is perceived to have a positive influence on data collection when it is

held in common: shared age and gender are also cited. Indeed, Rhodes (1994) found that

> Skin colour.... was not the only 'social signifier'...Ethnicity, gender, class, age, education and non-professional or more specifically non-social worker status all emerged as dimensions of differing significance during the course of the interview (ibid.:552; a similar point is made by Phoenix, 1994).

Indeed, at some points Rhodes, who is 'white', found that being of a different ethnic origin actually helped access: 'Many [black] people were prepared to talk openly about their experiences and opinions and several confided that they would not have a similar discussion with another black person' (Rhodes, 1994: 551).

Indeed, in spite of differences of ethnic origin, the researcher did possess at least one characteristic in common with all the interviewees and survey respondents: experience of seeking to enter and subsequently working in personnel management. In addition, there were many other areas of common identity with various interviewees, such as shared gender, similar age, possession of professional personnel qualifications, possession of a degree, and experience of being employed in a section 11 post - a post part funded by the Home Office to increase representation of people of ethnic minority origin in areas where such groups are under-represented.

It is also worth noting that both Mirza (1992) and Bhopal (1995) made use of access to the respondents' private homes, and it may be that common ethnic origin is more significant in this context that when it is access to the workplace and to career information that is being sought, as is the case here. Moreover, since the research discussed in this thesis is concerned with the careers of personnel staff of all ethnic origins, compared with those of 'white' personnel staff, it would be impossible for a single researcher to have the same ethnic origin as all respondents, and, even if a team of interviewers and surveyors of different ethnic origins were used, it is unlikely that every ethnic origin would be matched.

Another argument in favour of research on people of ethnic minority origin being done only by people of ethnic minority origin has been that 'white' people will be unable to

understand the ethnic minority experience, and that findings produced by 'white' researchers will therefore be invalid. There are a number of potential weaknesses of this argument. In the first place, as Hammersley (1993) notes, such 'standpoint theory' treats 'people's experience and knowledge... as valid or invalid by dint of their membership in some social category' (ibid.:433). As Allen and Macey argue:

> It is one thing to recognize that researchers are gendered, class located and racialized / ethicized, and as a consequence have diverse experiences, work with different assumptions, and may take different standpoints in their work... It is quite another to argue that any one position / characteristic validates, or conversely invalidates, knowledge or understanding (Allen and Macey, 1994: 114).

In the second place, an argument could equally be constructed to support the view that insiders to a particular social group may be more likely to take things for granted than an outsider, assuming a shared understanding or experience which may not necessarily exist. This possibility of 'subjective bias' is something Mirza recognises (Mirza 1992). Thus one of Rhodes' (1994) respondents is quoted as saying that 'I wouldn't have had a talk like this with another black person.... With a black person, you would just take it for granted' (ibid.:). Rhodes therefore adopted a pupil role to the respondent's teacher (ibid.), and this is a role which the researcher here also adopted through the exploratory questionnaire and the method of active interviewing, both of which encouraged respondents to develop their own arguments and play active roles in the development of theoretical models, rather than to respond passively to the researcher's preconceptions.

Finally, the implication that standpoint is wholly determined by membership of particular social groups, and that all members of the social group will therefore have the same standpoint, is not supported by the evidence. Rhodes (1994) cites the example of two 'black' interviewees who refused to speak to a 'black' interviewer because they believed that his or her viewpoint would differ from their own, while Acker et al (1991), who are female researchers undertaking research into women's lives, nevertheless report conflict between their feminist interpretations of some women's lives and the women's own interpretations of their lives. As Stanley and Wise (1990) argue with regard to feminist research, there is a need to recognise 'the differences that exist between women'

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(ibid.:33) and thus the lack of a single 'female' standpoint, and this is equally true for people categorised as of ethnic minority origin. While the ethnic minority researcher and ethnic minority respondent may share experience of oppression, those experiences are not necessarily the same, and an assumption that they are could again lead to distortion of the research material.

An underlying problem with all claims that researchers and researched have to be of the same ethnic origin is their implicit assumption that ethnic origin is essentialist in nature, and that allocation of individuals to ethnic categorisations is therefore unproblematic - an assumption which has been widely criticised (see discussion in chapter one of this thesis), and which this thesis rejects. What is important, as Allen and Macey (1994) argue, is therefore not that the researcher and the researched share any particular, pre-defined social group, but that the researcher acknowledges and reflects upon his or her social background and the implications that it may have for the research undertaken. This self-reflection, which has been introduced here, will therefore be returned to later on in the thesis.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS OF THE EXPLORATORY QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

The purpose of the exploratory questionnaire, as indicated in the preceding chapter, was to explore the careers and experiences of people categorised as being of ethnic minority origin, given the paucity of existing research on that subject, to provide a basis for progressing the aims of the thesis.

Although the findings of the exploratory questionnaire survey are not statistically significant, it is worth noting that respondents come from all levels of the personnel management hierarchy, from administrative work to directors of personnel (see table 1). While this cannot be taken to reflect the proportions of people of ethnic minority origin in personnel positions of different levels, it does indicate that at least some people of ethnic minority origin have been able to access positions at management level and above. Analysis of the industry in which respondents are employed similarly reveals that they come from a wide range of industries (classified using the Standard Industrial Classification), these being energy and water supply; extraction; metal goods engineering and vehicles; other manufacturing; distribution, hotels and catering; transport and commerce; banking; local government; national government; and 'other'[i], indicating that people of ethnic minority origin have gained access to personnel departments in a wide range of industries.

Table 1: Level of position held by questionnaire respondents.

Position	Number of respondents	% of respondents
Administrative	9	22.5
Officer / senior officer	23	57.5
Manager	6	15.0
Director	1	2.5

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[i] A breakdown of respondents' industries is given in appendix two, along with other characteristics of the sample. It is not given here because the data is statistically invalid, and is skewed by the fact that local authorities and health authorities were particularly targeted in the sampling method (see chapter four).

Consultant (self-employed)	1	2.5

Ethnic Origin and Discrimination

Given the limited data on ethnic representation in the personnel management occupation (see introduction) respondents were asked whether they perceive that people of ethnic minority origin are under-represented in personnel management positions in Britain and in their own organisations. 100% of respondents answer the former question in the affirmative, and 72.4% the latter. However, the explanations they give for this suggest that supply side factors, as well as discrimination, are relevant, as table 2 indicates. 13.2% of respondents, for example, believe that ethnic minority individuals' perceptions of personnel work deter them from applying for personnel management positions.

Table 2 - If you think people of ethnic minority origin are under-represented in personnel work in Britain, what do you think might be the reasons for this under-representation?

	No.	%
Ethnic minority perceptions of personnel work	5	13.2
Ethnic minority lack of knowledge about personnel work	8	21.0
Discrimination by employers	12	31.6
Personnel perceived to be discriminatory	3	7.9
Personnel practitioners recruited from secretarial staff	2	5.3
Few personnel posts	6	15.8
Ethnic minorities have lower qualifications	4	10.5
Lack of equal opportunities policies / race awareness	5	13.2
Discrimination / racism in society	3	7.9

(Note: Numbers may add to more than 100% as some respondents answered in more than one category).

Nevertheless, 31.6% of respondents do believe that discrimination by employers is a factor, and 13.2% that lack of equal opportunities policies is. Explanations for under-representation in personnel management positions in their own organisations, indeed, tend to focus more upon the existence of discrimination: only one of the respondents who believes that there is under-representation in their organisations cites a supply-side issue (the ethnic mix of the local population), while 42.8% of them cite discrimination / racism by the employer, and 33.3% the lack of equal opportunities awareness and strategy.

Questions asking about the respondents' own experiences of recruitment to personnel management positions support the claims discussed in chapter two that access discrimination is a factor in at least some instances (see tables 3 and 4 below). Of the nine respondents who believe that their ethnic origin has affected their recruitment to personnel posts, six believe that it has had a negative effect, either resulting in them being turned down for a post or recruited only to marginal areas of work (see table 4).[ii]

Table 3 - Has your ethnic origin ever affected your recruitment to personnel posts, in any way?

Response	No.	%
Yes	9	22.5
No	16	40.0
Not sure	15	37.5

[ii] The figures in tables 3 and 4 clearly need to be treated with particular caution. Not only is the sample small, but - as some respondents note - it is exceedingly difficult to identify whether one has been discriminated against because of one's ethnic origin or not, and this clearly resulted in the high proportion of 'not sure' responses in table 3. Moreover, as noted in chapter four, since the survey is of ethnic minority personnel staff it only includes those who have been successful in achieving at least some inclusion in personnel departments. Nevertheless, as indicated in chapter four, the responses, if not representative, are nonetheless of value as indications of the experiences of some ethnic minority people seeking inclusion in personnel management positions.

Table 4: Ways in which ethnic origin has affected recruitment to personnel posts (as % of those who say it has affected recruitment).

Response	No.	%
Positive effect	3	33.3
Turned down for job because of ethnic origin	5	55.6
Recruited only to certain types of personnel post because of ethnic origin	1	11.1

One female respondent, for example, notes that

Before I got married and was trying to obtain a post as a personnel officer... out of 80 applications I received 1 or 2 interviews. After marrying it was not obvious what my ethnic origin was, but whilst I got more interviews... my interviews were.. very brief and I was told on several occasions I would not fit into the team.

Another (male) respondent reports that he was

Turned down for [a] job because, rightly or wrongly, the interviewers thought / felt the unions might object to conduct negotiations with me purely on the basis of my colour / origin.

Indeed, one woman who has not suffered access discrimination expresses surprise at that: *'How was I employed? I do not know. People here are openly racist and do not hide it'.*

On the other hand, as table three shows, three respondents believe that their ethnic origin has had a positive effect upon their recruitment. Thus one female respondent argues that *'It has helped me to stand out from the average applicant'*, and another that *'It could be an advantage as many companies would relish the idea of having a high profile black personnel manager'*. Identifying the characteristics of the organisation or situation which lead to ethnic origin having such a positive effect upon inclusion is clearly important to achieving the aims of the thesis; however, this requires greater analysis of the organisational context of such processes than the questionnaire survey can provide. It will therefore be returned to in analysis of the case studies, which were designed to provide such contextualisation.

Even where ethnic origin has a positive effect upon inclusion, the questionnaire results suggest that that is limited: the latter respondent continues that *'This becomes a big stumbling block if I wish to pursue my career or pursue other avenues'*, suggesting - like the respondent who has only been allowed access to certain types of personnel work - that inclusion in some positions may be more readily available to people of ethnic minority origin than inclusion in others. These responses support the claims, made in chapter three, that the personnel management occupation is stratified, and suggest that Long's (1984) and Legge's (1987) claims that women are stratified into certain areas of the personnel occupation may apply to people of ethnic minority origin also.

Indeed, as the respondent who argues that her ethnic origin helps her to *'stand out'* points out, this kind of advantage only occurs due to *'other people's stereotyping'* (my highlight). Winning inclusion on the basis of being of ethnic minority origin means being categorised by others according to that ethnic origin and carrying the stereotypes associated with it, rather than being recognised to have the 'multiple social identities' noted by Hall (1991: 57), in other words, being a victim of 'racism', in Banton's (1983) and Jenkins' (1986a) sense. While this may be apparently advantageous in some situations, it carries downsides - such as that noted by the respondent cited in the previous paragraph.

Literature on the existence and importance of treatment discrimination is also supported by the questionnaire findings. 52.6% of respondents are certain that their ethnic origin has had an effect upon their experience of working in personnel, all of which tends to be negative (see table 5). The argument that discrimination occurs via the different allocation of duties (Snizek and Neil, 1992; Mai Dalton and Sullivan, 1981) is supported by respondents who believe that they have been given more menial work, not involved in certain areas of work, or pushed towards equal opportunities work: *'My experience is marginalised and I am seen fit to deal with equal opportunities issues only'*, one (male) respondent argues; another (this time female) that *'I have found that I have been given the less interesting and more menial tasks'*.

Table 5: Ways in which experience of working in personnel differs from that of most 'white' personnel staff (as % of those responding that their experience differs).

Response	No.	%
Given more menial work	2	10
Pushed towards equal opportunities work / work with ethnic minority groups	5	25
More difficult to network	2	10
Managers do not accept your advice	2	10
Discriminated against in promotions	2	10
Treated differently by other staff	5	25
Not involved in certain areas of work	2	10
Have to be better	2	10

(Note: responses do not add to 100% as some respondents answered in more than one category).

The examples cited in the previous paragraph are examples of Benokraitis and Feagin's 'covert' types of discrimination (Benokraitis and Feagin, 1995). However, some of the treatment discrimination noted by respondents falls into Benokraitis and Feagin's 'subtle' category. One male respondent, for example, argues that

Things that a white colleague takes for granted had to be achieved with a lot more investment on my part. Things that happen around you because you are black are different from things that happen around because you are white. This could mean the difference between success and failure of a project. One particular thing is information that seems to flow to white colleagues I had to work for.

Another, female respondent noted that *'Networking outside of your own company is not as easy'*. These would appear to be examples of 'collegial exclusion' (Benokraitis and Feagin, 1995: 111). Meanwhile, two other female respondents noted subtle differences in treatment such as *'The way in which people approach you'*, and *'The surprise managers express when they realise I am black'*.

Importantly, the above subtle discrimination is not merely perpetrated by colleagues within personnel management in the respondents' organisations, but also by people in

other departments or indeed people outside the organisation. Thus another (female) respondent gives as an example of different treatment because of her ethnic origin

Line managers trying it on to see how much they can get away with.... Line managers going above me to the director and the director passing down the work to me.

As was the case with the existence of positive effects of ethnic origin upon inclusion, the questionnaire survey is unable to identify the organisational context in which those outside the personnel departments are able to affect inclusion in personnel departments. This will, however, be discussed in relation to the case study findings.

Other Criteria Affecting Inclusion

A crucial finding of the questionnaire survey, however, is that ethnic origin is not the only criterion which respondents feel influences their inclusion in personnel departments. Asked what might prevent them from achieving their career ambitions over the next five years, the 31 respondents who wish to continue to pursue personnel management careers give a variety of responses, with only 9 respondents (29%) citing their race / ethnic origin as possible causes. These results are illustrated in table 6.

Table 6 - What, if anything, might prevent you from achieving the post you want to be in in five years' time (table shows responses only from those who wish to be in personnel management positions in five years' time).

Response	No.	%
Race / ethnic origin	9	29.0
Gender	2	6.5
Family commitments	2	6.5
Lack of opportunities	9	29.0
Lack of personnel qualifications	2	6.5
Not fitting in to norms	1	3.2
Lack of degree	1	3.2
Lack of confidence / shyness	2	6.5

Lack of career development / training	2	6.5
Not being able enough	1	3.2
Lack of motivation	1	3.2
Other reason	2	6.5
Nothing	1	3.2
No response	6	19.4

(Note: numbers do not add to 100% as some respondents answered in more than one category).

Thus, while 29% cite possible exclusion on the grounds of race or ethnic origin, other possible barriers to further inclusion cited include discrimination on the grounds of gender, family commitments, lack of ability, lack of confidence, lack of career opportunities, lack of degree or professional qualifications. Those responses which reflect supply-side issues (such as lack of motivation) are not of interest here, given the aims of the research indicated at the start of the thesis. The other criteria cited, however, merit further investigation.

The results suggest, for example, that gender is another criterion upon which exclusion may be based. As table 6 shows, two respondents believe that their gender may prevent them from achieving their career ambitions in personnel management, and a further two female respondents also believe that family responsibilities may be a barrier. Indeed, one female respondent plans to move into personnel management in the retail industry because she perceives that industry to be *more positive towards women* than the one she currently works in.

'Individualist' criteria (Parkin, 1974) such as qualifications, it is suggested, are also a criterion for inclusion. However, the findings support claims made in chapter three that the qualifications required for inclusion in personnel departments vary: while two of the responses in table 5 indicate that lack of professional personnel qualifications may be a barrier to their future careers, another respondent – a woman who possesses the professional qualification - argues that it is the lack of a degree which will hold her back.

This ambiguity over the qualifications required is reflected in responses to other questions also: one female respondent claims that

> *If you don't get in [to personnel work] at the early stages it is highly unlikely that you will get a personnel job without at least part of the [IPD],*

but another woman that such professional qualifications are not important in her organisation: *'[I] do not feel that they are taken into consideration when I apply for posts'*. In fact, 22.5% of the respondents are not members of the professional body. Indeed, some respondents claim that degrees are more important: *'You often have to be a graduate'*, one woman comments, and another woman notes that her interviews *'focused on my not having a degree rather than my experience and [professional] qualifications'*.

The findings also support the argument (see chapter three) that this variety of access routes actually makes accessing personnel departments more difficult for people of ethnic minority origin, rather than easier. For example, the respondent, cited above, who reported that her interviews focused upon her lack of degree, believes that this was merely a means of justifying a decision to exclude her which had already been taken because of her ethnic minority origin. Indeed, another female respondent argues that the lack of clear entry requirements might deter people of ethnic minority origin from applying for personnel management posts precisely because they perceive discrimination to be more likely as a result: *'Personnel is probably perceived to be too vague and therefore too risky'*.

For one woman, however, the only factor which could prevent the achievement of her personnel management ambitions is ability: *'I will need to pass internal interviews with other candidates; the best person wins and if I'm not best I won't get on'*. Another male respondent, arguing that people of ethnic minority origin are not under-represented in his organisation, argues that that is because *'The managers of the organisation base selection... purely on the ability of an individual to do the job'*.

What such responses fail to do, however, is to explain how 'ability' is defined in their organisations, to explain what makes one person 'the best' rather than another. Another

of the responses given in table 6 suggests that it is not fitting into organisational norms which might hinder a personnel management career - thus suggesting that it is that ability to conform to organisational norms and values which is rewarded with inclusion. A number of responses, indeed, argue that it is the desire for this type of ability which leads to the exclusion of people of ethnic minority origin: one reason given for ethnic minority under-representation in personnel management positions, for example, is that they *'don't match set norms, perceptions, beliefs set by the existing workforce culture'* (female respondent), while another woman claims that it is because of the *'perceived impression of ethnic minorities when they are interviewed - they do not 'fit' into personnel work'*.

The latter comment suggests that ethnic origin is a tool which personnel managers use to assess 'ability'. Other responses support this view: one female respondent, for example, argues that people of ethnic minority origin are under-represented in her personnel department because they are *'not regarded as highly'*; another woman that they are under-represented in personnel management posts in general because of *'lack of faith and confidence in people from ethnic minority origin'*; another woman that managers are less likely to accept advice from people of ethnic minority origin. As the respondent in the preceding paragraph notes, it is thus often the *'perceived impression,'* rather than the ability itself, upon which decisions about inclusion / exclusion are based.

Claims that it is the perceived ability to conform to organisational norms and values which is rewarded with inclusion, moreover, support the claims, noted in chapter two, that exclusion of those who are perceived to belong to a different social group may be a way of trying to ensure that those included are predictable and trustworthy (see for example Perrow, 1979; Lorber, 1984; Kramer et al, 1996), membership of social groups being a way of inferring trustworthiness (Dasgupta, 1988). Indeed, one female respondent argues that *'Many organisations are not yet ready to release so much power to a black individual'*, while another (again female) implies that she has been excluded from sensitive issues because she is considered untrustworthy as a result of her ethnic origin: *'Some decisions relating to disciplinary / grievance [I] was not involved in - due to [them being an] 'area of sensitivity''*.

Although the *'perceived impression'* of the ability desired may be partly derived from ethnic categorisations, however, respondents suggest again that those are not the only criteria from which it might be derived. Thus one female respondent notes that

> *It [failing to gain a personnel management post] would not be down to one point - ethnic origin - it is how the person interviewing you perceives certain characteristics. Those recruiting tend to select people with similar backgrounds.*

Another female respondent argues that her lack of confidence and shyness might be a barrier to a personnel management career, not because of the shyness per se, but *'Because I'm shy, I think interviewers probably think I wasn't capable'*. In this case, the expectation is that judgements about ability may be based upon the demonstration of particular behaviours.

The recognition that ethnic origin is not the only criterion of inclusion leaves open the possibility that people categorised as of ethnic minority origin can win inclusion by emphasising other characteristics which *do* suggest that they should be included - as was suggested by the analysis of Bourdieu's (1984) model in chapter two. One woman, for example, argues that her ethnic minority origin has a negative effect upon inclusion, *'However due to my skills / quality of work I have been able to overcome this and prove myself,'* while another woman argues that people of ethnic minority origin can win inclusion but to do so they have to be *'better, have more credibility and produce high quality work to justify [their] worth'*.

However, not all people categorised as being of ethnic minority origin may be able to demonstrate these characteristics as easily as some. It is interesting that those survey respondents born outside Britain are much more likely to report that their ethnic origin has affected their recruitment to personnel posts than those born in Britain, even where they give their ethnic origin as being the same, suggesting that the former find it more difficult to win inclusion than the latter (see table 7). Using Cramer's V, the level of association between the two variables is calculated at 0.548, with a significance level of 0.002, showing that being born in Britain or elsewhere has some, although not total, explanatory power. Given the claims by survey respondents that conforming to existing values and norms is important for inclusion, perhaps those born outside Britain are more

likely to be excluded because they are less likely to share (or are less likely to be judged to share) those values and norms than those born in Britain, and thus to win inclusion.

Table 7. Percentages (and numbers) of respondents born in Britain and elsewhere giving each response to 'Has your ethnic origin ever affected your recruitment to personnel posts in any way?'

Has your ethnic origin ever affected your recruitment to personnel posts in any way?	% of those born in Britain giving the response	(No. of those born in Britain giving the response)	% of those born in country other than Britain giving the response	(No. of those born in country other than Britain giving the response)
Yes	4.0	(1)	50.0	(7)
No	48.0	(12)	28.6	(4)
Not sure	48.0	(12)	21.4	(3)
Total	100	(25)	100.0	(14)

(Note: Only 39 respondents responded to both questions).

This finding also highlights again the problem of defining ethnic origin. The different emphases which may be placed upon skin colour, country of birth and ancestral homeland in defining ethnic origin is also apparent in the ways in which respondents categorise themselves on the questionnaire returns. One female respondent, for example, adds the category *'Black British'*, because of her British birth (although some others who were born in Britain categorise themselves as 'Black Caribbean', 'Black African', or 'Black Other'), another woman ticks 'Other Asian' but adds the comment *'Sri-Lankan British born'* for a similar reason. It is clear that, as argued in chapter one, ethnic categories are not essentialist, and that a person may categorise themselves - and be categorised - in a number of different ways, with different possible effects. As the finding in the preceding paragraph suggests, being born outside Britain - or being categorised as non-British - may have particular implications for either the ability to conform to existing organisational norms and values, or the ability to give the impression of being able to do so, because of the stereotypical expectations of members of that category. Indeed, it is perhaps to distance themselves from such categorisation and its

negative implications that the respondents cited above were keen to label themselves as 'British' on the questionnaire.

The findings of the questionnaire survey thus suggest that ethnic origin does have an effect upon inclusion in personnel departments. Crucially, however, they indicate that ethnic origin is not the only criterion which has an effect upon inclusion, and, moreover that its effect is not always the same, even for people categorised as being of the same ethnic minority origin. This, the findings suggest, is possibly because some of those classified as being of ethnic minority origin have been able to win inclusion on the basis of some of those other criteria which afford inclusion. Furthermore, the findings of the exploratory questionnaire suggest that individuals may consciously seek to determine the criteria upon which their inclusion is based, seeking to be categorised in ways which will be interpreted positively. The findings thus indicate a weakness of the models of closure discussed in chapter two, that is, their assumption that those excluded only react to their exclusion after the event.

What the questionnaire survey cannot do, however - as has been reiterated throughout this chapter – is to reveal how and why the categories which afford inclusion may vary (or be altered by those party to the process) in different organisational contexts, and thus, in particular, how and why the effects of ethnic categorisations may differ. It was to fill these gaps that a case study survey was undertaken.

CHAPTER SIX: CASE STUDY FINDINGS 1 - TOWN COUNCIL

The following five chapters analyse the findings of each of the five case studies in turn [i]. The order in which the case studies are presented reflects broadly the order in which the research was undertaken (although inevitably there were times when the timing of the case studies overlapped to some degree). In this chapter the findings of the case study of Town Council are analysed.

Town Council is a local authority employing approximately 20 000 staff (approximately 14 000 excluding teaching staff). Personnel practitioners in the organisation are located in one of a number of units: a central personnel department, situated in the central directorate, which is concerned primarily with strategic and policy issues, and operational personnel departments (including training units) in each of the other seven directorates. In accordance with some of the trends discussed in chapter three, responsibility for recruitment and selection has been devolved to individual line managers. Individual personnel managers, like other managers, therefore have responsibility for recruiting, selecting, promoting and training their staff. One consequence of this is destandardisation of employment practice between the different personnel departments.

However, in spite of such devolution, Town Council continues to have a number of centrally-written policies on equal opportunities. The existence and content of these is affected by the high ethnic minority population served by the organisation. The equal opportunities statement, for example, promises that :

> In our City, with its large and varied population, rich in culture and tradition, we
> will take positive steps to change the current workforce profile so that it reflects
> the community we serve and makes full and effective use of all the human
> resources available,

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[i] Since the questionnaire survey results indicate that ethnic origin and gender are two collectivist criteria (Parkin, 1974) which may affect inclusion in personnel departments, the ethnic origin – ethnic minority or 'white' – and gender of those participants quoted is given throughout the case study analyses.

while a policy on race equality notes that

> The lack of black staff has a direct effect on the services provided for Council Tax payers and user groups and the present imbalance of skills, knowledge and inter-cultural competence detracts from the effectiveness of our service delivery.

Thus, according to the equal opportunities statement, the council's aim is 'to ensure that all members of the community are able to exercise their rights to services and employment'.

The election of ethnic minority councillors is also seen by some interviewees as a significant factor in the development of Town Council's equal opportunities strategies. One ethnic minority woman, for example, argues that

> *We've had a number of politicians who are black,..... so there's a lot of...... awareness now, from, at least this public organisation, of black people, and like directors have to react to those politicians as well, and they ask a number of probing questions.*

Personnel departments within the organisation have played an important role in the development and implementation of the equal opportunities strategies, albeit in line with the strategy set out by the councillors. According to the equal opportunities statement, the central personnel department has responsibility for developing new policies, collating organisation-wide information relating to the policies, and supporting and promoting relevant initiatives. The managers of directorate personnel departments meanwhile are to be the key sources of guidance and support on the equal opportunities policies within each directorate, with the directorate personnel departments also responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of the policy within the directorate, and delivering training on such issues. Each directorate also employs a person with responsibility for exploring and providing advice on the equal rights implications of employment and service provision developments, a position which is sometimes, but not necessarily, located within the directorate personnel and training department.

As the above indicates, the role of the central personnel department is quite different from that of the directorate personnel departments, and the specific positions contained within the departments are therefore also different. Within the central personnel department, positions are largely divided between - to use Tyson's (1987) terminology - 'architect' roles, involving policy development for the whole organisation, and 'clerk of works' administrative positions, whereas the directorate personnel departments retain a more 'contracts manager' role, assisting line managers with training, recruitment and disciplinary issues. As noted in chapter three, such fragmentation of personnel roles has implications for individuals' ability to pursue linear personnel careers within a given organisation.

Another factor affecting personnel careers in Town Council is the fact that the organisation is contracting, and there are consequently few opportunities to enter or progress within the personnel and training units. In spite of an organisational policy to advertise all vacancies externally, those vacancies which do arise are filled by redeployees where suitable redeployees are available.

Ethnic Origin and Inclusion in Personnel Departments in Town Council
The case study of Town Council supports the findings of the exploratory questionnaire survey in revealing that being categorised as of ethnic minority origin may in some instances aid inclusion in personnel departments in Town Council. Interviewees indicate that a number of ethnic minority personnel practitioners, including five of the interviewees themselves, originally entered personnel work through positive action placements designed to increase the proportion of people of ethnic minority origin in the council's personnel departments. The placements are funded by an organisation-wide 'race budget', for which any department, personnel or other, can bid. The budget can also be used to fund other positive action initiatives to enhance the employment of ethnic minority staff, such as training for existing employees. The positive action placements the interviewees were on were paid placements, often lasting two or more years, during which time they were supported in gaining relevant vocational qualifications.

Obtaining a positive action placement in a personnel department appears to guarantee inclusion in a permanent personnel management position in Town Council. Although legally positive action placements should not involve giving jobs to people on the grounds of ethnic origin, and, according to the managers interviewed, these placements are only temporary, those who have been employed on them argue that they have always been on permanent contracts, supporting Jewson and Mason's contention that 'radical' policies often masquerade under a 'liberal' disguise (Jewson and Mason, 1986). One ex-positive action trainee (ethnic minority female), for example, states that:

I've always been on a permanent contract... That's how they used to employ because in days gone by there was always positions created or somebody left..'

Indeed, another woman (who categorises herself as 'white') argues explicitly that

[It is] often illegal positive action, it's not just positive action in terms of training, it's an actual conscious decision to promote black people into jobs because they're black,

while a male interviewee (again 'white') congratulates the authority for having *a 'race budget which can positively discriminate for our staff'.*

These positive action placements, for which being categorised as being of ethnic minority origin is an essential criteria, are operated by Town Council in order to implement the afore-mentioned equal opportunities policies and to demonstrate that implementation to ethnic minority councillors. As the ethnic minority origin woman, cited above, argues, such councillors have the power not only to influence the development of policies to improve employment opportunities for ethnic minority origin people locally - which according to the equal opportunities statement include the setting of targets relating to recruitment, training and promotion - but also to question departments' performance in relation to those targets. This, according to a female 'white' personnel practitioner, leads to the

Bend over backwards syndrome of doing too much, [managers are] actually still discriminating, but it's like out of fear of, fear of being a discriminator makes people discriminate and do things that are unequal under the guise of positive action, it's often illegal.

Indeed, both of the above interviewees claim that it is that political environment, resulting from the election of ethnic minority councillors, which has led to a greater emphasis on eradicating race inequality than gender inequality: *'It's currently high profile.... '* the latter interviewee argues, *'there's a lot more brownie points to be gained at the moment if you are seen to be doing things for the ethnic community. '*

Some respondents also argue that being categorised as of ethnic minority origin is, as a consequence, not only a criterion for initial inclusion in personnel work, but can also help to get jobs enriched and upgraded. One ethnic minority woman argues that two ethnic minority personnel assistants in the central personnel department – one male and one female - have been put onto career grades to ensure that ethnic minority staff are not on the lowest grades of the department, and have been sponsored to do qualifications which are not necessary for their work; again to demonstrate the department's commitment to training ethnic minority staff.

Indeed, given the above-noted division of central personnel department work into 'architect' and 'clerk of works' roles and the subsequent loss of a linear career path from one to the other, the only way in which the managers in that department can show that they are developing their ethnic minority staff - all of whom were originally in 'clerk of works' positions- is by devising new career grades, regardless of whether these meet the needs of the department's work or not. Indeed, it is suggested that the promotions given to the two ethnic minority personnel assistants are not only unnecessary for the work of the department, but actually hamper it, one 'white' female member of the department expressing annoyance that the promotions have removed her administrative support.

The need for departments to be seen to be meeting the organisation's equal opportunities targets gives ethnic minority personnel staff in the departments two particular strategies for furthering their careers and overcoming exclusion. One is to threaten that they will leave; another is to threaten to complain to someone outside the department: a particularly potent threat, given that the organisation has a recent and highly embarrassing history of race discrimination tribunal cases. The two ethnic

minority personnel assistants cited in the preceding paragraphs both used the latter strategy to gain their enhanced inclusion:

If you've brought it up a few times and they know you're getting and you might take it further, that's when they get scared,...... if they think oh they might take an I.T. out or they might go to see someone else something gets done straight away,

the woman notes, while the man reports that he pushed for more advanced work for two years, before deciding *'I'm going straight to the top, and that's when things started to happen'.*

However, although on the surface being categorised as of ethnic minority origin appears to facilitate inclusion in personnel management positions, closer examination supports the finding of the exploratory questionnaire survey that this inclusion is in fact often limited, due to the existence of the kinds of 'subtle' and 'covert' mechanisms noted in chapter two (c.f. Benokraitis and Feagin, 1995). For example, one 'white' female interviewee comments that:

I've seen people be appointed on the basis of colour who were not adequate to the job and then ... they've paid the price, which isn't any good for them.

This interviewee also argues that

They [managers] often do appoint people who can't cope with posts and then give them inadequate support to do it, which kind of, I mean there is a deliberate setting up to fail sometimes.

An example of this *'setting up to fail'* is the case of the male ethnic minority personnel assistant in the central personnel department, cited above, who obtained more challenging work by *'going straight to the top'* with his complaint. He reports that

When it came to the bit about they give me a number of projects they started off with sixteen. And I said this is well, this is a bit too much for me. What I was really asking for was to work alongside someone and ... then go off on my own little tangent and do my own project work. I felt they'd put me in at the deep end and said right, swim out this one because you've been asking for it.

Exploiting managers' fear of being accused of race discrimination may have gained him more challenging work, but failed to gain him the support necessary to do it. It is therefore not as successful a strategy as it might initially appear.

'Containment' (Benokraitis and Feagin, 1995) is another type of covert discrimination that the research reveals within Town Council. Many of the ethnic minority personnel practitioners in Town Council specialise in issues related to equal opportunities, partly out of a particular interest in these issues, but also partly because those are the opportunities made available to them. One 'white' male personnel manager cites the example of an ethnic minority man who was moved from a directorate personnel department into a job managing section 11 provision, which *'you might say ultimately [is] a bit of a dead end route '*:

> *If I'd been able to write their career path it would have been stay in personnel*
> *you, but management have found them a niche somewhere else*

he argues. Another ethnic minority man in a directorate personnel department reports that he was *'headhunted'* to get involved in a *'black workers into management'* initiative, and has recently been assigned a role on *'a very very high profile initiative...* *involving publicity around the section 11 funding'*, both roles being specifically related to ethnic minority employees. Although being categorised as of ethnic minority origin is sometimes a criterion for inclusion in personnel management positions, therefore, the evidence indicates that the inclusion afforded is often different from and more marginalised than that afforded to non-ethnic minority colleagues.

The findings suggest that a key reason for this different treatment is the fact that managers are often unwilling to take risks on people they categorise as being of ethnic minority origin. A number of interviewees point out that being *'let loose'* ('white' male manager, central personnel department) is important for people to progress within personnel. That manager explains that:

> *In my career, when I was their [ethnic minority employees'] age, somebody gave*
> *me the break... Part of it's letting go and being able to live with the mistakes that*
> *I certainly made...*

His comments suggest that it is the extent to which managers trust staff or believe them capable, rather than ethnic origin per se, which is a key factor in the decision to 'let go': it is harder to 'let go', he argues, because

The stakes are also higher [than when he was young] because of local government and the services we provide... so there's a lot more issues around who are we, how effective are we, there's a little bit of covering our backsides... which restrains people, you can't make mistakes.

Thus, in accordance with the models of trust discussed in chapter two, the findings suggest that ethnic categorisations affects the degree to which individuals in Town Council are trusted not to make mistakes and, indeed, not to cause trouble in other ways also. Thus two ethnic minority staff (one male and one female) in the central personnel department claim that they have been falsely accused of fiddling their working hours - accusations which they claim have never been levelled at their 'white' colleagues. Another ethnic minority woman from a directorate personnel department, asked if her ethnic origin has affected her career in any way, responds:

It's not stopped me from progressing, except perhaps, as I say, people look at me and think can she deal with this, but once I've opened my mouth they tend to change their minds.

Another male ethnic minority personnel practitioner comments that

Personally I think if it was a white person with me working... I'd have to show more, that's the sort of feeling I get all the time, I'd have to show more that I'm capable of doing things, the white person wouldn't.

The response of another ethnic minority male personnel practitioner suggests that this may be because the alternative perspectives offered by ethnic minority personnel practitioners are not valued by their 'white' managers:

Any human being will see a different side, but I think quite often sometimes in personnel a white man doesn't see that, and a white man doesn't see that, but a black man sees it... The effects are invariably that I could really contribute to this, I could make a valuable contribution, but I'm not being used. Why?

Indeed, several interviewees argue that many managers are scared of ethnic minority staff: one ethnic minority ex-personnel practitioner (male), who has worked in both central and directorate personnel departments, argues that managers treat ethnic minority staff differently from 'white' staff because *They're scared to approach black staff where they have a concern*', something with which the 'white' male manager of another personnel department concurs. Another ethnic minority man comments that:

> *I think any black potential is seen as a threat rather than as something that can*
> *be harvested and developed to benefit the organisation.*

Ethnic origin therefore affects inclusion, as suggested in chapter two, because it affects the extent to which an individual is trusted to behave in particular ways and not present a threat.

The research indicates, therefore, that being of ethnic minority origin is an asset of mixed value in personnel departments in Town Council. On the one hand, it sometimes facilitates inclusion in the personnel departments in the first place, or is a criterion for access to training or promotion opportunities. On the other hand, the inclusion afforded is often limited, in terms of the kinds of roles and responsibilities ethnic minority staff are allowed by managers, and the trust they are afforded - trust which is important for inclusion in more senior personnel positions.

That the ethnic minority personnel practitioners interviewed appreciate the complex effect of their ethnic origins is revealed by their careful positioning of themselves in relation to ethnic categories. On a number of occasions, the ethnic minority personnel practitioners interviewed seek to de-emphasise their ethnic origin, distancing themselves from other ethnic minority people by referring to them in the third person:

> *I'd prefer to work with under-represented groups, and help **them** get into*
> *employment* (my highlight)

one ethnic minority woman comments, while an ethnic minority origin man notes that:

*For the **black** people in the organisation [a review of equal opportunities] didn't*
*say anything that wasn't known. And that's the whole point, **they** already knew*
the whole of it (my highlight).

Another ethnic minority man comments that

I've had to prove things that I can do, that I can do it. I don't know whether it's
the colour or I don't know whether it's just the way they work as management.... I
think that's a pressure because I'm black at the same time, I think that's a bit
personal..'.

His first statement is that it is *'the colour'*, with no indication of what the colour is, or of
its relationship to him; only later does he 'admit' that he is 'black', showing his
discomfort by noting that *'that's a bit personal'*.[ii]

Also significant is the reluctance of many of the ethnic minority origin ex-positive action
interviewees to 'admit' that they were initially recruited onto positive action posts.
Three of the five ex-positive action recruits (including both males) never acknowledge
this in their interviews; one of the men, when asked if his ethnic origin has in any way
affected his career, responds:

I hope not. The, I don't know, as I said, I got into personnel through default. I
hope I have not had any help or been promoted because of my ethnic origin.

His discomfort at being asked the question is apparent from the dislocated speech, and
the fact that he first obtained his position through a positive action scheme (according to
his manager and the person in charge of the scheme) is apparently forgotten. The fourth
ex-positive action recruit (a woman) admits that she was recruited via the scheme, but
still distances herself from it and those involved in it, stating that:

*The council took on... recruits as a positive action. I think **they** were 16.to 18*
year olds, that's how I got into the council [my highlight].

Again, the use of the third person is significant. Indeed, perhaps tellingly, the only ex-
positive action trainee (another woman) who is comfortable 'admitting' to the fact (she

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[ii] The fact that the interviewer was 'white' might also be a factor here.

explains that she *'started work aged, what 21, which was a positive action training scheme'*) is also the only one who is no longer trying to pursue a personnel career, having been redeployed to another function within the organisation.

Whilst being categorised as of ethnic minority origin may facilitate initial inclusion in personnel via positive action, therefore, it tends to hinder further inclusion in personnel departments, and is therefore downplayed. As one 'white' male personnel manager comments:

> *We've got more [ethnic minority people] in senior positions, or with more experience now, but possibly just unfortunately more aware, wrapped into their career move.... rather than into their community.*

Being categorised as of ethnic minority origin, and developing a career in personnel in Town Council, it appears, are judged by many to be incompatible.

As the above quotation indicates, some people commonly categorised as of ethnic minority origin are able to overcome the negative effects of that categorisation, if only by resisting it, and win inclusion. Indeed, the case study reveals two examples in which ethnic minority interviewees (both male) believe that they have received less support and been excluded from development opportunities because of their ethnic origin, yet they have colleagues who are also commonly categorised as of ethnic minority origin who have received that support, again suggesting that the latter individuals have been able to draw upon other criteria to win inclusion. Interestingly, one of the employees who believes that he has received little support himself attributes this to the fact that he took his line manager to industrial tribunal because of an incident related to his ethnic origin, thus drawing attention to his ethnic origin and, through his behaviour, confirming expectations that he presents a threat to the manager.

Other Criteria Affecting Inclusion in Personnel Departments in Town Council:
a. Past Experience
Past experience, unsurprisingly, is also revealed to be significant in achieving inclusion in personnel departments in Town Council. Previous experience is always in some way relevant to the position appointed to; however, the precise nature of this relevant

experience varies enormously. Many of the junior staff entered administrative positions in the organisation's personnel departments from the organisation's Youth Training scheme, which they entered as school leavers; one junior interviewee has previous experience of non-personnel administrative work in another public sector organisation, another has worked in personnel administration in the private sector, and another has been on a positive action training scheme in personnel in another local authority.

At more senior (officer) levels many people have been promoted internally, either from other personnel positions in the organisation or from functions which require similar skills to those required by the personnel position, such as youth training posts. Indeed, while the level of redeployment at the time of the research may have increased the degree of internal recruitment, examination of career histories reveals that this pattern of internal recruitment existed even before the high levels of redeployment. In the personnel department in the social services directorate the use of internal recruitment has led to the appointment of two ethnic minority men, both from positions elsewhere in the directorate where they were providing youth training for ethnic minority youths.

There are some people at officer level who have been recruited externally: for example, an ethnic minority man in another directorate personnel department entered an officer-level post from a skilled manual position outside the organisation, in which he had gained experience of being a trade union officer. However, he too has subsequently been promoted internally. At management level most people have been promoted not only from within the organisation, but from within its personnel function, although one recent appointment (a 'white' man) has come from a personnel career in private industry via a lecturing position.

In spite of the great variety of previous experience some general patterns can be identified. Previous personnel experience is less important the more junior the position, and the more senior the position, the more likely the post holder is to have been recruited from within the organisation. At the most senior levels people have often been promoted from within the particular personnel department. Thus, although individuals win inclusion on the basis of a variety of experience (as in Martin's, 1998, 'nmc bricoleur' model), there is a tendency for organisational careers to be more important

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the more senior the position (c.f. Brown, 1982) and at the most senior levels, both cultural and organisational assets (Savage et al, 1992) are usually required for inclusion.

b. Qualifications

Given the personnel occupation's professional body's attempts (discussed in chapter three) to control the occupation through its professional credentials, it might be expected that qualifications - and particularly professional ones - would be significant in determining access to personnel positions in Town Council.

There are a number of cases in Town Council when professional qualifications have had some impact upon personnel careers, although this is mainly through being a requirement for progression to a higher grade within the same job, rather than for access to the position itself. The research uncovers only one recent personnel officer position for which graduateship of the professional body was an essential criteria in recruitment to the position.

Reflecting the aforementioned destandardisation of practice across the organisation, requirements for professional qualifications are not consistently applied across the organisation; indeed, they are not even consistently applied within individual personnel and training units. In some units, it is a personnel officer's grade which is tied to the achievement of graduateship of the professional body, in another it is a more junior personnel assistant's. Moreover, although the grade of that particular personnel assistant (an ethnic minority origin man) is linked to professional qualifications, that of another personnel assistant in the same unit (an ethnic minority origin woman) is linked to obtaining a degree, while in the same unit, and not long before, a 'white' woman was recruited to a personnel officer position (a more senior position than a personnel assistant) without professional qualifications, and failed to receive sponsorship to take the personnel qualification when she requested it.

Indeed, the requirement for some people to obtain professional qualifications in order to move up their grade appears in some instances to exist in order to provide an opportunity for progression, rather than because it is necessary for the position. For

example, it was written into the 'career grade' of one male ethnic minority origin personnel assistant after he asked for an opportunity to develop:

The director and one of the directorate personnel training officers sat together, they listened to me, what my plans were, what my ideas were, and then I went away and they designed a career path for me,

this path involving taking and passing the professional qualification.

Access to professional training (and thus to the possession of professional qualifications) is often dependent upon ethnic categorisations, due to managers' desire to be seen to be developing ethnic minority staff, and the existence of the race budget which can be used to pay part of the costs of sending ethnic minority origin staff on such courses. In the central personnel department, as previously indicated, the personnel assistant who has received sponsorship for professional education is an ethnic minority man on a positive action post, while the more senior personnel practitioner who has been unable to gain sponsorship is a 'white' woman[iii]. As the latter argues:

You look at training resources for everybody in your whole area and why did these two people alone get it [the other had been sponsored to study for a business degree]? It's quite legal and acceptable to say well I gave it to those two because they're black.

It is the expectation of those who take the professional qualification that it will lead to an enhancement of their responsibilities, if not to a promotion. One respondent (ethnic minority male) explains that:

I did my BTEC National, passed that, I graduated [IPD]... I said [to the managers] I've got to do something other than what I'm doing now.

Indeed, one of the key recommendations of a 'black workers' group', set up to look at ways of overcoming barriers preventing such people entering management, is to provide resources and opportunities for those staff to participate in management training courses and professional qualification courses.

[iii] Possible effects of gender will be discussed in a later section

However, while two interviewees (one a 'white' woman and the other an ethnic minority origin man) who do not have the professional personnel qualification express the view that this is a *'setback'*, particularly if they wish to move to personnel positions outside Town Council, there is little evidence that possessing the qualification actually does improve people's career opportunities *within* the organisation. As indicated above, in most cases people are required to study for professional credentials *after*, rather than *before*, being given a particular position. In the one case in which graduateship of the professional body was made a requirement for entry to a trainee personnel officer position that requirement was apparently a means of ringfencing a position for an applicant (an ethnic minority origin woman) who had already been selected on the basis of other criteria. This is made apparent by the fact that, when a ('white' male) manager with the qualification also applied, he was not appointed instead of the preferred applicant but as well as - another post was created to accommodate both. As the ethnic minority female applicant states:

I mean, personally I know it was more or less aimed merely at me, but there was

also another individual who had done the [IPD] but he was already a manager,

so nobody expected him to apply, you wouldn't.

In fact, the findings suggest that degrees (in whatever subject) are more likely to lead to inclusion than professional qualifications, particularly in the central personnel department. This appears to be related to the nature of the work in this department, it being more concerned with policy and less with practice. Thus an unemployed graduate (ethnic minority female) has been given a full-time (unpaid) placement in the central personnel department, assisting with a number of important projects, although there are two paid employees (one ethnic minority man and one ethnic minority woman), one of whom is studying for the professional qualification, who have been promised such project work. This is apparently a frequent occurrence in this department: the ethnic minority man who has been overlooked reports that:

There was a number of graduates came up one time when I was saying, you know,

I want more challenging work, and they were given special projects, one were

[sic] given a project to do with graduate recruitment. I go out to a lot of

graduate fairs, it would be an ideal thing for me, I know what it's all about.

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There was other times when a teacher who'd just had a career change who wanted to do personnel work came in to do project work, he was white and he was given a real challenging project... They weren't paid projects... But even so they came into the department and they were doing more interesting work and more challenging work, that I'd been asking for, I said how come they're doing it and I'm not?

In spite of the interviewee's suggestion that the different treatment was due to ethnic origin, that is clearly not the explanation, or at least not the full explanation, since at least one of the unpaid workers who were given the projects was perceived to be of the same ethnic origin as the employee who was not given those opportunities. In fact, the one criterion that those unpaid workers had in common - they were of different ages, genders, and categorised into different ethnic groups - and which differentiated them from the interviewee who was overlooked, was that they were all graduates while he was not. This suggests that possession of a degree is the criterion for inclusion in those opportunities. Another ethnic minority origin woman in this department, who is being sponsored to do a degree rather than a professional qualification, also notes that

He [the manager] bends over backwards for me when it comes to this degree and he's really helped me... whereas [X] was doing the [IPD] and he's had a really completely different ball game.

c. Gender

Gender also influences inclusion in the personnel departments. Indeed, two female interviewees from different departments (one 'white', one of ethnic minority origin) both claim that gender is a more significant criterion than ethnic origin. *'I distinctly think that being a woman is more of a disadvantage than being black'*, the ethnic minority interviewee states. Both women argue that a key factor in this is the lack of pressure from councillors to improve opportunities for women, in contrast to the pressure to improve opportunities for people of ethnic minority origin, discussed above. Moreover, the ethnic minority woman points out that while ethnic minority, male politicians have been successful in getting support for race equality initiatives, there are *'no black women*

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politicians', and neither race equality nor sex equality initiatives *'consider the needs of black women. Not properly'.*

Another factor is perceived to be the preference of male managers to work with other men, even if these are of a different ethnic origin. Supporting the claims of Kanter (1993), Ibarra (1992) and Roper (1994) regarding networking with people of the same gender, one ethnic minority woman argues that:

> *It's the old boys network, isn't it? And I think probably white men find it better, because at the end of the day like it's easier to identify with their type, isn't it, and you can go for a drink together, you can do lots of things that women probably don't do.*

There is also evidence of gender influencing access to challenging tasks, and subsequently inclusion in more senior personnel positions. One female, ('white') interviewee describes how she was blocked from competing for a promotion because a male colleague was given the duties of the more senior position to cover; by the time it was decided to fill the vacancy he therefore had the expertise to do the job and she did not.

The findings suggest that being of the same gender as the manager can facilitate the inclusion of those commonly categorised as being of a different ethnic origin. Thus, in one example, a male, ethnic minority origin trainee is reported to have progressed quickly after the appointment of a 'white' male manager to head the department, because he *'got on well'* with him. The manager himself, speaking of the ex-trainee's rapid progression within the department, comments that:

> *I think I can take some credit for it, I mean [name], I think before I came was.... I think it was partly a female, I think it was a female dominated office at that time.*

The 'female domination' of the office is thus presented as a reason for the ethnic minority man's failure to progress before, and the ending of this domination - by the appointment of the 'white' male manager - is believed to have led to his rapid promotion.

Conversely, being of a different gender can lead to exclusion in spite of being categorised as being of the same ethnic origin as more senior people. For example one female ethnic minority interviewee, asked whether getting ethnic minority men into positions of power helps ethnic minority women, responds:

No, no, no, not at all. Not at all. I think a lot of black men see black women as more of a threat..... There's a few black men in this directorate who are the same level as I am, and I chair an officer group called the equal rights officer group, and honestly the black men there they give me more agro sometimes than anybody else really.... Now I'm not quite sure whether it's because it's me or whether because they've made it they don't want anybody else to make it, you know, or whether they don't want to be told by this little woman what to do.

As the interviewee herself recognises, there are several possible explanations for the failure of the ethnic minority men to cooperate with an ethnic minority woman in this situation. By being uncooperative in an equal rights group, these men are distancing themselves from the equal rights work which, as seen above, is often given to ethnic minority staff, and also - as the interviewee implies (*'they don't want anybody else to make it'*) - from other, junior ethnic minority employees in the organisation. In doing this, and in showing little respect for an ethnic minority female colleague, they are de-emphasising their ethnicity and asserting their difference from ethnic minority colleagues, and particularly from female ethnic minority colleagues, and hence emphasising their different gender.

Where the manager is female, however, the situation is reversed. One ethnic minority man reports that a male, ethnic minority origin colleague has a *'bad attitude - can't take instructions from women'*, an attitude which causes him problems given that the department manager is a 'white' woman. It is possibly not entirely coincidental that of the four ethnic minority people the interviewee has recruited during his time in the department, the two women, he claims, have been successful in their careers and the two men (including the colleague mentioned before) not. Again, where the individual's

gender is the same as the manager's, the negative implications of being categorised as being of a different ethnic origin have been avoided.

d. Age

The findings also indicate that age is a criterion of inclusion in the central personnel department, which contains a group of 'white' male managers who occupy most of the senior positions in the department, have worked together for a number of years, and are older than many other people in the department. As one of those managers notes: *'A lot of us here in this office have been around for 20 or more years'.*

One of the younger interviewees (who was of ethnic minority origin and female) refers to these managers as the

> *Old boys network in this office, they all stick together and we [referring to herself and an ethnic minority man of a similar age to herself] don't fit into that...*
> *They've all worked together like, I think, fifteen, twenty years, they've all been*
> *like together, and they're more like bosom buddies than anything else.*

Her network instead comprises the *'youngsters'*, which she defines as being herself, the ethnic minority male colleague of a similar age, and a 'white', female disabled officer. *'There's us three'* she states, *'it's like all the youngsters stick together'.* This group cuts across gender, ethnicity and disability categorisations: the key defining feature of it - and the criterion which differentiates its members from the rest of the department - is age.

However, the youngsters must bear some responsibility for their exclusion, since they themselves feel more comfortable with people of a similar age to themselves. As the interviewee continues:

> *We [the youngsters] feel.... you see you can't go to, even [manager's name] said*
> *treat me as a friend and I'll listen to your problems and you feel intimidated by*
> *him so you can't go to him. So it's like, you can't.... the people you're supposed*
> *to get the support from you just don't feel as though you can.*

The exclusion, the lack of support, therefore arises partly because she feels intimidated by the older manager, and so does not feel able to seek support from him in spite of his offer of help.

Interestingly, not all of the older people within the department are included in the most powerful group. One older, 'white' female officer who was excluded from a promotion opportunity, discussed in the section about gender, above, was excluded in spite of her age, perhaps because of her gender and outspokenness - she has organised women-only meetings in her department. Whilst being of a different age from those in positions of power therefore contributes to exclusion from the most powerful group in the central personnel department, in spite of similarities of gender or ethnicity, being of a similar age is not necessarily sufficient to overcome the negative effects of other criteria such as those, particularly where - as in the examples relating to ethnic origin, discussed above - the individual's actions draw attention to those 'negative' criteria.

e. Being 'Known'

However, as the responses quoted above indicate, age is not the only criterion around which membership of the so-called 'old boys network' in the central personnel department is based. Ethnic origin and gender are also perceived by interviewees to be significant, the group consisting entirely of 'white' males. So is the length of time that they have worked together; this is cited by both the younger ethnic minority interviewee and one of the managers himself.

Being 'known' to managers in this way is also perceived to help inclusion elsewhere in Town Council. One ethnic minority woman argues that being known to managers has helped ethnic minority individuals to gain permanent positions after temporary placements. She comments:

It's human nature, isn't it, and that's probably why it's difficult to get new people in, like if there's a person been with you, you know, because a person's been with us on positive action training so that's a black face you know, and if there's been an opening once, when they've nearly completed or six months after they completed their training and they apply for it, you know that person.... if it's a

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toss between two people then it's always subjective, and that's when your emotions come into force, isn't it, who you feel comfortable with, and that's probably one of the reasons why you try and recruit somebody who's like you or someone you know.

Being known to the manager, according to this interviewee, is significant because it enables the manager to be *'comfortable'* with the person, in other words, enables the manager to 'trust' that a person will not harm us (c.f. Gambetta, 1988). As noted in chapter two, trust may be based upon 'ascribed characteristics' (Good, 1988; Dasgupta, 1988) or upon repeated exchanges (Humphrey and Schmitz, 1996). Thus, whilst being *like* the manager in Town Council (for example in terms of ethnic categorisation, gender or age) may give rise to trust based upon ascribed characteristics, being *known* to the manager may give rise to trust on the basis of repeated exchanges. Being known to the relevant manager in Town Council, as the interviewee suggests, may therefore enable those who are categorised as being of a different ethnic origin from the manager to win inclusion.

Indeed, there is evidence that a job description and person specification for a vacancy in one personnel department have been drawn up to allow the inclusion of a 'white' male who has done temporary work in that department and is therefore known to the manager of the department. The person responsible for drawing up the person specification (an ethnic minority origin woman) comments that *'I can honestly say I think that job description has been written for [name of temporary worker].'* Moreover, she reports that when she tried to make a typing qualification an essential requirement for the position *'somebody said to me has [name] got that, and I said no, he goes well you can't put that.'*

The facts that the temporary worker are 'white' and male is perceived by some interviewees to be criteria in his inclusion. However, these interviewees are probably not aware that, when agreement was first gained to create a new post in the department it was offered informally to a female graduate of ethnic minority origin who had been working unpaid in the department, indicating again that 'being known' was the more

significant criterion. Indeed, at that point the post had been described by the 'white' male manager as a post *'for a graduate who is looking for a career in personnel management'* (which the person to whom it was initially offered was), a very different position from the administrative one finally created. Such is the desire of these Town Council personnel managers to recruit people they know, the research indicates, that they are willing to tailor a vacancy to suit those people rather than recruit somebody unknown to them.

f. Behaviour

Of course, being known to the manager is, in itself, not a sufficient criterion for winning inclusion or further inclusion in personnel departments. The behaviour which has been demonstrated while the manager gets to 'know' the individual is crucial. In many cases, unsurprisingly, being known to be 'able' to do the job, as a result of the behaviours one has demonstrated in the past, is necessary for inclusion. Thus one ethnic minority origin woman has been promoted, according to a 'white' male manager, because *'[she] has done everything that has been put forward'*, while an ethnic minority man has been promoted, according to his 'white' male manager, because *'he's met every challenge that's been put to him'.*

However, evidence of ability to do certain things is not the only behaviour upon which judgements regarding inclusion are based. An illustration of this is the case of one ethnic minority woman in the central personnel department who was refused professional training when she first asked, not; according to a 'white' female colleague, because she was not able, but because she was *'bolshy black. You have to be grateful'*. It was, the colleague suggests, the woman's behaviour towards her managers, rather than her ability to perform her job role itself, which led to initial exclusion from the development opportunity.

In another case in a directorate personnel department, an ethnic minority origin man is described by a more senior ethnic minority, male colleague as someone *'bright, full of potential, who I know will not get on'* because *'he rubs up the system the wrong way'*. Success in Town Council, the colleague argues, depends on an individual's behaviour in relation to *'how you deal with the problems'*. The person who *'will not get on'*

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responded to what he perceived as racial harassment by writing directly to the person concerned, rather than informing his manager, and was then reprimanded for sending personal messages on official stationary. As a result of this incident he eventually took out a grievance and then a tribunal case against his manager. As that person himself explains:

I believe in managers being accountable, that makes me a person who questions... I believe in asserting myself and speaking out and putting forward my ideas... I think management basically saw that as a threat.

By contrast, an ethnic minority female in the same department had promotion opportunities created for her. The explanation for her inclusion (as for her colleague's exclusion) lies partly in the way she has behaved when faced with problems. For example, when she was bored with her job she did not complain but, as she describes it, *'sat there with no work to do'* until encouraged to apply for other positions; when she completed her professional qualifications but was given no opportunities to put what she had learnt into practice she reports that

[I] had a couple of words with the unit manager and said, look, I've done my [IPD], I'm happy that you've helped me... so now... give me the opportunities to actually put it into practice.

After she was given a personnel officer position she again found that she was not being given work, and raised this again discretely and politely, asking, at the end of a personnel officers' meeting *'Can I say something please?'* The other officers' response, she reports, was *'What? she doesn't normally complain'* they were *'quite stunned, then very apologetic'*. In contrast to the two individuals cited in the two preceding paragraphs, she is concerned to show sensitivity to the managers' feelings, rarely complaining and, when she does, doing it in a discrete and private way, being careful to show gratitude at the same time.

This behaviour is also apparent in the transcription of her research interview. Again unlike her colleague, she does not accuse the other personnel officers of discrimination

in their behaviour towards her (although she comments at one point that *'age does come into it'*), but rather provides excuses for their actions:

> *Really it was just they didn't want to throw me in at the deep end, which was understandable, but they know my point of view now, so they're trying.*

Such discrete, non-accusatory and loyal behaviour does not present a threat to the other personnel officers and managers, and so, as the literature on trust discussed in chapter two would suggest (c.f. Humphrey and Schmitz, 1996), lead to her winning the trust of the department's personnel officers and thus to inclusion in their ranks and their weekly meetings. The interviewee's description of these meetings as *'very confidential, closed door, talk about who you want and it won't go any further'* highlights the need for trust before such inclusion will be allowed. An individual's demonstration that he or she can do the job is therefore clearly significant in achieving inclusion or further inclusion in personnel departments in Town Council, but so is the demonstration that they can be trusted not to harm their colleagues and managers.

Summary

The findings from Town Council make clear that varying degrees of inclusion can be achieved, ranging from initial inclusion in junior, low- responsibility or marginalised positions, through to inclusion in powerful and influential positions or groups - the 'old boys' network' in the central personnel department, for example, or the personnel officers' group cited above. The findings also reveal similar criteria of inclusion across the four personnel departments, in spite of the devolution of authority over recruitment and development decisions. The only key differences are found in the central personnel department, in which degree qualifications and age are particularly significant, the former because of the type of work undertaken by the department, and the latter because of the age structure of those employed in it.

Ethnic categorisation is revealed to be one of a number of criteria affecting the degree of inclusion achieved, with being categorised as of ethnic minority origin sometimes having a positive and sometimes a negative effect. The positive effect is largely due to policy decisions arising from the political need for the organisation to be seen not to be

discriminating against people categorised as of ethnic minority origin. The negative effects, by contrast, arise from the actions of individual managers.

The other particularly significant criteria, besides ethnic origin, are previous experience, gender, being known, and behaving in ways which demonstrate ability and / or trustworthiness to those in power, and, in the central personnel department in particular, age and degree qualifications. Whilst being categorised as of ethnic minority origin can sometimes have a positive effect upon inclusion in personnel departments in Town Council through the effects of organisational policies, where individual managers (who are all 'white') have more discretion, all criteria which suggest difference from them (including ethnic categorisations) hinder inclusion.

However, in some instances, as has been indicated, people have been able to overcome the exclusionary effects of criteria which indicate difference from managers by drawing on other criteria. Thus people categorised as of ethnic minority origin have sometimes gained inclusion in spite of their ethnic categorisation on the basis of other criteria such as gender, or the demonstration of desired behaviours, past experience and qualifications. Some interviewees' own awareness of this is apparent in the way in which they seek to emphasise certain criteria and distance themselves from others.

These criteria, however, are not unrelated. As the discussion of treatment discrimination in chapter two, and the discussion of 'collectivist' criteria such as ethnic origin and gender in this chapter, indicate, possession of those apparently 'individualist' criteria (Parkin, 1974) - previous experience, qualifications, 'being known', and having demonstrated desired behaviours - may be at least partly contingent upon perceived possession of 'collective' criteria such as ethnic origin, gender, and age. As has been argued in chapter two, trust is based firstly upon 'ascribed characteristics' and only subsequently upon 'repeated exchanges'; thus the characteristics ascribed may affect the opportunities people have to demonstrate their trustworthiness through 'being known' and behaving in desired, non-threatening ways. Similarly, inclusion in previous experience and qualification opportunities may be influenced by such characteristics.

Nevertheless, some people who are categorised as being of a different ethnic origin from managers have been able to win inclusion in personnel departments in Town Council, and in some cases in relatively senior positions in those departments, because of the variety of criteria upon which inclusion may be based, the fact that those 'individual' criteria are only partly contingent upon ethnic categorisations, and the further fact that, in some instances, being categorised as of ethnic minority origin does itself afford a degree of inclusion. Thus the other criteria individuals are able to demonstrate, and the success with which they are able to identify which criteria will afford inclusion in a given situation and emphasise those rather than others, are crucial.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CASE STUDY FINDINGS 2 - MANUF.CO.

Manuf.Co. is an American-owned manufacturing company with a number of plants located in different geographical areas of Britain and a national head office. For the purposes of the research only the British operations are examined, and the label Manuf.Co. refers only to the company in Britain. This is a valid approach given that authority over personnel policies and procedures has been largely devolved to national level. Equal opportunities policies, for example, developed in Britain rather being imposed from the United States. In total, the British part of the company employs approximately 38,000 people, of whom around 9500 are in non-manual positions.

Manuf.Co. is located in an industrial sector which is traditionally male-dominated, with only 3.5% of the manual staff being female. However, 18% of the manual staff are categorised as of ethnic minority origin, at least partly due to the fact that many of the plants are located in areas of high ethnic minority population. Indeed, those plants located in predominantly 'white' areas have much smaller proportions of ethnic minority manual staff. The ethnic diversity of manual staff has raised the profile of racial equality within the organisation, leading to, for example, the establishment of equal opportunities committees in each plant, although again these are more active in those plants with the highest proportion of ethnic minority employees.

Women are better represented in non-manual than in manual positions, comprising just over 10% of non-manual staff. People categorised as of ethnic minority origin, by contrast, are worse represented in such positions, comprising only 2% of non-manual staff in the organisation. Ethnic minority women comprise only 0.2% of all non-manual staff.

Personnel departments in Manuf.Co. are affected by the organisation's history of strong trade unionism and industrial action. This has affected the nature of the personnel work done in the organisation, ensuring that it remains in the 'industrial relations tradition' (c.f. Tyson and Fell, 1986). In line with Armstrong's (1984) argument, the fulfilment of this industrial relations role has ensured that personnel departments are relatively powerful in the organisation.

Each plant has its own personnel department which deals with local employee relations, training and organisation development issues, with a large personnel department in the head office dealing with national personnel issues. Recruitment to administrative personnel positions is devolved to local level, people usually being promoted from manual or secretarial positions elsewhere in the plant. Recruitment to non-administrative personnel positions - which Manuf.Co. terms 'professional' personnel posts - is, by contrast, centralised, applicants being assessed against centrally-defined competences through a variety of centrally-organised selection tools including assessment centres. Promotion and career development decisions for these 'professional' personnel staff are also made centrally, by a personnel development committee comprising all senior personnel managers. The centralisation of 'professional' personnel staff's career development means that these staff are much more likely to move to different parts of the organisation than the administrative staff.

Routes into administrative and 'professional' personnel positions are therefore very different, and movement from the one into the other is limited. Although in previous years some people have moved from administrative to 'professional' personnel positions, almost all new 'professional' personnel positions are filled by graduates from outside the organisation. Those people who have moved into 'professional' positions from administrative ones, moreover, are usually located outside the main 'professional' personnel career path and do not receive the same career development or promotion opportunities. Given this thesis's focus upon specialist personnel careers, the research in Manuf.Co. focuses predominantly upon the 'professional' personnel positions.

Ethnic Origin and Inclusion in Personnel Departments in Manuf.Co.

According to Manuf.Co.'s records, at the time of the research there are no ethnic minority origin people amongst the one hundred or so administrative personnel staff in Manuf.Co. However, five out of approximately one hundred 'professional' personnel staff in the organisation are categorised as of ethnic minority origin, two of these being in managerial positions. 4% of those recruited to professional personnel positions over the previous eight years have been of ethnic minority origin, some of whom have since left the organisation.

The organisation has adopted a number of policies and practices which interviewees believe limit the possible impact of ethnic origin upon initial inclusion in these 'professional' personnel positions. One factor often cited is the centrally-controlled recruitment process. Interviewees reveal that all recruits to professional personnel positions follow the same process which seeks to match applicants to pre-defined competences, involving a bio-data screening aid, an interview, tests, and an assessment centre. Because it is recognised that these tests might be harder for people who speak English as a second language to pass the manager in charge of recruitment reports that all candidates are given a guide to psychometric tests in advance, and decisions are not based upon the test results alone. Thus - it is claimed - a person who fails the test can still be recruited if his or her interview score is good. Nevertheless, failure in the test does have a negative effect upon the assessment of an individual's potential, and has to be compensated for by a good interview.

As a consequence of the central control over recruitment to 'professional' personnel posts in Manuf.Co., individual managers lack the discretion over the recruitment process - and thus initial inclusion - found in Town Council. Interviewees argue that - as suggested in chapter two (c.f. Jewson et al, 1990) - this reduces the likelihood of discrimination on the grounds of ethnic origin. Asked if ethnic origin affects careers in personnel in Manuf.Co. one 'white' female interviewee responds, for example:

Not at the recruitment stage.... our literature is very open and honest and clear about the types of skills it wants rather than the types of people it wants.... I haven't had cause to say God that person didn't get that job because....

an opinion with which interviewees of ethnic minority origin concurred.

However, the research findings suggest that there are some ways in which ethnic categorisation may affect inclusion in those 'professional' personnel positions, notably through the way in which Manuf.Co. contacts potential recruits to those posts and, relatedly, through recruitment to its sponsorship programme. Although one (ethnic minority female) personnel manager argues that the organisation recruits *'from all over the place, polytechnics and universities and just everywhere. And I think that diversity*

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of recruitment is bound to pick up a wider bag of people', a 'white' woman more closely involved in the graduate recruitment process states that *'we tend to go to specific universities where we've been successful in the past, we don't tend to go to the inner city ones, where you get more black students'*. Thus people of ethnic minority origin may have reduced opportunities to apply for the vacancies.

Sponsored students are similarly drawn from that limited range of universities, and one 'white' woman argues that *'You tend probably to get white males [recruited to sponsorships].... because it's the white universities we're going to'*. Inclusion in sponsorships is significant because the sponsored students are given vacation work in the organisation and, as the 'white' woman comments:

> *Although nobody can get into [permanent positions in]the company whether they've been a vacation trainee or not without going through an assessment centre, because [the vacation trainees have] had three months in the company they are better equipped [to succeed in the assessment centre].*

Indeed, she notes that *'some of the intake, especially when we've had years when we've had very low recruitment, have all been through sponsored students'*. Being excluded from sponsorships can therefore have knock-on effects upon the ability to win inclusion in permanent posts.

However, it is not only the type of universities from which these students are recruited which may make it more difficult for people of ethnic minority origin to win inclusion, but also the fact that, unlike recruitment to the 'professional' personnel posts themselves, recruitment to vacation positions is entirely at the discretion of individual managers. This, one 'white' female interviewee argues, makes it possible for individual managers to use criteria such as ethnic categorisation at this stage.

Manuf.Co. is, however, making attempts to attract more ethnic minority applicants to its personnel positions through positive action. For example, advertisements for personnel positions have been placed in the journal of the personnel profession and two newspapers targeted at people of ethnic minority origin. The organisation has also been involved in a scheme in which one of the ethnic minority origin personnel managers

mentored ethnic minority youths. Unlike in Town Council, however, the key criteria at the point of selection are still related to degree qualifications and competences, rather than ethnic origin. It is notable that, when some managers attempted to use positive action to recruit to another professional group and failed to find a candidate who met the organisation's standard criteria they did not appoint anyone.

Interviewees also perceive that ethnic origin is not a major factor in subsequent personnel careers in Manuf.Co. While individual managers have a little more discretion over promotion decisions than initial appointments, that discretion is still limited and much of the authority is retained centrally, through the afore-mentioned mechanism of the personnel development committee, which reviews each personnel promotion vacancy as it arises and identifies suitable candidates to fill it. These are then interviewed and only the final selection decision is made by the manager of the position concerned.

Indeed, the findings reveal that personnel managers strive to ensure that decisions take no account of ethnic origin. For example, an 'Asian' man was moved to a position in a plant in which there are few people of ethnic minority origin, and one of the managers – a 'white' man - involved in the decision reports that there was *'No particular reason for doing it, it was an operational need, and I've not really gone out of my way to make sure that he's okay'*. Similarly, unlike in Town Council, involvement in equal opportunities work does not appear to be influenced by ethnic origin, since the position of equal opportunities manager has been held firstly by a 'white' man, then an ethnic minority woman, and then a 'white' woman. Indeed, one of the ethnic minority women interviewed comments that *'I don't think I've been treated any differently'* (because of her ethnic categorisation) while another notes that

I've very rarely seen people really be, have any detrimental mark held against them for either gender or race, and there may be some Black employees aren't well thought of, but usually, well, there's always business reasons for that, or operating reasons for that.

Nevertheless, the preceding quotation suggests that, on occasion, ethnic categorisation may be a factor. This is supported by the comments of a 'white' woman manager who reports that

One of my personnel officers, who was an Afro-Caribbean man, got, not harassed, was treated less fairly by one of the managers, who'd never really talk to him, would always talk to me, stuff like that, we got that sorted out, now I don't know whether that is a common thing or not, the guy went on to have the same sort of career progression as anybody else.

Thus ethnic minority personnel staff in Manuf.Co. may experience treatment discrimination at the hands of people outside the personnel department. However, if *'sorted out'* appropriately this need not have a negative impact upon their careers.

The way in which this particular situation was resolved is instructive. The ethnic minority man involved did not wish to take formal action or involve his manager - *'he actually said to me that he would handle it'* his manager reports. In part, this may reflect the ethnic minority individual's desire to demonstrate the ability to handle all situations and conceal any weaknesses (even if resulting from someone else's racism), and this is discussed further below. In addition, drawing attention to problems arising from ethnic categorisations would have drawn attention to that categorisation, something which ethnic minority personnel staff (and other ethnic minority staff in Manuf.Co.), like some in Town Council, seek to avoid.

Thus, as in Town Council, ethnic minority interviewees in Manuf.Co. often distance themselves from other people of ethnic minority origin: for example, one ethnic minority (female) personnel manager speaks of ethnic minority staff in the third person, noting that *'they [ethnic minority origin employees] felt a bit vulnerable'* and that *'I don't think they are, that ethnic minorities are progressing at a slower rate than their white counterparts'* (my highlight). Significantly, the vulnerability referred to in the first of these quotations arose from the possibility of a mentoring scheme just for ethnic minority staff: the proposal, she argues, made ethnic minority employees feel *'vulnerable being the only group to have mentors'* because

It's not a particularly high percentage of the population on the staff side.... and it's better to have things.... where fair practices operate without them being so overt, so you don't feel like you've been singled out.

That desire not to be *'singled out'* on the basis of ethnic categorisations is also apparent in ethnic minority staff's responses to attempts to use them as role models for ethnic minority applicants. As one 'white' woman manager notes:

We encourage our .... black managers to go out and do the sponsoring, but you know, it's very difficult, we do have quite a lot of our black employees that have said to us I'm sick and tired of being the token,

while another ('white' male) reports that his

[ethnic minority colleagues] are sick of being treated as tokens, trotted out... at every opportunity... I feel very embarrassed going and asking them... a couple have said they don't want to know anymore.

The evidence suggests, therefore, that ethnic origin does not have a major impact upon initial recruitment to 'professional' personnel positions in Manuf.Co., although there is the potential for it to have some effect. Once in Manuf.Co., ethnic origin can cause difficulties for personnel specialists, notably in relationships with people outside the personnel departments, but the negative effects of these can be overcome. The findings do indicate, however, that personnel staff resist being labelled as 'ethnic minority', as this singles them out from the rest of the personnel population in the organisation, and suggest that it is through this 'singling out' effect that ethnic categorisation can have the greatest negative impact.

Other Criteria Affecting Inclusion in Personnel Positions in Manuf.Co.

a. Qualifications

Degree qualifications are a key criterion of exclusion / inclusion used at the point of entry to 'professional' personnel posts in Manuf.Co. Unlike in Town Council, these are centrally-imposed entry requirements, which new recruits to 'professional' personnel posts must have. As indicated above, although some people have in the past accessed

'professional' posts without degrees, these people are usually outside the personnel career path, and do not receive the same promotions and career development as people with degrees. As one ethnic minority female personnel manager notes, these non-graduates' *'expectations and the function's expectations are different. Whereas with graduate hires, generally, you are expecting them to get experience in a wide variety of areas'* in order that they can achieve promotion.

Moreover, as the discussion above has already revealed, the institution from which the degree was achieved is also significant, recruiters from Manuf.Co. only visiting certain, generally 'older' Universities - *'where we've been successful in the past'* (white woman). While other methods of attracting graduate applicants are used, the majority of them are recruited through such University links.

Professional personnel qualifications have a much more limited effect upon inclusion. Although administrative staff can in theory enter 'professional' personnel positions by gaining professional credentials, and although Manuf.Co. has established an in-house professional training programme, a 'white' male manager comments that *'A degree is still seen as the benchmark, I think an [IPD] qualification is still seen to be not as important as a degree'*. Furthermore, he continues, administrative staff *'will find it difficult to break through to the ranks of the professional even with the ....IPD'*.

Indeed, asked if the professional qualification is necessary for her career progression in Manuf.Co. one ethnic minority woman graduate, who is taking the professional course, answers *'No it isn't. Not for [Manuf.Co.] at all'*. This interviewee's motives in taking the course are to improve her personal development and her employability outside Manuf.Co: although believing that the qualification will not help her career within Manuf.Co, she argues that *'I think it would outside, if I choose to leave, then it will outside'*.

In fact, the in-house programme has been introduced mainly to attract potential applicants to Manuf.Co. because they might want to gain the qualification, rather than because Manuf.Co. wants them to have it. One ethnic minority origin woman comments

that: *'I think they [Manuf.Co.'s managers] realise that it's the right thing to do because many organisations are sponsoring their individuals to go off and do it if they want to'* while a 'white' male manager states that *'It's a good marketing tool, because the graduates who we're taking on expect ongoing personal development'*. Interestingly, the other benefit that that manager feels has been gained from the professional programme is that it has *'helped fortunately with the bonding of the groups'*, and it is instructive that the organisation has developed an in-house course rather than sending its staff on to an external one. This point will be returned to later.

b. Competences

Of course, degree qualifications are not the only criteria by which initial inclusion is determined. As indicated above, interviewees argue that recruits to 'professional' personnel posts also have to demonstrate possession of particular competences, for example decisiveness, which have been identified as necessary to succeed in personnel positions in Manuf.Co. The way in which these are assessed is interesting. Degree qualifications still provide the initial means of assessing such competence, other means being the various tests and exercises undertaken during the assessment centres. However, as interviewees argue (see discussion above), the ability to demonstrate the necessary competences during these assessments is improved by having had access to previous work experience in Manuf.Co., or, where selection tests are concerned, through speaking English as a first language. Thus the ability to demonstrate possession of particular competences, which is claimed to be a key criterion of inclusion, may actually be determined by other criteria.

c. Gender

There is evidence of gender segregation within personnel management in Manuf.Co.: while the vast majority of the personnel administrative staff are female, women comprise only around one-third of those in professional posts. However, interviewees do not perceive gender to have a direct influence upon initial inclusion in 'professional' personnel posts in Manuf.Co. The 'white' man responsible for recruitment to 'professional' personnel positions argues that the segregation is related to the fact that *'hiring of females [to professional positions] is a relatively recent phenomena'*; in other words, to the fact that being female hindered inclusion in the past, rather than that

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it does so currently. Indeed, recruitment statistics showed that in the seven years prior to the research two-thirds of those recruited to professional personnel positions were female, a proportion which reflects the proportions of females applying for such positions.

The personnel development committee process for allocating promotions, discussed above, also limits the impact of gender upon such decisions. Nevertheless, there is evidence that the experience of working in 'professional' personnel positions is different for men and women, often to the disadvantage of female personnel staff. One ('white') female interviewee refers to *'hidden things'*, which happen because she is a woman: *'I mean, I did get treated badly sometimes.'* As with the different treatment of the ethnic minority personnel practitioner discussed earlier, this treatment was not at the hands of other personnel professionals but at the hands of those 'on the shop floor' - an extremely male-dominated area. For example, the interviewee explains:

> *You'd go into a meeting and the trade union would make a comment about, about your personal appearance, which can be quite difficult if you're trying to chair a meeting and exert some authority, but you find ways of dealing with that... It probably did take up more of their [women managers'] energy than it might do a man.*

Indeed, one ethnic minority female interviewee suggests that, because of the male-dominated environment, being female is a more negative factor than being of ethnic minority origin (as noted above, there are a large proportion of ethnic minority workers in many of the plants). In response to a question asking whether she has ever been treated differently as a result of her ethnic origin she states that:

> *I think being a female in a very male-dominated environment gave me a greater insight into the kinds of things that, feelings that you might have, but I, from an ethnic minority standpoint, I've never really felt isolated or singled out or in any way treated badly as a result of that.*

In some situations, however, being female is perceived to have a positive effect upon inclusion, again through its effects upon relations with people outside personnel departments. One 'white' woman, for example, has found that males on the shop floor *would not get overtly aggressive with women, they would with men,* ' and so she is sometimes able to diffuse difficult situations more successfully than her male colleagues. She has also found that her gender facilitates access to (male) plant managers:

> *The plant manager would probably sit down and talk to you, because he felt that because of his own kind of expectations of women, he perhaps felt that you were less of a threat, he would tell you more, work more closely with you, than he would with some twenty-two, twenty-three year old boy, as he would see it, who's fresh from university.*

However, these 'apparent' advantages of being female are due to negative assessments of the women. The fact that the plant manager does not perceive a women personnel manager to be as much of a threat as a male indicates that he regards her as inferior, since the personnel manager ought in that situation to have some power to make the plant manager conform to his or her requirements, and thus, if effective, ought to present a threat to him. Thus the more chivalrous behaviour of the men on the shop floor is an example of the subtle discrimination identified by Benokraitis and Feagin (1995), since, as they argue, it treats women as inferiors.

Gender also has an effect upon inclusion through the inability of Manuf.Co. to adapt working hours to meet the needs of people with child care responsibilities. Although the organisation is recruiting more women to professional personnel posts than men, the turnover of women is slightly higher than that of men, and some interviewees relate this to the child care responsibilities of women. As one ethnic minority origin woman notes: *'One of the issues is that women, women tend to leave on maternity leave and not come back... and when they do come back they come back in the part-time role.* '

Although part-time personnel posts are available, they are limited: one ('white') woman, about to go on maternity leave at the time of the interview, has arranged to come back on a job-share basis with another woman who is to be on maternity leave at the same

time. The actual job they will fill has not been decided - there is no question of them being able to fill a personnel manager position - and it is possible that the work might be at a lower grade than their current posts, or even on an ad-hoc basis.

Promotion of part-time staff is also unlikely: although much was made of one 'white' female personnel practitioner who was promoted when working part-time, the post she was promoted into was that of equal opportunities manager - a valued, but not a typical personnel post - in which she is employed for four days per week. Moreover, she has stayed longer in the post than she should have done, according to the norms of career development at Manuf.Co., because she is expecting another child and wishes to remain part-time. It appears that there is no other part-time opportunity available to her, and that this has limited her career progression. As another 'white' female interviewee argues:

> *It's a male dominated industry... and because it is demanding in terms of the shift patterns, which are not flexible, the types of disciplines, you know, it's very difficult to find jobs that you can effectively job, either job share or do on a part-time basis or that you can, you can leave for a year and come back to without.... your progress being hindered. ... I don't think we are particularly progressive in terms of adapting or at least acknowledging that people have lives.*

This last point is underlined by the fact that the woman returner has found herself labelled as an *'ex-mother'*, reflecting a model of the employee which does not accommodate the possibility of simultaneous motherhood and employment.

As with ethnic origin, however, the greatest evidence that being female - or being categorised as female - may hinder inclusion is the way in which the female personnel interviewees attempt to de-emphasise their gender. One female interviewee, for example, notes that being treated badly because of her gender *'wouldn't be something that I would probably share with other people.'*

Many of the quotations given above reveal the female interviewees' attempts to downplay or deny their gender through using the second or third person rather than the first, for example: *'the trade union would make a comment about.... your personal*

appearance' ('white' woman, in response to a question asking for examples of the interviewee's personal experiences); *'it probably did take up more of their energy than it might do a man'* ('white' woman); *'the plant manger would probably sit down and talk to you'* ('white' woman) (my highlights). Being labelled as a woman is clearly to be resisted, and drawing attention to the implications of being a woman is therefore to be avoided. The one situation in which this is impossible is that involving maternity, perhaps explaining why the barriers to women are most apparent and most resented at this point.

d. Past Experience

Once initial inclusion in professional personnel positions in Manuf.Co. has been achieved, further inclusion is heavily dependent upon having the correct past experience within the organisation. In deciding who to put forward for promotions and career moves, the personnel development committee looks at the experience personnel practitioners have gained within Manuf.Co. and identifies which experiences they still need. One 'white' female personnel manager comments that:

> *That's the role of the personnel development committees.... people who generally have a blueprint.... and you would be able to sort of look across and say well, you know, that person needs this type of experience....*

Conformity to this *'blueprint'*, in terms of experience gained, is a crucial criterion for further inclusion in personnel positions in Manuf.Co.

The existence of this crucial set of experiences is further revealed by the number of interviewees who refer to the need to *'tick this box'* in order to progress up the personnel hierarchy: *'You really need to tick this box, as it were, and get this experience under your belt if you want to progress'* one ethnic minority woman comments, while another ethnic minority woman argues that *'there are certain jobs that you have to go and do and sort of tick the right boxes'*.

Whereas Long spoke of a 'hidden structure of requirements' in personnel careers (Long, 1984), within Manuf.Co. the required experience is therefore well known. The raw graduate enters one of three positions: an employee relations officer post, in one of the

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manufacturing plants; a staff officer post, in the head office, or a training post. As a 'white' male manager reveals:

> *A typical path for a new graduate, it would probably be up to eighteen months on first position, possibly less... and then a second position in one of the other of the two jobs, would be about a minimum of a year... Following that .... a graduate would normally be ready for promotion.... and then they would do either one or two positions at grade [x] before being ready for [a] management role.*

Importantly, the '*blueprint*' does not involve any experience either outside Manuf.Co. or even outside personnel departments in Manuf.Co. The 'white' male manager acknowledges that

> *People who choose to career hop, moving from function to function will probably longer term be a more valuable asset, in terms of their overall business knowledge, but may not progress as quickly.*

Experience outside personnel even within the organisation therefore has a negative impact upon inclusion in personnel in Manuf.Co., which that manager relates to the '*understanding of the business you need in [Manuf.Co.] to survive*':

> *To be a director of.. the personnel community you need a good business understanding but above all else you need, you really need to know your business in the personnel function*

he argues.

This nature of the experience required for inclusion reflects the power of the personnel departments in Manuf.Co., arising from their afore-mentioned ability to solve the organisation's industrial relations problems. As the earlier comment – by a 'white' female personnel manager - that plant managers find female personnel practitioners *'less of a threat'* indicates, the personnel departments do not merely serve line managers, but have the power to threaten them also. The fact that the experience outside personnel has a negative effect upon inclusion in senior personnel positions highlights not only personnel departments' perception that they are different from other parts of the

business, requiring different expertise, but also, and crucially, their power to maintain that difference and to impose career paths which are occupational as well as organisational (c.f. Brown, 1982). This level of power is further underlined by the personnel development committee's insistence on moving staff after eighteen months in a position, even though one 'white' woman claims that line managers want them to be *'here for longer'*, to ensure continuity. It is the personnel development committee's desire to develop occupational careers and occupational expertise, rather than the line managers' desire to have continuity of service, which is met.

Since failure to conform to the *'blueprint'*, in terms of experiences 'ticked off', can have such negative consequences upon further inclusion in personnel departments, personnel practitioners in Manuf.Co. take great care to ensure that they gain the 'correct' experiences. Personnel staff explain how they check out possible future positions once they know that somebody is moving on, asking mentors *'Do you think this job's suitable for me?'* ('white' woman). In one case, another 'white' woman moved to a personnel position in a wholly-owned subsidiary of Manuf.Co., *'quite an unusual move for this company'*. Consequently, as she notes, *'Really it was a bit risky and how could you really guarantee you'd get back into the mainstream?'* Indeed, such was her concern at making this *'unusual'* move that she refused to take the post until she had been given assurances that she would be able to move back into the main organisation afterwards.

e. Behaviour

Of course, whilst having the correct past experience is significant in achieving inclusion, it is not enough in itself - the behaviour demonstrated during those experiences is, as in Town Council, also important. Although at the point of recruitment, as discussed above, competences are assessed through qualifications and performance in selection tests and exercises, decisions regarding further inclusion are based largely upon assessments of occupational expertise based upon behaviour in Manuf.Co. One of the interviewees, an ethnic minority origin woman who is involved in development committee work, argues that the committees *'rate people, in terms of potential'* and that this rating is based upon

Lots of different criteria. I mean, it depends on how well they've performed on the job in terms of technical competences, ability to liaise with people, you know,

report writing, all those sorts of skills, and then you try to make a judgement,
based on what that individual's experiences are whether they've got the ability to
move to the next grade.

These ratings of potential are based largely upon appraisals given by individuals'
managers. Again, however, the centralised system reduces the power of individual
managers to write overly favourable or negative appraisals for certain staff by involving
all senior managers, many of whom would have worked with the personnel practitioner
under discussion at some point in his or her career. As one 'white' female interviewee
notes:

The good things about the PDC system is that what it is it's a group of managers,
all of whom will have some experience of this particular person, so even though
someone who was my friend, if you like, might say oh she's brilliant... somebody
else will say when she worked with me she wasn't, and they'll have a concensus
opinion.

Clearly, the different treatment people categorised as of ethnic minority origin - and of
different genders - receive from people outside the personnel departments may affect
their ability to perform effectively in their job, and this is one way in which ethnic
categorisation and gender might have an indirect effect upon inclusion. However, the
fact remains that when such difficulties do occur, people do not seek to draw attention
to them to explain why they have not performed well, but rather seek to conceal them.
As indicated above, this may reflect the desire of individuals not to draw attention to any
ethnic or gender difference from their colleagues. However, it may also reflect their
desire not to draw attention to any difficulties they have had, which might call their
occupational expertise into question.

Indeed, the personnel practitioners interviewed are very conscious that further inclusion
is based not on the level of occupational expertise actually possessed, but on the level
demonstrated, through their behaviour, to those with the power to make decisions.
Thus, if a trade union official causes an individual problems, these problems have to be
coped with privately, so that the impression of expertise is not impaired. Those

interviewed are consequently very careful about who they reveal weaknesses and difficulties to. One 'white' woman notes that she uses her mentors for

Silly things like when I've gone into an area where I've not been sure about something I might ring them up and ask them how to deal with a particular issue because I wouldn't particularly want to go to my supervisor.

Another 'white' woman uses her informal network for the same purpose:

I can ring [a person] up and ask for advice or you know like ask a dumb question that you wouldn't, really wouldn't want to ask somebody else.

As in Town Council, however, behaviours demonstrating occupational expertise are not, by themselves, sufficient to afford greater degrees of inclusion. A recruitment manager ('white' male) argues that conformity to the organisation's values and practices is also important, and that this is the reason why Manuf.Co. very rarely recruits from outside the organisation to senior management positions:

We've tried it [external recruitment] in the past and it was very unsuccessful, the culture and knowledge required to operate at senior level in the company is absolutely critical.

Because of the centralised system for allocating personnel positions, these values and practices are the same across the personnel departments in Manuf.Co., reflecting what the recruitment manager refers to as the organisation's 'strong culture'. This is revealed in the similar language interviewees used, many of them, for example, referring to the need to 'tick the boxes'. It also explains why the company has chosen to send its staff onto an in-house professional personnel programme, as noted above, thereby enhancing the degree to which 'shared identity is reinforced by similar experiences of entry and socialisation' (Johnson, 1972: 54).

One set of unspoken behavioural rules relates to the need to accept career moves when offered. One ethnic minority female personnel manager notes that she talks to her supervisors about proposed career moves and asks for their opinions *'And you'll probably get a mixture of well, this is the political thing to do, and this is, these are the kinds of options you've got'*. Another interviewee, again a woman of ethnic minority

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origin, notes that they have to be careful about turning down proposed moves: *'If an opportunity came up and you didn't want to go for it you could say, but you've got to have a pretty good reason as to why you want to turn it down'*. This is underlined by a personnel manager (ethnic minority female), who argues that if

[A subordinate is] worried about going for a position for any reason you will often be the one who, who will feed that back. So you have to make sure that you do that in a sensitive way that doesn't perhaps ruin their chances for another move in the future.

The demonstration of these behavioural criteria is therefore aided by having supportive relationships with mentors and others in the organisation (one 'white' woman notes, for example, that mentors have been *'really important in my career, and certainly all the people that I know in the company, Black and White, who've been fairly successful in the company have had these kind of mentors'*.) The organisation itself recognises that mentors are so crucial that it appoints a mentor for each new graduate recruit. Even in relation to mentors, however, there are organisational rules which govern how they should be used, and individuals are careful to behave in accordance with these. One ethnic minority origin woman, for example, notes that

[People have been] assigned a mentor that they could go and discuss issues with, but it was very difficult, it's a very sort of fine line what you use your mentor for, because you don't want to cut across the role of your own supervisor.

Indeed, the interviewees preferred to rely upon informal mentors and networks to support their demonstration of required behaviours. Interestingly, these crucial support relationships are not based upon shared ethnic categorisation or gender, as some of the research cited in chapter two would suggest, but rather upon shared experiences which create a sense of shared identity, such as having entered the company at the same time:

People always consider them, which intake were you, which year did you come into the company... and you, you just naturally tend to keep in touch with them.... It's interesting how many people end up living, getting the same houses together and things, it's a very strong building block

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one 'white' woman explains. Another 'white' woman notes that her mentors are: *'People that I happened to work for at some point, that I got on with really well'*. The importance of being able to build relationships with others in the personnel departments, through some shared experience, explains the recruitment manager's delight that the professional training course has also become a way of building personnel relationships (as noted above, it has, according to a 'white' man, *'helped... with the bonding of the groups'*).

Summary

The key criteria influencing inclusion in Manuf.Co. are, therefore, at the point of entry, degree qualifications and ability to demonstrate the competences demanded, and subsequently the gaining of the 'right' personnel experiences within the organisation, demonstration of occupational expertise, and behaviour in conformity to organisational values and practices. Ethnic categorisations and gender may have some effect upon initial inclusion through the universities targeted and the process of recruitment to student sponsorships, and upon further inclusion via the different treatment received at the hands of those outside personnel departments. These make it more difficult for people categorised as being of ethnic minority origin and women to demonstrate the occupational expertise required for greater inclusion. In the case of gender there is a further effect through the inability of the organisation to recognise and accommodate family responsibilities.

Ethnic minority staff and women are, however, keen to downplay their ethnic categorisation and gender, and often disassociate themselves from other people who are categorised as being of ethnic minority origin or women. This reveals a reluctance to be 'singled out' as being different from everyone else in the organisation because, in the words of one ethnic minority female personnel manager, this would make them feel *'a bit vulnerable'*. The positions the interviewees adopt in relation to ethnic origin and gender clearly signal their own feeling that to be categorised as being of ethnic minority origin, or a woman, would be negative.

This reflects the importance (noted above) of building relationships with other organisational members, in particular of the personnel function. As a consequence, it is

those categories which link individuals, such as previous shared experiences, which individuals emphasise and use, rather than those which isolate them. Supporting Johnson's (1972) claims, the fact that most people in 'professional' personnel positions enter the organisation with the same criterion of a degree, and subsequently follow the same career path, working with the same people, having to demonstrate expertise in the same areas and conformity to the same organisational values and practices, aids the production of this similarity and common identity. Inclusion in senior levels in personnel departments in Manuf.Co. therefore requires conformity to particular occupational and organisational values and practices more than to membership of particular ethnic categories. As one 'white' female interviewee argues: *'It's kind of like, if you fit, whatever your colour is or your size or your creed or your religion, if you fit, then fine.'* However, as she adds: *'If you want to kind of stray away from the blueprint a little bit, we're not very good at accommodating people'*.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CASE STUDY FINDINGS 3 - UTILITY CO.

Utility Co. is a public corporation with employees in various locations across Britain. The organisation has been divided into a number of operating units in preparation for its privatisation, each of these units containing a head office personnel department and a number of local personnel departments. Each of the local personnel departments is responsible for handling operational and administrative personnel responsibilities within a particular geographical area, and sections within the local departments deal with personnel services, payroll and local employee relations.

When it was a national corporation Utility Co. was controlled through a large number of centralised policies and procedures, which have been retained by the operating units. Much of the work of the personnel services sections of the local personnel departments concerns the implementation and administration of these policies, for example, checking clocking-in, arranging length of service awards, organising shifts, and checking whether people are appropriately dressed for work. The work of these local personnel departments thus fits Tyson and Fell's (1986) model of the 'clerk of works'; indeed, until relatively recently these departments were called 'administration departments' rather than 'personnel'. The head office personnel departments, by contrast, take on more of the role of 'contracts manager' and, increasingly as privatisation approaches, 'architect' (ibid.).

As in Manuf.Co., there is a tradition of recruiting internally to all but the most junior personnel positions in Utility Co., and it continues to be policy to consider internal applicants first for many posts. Increasingly, however, people are being recruited to management positions in personnel from outside the organisation. Moreover, although the internal labour market has not been destroyed by the division of the organisation into operating units, it has shrunk as some other parts of the organisation have been privatised. The continuous restructuring the organisation is undergoing in preparation for privatisation also means that, as in Town Council, many personnel posts are filled by redeployees from posts in other personnel departments or in other areas of work which have ceased to exist.

Decisions over recruitment to personnel positions are, however, devolved to the individual personnel manager. This gives individual personnel managers a similar degree of discretion over inclusion in their departments as managers in Town Council have, and considerably more than has been found to be the case for managers in Manuf.Co.

Utility Co. has a long history of employing people of ethnic minority origin. Some of its departments are located in areas where there are high proportions of people categorised as of ethnic minority origin in the local population, and in the 1960s it recruited a large number of such people to positions that it found difficult to fill. Prior to the Race Relations Act of 1976, people of ethnic minority origin tended to be employed only in backroom occupations, where they were not visible to members of the public. By contrast, Utility Co. does not have a history of employing large numbers of female workers.

The case study of Utility Co. involves interviews with personnel staff in two operating units, which will be referred to as Operating Unit X and Operating Unit Y. In one of these, it was only possible to interview personnel staff and managers in one of the local personnel departments; in the other an interview was also conducted with a junior ethnic minority member of staff in a second local personnel department and a personnel manager from the head office department.

Ethnic Origin and Inclusion in Personnel Departments in Utility Co.
As indicated above, Utility Co. has a history of employing people of ethnic minority origin, at least in low-grade, back-room positions. It also, however, has a history of overt discrimination against such people prior to the Race Relations Act. One ethnic minority personnel practitioner (male), who has been employed in Utility Co. since before 1976, reports that Utility Co. *'took ethnic minorities to do jobs that most natives wouldn't do'*
while another (again ethnic minority male) comments that prior to 1976 management would only recruit someone of ethnic minority origin to a higher status job if there were no 'white' people available:

To get [someone of ethnic minority origin] into that position management had to be in a dire strait... It was the custom and practice.

Another ethnic minority male personnel practitioner recalls noticing that the staff records of people of ethnic minority origin were marked with a 'C' for 'Coloured', indicating the centrality of skin colour to the categorisations used in Utility Co., as in the dominant British model of ethnicity (c.f. Mason, 1995).

Interviewees of ethnic minority origin who were born outside Britain also argue that they received no recognition for qualifications gained in their countries of origin. Although often well educated, they were given the most menial tasks. Nevertheless, some managers were prepared to promote people of ethnic minority origin even before the Race Relations Act, and one ethnic minority man reports that he was promoted into personnel by such a person.

One ethnic minority man notes however that *'Things changed with the racial opportunities commission, that helped a little bit'*. However, another ethnic minority man argues that Utility Co. has concentrated more on recruiting women, who are heavily under-represented throughout the organisation, than on furthering the careers of people of ethnic minority origin. Certainly, unlike in Town Council and to a lesser extent Manuf.Co., none of the interviewees from Utility Co. are able to cite any initiatives which have been used to improve the representation of people of ethnic minority origin in any parts of the organisation.

Older ethnic minority origin personnel practitioners interviewed (all of whom are male) are convinced that their ethnic origin still affects their career progression in personnel departments in the organisation. The male ethnic minority origin manager of the local personnel department studied in Operating Unit X thus argues that his career will *'go nowhere now'* and that *'If I wasn't of ethnic origin [sic] I should have got promotion'*. Another, the ethnic minority male head of the personnel services section in the same department, states that his ethnic origin has *'definitely'* affected his career in personnel: *'I'll only go as far as I am and I'll stop there'*. Indeed, he has been in his position for 12 years. He also claims that other people doing the same work as him in other departments

are on higher grades, a situation which he again attributes to his ethnic categorisation. The head of the paybills section in the same department – again an ethnic minority man – also argues that he would have progressed further if he were 'white'.

It will be noted that the ethnic minority male manager and heads of section cited above are all from one department in Operating Unit X. The latter interviewee argues that this is because they *'had local managers who were prepared to recognise ability'*. However, he argues that even those managers will only allow someone of ethnic minority origin to progress a certain distance: *'I finally got as far as [Utility Co.] will allow me to go. I could never get onto management grade'*. One explanation given by those interviewees is that this is due to stereotypes of people of ethnic minority origin, developed in the times before the Race Relations Act: *'I think they still have this thing about Asian people at [Utility Co.] - that they're not good at managing'* one of them states.

Younger, and more junior, interviewees of ethnic minority origin, by contrast, do not perceive that their careers have been negatively affected by their ethnic categorisation, at least not *'so far'*, one ethnic minority man states. Indeed, one ethnic minority woman fears that either her ethnic origin or her gender might actually have helped her to get a personnel position in order to improve monitoring statistics.

It is possible that the younger ethnic minority interviewees have not yet experienced any exclusion due to their ethnic origins because they are in more junior positions, and have not yet reached the permitted limits of ethnic minority inclusion, as the more senior ethnic minority personnel practitioners interviewed believe they have. Indeed, the (male) ethnic minority personnel manager from Operating Unit X claims that *'the higher you go the more problems you have'*, and one of the more junior ethnic minority personnel practitioners (again male) himself suggests that he might encounter problems if he attempts to progress further up the personnel hierarchy.

The uneven distribution of people of ethnic minority origin in the personnel departments across the two operating units studied reflects the devolution of power over recruitment decisions and indicates that ethnic categorisation affects inclusion differently in different departments. The local personnel department in Operating Unit X contains an ethnic

minority manager, two ethnic minority heads of section, and another more junior personnel practitioner of ethnic minority origin (all male). By contrast, in the similarly-sized local personnel department studied in Operating Unit Y there is only one person of ethnic minority origin, a woman, at relatively a junior level, in spite of the fact that this latter department is located only half a mile away from the former, in the same area of high ethnic minority population. This different ethnic composition would appear to support the claim of one ethnic minority man, cited above, that some managers are more willing to recruit people of ethnic minority origin than others.

Moreover, the findings suggest that the manager's own ethnic origin affects that willingness to include people of ethnic minority origin. The manager of the department with a high proportion of ethnic minority staff categorises himself as of 'Indian' origin, and being categorised in a similar way appears to aid inclusion in his department. All of the three ethnic minority personnel practitioners he has appointed to his department are categorised by him as being of similar ethnic origins, and in the interview he states that people of those ethnic origins are more reliable than people of other ethnic origins. The manager of the other department, by contrast, is 'white'. Being of the same ethnic origin as the manager, it appears, aids inclusion in personnel departments in Utility Co.

Other Criteria Affecting Inclusion in Personnel Departments in Utility Co.
a. Past Experience
As a consequence of the strong internal labour market, the majority of personnel practitioners in the local departments have entered Utility Co. at a junior level and worked their way up the organisational hierarchy. However, unlike in Manuf.Co., many started work in Utility Co. in functions other than personnel. For example, one ethnic minority origin woman interviewed moved into personnel from a clerical finance officer position, one 'white' man moved into personnel from a general trainee position, and two others – one 'white' woman and one ethnic minority man – entered personnel from manual positions elsewhere in the organisation. In fact, for only two of those interviewed was a personnel position their first position in Utility Co.

This reflects the fact that, as one ethnic minority female recruitment officer comments, '*There are not many low grades in personnel*'. Because of the policy of recruiting

internally to all but the lowest grades, to which local personnel departments tend to adhere, and the small number of the lowest personnel grades, external people are very rarely able to apply for personnel positions in those departments. Experience elsewhere within Utility Co. is therefore a necessary criterion for inclusion in all but the most junior personnel positions in the organisation's local personnel departments.

At the lowest two grades in the personnel hierarchy, such experience does not need to be within personnel. However, above these grades local personnel departments require occupational personnel experience. An ethnic minority origin woman, for example, notes that she tried unsuccessfully to win promotion from another function into a higher-graded personnel position, and was advised by the personnel manager to seek a sideways shift as she would not get a higher grade personnel post without personnel experience. Moreover, there is a long tradition of including people on the basis of the length of that experience, promotions being traditionally allocated on the basis of 'seniority' - the length of time an individual has been in post.

The breadth of personnel experience is also important for inclusion in the local personnel department studied in Operating Unit X. Most of those at more senior levels in that department, including the manager, have experience in a position that involves covering the work of anyone absent. One head of section in the department (an ethnic minority man) argues that *every good personnel clerk should get experience of all areas of personnel*, experience which he gained as a result of providing such cover; another ethnic minority man in the department similarly argues that that breadth of experience is invaluable because he needs experience of all areas of personnel work in order to do his current job.

The justification for using type and length of experience as a criterion for inclusion is that they are assumed to ensure possession of necessary knowledge and expertise. The ethnic minority woman who was advised not to seek a promotion into personnel as she had no personnel experience was told that *as a [grade 4] people would expect you to have a certain amount of knowledge, which you don't have having not worked in personnel*. The justification of the policy of seniority is based upon the same assumption: the interviewee quoted above explains that

I've been on [grade 4] since last April. If I went for a [grade 5] job and there's a
[grade 4] who's been on [grade 4] since 1989, the obvious, well, not the obvious,
but the explanation is that that person knows more than you.

However, such criteria are not the only means of assessing possession of knowledge and expertise, and have become less significant in recent years. Although the manager of the local personnel department studied in Operating Unit X still promotes largely on the basis of seniority, the ethnic minority woman recruitment officer in the local personnel department in Operating Unit Y maintains that this is no longer organisation policy:

It used to be common practice for all grades, it's been eroded for all grades now
baring [two specialist non-personnel grades].

Moreover, while personnel managers in the local personnel departments studied continue to express a preference for recruiting people with experience of working in Utility Co., the head offices are increasingly recruiting graduates from outside the organisation directly into personnel management trainee positions. Thus, while most of those in local personnel departments have worked their way up the hierarchy, those on the levels above them at head office, one local department personnel practitioner (a 'white' woman) notes, are '*definitely different*', being often younger and recruited directly into management from outside the organisation. '*Now young people are going straight into senior jobs*' an ethnic minority man from a local personnel department notes, adding that the graduates '*Jump all the other grades and come to the top*'. Those in the personnel department in Operating Unit X, who have all worked their way up the hierarchy over a number of years, particularly disapprove of this change.

Indeed, the value personnel practitioners in Utility Co. ascribe to past occupational or organisational experience appears to depend upon their own possession of it. Those who have worked their way up the hierarchy in Utility Co., and who have been appointed on the basis of length of experience, tend to value such criteria and use them for the selection and inclusion of others, and to resist their devaluation by head office personnel departments. As some of the literature explored in chapter two argues (see for example Liff and Aitkenhead, 1992; Roper, 1994) such reproduction of the status quo is essential

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to the maintenance of individuals' social identities. By ceasing to use experience and seniority as criteria for inclusion, head office personnel managers are devaluing and indeed excluding those personnel practitioners who have always won inclusion on the basis of those criteria. It is therefore hardly surprising that those personnel practitioners attempt to resist that change of criterion.

The head office personnel departments' shift away from the use of past experience as a criterion of inclusion also reflects the increasing division between the 'clerk of works' role of local personnel departments, and the more 'architect'-like role to which the head office departments aspire (Tyson and Fell, 1986), and exemplifies the increasing stratification of the personnel occupation envisaged by Tyson (1987). In Utility Co., this stratification also has an ethnic dimension, as the majority of those for whom length of experience is their greatest asset - at least partly because their overseas qualifications have not been recognised - are of ethnic minority origin. In this way the devaluing of the criterion of experience adds another barrier to the further inclusion of some ethnic minority personnel practitioners in Utility Co.'s personnel departments.

b. Qualifications

If experience is becoming a less significant criterion of inclusion, particularly in the head office personnel departments, educational qualifications are becoming more significant. Graduates, as noted above, are being recruited directly into trainee personnel management positions, and then into senior personnel management positions, clearly more on the basis of possessing a degree than either occupational or organisational experience. When the ethnic minority male manager of the local personnel department in Operating Unit X applied for the position of personnel manager at his head office he was rejected and it was offered to a younger graduate with less experience.

Just as many in the local personnel departments resist the devaluing of the criterion of experience - which they possess - so they resist the introduction of the criterion of degree qualifications - which they do not. The manager of the local personnel department in Operating Unit X, refered to in the preceding paragraph, for example, does not like having subordinates with degrees, who come to him for two or three months while on their traineeship, and are then promoted. He argues that graduates have

a different attitude to work from those with experience, being more *'think tank'*, in his words, and less reliable. *'[I] don't need a brain of Britain, I need a good solid worker'* he argues, again reflecting the different type of personnel work undertaken in the local personnel departments compared with those in the head offices.

Thus the increasing requirement of a degree for inclusion in head office personnel departments exacerbates the division between local and head office personnel departments. Local personnel managers continue to include people on the basis of experience, head office personnel departments increasingly value degrees rather than experience and the more senior jobs are increasingly being filled by graduates.

Interviewees also argue that professional qualifications are important. The justification, as for the use of the criterion of occupational experience, is that it enables assessment of occupational expertise. As one personnel practitioner (an ethnic minority woman) from the local personnel department in Operating Unit Y, who paid for herself to take the qualification in order to win inclusion in a personnel department argues,

> *A professional qualification... whatever it is, you are seen to know it all, regardless of the fact that theory is different from the real world. So it is essential to have the letter.*

Indeed, as with degrees, the professional qualification is becoming more important. The ethnic minority male personnel manager in the local department in Operating Unit X comments that

> *Before, it [the professional qualification] wasn't a factor... It is getting more important... Sometimes I feel it is getting too important.*

The fact that he himself does not have the qualification may again be significant in his assessment that it may be becoming *'too important'*.

Increasingly the professional qualification is seen to help to gain inclusion in senior positions even in local personnel departments. One local personnel manager ('white' male) in Operating Unit Y argues that

Within [Utility Co. 's] management job description, competency requirements, the IPD generally is sort of one which is looked upon as a preferred status.

As a result, he wants that professional qualification to be taken by his *'senior personnel staff.... people that we would wish to develop for senior management positions'*. The fact that he himself is studying for the professional qualification, and thus does not feel that the criterion excludes him, may explain his more positive attitude to it compared with the manager in Operating Unit X.

However, as the above quotation implies, being sent on the professional training course is, as in Town Council and in Greed's (1991) study of surveyors, often a reward for potential already identified by other means, rather than a means of assessing that potential in the first place. One head office personnel practitioner ('white' male) thus notes that *'If you have potential you'll be identified on an individual basis'* and then, as a result, be *'invited to do the IPD'*. Indeed, one ethnic minority man, asked about the value of the IPD qualification to careers in Utility Co., argues that *'If they wanted to appoint you into one of those jobs they'll appoint you if you're... qualified or not'*. Professional qualifications, it appears, may therefore be less significant for inclusion than is claimed.

The final qualification which is relevant to gaining inclusion in personnel departments in Utility Co. is the organisation's own clerical test. As one personnel practitioner (ethnic minority woman) explains, in previous years

You could not cross from wages [manual] grade to clerical grade.... But when people started becoming more lenient, to test your brains, to see how competent you are, you can now cross from a wages grade to a clerical grade by passing a clerical test.

This test takes the form of a psychometric test, and is an essential criterion of inclusion for anyone entering the personnel function from a manual position in the organisation.

c. Gender

As already discussed, Utility Co. does not have a tradition of employing many women. Nevertheless, in the years since the Sex Discrimination Act more women have been

recruited. According to one interviewee (an ethnic minority man), the personnel departments of Operating Unit X had two female personnel managers and two female employee relations managers in the ten years prior to the research, while, according to a 'white' male interviewee, the personnel director of Operating Unit Y was a woman until shortly before the research. While there appears to have been no positive action to increase the proportion of women in personnel positions, there has been in other functions, and, given the nature of the internal labour market in the organisation, this may have helped to increase the number of women available to occupy personnel positions.

Some interviewees, however, express some suspicion that being female might aid inclusion in a more direct way. One male personnel practitioner (of ethnic minority origin) believes that the proportion of women has been increased by giving the job to the female candidate, if she is suitable, while, as already mentioned, one woman of ethnic minority origin fears that her gender and / or ethnic origin may have helped her appointment. This latter interviewee claims that she was appointed to work with a woman who '*had a chip on her shoulder*' who had been the only woman in that area of work. Her suspicion, therefore, is that she was appointed to work with that woman because she is also a woman.

However, as discussed previously, such positive discrimination – if it was that – would have negative implications for those apparently included by it. The personnel practitioner just quoted comments that '*It's not something I like to think about because it makes me feel jittery*'. Indeed, she is pleased that she has subsequently been given a promotion within the department, as this, she believes, proves her ability: '*I was interviewing with the same people that knew me and knew my work potential*'.

Another possible positive effect of being female is noted by one ('white') female personnel practitioner, who believes that she was '*spoilt*' by men when working in a very low-grade post in an otherwise all-male department. As was discussed in relation to Manuf.Co., however, such 'condescending chivalry' (Benokraitis and Feagin, 1995) may actually be a form of subtle sex discrimination. It is notable that, although the men '*spoilt*' the woman, they did not encourage her to progress her career - it was another

woman who did that and helped her to complete the application forms. The men's behaviour, while appreciated by the woman, actually did nothing to further her inclusion and may have hindered it.

Moreover, being female may have other negative effects upon inclusion. One 'white' woman interviewee describes how one female personnel management trainee went to her - the only other woman in her department – rather than to her fellow managers for information on how the other managers did things, even though the interviewee was in a very junior post. It is possible that the female trainee felt excluded by the male managers, or else that the shared gender prompted the graduate trainee to trust the more junior woman and thus to network with her rather than with the managers - a tendency which Kanter (1993) notes in the behaviour of female managers in her study of the 'Corporation'. The possible negative implications of such failure to network with senior practitioners were discussed in chapter two.

Furthermore, interviewees draw attention to some female personnel managers who they argue were excluded from the organisation. One is reported – by an ethnic minority man - to have been *'totally resented by other management colleagues here and senior management'*; another – according to the same interviewee - *'was booted out... she couldn't get on with the boss man'*. In part, the interviewee claims, that this was due to the fact that the latter woman consulted with her staff, and was judged to be too close to them. The possible relationship between gender and such behaviour is discussed below.

d. Age

Age is also perceived by interviewees to be a significant criterion of inclusion. The older, predominantly ethnic minority personnel practitioners believe that their age will prevent them from gaining further inclusion. One (older) interviewee (an ethnic minority man) claims that *'[The] whole emphasis [is] now on getting younger people. [They] see more potential in a younger person'*. Clearly, the growing emphasis on including younger people and excluding older people is related to the previously-discussed shift away from using length of experience as a criterion of inclusion, as it is this criterion that used to advantage the older employees.

Similarity of age is also, as in Town Council, a basis for networking and support in Utility Co., and, as in that other organisation, can overcome differences of gender and ethnic origin. One older, 'white', female personnel practitioner thus notes that she would go to the department manager rather than her immediate manager if she had a problem, even though he is a man categorised as being of a different ethnic origin, because she finds him more *'approachable'* because he is of a similar age. She finds her own manager less approachable because he is younger.

e. Being 'Known'

Again as in Town Council, being known to the manager with the power to make decisions about recruitment and promotion is another significant criterion for inclusion. In particular, there is a strong tendency for managers to favour those people already in their departments. One ethnic minority origin man notes that, while you can apply to departments in which you are not known, you receive preferential treatment if you are already in the department. Another (again ethnic minority man) notes that *'If you were applying to another department there was always someone there the job was earmarked for'*. Certainly, one recent recruit (a 'white' man) who worked initially in personnel as part of an organisation-wide training scheme, was asked to provide some temporary cover in the personnel department, and was then taken on into the permanent position when it became available, without having to go through any selection procedure - in spite of the fact that the position was a promotion for him.

The key advantage of promoting someone already in the department is that they are known to the manager. As an ethnic minority origin woman explains, when she was promoted within the department the managers *'knew me and knew my work potential'*. However, as in Town Council, the purpose of including 'known' people often extends beyond being able to have more confidence in their ability. It also serves to increase trust that they will be loyal and co-operative. Indeed, the importance of such loyalty in Utility Co. is clear. A number of interviewees use images of the 'family' or 'home' to describe individual departments or sites, and one ethnic minority man describes applying, a number of years before, to a position in another department and being told by his manager: *'We're a family, you don't move'*. Although this extreme manifestation of 'familial' loyalty may now be outdated, a degree of such loyalty is still evident: one

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personnel manager (ethnic minority male) notes that the different parts of Utility Co. *'tend to look after their own staff first'*.

Even in those instances identified in the research in which a candidate has been appointed from outside the department, the person appointed was still 'known' to the manager in some way. Of course, it is not possible for everyone appointed to personnel jobs in Utility Co. to be personally known to the recruiting manager. However, a range of different characteristics may contribute to the sense of knowing another person (c.f. Good, 1988). The policy of recruiting from within the organisation, for example, gives managers the impression of 'knowing' people even if they have never actually met them before: they belong to the same larger 'family'. Indeed, one ethnic minority male personnel practitioner notes that: *'[Utility Co.] used to be a family industry. I was told.... keep your nose clean and you'll have a job for life'*.

The use of the past tense in the above quotation reflects this person's disillusionment at what he sees as the betrayal of this family promise, as people with no experience in the organisation are increasingly appointed above him. However, the quotation indicates again the importance of loyalty to Utility Co.: while part of the reason for promoting people within departments, and within the organisation, is because their ability is then 'known', part of it is a reward for good behaviour, a pact stating that if individuals are loyal to the organisation and cause no problems, the organisation will be loyal to them.

Being already employed in Utility Co. is not the only way in which the impression of 'knowing' an individual can be created (indeed, as noted above, it is becoming less significant in some personnel departments). Membership of some other groups can also provide a basis for that sense of knowing. Shared ethnic categorisation, as discussed in chapter two, may be used. Actual family relations are also a useful criterion for inclusion, and one ethnic minority male personnel practitioner accuses Utility Co. of *'nepotism'*, claiming that he knows managers whose fathers were senior managers in the organisation, and who have progressed more quickly than other managers. Being a freemason is also believed to be significant, although less so than in the past. Finally, existing friendship networks are also used. One ethnic minority man notes that a person *'Might have a situation where a friend's got a friend in another office and they say*

apply for that post, I've seen it happen'. In all these cases, common membership of the group or network provides an impression of 'knowledge' and the expectation of co-operation.

Membership of a number of these groups is partly contingent upon ethnic origin. Membership of the freemasons, and being the son or daughter of a senior manager, are both likely to indirectly exclude many people categorised as of ethnic minority origin. However, significantly, as one ethnic minority man notes in relation to the unfair allocation of promotions to people known to the managers: *'[It] doesn't only apply to coloured people, it happens across the board'*. The criterion of 'being known' does not only exclude people of ethnic minority origin, nor does it necessarily exclude all of those.

f. Behaviour

The relevance of 'being known' is therefore not only that it increases confidence in an individual's ability to do the job, but also that it increases confidence in his or her willingness to behave in a co-operative manner (c.f. Good, 1988). A person who has been successfully employed in Utility Co., or brought up in a family known to the organisation, or joined the freemasons with people from the organisation, or been a friend of people in the organisation, can be expected to behave in ways which will not cause problems.

However, as was noted in chapter two, although such 'ascribed trust' may be important in the initial formation of relationships, the subsequent demonstration of trustworthiness through behaviour is also important (Humphrey and Schmitz, 1996). Thus, although 'being known' tends to aid inclusion, its effects may be cancelled out by the demonstration of undesirable behaviours. As one of the ethnic minority male personnel practitioners cited above reports being told, having a *'job for life'* requires that you *'keep your nose clean.'* As in Town Council and Manuf.Co., therefore, it is not only 'being known', but also the *behaviours* people demonstrate, which are crucial for further inclusion in Utility Co.

Some behaviours are rewarded in Utility Co. because they are believed by the managers to provide a clue to a person's future ability to do a particular job. Thus one local personnel department manager ('white' male), in recruiting to the lowest grade personnel positions, looks for '*a demonstration of initiative*' as '*I like to think that the person that I'm recruiting for that has got capability beyond it*'.

However, as might be expected from the importance placed upon loyalty and co-operation in Utility Co. (see discussion above), the behaviours rewarded are in many instances those which demonstrate what Jenkins (1986b) has termed 'acceptability', indicating that an individual will be co-operative and not cause problems for the manager, rather than 'suitability', that he or she is able to do the job itself. The requirement to '*keep your nose clean*' is an example. Another is case of the male ethnic minority personnel manager of the local department in Operating Unit X. One of his subordinates, a 'white' woman, notes that some others do not get on well with him because he tends to be '*abrupt*', and as a consequence '*Some people can get quite upset about him*'. In summary, '*He doesn't come across as he ought to*'.

Clearly, there are forms of behaviour to which someone in Utility Co. '*ought to*' conform; by failing to do so, it is claimed, that manager upsets people, and thus his relationship with them is damaged. The manager himself notes his poor relationship with his own manager, commenting that there is '*no feedback between myself and the other*', and suggesting that that is partly due to the fact that '*If I don't agree [with him] I say so*', and giving examples of times when he told his manager that he should do things differently. On one occasion he disagreed with a policy written and finalised by his manager, over which his opinion had not been sought, and so he re-wrote it and sent it back to his manager, requesting a meeting to discuss it. Rather than demonstrating co-operative and loyal behaviour, therefore, the local personnel manager continually demonstrates behaviour that is perceived as inappropriate, unco-operative and potentially threatening, as he repeatedly questions his manager's decisions and authority.

The lack of trust his manager has in him is apparent from the initial concern his manager expressed at his agreement to participate in this research, while the fact that he initially gave his consent without consulting his manager provides further evidence of their

different perceptions of the behaviours which are appropriate, the behaviours he considers appropriate again being construed as threatening by his manager. It is significant that he has been in his current position for a number of years and has consistently failed to achieve promotion.

Another example of 'inappropriate' behaviour leading to exclusion is that of the female personnel manager, cited above, who was said by her manager to be too close to her staff, and was *'booted out'* (according to one ethnic minority male interviewee) as a result. Different behaviour from the norm, in this instance adopting a different management style, again led to exclusion.

However, this example reveals the difficulty of distinguishing between behaviours which indicate 'acceptability' and those which indicate 'suitability': although her managers may have perceived her behaviour to demonstrate a lack of 'suitability', an inability to do her job effectively, the personnel practitioner interviewed clearly believes that it did not, and that she was excluded because she behaved differently, i.e. demonstrated a lack of 'acceptability'. Apparent assessments of 'suitability', it would appear, may actually be grounded in assessments of 'acceptability'.

Once it is recognised that judgements about what constitutes 'suitability' are subjective and based upon notions of 'acceptability', the possibility that the behaviours that are believed to demonstrate 'suitability' may differ over time or between different people becomes apparent. Thus there is evidence of a shift in the behaviours judged to demonstrate 'suitability' for inclusion in senior personnel positions in Utility Co. Once loyalty and an ability to get the work done were the behaviours rewarded with further inclusion; increasingly, as indicated above, it is demonstration of 'initiative', rather than of hard work, which is necessary. (This may explain some of the confusion and resentment felt by some of the older personnel practitioners, who, one interviewee argues, demonstrate dedication and ability to do work done, but have not received recognition for it). While the local personnel manager in Operating Unit X (an ethnic minority man) continues to include people in his department on the basis of being a *'solid worker'*, and does not approve of the graduates who adopt a more *'think tank'*

role, it is the latter that achieve further inclusion by being promoted above him by those in head office.

Moreover, as Jenkins has argued (Jenkins, 1986b), assessments of 'acceptability' may be based upon idiosyncratic or ethnocentric criteria. The demonstration of appropriate behaviours may thus be partly contingent upon other criteria such as ethnic origin or gender. One interviewee (an ethnic minority man) suggests that being a woman affected the kind of management style the female manager in the above example used; another (a 'white' woman) that the local personnel manager in Operating Unit X *'doesn't come across as he ought to'* because he is *'Indian'*. Being born outside Britain, as the results of the exploratory questionnaire survey also suggest, may make it more difficult for people to demonstrate the kinds of behaviours which are rewarded with inclusion. Perhaps, as the local (ethnic minority male) personnel manager in Operating Unit X argues, he has been denied promotions because ultimately *'It's human nature - different type of person'*.

Summary

Inclusion in the personnel function in Utility Co. is therefore based around a range of criteria, including type of experience, qualifications, 'being known' - or belonging to a common group, which conveys an impression of knowing - and behaving in particular ways. Ethnic origin had a very strong effect upon inclusion in the past, and the existence of greater concentrations of ethnic minority staff under some managers than others, combined with the existence of stereotypes based upon ethnic origin, indicate that it continues to have some effect. The findings indicate that ethnic origin also affects individuals' ability to demonstrate some of the other criteria, such as the required types of behaviour, the possession of recognised British qualifications, and membership of some of the other groups which create the impression of knowledge, such as family groups or freemasons, the first two being most problematic for those born outside Britain. Gender also affects inclusion, largely through its impact upon support relationships, and the possibility that women might be included as part of an equal opportunities policy.

However, personnel departments in Utility Co. are in a state of change, and the precise nature of some of the criteria that afford inclusion in some personnel posts, particularly in relation to experience, qualifications and behaviour, have shifted. This change is particularly noticeable in inclusion in head office personnel departments, which have moved towards a more 'architect' role (Tyson and Fell, 1986), but is also reflected to some degree in the criteria adopted in the local personnel department in Operating Unit Y.

However, individual personnel managers have discretion over the criteria they require for inclusion in their departments, and thus not all departments have embraced those new criteria. The local personnel manager interviewed in Operating Unit X (an ethnic minority man) continues to include people in his department on the basis of older criteria of length of experience and dependability (upon which his own inclusion was based), thus providing an example of the 'homosocial reproduction' noted by Kanter (1993). By contrast, as indicated above, the 'white' male manager interviewed in the local personnel department in Operating Unit Y, while still valuing experience, also looks for individuals to possess more of the new criteria of degree qualifications, professional qualifications and demonstration of initiative. This reflects the fact that he is younger and has invested less time in the organisation, and is currently enrolled upon the professional training programme himself.

Similarity to the manager with power over inclusion in terms of experience, qualifications, behaviours demonstrated, and groups belonged to (including groups based upon ethnic origin and gender), is therefore crucial for inclusion in personnel departments in Utility Co. As one interviewee (an ethnic minority man) notes:

> *If my face fits I'm one of the selected few. If my face didn't fit there'd be bloody hell and I'd be out.*

Underpinning these, is the need to be judged likely to perform the work in the way which the manager believes to be appropriate, and, relatedly, to co-operate with and present no threat him or her.

CHAPTER NINE: CASE STUDY FINDINGS 4 - CITY COUNCIL

City Council is a large local authority based in an urban area with a large ethnic minority population. Some seven years prior to the commencement of the research it experienced a financial crisis which resulted in a thousand redundancies, and this, combined with a change in the political control of the authority, prompted a programme of radical change. Three core values were identified for the 'new' organisation, concerning, according to its mission statement, the quality of service; the efficiency of the organisation, and the serving of customers. The new organisation thus sought to refocus itself around the needs of customers; ensuring that it delivered value for money, and raising its levels of service. At a later date a fourth key value was added – 'valuing and empowering our staff'. According to the organisation's statement of mission and values, this value reflects a belief that 'Our mission can only become a reality if all our staff understand and own our values and are fully committed to making [City Council] the best.'

The adoption of these values led to a major restructuring of City Council, which has had radical implications for the personnel function. Whereas City Council was previously highly centralised, under the new structure authority is devolved, where possible, to line managers, and only a very small central core is maintained to provide strategic inputs and organisation-wide monitoring. Moreover, structures based upon professional groupings have been replaced with ones based upon perceived customer need. In an attempt to ensure efficiency, individual departments have become either client units, which purchase services for the council, or business units, which provide those services, and compete for those contracts with other units within the council and organisations outside it.

As part of the reorganisation the central personnel department, which had employed over 80 staff, was split up. Initially it was split into directorate personnel departments, leaving a structure similar to that of Town Council: a small central personnel department, and an operational personnel department in each of the authority's directorates. However, provision of personnel services is now being devolved from directorate personnel departments to each individual business unit, which are taking on

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responsibility for the 'clerk of works' and 'contracts manager' functions of personnel (Tyson and Fell, 1986). Although many personnel specialists have been made redundant or redeployed to other parts of the organisation, some have been kept on in what remains of the personnel departments, which have become business units in their own rights, offering personnel services, under contract, to other business units. Although by the time of the research this devolution has occurred throughout most of the organisation, one of the personnel managers interviewed comes from a directorate which is only just about to implement it.

In the centre, the small central personnel unit has been retained, although with just eleven staff. As in Town Council's central personnel unit, the work of the strategic personnel unit is divided into administrative and strategic work. The implications of this for personnel careers are discussed below.

The reduction in the number of personnel staff and the devolution of personnel responsibilities may be seen to reflect a loss of personnel departments' power in City Council. From having a 'regulator role' (Storey, 1992) with the power to require managers to adhere to its numerous policies and procedures, it has become a 'handmaiden' (ibid), largely providing guidance and assistance to unit managers when they request it, and indeed, competing to offer this service with other potential providers. Part of the reason for this marginalisation, supporting the claims of Legge (1978) and Guest and Hoque (1994), appears to be difficulty in assessing personnel's contribution to the new, business-like goals of the organisation. One 'white' male 'consultant', in the central personnel unit, for example, argues that personnel has been marginalised because

> *Personnel doesn't generate income. And the view is that it could be done by an admin. assistant earning twelve thousand pounds a year, and therefore why do you need high flying principal consultants in these [personnel] units.*

The organisational change has particular implications for the organisation's approach to equal opportunities. Prior to the change, City Council was noted for its positive action equal opportunities initiatives, and had succeeded in achieving a representation of ethnic

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minority staff that mirrored that of its local population, even if they were still under-represented at the most senior levels of the organisation. However, City Council's equal opportunities policy also resulted in some very bad publicity, due to claims of positive discrimination, and some line managers greatly resented the power that the centre exerted over recruitment through it. Indeed, this was a factor in the decision to devolve power over the personnel function from the centre. At the current time most organisation-wide equal opportunities initiatives have been abandoned, and responsibility for equal opportunities has been devolved to individual managers.

The organisation's stated approach to equality has moved towards that of the 'management of diversity' model. The organisation's stated values, of empowering and valuing staff, and its declared 'management style' of respecting, empowering, and communicating with all staff are all in line with the management of diversity literature (c.f Kandola and Fullerton, 1994; Herriot and Pemberton, 1995). As one 'white' female personnel manager notes:

> *We've... rewritten all of the old equal opportunities policies and gone over to a much more management of diversity approach. We had the old style local government thou shalt not discriminate against a b c d e f g h , and so we're trying to get away from that and to integrate it much more into the work that we've been doing on the management style, empowerment and valuing and getting the best from all your staff rather than just focusing on particular groups.*

However, as was noted in chapter two, the management of diversity model does not, in practice, require that everyone should be valued, as it implies, and the same is true of City Council. The claim, already cited, in the council's statement of mission and values, that 'Our mission can only become a reality if all our staff understand and own our values and are fully committed to making [City Council] the best' makes clear that its staff are to be valued and empowered only in order to ensure that the predetermined mission of the organisation is achieved. It is therefore those staff who share the organisation's values that are to be empowered and valued.

As in the other case study organisations, the research focuses only upon those departments and positions that specialise in personnel management, and does not include those people in the business units who have acquired some additional personnel responsibilities through the devolution of the personnel function. Interviews were conducted with personnel practitioners at a variety of levels in the central personnel unit, along with managers of a personnel business unit and a remaining directorate personnel department, and a manager from the organisation's development unit.

Ethnic Origin and Inclusion in Personnel Departments in City Council

As indicated above, City Council is located in an area of high ethnic minority population. As in Town Council, the other local authority researched, this has resulted in the election of a number of councillors of ethnic minority origin, and in pressure to ensure that the organisation's workforce reflects the ethnic diversity of its community. In order to achieve this City Council earlier implemented an equal opportunities policy that sought to increase the representation of people of ethnic minority origin in the workforce. One ethnic minority man notes, for example, that

> *We used to have race advisors and they used to create initiatives for the ethnic minorities, and they used to sit on interviews to make sure the interviews were conducted properly and all that.*

Indeed, another ethnic minority personnel practitioner – this time female - cites '*The initial enthusiasm of the council's equal opportunities policy*' as one of the factors that helped her in her career, and recalls that encouragement from one of the aforementioned race advisors was crucial to her gaining initial inclusion in a personnel department.

The inclusion of another ethnic minority personnel practitioner - the female manager of the directorate personnel department studied - was also aided directly by that equal opportunities policy, as she entered City Council as an equal opportunities advisor.

> *It [her entry to personnel] was through the equal opportunities route, and had I not had that route I don't think I would, I would have had a struggle to get into personnel*

she argues.

In these instances being categorised as of ethnic minority origin aided inclusion through the encouragement offered to such people and the importance of equal opportunities positions. However, some 'white' interviewees argue that such staff also sometimes benefited from positive discrimination: one 'white' female personnel practitioner, for example, claims that

There was a system of race advisors who used to sit on appointment panels who had control over the appointment process, and there was opportunity within that process for abuse and in places there was abuse in the process, and it became a, a, you had to know the group that was running the sort of mafia, you know the race mafia, that was running the thing, and if you came from that particular group you would be all right, if you were anybody else you were not so fortunate. So I think because some of those practices grew up... some appointments were made of people who did not have the skills and abilities to do the post that they were appointed to.

Such perceived 'abuse' led to the afore-mentioned bad publicity about City Council, which not only influenced the decision to remove the old policy, but also the decision to do nothing else specifically for employees of ethnic minority origin. Thus, as a 'white' male personnel practitioner notes, any new initiatives are *'Principally driven on [a] gender basis, because race has been very destructive of the council's reputation in terms of the press coverage we've got'.*

As noted above, City Council's approach to equality changed with the reorganisation and the devolution of personnel responsibilities. One ethnic minority woman reports that *'All the [equal opportunities] policies have been wiped out... so it's basically managers do have ultimate discretion whether they choose somebody'.* The central personnel unit's role is thus reduced, she claims, to giving managers *'clear guidance in the technical standards, that the criteria have to be relevant, and they have to meet legislation in terms of equal opportunities law'.*

Opinions of the old equal opportunities policy differ according to ethnic categorisation. Those categorised as of ethnic minority origin, whose inclusion was aided by the policy, regret its demise (one ethnic minority woman states that as a consequence equal opportunities *'goes out the window'* and *'Equal opportunities in [City Council] at the moment is just rhetoric, there's no substance behind it. There isn't.'*) On the other hand, those categorised as 'white', whose inclusion was not aided by the old policy, tend to approve its passing, claiming - as in the earlier quotation - that it led to the inclusion of people on ethnic grounds, rather than on their ability to do a particular job.

However, the evidence gathered from the case study suggests that ethnic origin has not ceased to be a criterion for inclusion with the demise of the old equal opportunities policy. The manager of the remaining directorate personnel department studied, who is a woman of ethnic minority origin, for example, argues that

> *There's no question that.... if there weren't any black senior officers in central personnel, for example, you know there wouldn't be any black officers..... the one brings the other, you know.*

This, she implies, is because 'white' officers tend to recruit and support 'white' people, while

> *They [black officers] are less likely to discriminate, they are more likely to push you [another black person], be positive, you know, and they're more likely to make you aware of vacancies.*

Indeed, she recounts how she herself has done this:

> *When I needed somebody I went immediately to the, to central personnel, [Suzanne] [ethnic minority woman] was there, you know... there were other officers but I was happy to have [Suzanne]... based on her performance. So, because I'm black I'm not going to discriminate, but perhaps if I had been a white male I might want another white male because I'm more comfortable in that relationship.*

Although she claims that she - and other 'black' staff - do not discriminate, her actions, and those she ascribes to other ethnic minority managers, do in fact serve to aid the

inclusion of people of similar ethnic origins, just as she argues those of 'white' managers do. Indeed, the two other people in her department are, like her, women whom she categorises as being of African origin- itself evidence of 'homosocial reproduction' (Kanter, 1993), and she explains that '*There were very few senior Africans... working in the department and as an African I wanted to address that.*' In this instance, being categorised as of a particular ethnic minority origin appears to have been a criterion for inclusion.

However, there is also evidence to support the ethnic minority manager's claim that 'white' managers discriminate against ethnic minority staff, in other words, also engage in homosocial reproduction, so that being categorised as of ethnic minority origin may sometimes have a negative effect upon inclusion. For example, a male ex-personnel practitioner of ethnic minority origin is pursuing a claim of unfair dismissal because he was selected for redundancy while absent on sick leave, a situation which might not have occurred had the 'white' (male) manager made efforts to help him to attend the selection process, or made him aware of the consequences of not doing so.

The existence of such homosocial reproduction reflects the power that individual personnel managers in City Council have over recruitment to their departments, as a result of the devolution of recruitment responsibilities to individual managers. However, the reorganisation means that those *outside* personnel departments can also have some influence over inclusion in personnel departments, as a result of the 'handmaiden' role personnel units have adopted and their consequent need to impress and be credible to line managers. One female ethnic minority interviewee argues, for example, that the fact that the '*key decision-makers of the organisation are white male*', and that '*business unit [managers] are predominantly white male*' has hindered her career. Indeed, she argues people of ethnic minority origin (and women, as will be discussed below) may be excluded from senior personnel positions in City Council because they lack credibility within the organisation as a whole, rather than in personnel departments:

> *In terms of gender... careers in personnel are affected by whether or not the organisation values a female being a decision maker, or sees a female as being a credible person to be able to make decisions... Also with regards to ethnic origin*

it's exactly the same, it's a question of value of the organisation if they have... an
inbuilt prejudice about not just the person's ability but a particular race...

The reason why 'white' people may exclude people of ethnic minority origin, this interviewee argues, is linked to their lack of knowledge and thus misperceptions of ethnic minority individuals: *'They haven't had black people in these roles before.... it's a matter of them changing their perceptions of other people, other societies.'* As the analysis of Utility Co. suggested, part of the effect of ethnic origin upon inclusion may be derived from its contribution to the sense of knowing other people (c.f. Good, 1988).

Interestingly, personnel practitioners in City Council are more comfortable categorising themselves as being of ethnic minority origin or 'black' - the categorisation they most commonly use - than those in some of the other organisations analysed so far. The two senior ethnic minority women personnel practitioners in particular readily identify themselves as 'black women': asked if power in her personnel department is less likely to be relinquished to women or people of ethnic minority origin, one of them, for example, replies in the first person: *'Luckily it's not restricted otherwise I would have had a problem, wouldn't I?'* (my highlight). These two people's previous experiences - the fact that when they joined City Council their ethnic minority categorisation aided their inclusion - may be one relevant factor. Another may relate to the fact that there are enough individuals – and senior individuals - categorised as of ethnic minority origin in the organisation for being categorised as of ethnic minority origin not to isolate them in the way that it isolates those interviewed in other organisations.

Other Criteria Affecting Inclusion in Personnel Departments in City Council.
a. Past Experience
As has already been indicated, the devolution of personnel responsibilities to line managers is perceived as part of a move away from organisation based upon professional groups, and part of this move is seen to be a move away from occupational to organisational careers (c.f. Brown, 1982). A 'white' male manager from the development unit (which has responsibility for implementing the new culture) argues that *'the strict professional career path I think will slowly disappear, well, it's*

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disappearing quite fast in [City Council]'. Another senior personnel practitioner in the central personnel unit (a 'white' woman) comments that

> *It's difficult to talk about a career in personnel in [City Council] because what they're trying to do is not to have, is to break down those sort of functional empires... the concept is of a generic [City Council] manager, rather than functional specialist.*

This shift is reflected in the variety of experience giving access to more junior positions in the central personnel unit. People are recruited to these positions on the basis of the experience that is relevant to the particular job in the department and is not necessarily personnel experience. The equal opportunities monitoring officer, for example, (a woman of ethnic minority origin) has a background in market research, which has given her experience in data collection and analysis; the consultant who managers the personnel databases (an ethnic minority man) had previous information technology experience. These careers therefore appear to be in line with Martin's 'nmc bricoleur' model (Martin, 1998).

Moreover, in keeping with the notion of there being no personnel career in City Council, neither of the above people either perceive themselves as personnel practitioners, nor anticipate remaining in personnel in the future: '*I still think of myself as somebody that does research and databasing rather than somebody that does personnel*', the monitoring officer comments, while the information consultant has '*no interest*' in pursuing a personnel career but is seeking to move back into mainstream information technology work. In part, however, these career aims reflect their recognition that they do not have the experience necessary for promotion within the central personnel unit.

> *I just think that my [market research] background would be, it would be easier for me to continue in that way rather than to try to get into personnel now,*

the monitoring officer comments, while the information consultant notes that:

> *I don't have the [IPD].... I haven't worked in front-line personnel... all the necessary steps to actually moving up the personnel ladder.*

In part, this reflects again the division of the central personnel unit's work into the administrative and the strategic - into, to use Tyson and Fell's (1986) model, 'clerk of works' and 'architect' - which means that progression between the two is almost impossible. Unlike Town Council - where the central personnel department manifests a similar division of personnel roles - City Council, because of its focus on business rather than employee need, has made no attempt to build ways of bridging that divide.

Just as significantly, however, the expectation that lack of sufficient personnel experience, or of the professional qualification, is a barrier to progression to more senior personnel positions suggests that, although the 'nmc bricoleur' model may apply at lower levels in personnel departments, at more senior levels it is those following occupational careers who are included - in spite of City Council's claims to the contrary. Indeed, all of the people in senior personnel positions in the central personnel unit have followed occupational personnel careers, rather than either organisational or 'nmc bricoleur' ones. Of the four personnel consultants and head of unit, all have substantial previous personnel experience and in fact only for one of them – an ethnic minority woman - is that previous personnel experience in City Council. The others have adopted Brown's (1982) occupational career strategy, one having worked in personnel in another local authority, the other two having worked in personnel in a variety of organisations and industries. As the ('white' male) head of unit notes, *'In actual practical terms most people [in the unit] have come in from personnel or quasi-personnel activities in other organisations. '*

As the above admission of what happens in 'actual practical terms' suggests, there is a tension between the strategic ideals of City Council, and the actual criterion of occupational experience according to which people are included in the central personnel unit. Indeed, the manager with particular responsibility for implementing the new culture – a 'white' man - having said initially that there are only opportunities for generic managers in City Council, admits later in the interview that *'there will still be room for extra advice and strategic direction that'll need to be done, and maybe that is a career path '.*

However, the central personnel unit is not the only personnel department for which previous personnel experience is needed. Asked what he would look for when appointing someone to a personnel officer position in his department, the head of the personnel business unit studied (a 'white' man) states that he would *'be looking for somebody who had some post- [IPD] qualification experience, I don't think I'd be able to meet my need with somebody freshly qualified'*. Clearly, he would give inclusion to someone who has followed an occupational personnel career, having both taken the professional qualification and put it into practice, rather than an organisational one. Indeed, experience in the same industrial sector, he claims, would only be *'desirable'*.

By contrast, the manager of the directorate personnel department studied (an ethnic minority woman) does not require any particular previous personnel experience. While one of the two staff in her department had personnel experience prior to their inclusion, the other had *'no personnel experience'* before entering the department. This different value given to the criterion of experience reflects again the degree of power individual personnel managers - like other managers - have over inclusion in their units as a result of devolution.

b. Qualifications

As in the central personnel department in Town Council, degree qualifications are a significant criterion of inclusion in senior positions in the central personnel unit of City Council. People at that level are noted to be *'in general graduates who have moved directly into HR roles'* ('white' man). Indeed, only one of the 'consultants' (an ethnic minority woman) - the only one who was in personnel in City Council before its reorganisation, and the only one of ethnic minority origin - does not hold a degree.

There is also a history of personnel specialists being required to hold the professional personnel qualification. One ethnic minority woman in the strategic personnel unit failed to obtain the first personnel position she applied for because a professional personnel qualification was an essential criterion for the position; she subsequently took the professional qualification in order to win inclusion in personnel. Indeed, a 'white' man from the central unit notes that virtually everyone in the personnel departments has

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taken the professional qualification: '*We are saturated... and.. we've got one person with an IPD qualification who didn't really need it sufficiently*'.

However, in line with the supposed move away from occupational to organisational careers, some of the personnel practitioners interviewed express a belief that people in personnel departments in City Council should no longer be encouraged to take the professional personnel qualification:

> *I think we would encourage people to do other things, other things that would be more likely to get them somewhere in the borough,*

A 'white' woman in the central personnel unit, who supports the notion of generic management careers, states. Hence, although all of the practitioners in the central personnel unit hold the professional qualification, it was not actually given as a requirement for their posts in the person specifications.

By contrast, however, and as noted above, the ('white' male) personnel business unit manager who wants employees to have personnel experience also wants them to have the professional qualification, as he believes that that gives them '*credibility in selling our services to the managers*'. The need for personnel departments to have credibility with line managers, as a result of their 'handmaiden' role and their need to win contracts from the managers, has already been discussed. The professional qualification is thus, as Larson (1977) argued, used to indicate occupational expertise, as a way of increasing personnel practitioners' credibility and power within the organisation

Finally, the manager of the directorate personnel department interviewed has a policy of not using professional qualifications as a criterion for inclusion. Supporting Johnson's (1972) application of the model of social closure to professions, this ethnic minority origin woman argues that

> *An [IPD] is actually... it served in the past to exclude certain people, I hated the IPD, I never did it, I refused to do it, I found it restrictive, you know... there were very few black people doing IPD courses.*

The concern of this manager is to include women and people of ethnic minority origin, not to set up occupational boundaries, which she - in opposition to Brown (1992), who

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argues that people of ethnic minority origin are less likely to be excluded from occupations which require professional credentials - believes serve to exclude them.

c. Gender

Many of those interviewed perceive that gender affects inclusion in personnel departments in City Council. One ethnic minority woman, who has responsibility for monitoring the workforce composition, notes that although

> *There's a higher ratio of female staff in personnel. When it actually comes to promotion, to move on, it's the males who are actually the heads of the units, in quite a lot of places.*

Unlike in relation to ethnic origin, and as noted above, City Council still operates some limited centralised initiatives to improve gender equality. These consist of talks to unit managers on the business case for developing women, and a mentoring scheme for women managers. The latter scheme links women managers with a mentor for an eight month period, to assist them in looking at their career opportunities within City Council and deciding on their next career move.

Both of these initiatives follow a 'management of diversity' approach, in that they emphasise the individual manager's and individual member of staff's responsibility for equal opportunities. However, in spite of the claims that City Council is no longer, in the words of one 'white' woman, *'focusing on particular groups'*, it is clear that here one particular group is being focused upon - women. Although this contradicts the theory of management of diversity, it mirrors the tension found within the literature on the approach, discussed in chapter two.

There is, however, evidence of a shift away from the notion that equal opportunities is a female or ethnic minority issue, and that equal opportunities posts should therefore be filled by women or people of ethnic minority origin, as the person running the women managers' mentoring scheme is a 'white' man. Interestingly, however, none of the female personnel interviewees have been involved in this scheme. One ethnic minority woman, indeed, specifically argues that:

I have my own mentors outside of the organisation, for various reasons I don't

think it's appropriate to be mentored by a man in the organisation [which most

mentors would be, since men occupy most senior posts in City Council] in the

very organisation that sets up systems to stop women getting in.

Although City Council's formal policies seek to establish support relationships between genders, through appointing a man to run the women's mentoring scheme and giving women male mentors, this interviewee argues that in practice women continue to be less valued and given less support by male managers - hence her reluctance to be allocated a male mentor. The *'systems to stop women getting in'*, she argues, include:

The support networks, the approach, the attitude, the values of the organisation,

and that's shown in the amount of women that are throughout senior

management in the organisation. I don't think women are given credit... even

though women might put themselves forwards for jobs, unless they're able to get

the same level of support by the organisation and the individuals concerned, then

the force against them is enough to make them not succeed.

Further evidence supports this claim that shared gender, like shared ethnic categorisation, may be a factor in the development of support relationships. One female, ethnic minority interviewee, for example, notes that her career was aided by one female personnel manager who *'gave me a lot of encouragement... she used to put projects my way even though I was being supervised by somebody else'*. Asked why she thinks the manager did this, the interviewee argues that *'It was the fact she was a woman, I think, encouraging other women to get on'*.

The female, ethnic minority directorate personnel manager similarly notes the importance, early on in her career, of

All these wonderful supportive women... [Mary - a white female manager] used

to say to me, you know, there are so many incompetent men out there, you know,

you're competent, you can do it, so she really pushed me.

The manager's own department contains all ethnic minority women, because she has made a conscious decision to support other women of ethnic minority origin: both similarity of ethnic origin and of gender being criteria in this instance. Furthermore, she notes that *'I have a strong support network and it's all women'*. However, it is worth noting that when recently *'there was something that was really bothering me'* it was a senior female ethnic minority manager to whom she turned. While her larger support network is based upon shared gender, her closest support relationship is with someone of both the same gender *and* a similar ethnic categorisation.

As in Manuf.Co., interviewees also believe that the different home lives of men and women affect personnel careers within City Council. The female personnel manager cited in the preceding paragraph, for example, argues that the recent restructuring was particularly stressful for her because

> *It was just trying to juggle your home life, which is different with my senior male colleagues, they go home, they have their wives, their dinner, there's none of that, I don't have a wife to go home to.*

This explains why a support network of women, who have a similar problem, is so important to her.

However, this interviewee is also conscious that her female support network does not give her the access to people in positions of power which is necessary for career success: for this she has to establish a different network which includes a large number of men. As in Utility Co., while networks based upon women may be crucial to women for emotional support - and, the above evidence suggests, may be easier for women to access - it is networks with men that can aid inclusion in senior personnel positions.

Routes in to personnel careers are also perceived to be a factor through which gender affects upon inclusion. One 'white' male interviewee from the strategic personnel unit argues that

> *[A number of female personnel practitioners have been] drawn in through the paper-shovelling, service function.... [these] people are sucked up to do the low level stuff, and may not necessarily have the talents to go right the way to the top.*

The increasing stratification of personnel work in the strategic unit, noted earlier, as in Town Council, makes it more difficult for people who are appointed to low-level positions in the department - who are predominantly women - to achieve promotions to more senior ones. This may be, as the interviewee argues, because they lack the talent required; certainly they lack the opportunity to acquire or practice that talent.

This male interviewee also suggests that women's careers in personnel in City Council are hindered by their perception of it as a *'caring function': 'if you hang on to this caring role too long it is career inhibiting'*, he argues. Certainly, any such 'caring' function has been devalued within City Council, where there has been a shift from, according to this interviewee, personnel *'schemes that are employee-centred'* to ones that *'recognise the organisation or the line managers' interests'*.

Moreover, as Watson (1977) points out, women are often associated with 'caring' roles, regardless of whether that is actually the role a woman wishes have. This association by others would tend to reduce a woman's credibility in an organisation like City Council, where such 'caring' roles are no longer valued, and lead to a perception that, as an ethnic minority woman suggests is the case in City Council, a woman is not *'a credible person to be able to make decisions, important decisions'*. Indeed, it is not clear upon what evidence the 'white' male interviewee cited in the preceding paragraph bases his belief that women view personnel management as a caring function, and the existence of this stereotype itself might lead him to exclude women, since people's tendency is to seek confirmation of such preconceptions, and to avoid evidence that overturns them (Good, 1988).

d. Being 'Known'

As in Town Council and Utility Co., being 'known' is also important in winning inclusion in personnel departments in City Council. One 'white' female consultant who was recruited recently to the central personnel unit knew the head of the unit from her previous job, while the ethnic minority woman manager of the directorate personnel department reports that she appointed the redeployee she did partly because *'I knew her reputation'* and *'I knew she was very good'*. As in Utility Co., recruiting someone who is 'known' in this way reduces the uncertainty involved in recruiting new people.

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However, the importance of being 'known'- there might have been other redeployees who were not considered by the manager of the directorate personnel department simply because she had not heard of their reputation - underlines the importance of networking. If an individual's network is based only around particular ethnic or gender groups, the ability to be 'known' may be similarly limited. The criterion of being 'known' to the individual manager may thus, as in Utility Co., exclude or include people indirectly on the basis of ethnic origin or gender. Hence, again, the importance the ethnic minority female personnel manager places upon networking not only with women, but with men also:

> *[With] people like the director, the deputy director, the divisional director, all men, you know, because they, because they were in a position to, to make things happen to me. You have to network and you have to be flexible in the sense that you have to be prepared to do some work which is outside your area so you get tested in that, you know, and then you have a higher profile.*

As discussed in chapter two, shared ethnic categorisation may also give the 'sense' of knowing someone (c.f. Perrow, 1979). The negative effects of ethnic minority categorisation is therefore exacerbated in areas where no people categorised as of ethnic minority origin are known to have worked before, as a 'white' manager then has no previous knowledge of ethnic minority staff from which to have developed a sense of 'knowing' the recruit. As cited above in the section on ethnic origin, one ethnic minority origin woman thus claims that people of ethnic minority origin may be excluded because:

> *It's very hard for people who are in the status quo to have people who have not normally been in the field before.... they haven't had black people in these roles before.*

e. Behaviour
As in the other organisations studied, the type of behaviours individuals demonstrate are also significant. Behaving in ways which demonstrate occupational expertise, for

example, aids inclusion. Thus the ethnic minority woman manager of the directorate personnel department studied chose to appoint the redeployee she did not just because she already knew her but because '*I knew she was good*'. However, some personnel practitioners explain that personnel posts do not always give the opportunity to demonstrate the expertise needed for further inclusion. The directorate personnel manager just cited, for example, reports that it is necessary to '*do some work which is outside your area so you get tested in that*'. As another ethnic minority woman explains: '*Until you're given a job to do.... the organisation doesn't know whether or not I'd be capable of doing it*'. Performing well when given a task is therefore crucial; however, before an individual can demonstrate that behaviour in relation to a task, he or she has to be given the opportunity to do so.

As already discussed, being perceived to share some characteristics with those with power to grant inclusion may overcome this problem by giving them the impression that they already know an individual and know his or her capability in relation to the new tasks (as Heider (1958) explains, people tend to believe that people who share similar characteristics with them will be similar in other respects also). However, where such 'ascribed trust' (Humphrey and Schmitz, 1996) is not possible, trust has to be gained in other ways, namely by demonstrating the required occupational expertise through behaviour.

Networking, as already discussed, is therefore useful for people who do not share similar characteristics with those in power, since it enables them to demonstrate their appropriate behaviour more widely. Demanding new challenges is also a behaviour that such people have used with success in City Council. One ethnic minority woman, for example, describes how she moved from her initial job in personnel - that of personnel secretary - into employee relations work:

> *Within the first five months I talked to my boss about it and I told him about what he told me at the interview, what expectations I had of the job, he would give me about the job, about doing projects and things like that that just didn't materialise.... Because of that he saw an opportunity to place me in employee relations, because they had some vacancies in employee relations, so what he did*

he seconded me, let me go and work in employee relations, and he got a girl from
the typing pool to come and take, do my job for about a year.

Indeed, it is perhaps no coincidence that the only two interviewees from City Council who apparently felt the need to persuade their managers to give them new challenges so that they could demonstrate their capabilities, are both ethnic minority females - people who differ from most of those in power in City Council in both their ethnic origin and their gender.

That demanding behaviour also fits City Council's new culture of individual empowerment. Individuals are expected to take responsibility for their own careers. Thus another ('white' female) personnel practitioner in the central personnel unit notes that *'self-development is very much emphasised, it's [up to] the people to say I've seen this and I've found a bit more out about it and it looks good'*, and that careers for the staff *'wouldn't be planned.... that would be for them to see that as their career path'*. Similarly, in relation to training opportunities, a 'white' male personnel practitioner notes:

If you are passive and you grumble that you are never sent on a course,
irrespective of the pertinence of the course to your job, you won't get anything.
You haven't asked for it. So it's very much those who help themselves are
rewarded.

Indeed, a key criterion of inclusion in City Council post-reorganisation is demonstrating conformity to the new behavioural norms such as these. One 'white' male manager interviewed, for example, notes with regard to empowerment that *'Some people take that on well, and others haven't, and I think it's a matter of you and your style'*. Those who did not *'take that on well'*, he argues, have found inclusion in City Council difficult:

Some managers didn't want to change, and some of those are no longer with us,
because in this sort of environment we have, it's very difficult to survive if you're
trying to play the old way when everybody else is playing a different way.

His own inclusion in his current personnel post - having been made redundant from a previous position of personnel manager in City Council - he put down to his

'chameleon-like approach to work, so I'm quite able to sort of change my skin to suit, so to speak'.

The ethnic minority woman cited above who used 'demanding' behaviour to such good effect also shows willingness to adapt to the new values and practices of the organisation, which may help to explain why she was the only one from her level kept on in the central personnel unit after reorganisation. For example, in relation to qualifications she notes that:

> *I've been considering doing the M.B.A. Because I'm thinking, if the day comes when because of the dissemination of the personnel systems the focus for our unit will no longer be there. Not given so much importance, should I say. So in order to develop you've got to look elsewhere.*

Such flexible behaviour, such willingness to drop the criteria City Council used to value and behave in accordance with the ones which City Council now values, is important for for continued and further inclusion in its personnel departments.

However – and ironically as a result of the reorganisation and the greater discretion it affords individual managers - individual personnel managers are able to continue to retain some of the behaviours valued by the 'old' organisation. This is apparent, for example, in the female ethnic minority directorate personnel manager's ability, discussed earlier, to continue to include people in her department at least partly on the basis of membership of particular social groups - a practice which no longer accords with the organisation's strategy.

Indeed, the behaviours the organisation seeks in relation to equal opportunities form a key area of conflict, with those categorised as 'white' more willing to adapt to the new practices than those categorised as of ethnic minority origin. For example, the following is how the 'white' male head of the central personnel unit describes the new behaviours the organisation seeks in relation to equal opportunities: it is, he says,

> *[To] recognise everybody as individuals rather than regarding people as part of the group of people.... we will value people for their performance and their contribution only, ... we will listen to people and take account of their views on*

the basis of ... the quality of the view as distinct from their position in the hierarchy.

The use of the first person clearly demonstrates his identification with and adoption of the new norms. Such identification and ownership is common to all the 'white' interviewees when they talk about the organisation's approach to equal opportunities.

By contrast, none of the ethnic minority interviewees agree with the new approach, or identify with it, as their use of the third person shows: *'I think [City Council] is so scared terrified of being caught in that trap [of bad publicity] again that they'll do anything to get away from it'* (my highlight) one ethnic minority woman states. Another (ethnic minority man) argues that the lack of interest in monitoring data *'showed their [lack of] commitment to us [people of ethnic minority origin]'* (my highlight).

The female ethnic minority directorate personnel manager's own refusal to adopt the new approach has already been mentioned; tellingly, she has just accepted voluntary redundancy. Given that, under 'management of diversity' approaches, organisations are to reward 'required' behaviours (Herriot and Pemberton, 1995: 210), the fact that personnel practitioners of ethnic minority origin in City Council disagree with the behaviours required by the management of diversity approach may, as in the case of that ethnic minority personnel manager, affect their inclusion. After all, as personnel practitioners, many of them are expected to 'sell' those behaviours to other managers.

The solution, where an individual does not agree with a particular value or practice, of course, is to demonstrate conformity through behaviour, while still secretly disagreeing. The 'white' male manager quoted earlier, for example, claims only that he has *'changed my skin to suit'* (my highlight). Such care over what is shown to others is apparent in the behaviour of another senior, 'white' male personnel practitioner, who notes that in his discussions with his manager *'Every card is not down on the table'*. The issue for ethnic minority personnel practitioners in City Council is therefore whether or not they are prepared or able to change their 'skin', their behaviours, to suit the new values and practices of the organisation, particularly in relation to equal opportunities. The ethnic minority female directorate personnel manager at least has decided that she is not.

Summary

As in the other case studies analysed so far, the findings indicate that a range of collectivist and individualist criteria (c.f. Parkin, 1974) are significant for inclusion in City Council, these being ethnic origin, past experience, qualifications, gender, 'being known' and demonstrating appropriate behaviours. As is still the case in Town Council, being categorised as of ethnic minority origin was used throughout City Council as a criterion for inclusion in the past, and many of the existing ethnic minority personnel practitioners' initial inclusion in personnel departments in the organisation was facilitated by their ethnic origin. However, such practices are no longer supported by the organisation. In spite of this, however, and reflecting the discretion individual managers have over their departments, at least one personnel manager - herself of ethnic minority origin - continues to include people because she categorises them as also being of ethnic minority origin. Whether other personnel managers use ethnic origin as a criterion of inclusion in such a direct manner is less clear. Although at least one ex-personnel employee is accusing his manager of race discrimination, none of the 'white' managers admits, unsurprisingly, to using ethnic origin as a criterion.

However, the findings suggest that ethnic origin does affect inclusion by affecting access to support and networks. Moreover, it affects credibility with those outside personnel departments, who have some influence over whether a personnel practitioner succeeds in his or her role. As in the other case study organisations analysed so far, ethnic origin may also affect the ability to possess some of the other criteria of inclusion identified, such as 'being known' and being able (or willing) to behave in accordance with certain of the organisation's values and practices, particularly in relation to its approach to equal opportunities.

The analysis also reveals that being female, as in the other case study organisations, often has negative effects. However, female personnel managers aid the inclusion of female staff. Ethnic minority origin women face particular barriers to inclusion in most instances, and are particularly aware of the need to demonstrate their ability in order to win inclusion.

As in Town Council, Manuf.Co. and Utility Co., individualist criteria such as experience, being known, and demonstrating appropriate behaviours are also significant for inclusion in personnel departments in City Council. However, the precise nature of the criteria required sometimes differs from that required in the other case studies. The behaviour rewarded, for example, is different from that rewarded in the other organisations, behaving in a demanding way, giving and accepting empowerment, and treating people as individuals rather than as members of groups, being among the behaviours deemed appropriate for inclusion in City Council.

As in Utility Co., there is also conflict within City Council itself over the experience and qualifications required. In City Council this conflict is between the model set by the organisation at a strategic level and that adopted by individual personnel departments in relation to organisational or occupational careers. Furthermore, due to the devolved nature of the personnel function, the criteria affording inclusion vary between individual personnel departments, often mirroring the experience and qualifications of the department manager.

According to City Council's new 'management of diversity' policy, people are to be included on the basis of their ability to do the job, not on the basis of any other criteria. According to the manager from the development unit interviewed (a 'white' man) *'we will recruit the best person for the job. Whether that person happens to share a particular physical characteristic is irrelevant'* and again, *'we've laid the ground for the emergence of people on their value rather than any particular physical characteristic they may have.'* However, he never explains how that *'value'* is assessed, or on what basis the *'best person'* is identified. The case study results suggest that in fact people in personnel departments in City Council are 'valued', and thus included, according to their ability to conform, either to the dominant organisational culture, or to the experience, qualifications, behaviours, ethnic origin or gender valued by - and often thus possessed by - those managers with power over inclusion. Moreover, they suggest that even where physical characteristics do not have a direct effect upon inclusion, they may have an indirect one.

CHAPTER TEN: CASE STUDY FINDINGS 5 - REST CO.

Rest.Co is an American-owned restaurant chain, with restaurants throughout Britain, many of which are located in areas with high ethnic minority populations. Around 1600 managers are employed in the restaurants, and approximately 500 staff (administrative and managerial) in 'support departments' in its head office and two regional offices, which is where the personnel departments are located. The vast majority of Rest.Co.'s staff, however, are employed in the restaurants - which Rest Co. refers to as 'operations' work - rather than in support departments.

The head office and two regional offices each contain a 'human resources department', which advises managers in the restaurants on employee relations issues, organises the recruitment of managers, provides other recruitment support as necessary, and offers managers training in specific personnel issues. Responsibility for the recruitment and management of employees below management level is the responsibility of individual line managers. The human resources departments are small, typically employing around three 'human resources officers' (or senior officers), a recruitment officer, someone on industrial placement, and secretarial and administrative support.

Each region also has its own regional training department, of a similar size to the human resources department. These departments provide training to managers in the region in response to identified restaurant needs. Both the human resources department and the training department of each region are managed by a regional human resources manager. At head office, in addition to the regional training department, there is also a corporate training department, which provides courses which managers from across Britain are required to attend as part of their career development. The training of people below management level is usually the responsibility of line managers rather than the training departments.

Entry to 'officer' positions in these personnel departments is either direct from other personnel positions outside the organisation (following Brown's (1982) occupational career strategy), or increasingly by progressing up the operations hierarchy within Rest Co., and then being transferred to a specialist personnel position from a position in

operations management (following an organisational career strategy (ibid.)). These transfers generally start off as temporary secondments from operations management, although some people have subsequently been offered permanent personnel positions.

Work in operations involves shifts, working at weekends and in the evenings, and many of the operations staff below management level (hourly paid grades) work part-time, often whilst studying at college. Turnover amongst these hourly-paid staff is high, and restaurants are constantly looking to recruit new staff. In some regions the personnel practitioners have helped restaurant managers to organise special recruitment initiatives in order to fill vacancies amongst these lowest grades. Rest.Co. is also continuing to expand, although less rapidly than it has done. There is therefore a constant demand for staff at all levels, including management.

There is a clear career path for both hourly-paid staff and management staff within operations. All would-be salaried managers become trainee managers, regardless of their previous experience, and are required to attend a training programme and pass an examination in order to qualify as managers. After qualifying, the career path takes managers up the restaurant hierarchy to the post of restaurant manager, followed by that of area supervisor, which carries responsibility for overseeing the running of a small number of restaurants, and then that of operations manager, which oversees a number of areas. There are various training programmes, run by the regional or corporate training departments, which individuals at various levels of the operations management hierarchy must attend in order to win inclusion in the next level of the hierarchy.

Within the support departments such as 'human resources' and 'training', career paths are more flexible, and one interviewee (a 'white' woman) claims that it is possible for individual office workers to develop their own position:

A lot of it can come down to the individual, you know, you can... almost create your own niche in the support departments, I mean, the operations hierarchy is more structured, but that's certainly happened before in the support departments... it certainly isn't the... type of organisation where you've got to wait for the person above you to, for something to happen to them.

However, she notes that *'You have to have a really good case as to you need this function, you know, to sort of create another, another position'.*

The paramount importance of 'business need' is also apparent in the company's equal opportunities initiatives. Although the company has a policy which states that it will not discriminate against people on the grounds of gender, race, or disability, and has policies on harassment, personnel practitioners acknowledge that it has been difficult to implement many initiatives. This difficulty is largely perceived to be due to the problems in convincing operations managers of the business case for such initiatives: as one 'white' male personnel practitioner notes: *'Equal opportunities is... a difficult area to sell to line management... because.... there's not any tangible results'.*

This difficulty also reflects the balance of power between the operations side of the organisation and the personnel departments. The personnel departments and operations departments do not always have the same priorities, and this leads to conflict, as one training officer – an ethnic minority origin man - explains:

> *There could be something which is a burning issue for operations which needs addressing straight away... and there could also be a burning training issue which we view as something that needs rectifying straight away here and now, so you get a bit of conflict there.*

However, as the label 'support departments', and the experience of trying to implement equal opportunities initiatives indicate, it is the operations managers who win the conflict: personnel practitioners, as in City Council, are there to fulfil a handmaiden role (Storey, 1992), not to impose their own agendas on the restaurants.

For example, in relation to the implementation of a new employee-development programme, one 'white' male personnel practitioner notes that:

> *The priority is clearly operations at the moment, that is the ... number one issue, because you know if we're not getting it right at the restaurants it doesn't matter what's happening in terms of staff development within the office because that doesn't affect custom.*

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As Legge (1978) and Guest and Hoque (1994) have argued, and as was the case City Council, the difficulty of evaluating personnel practitioners' contribution to the achievement of business goals reduces their power.

As noted above, this affects the personnel departments' power to implement equal opportunities initiatives. Indeed, one 'white' man - who significantly was in a personnel post on a secondment from an operations position, and intended to return to operations - reveals that he himself does not see a relationship between equal opportunities and business need. He argues that

> *With regards to equal opportunities, you [personnel practitioners]... get so*
> *excited because you think it's just a great thing for the company to be involved*
> *in.... but we can't lose... the bread and butter issues,*

these being the operations of the restaurants.

In order to develop equal opportunities, therefore, equal opportunities groups have been established involving not only personnel practitioners and representatives from other support functions, but also operations managers, as their co-operation is essential. However, personnel practitioners still take the lead on such issues, a human resource officer in each region being responsible, respectively, for leading initiatives on ethnic origin, gender and disability, these being the three groups identified by Rest.Co. as requiring attention. Again, reflecting the need to demonstrate the 'business case' for equal opportunities, much of the early work has focused upon equal opportunities for customers, rather than employees.

Rest.Co. has also identified a number of key corporate values. Personal hygiene, care of uniform, timekeeping, staying busy without supervision, completing tasks, working as part of a team, following management direction and company policies, being courteous to customers and fellow employees, helping others, and being interested in self-development are some of the factors rewarded in the appraisal of hourly-paid staff, revealing corporate values of hygiene, tidy appearance, use of initiative and working hard, team work, self-development, reliability, and obedience to managers and company

policies. As the analysis below will reveal, these values are important throughout the organisation.

As in the analysis of Manuf.Co., the analysis of Rest Co. is concerned only with the British part of the organisation which, as in Manuf.Co., is largely independent of its American parent company in terms of personnel careers and practices. Interviews were conducted with personnel practitioners in the human resource department in the Northern region office, the training department and human resource department of the Midlands regional office, and the human resource department, regional training and corporate training departments in the South East regional office.

Ethnic Origin and Inclusion in Personnel Departments in Rest.Co.

Many of Rest.Co.'s restaurants and all of its regional offices are located in areas with high ethnic minority populations, and people categorised as of ethnic minority origin are well-represented amongst the hourly-paid restaurant staff. The representation is lower at management level: as one 'white' woman personnel practitioner notes

> *We're definitely heavily represented at floor level in ethnic minorities and not in management.... I can point to a few in middle and senior management.*

However people of ethnic minority origin still comprise over 18% of all managers. Within the support departments - where personnel departments are - people of ethnic minority origin comprise a little over 11% of staff.

Rest.Co. has a policy of being 'ethnicity-blind'. The equal opportunities policy claims that

> We ensure that employee and job applicants are selected, trained, promoted and treated on the basis of their relevant skills, talents and performance and without reference to race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, sex, marital status or disability.

This 'ethnicity-blind' policy is exemplified in the composition of the racial equality committee, which, as one ethnic minority personnel practitioner notes, contains no one of ethnic minority origin. Ethnic origin is not to be a criterion even for inclusion in committees.

Certainly, none of the three people interviewed who are formally categorised by the organisation as being of ethnic minority origin believe that they have been excluded because of their ethnic origins in any direct way: '*I don't believe right now in this company that a black person will be held back because of his colour*', one ethnic minority man states. However, in spite of this claim, this interviewee and one other man of ethnic minority origin do note ways in which their experience of working in Rest.Co. has been affected by their ethnic categorisation, and these may have made winning inclusion more difficult for them. As in Manuf.Co., this different treatment is by people outside personnel departments.

Unlike in Manuf. Co., however, some of this different treatment occurs even before individuals seek inclusion in personnel departments, and thus only affects their inclusion indirectly, rather than directly, as the examples below will illustrate. Even though in those instances ethnic origin does not, itself, form one of the criteria which lead to inclusion in personnel departments, they are discussed here in order to show how ethnic origin may have an indirect effect upon inclusion in personnel departments, through affecting possession of other criteria which *are* required for inclusion. This point will be returned to in chapter eleven.

Some of this different treatment comes from people outside Rest.Co. altogether. The fact that operations positions involve close contact with customers means that treatment received from those customers has an effect upon an individual's experience of, and opportunity to succeed in, operations positions in Rest.Co. - as one ethnic minority man interviewed notes, '*We can't operate in a vacuum*'. Given that, as noted above, progression up the operations management hierarchy is an increasingly important route into personnel officer positions and above, negative treatment by customers when in operations roles may ultimately make it more difficult for an individual to win inclusion in personnel departments.

One (male) ethnic minority personnel practitioner, for example, describes how his first restaurant manager appointment was '*a real challenge*',

Because you've got the British National Party main office about a mile down the road from the restaurant, so at nights, if I worked nights on the pub rush there'd be a lot of conflicts with people calling you names, threatening you, you know if you leave the store at night you've got to sort of have eyes in the back of your head because the car park's like two hundred yards away from the store, so those kind of pressures you had to be, you know, obviously the company doesn't have any strategy to deal with that.

As a result of the company's equal opportunities policy this manager was assigned the restaurant on the basis of business need, and without reference to his ethnic origin, and no special support was provided to help him deal with the problems which arose. However, the pressure he experienced in that position was clearly much greater than would have been experienced by a 'white' manager, and the likelihood of him successfully completing his time there less.

Those two ethnic minority origin men also experienced different treatment from colleagues when they worked in operations. One of them recalls that, when working his way up the restaurant management hierarchy, '*Obviously colour was a problem, came up to a lot of barriers with colour*'. Both experienced comments and actions which they found offensive, and dealt with them by confronting the individual responsible.

I don't let anyone abuse me in any way... I will react to let people know that I don't think what they're saying is right. And if they continue to talk in that kind of way I would refuse to carry on talking and I would walk off. I've done that in the past and that is while I've worked here at [Rest.Co.], not in this training department but earlier on in my career

one of them explains.

One personnel practitioner, a woman not categorised as of ethnic minority origin, notes that operations managers also sometimes harbour prejudices which may lead to the exclusion of people of ethnic minority origin within operations.

I've worked with a manager in the past, of very high standing, who said that [when] he went into a restaurant, he just wanted to see pretty white girls on the tills, and he wanted any men and certainly any ethnic minorities in the back

she recalls. She continues:

Hopefully we've moved on from that, but if someone who is high up has had that idea, you know that managers who want to please him will do that.

Interviewees also suggest that expectations of people in operations may be affected by their ethnic origins. One of the ethnic minority origin men interviewed remembers that when he was promoted to restaurant manager

The reaction was funny because with black people working within the restaurant as crew and floor management, they thought it was great... then the other reaction was, from white crew members was, oh, how did you get it?

The assumption from 'white' staff was that he would not have had the ability to gain the position on merit. Moreover, although this example relates to operations work, it is conceivable that different expectations could also exist in relation to those working in support departments such as personnel, and thus have a direct effect upon inclusion in them.

Indeed, it is claimed that, in general, people categorised as of ethnic minority origin have to work harder to defeat the negative expectations non-ethnic minority people (who comprise the majority of senior people in Rest.Co.) have of them. One ethnic minority male manager reports that

At the beginning I was so fearful of [not] doing a good job I had to work harder to prove myself more than somebody whose, you know, I mean that is definitely that definitely still exists, you definitely have to make yourself seem as good if not better, because the expectations of you is, you're seen as, you know, not able, if you fail then it's no big deal really because you're not expected to do that well anyway.

As Good (1988) notes, not only may someone infer a person's ability from characteristics such as ethnic origin, but he or she will then seek evidence to preserve

that theory: hence the need for people categorised as of ethnic minority origin in Rest.Co. to work harder in order to overcome the negative expectation.

Two other noteworthy points arise from the above quotation, both of which again suggest that ethnic origin may have more direct effects upon inclusion in personnel departments. One is that this personnel practitioner - like many interviewed in the other case study organisations - attempts to avoid actually mentioning ethnic origin: it is only the context of the comment, in a discussion of ethnicity, which reveals that it is about ethnicity. This suggests a continued reluctance to associate himself with any difficulties caused by ethnic origin. In the quotation about the restaurant near the British National Party headquarters, given above, the same interviewee similarly disassociates himself from problems caused by ethnic categorisation by speaking only in the second person. (By contrast, he is proud to acknowledge his ethnic origin when discussing successes, for example the fact that he was the first ethnic minority origin manager in his region.)

The second point arising from the quotation is that the pressure to do well is increased by the fact that he is seen as a representative of people of ethnic minority origin. He states that

The only criticism I probably would have [of Rest.Co.] is that is seems to be the fact that I'm more of a role model now rather than somebody who's just doing a good job.

The additional pressures experienced by such 'tokens' are noted by Kanter (1993), for if they fail they let down not only themselves, but others who share the same categorisation. This perhaps explains why the interviewee was *'so fearful of [not] doing a good job'.*

The reader will also have noticed these ethnic minority male interviewees from Rest.Co. tend to refer to 'colour' rather than to 'ethnic origin', stating for example that *'colour was a problem'* ; *'I don't believe right now in this company that a black person will be held back because of his colour'.* This suggests again that skin colour is the key determinant of ethnic minority categorisation (c.f. Mason, 1995). Indeed, of the three interviewees categorised as of ethnic minority origin using the Office of Population

Censuses and Surveys categorisation outlined in the introduction (and using Rest.Co.'s own monitoring), the two who have experienced difficulties are those who possess a different skin colour from the majority (the other categorising himself as being 'white other' - i.e. non-European - because he was born in South America.) It is those who are of a different skin colour from the majority, it appears, who are commonly categorised by colleagues and customers as being of ethnic minority origin, and thus experience the negative effects analysed above most.

However, interviewees report that the cultural component of ethnic origin does have some effect, through its effect upon the ability of people to relate to one another. One of the ethnic minority men interviewed - a training officer - notes that

> *My upbringing and somebody else's upbringing are two different things, but culturally there is a link, if you have, you can relate to certain people on a course obviously if they are from the same origin as you.*

Because 'white' European people are in the majority, being of 'white' European ethnic origin is more likely to aid inclusion in Rest.Co. through this process.

Other Criteria Affecting Inclusion in Personnel Departments in Rest.Co.
a. Past Experience

As already indicated, there are two key routes into personnel positions in Rest.Co. above administrative levels: recruitment from personnel positions in other companies, or transfer from operations management in Rest.Co. Those personnel practitioners who follow the first route win inclusion on the basis of specialist occupational experience, while those who follow the second do so on the basis of their organisational experience.

Inclusion in administrative personnel positions is gained either on the basis of secretarial and administrative experience, whether within the company or outside, or, in one case some years before the research, on the basis of junior operational experience. Although, as some of the other case studies analysed, there is perceived to be a large gap between administrative personnel work and the work of practitioners at 'officer' level, there is one example of an individual progressing from one to the other, although again this happened some years prior to the research.

In the early years of Rest.Co.'s British operations, personnel practitioners were usually recruited on the basis of specialist occupational experience. As one ethnic minority origin male personnel practitioner explains:

When [Rest.Co.] was first established within within the UK you need a personnel specialist... you need people who are going to be very strong in the field, so, a lot of the the senior people within the human resources department are all external because they were brought in specifically to perform their role.

However, he goes on to explain that

Once you've set the foundations, then ... you've got an option of doing two things.... You recruit somebody from outside and yes they know the job but they don't know the [Rest.Co.] system, they don't know the culture.... or you get somebody from [Rest.Co.] who, who already knows the company, already knows the business, already, you know, fits the culture, and develop their, their skills as a... personnel sort of like specialist.

In other words, there is a choice between, to use Brown's (1982) model, appointing people who are following occupational careers, and appointing people who are following organisational ones.

As in City Council, there is conflict in Rest.Co. over the relative value of that occupational and organisational experience. Those who support including people on the basis of organisational experience argue, for example, that that experience *'helps focus all of the service departments onto what is actually required by [Rest.Co.]'* ('white' male). This interviewee - a human resources manager who is on a secondment from operations management - claims that those following specialist personnel careers often have incorrect perceptions of what is needed by Rest.Co., and people with operations experience are needed to put them right:

Coming from operations I ... know the reality of the situation out there, and sitting in an office you're an HRO, you can get very comfortable reading the literature [Rest.Co.] produces... whereas I know the reality of the situation.

By contrast, a number of the permanent personnel practitioners - both those recruited externally and those who were seconded internally, but subsequently taken on into permanent personnel positions - argue the need for at least some people with specialist occupational experience. One person (a 'white' woman) who moved into personnel from operations six years ago argues that

Over the six years that I've been in the personnel role... I've developed quite a good network and I think that you know I can help the company more by drawing on that network for best practice and putting it in place in [Rest.Co.].

This interviewee clearly values her specialist occupational experience and the occupational models she is thus able to bring to Rest.Co. Another permanent personnel practitioner (again a 'white' woman) argues that it is important to retain a balance of permanent personnel practitioners and secondees, in order to provide a *'stable base'*.

However, it is the organisational career model which has become dominant, and operations experience within the organisation is therefore a more significant criterion of inclusion in personnel positions at office level and above than previous personnel experience. One 'white' woman who was recruited on the basis of external personnel experience acknowledges that now *'We would normally go internal'* to recruit to personnel positions, while a 'white' male secondee to the personnel function argues that *'We'll probably be unlikely to hire people into our HR departments from outside now'*. Another 'white' woman, an individual with operations experience who has become a permanent human resources officer, argues that the criterion for inclusion in senior personnel positions in Rest.Co. is now *'that you must have had operational experience'*.

This, that personnel practitioner argues, is not only because of the formal criteria for recruitment to such positions, but also because of the greater credibility operations experience brings.

Whilst [externally-recruited personnel specialists] perhaps I think almost do a better job, more professional job, they don't get the kind of respect that people who've been you know in a store do get

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the interviewee explains. Indeed, this interviewee believes that a ('white' male) colleague on secondment has been given the post of senior human resources officer, while she - with much more personnel experience - remains a human resources officer, because he has more senior operations experience than her. As she explains:

Although I've got the qualification and the [personnel] experience I think he's got more credibility because he came in at a higher level of operations.

This increasing use of secondees from operations reflects the low power of the personnel function relative to operations, the secondments being used to ensure that those in the personnel departments adhere to the values and practices of the organisation rather than of the occupation:

Maybe sort of a year and a half into the secondment maybe I'll lose some of my objectivity and it'll be time for somebody else to come in

one secondee ('white' male) suggests. Even the human resources manager of one of the regions, as indicated above, is on a secondment, thus preventing those specialising in personnel from progressing their careers.

The level of operations experience required to enter officer-level personnel positions has also shifted in recent years. Whereas in the past these positions were open to people at restaurant manager level, they are now -according to the formal recruitment criteria- only available to those at supervisor level, the next level up in the operations hierarchy. (However, in practice this rule is sometimes broken: one training officer ('white' female) notes that

When I joined the department, well, I was told that the requirements are that you have to be a supervisor to get into that position, but I wasn't a supervisor, I was a store [i.e. restaurant] manager.)

Interviewees suggest two reasons for supposedly limiting these secondments to supervisors and above. One is that people at that level have the skills needed to work in personnel positions; thus one ('white') man notes that there are various skills needed to fulfil the personnel posts in which '*most supervisors would really qualify anyway, by*

virtue of the fact that they'd got to be an area supervisor they'd be sort of qualified'. However, the fact that restaurant managers have in the past been sufficiently successful in personnel to be taken on permanently into personnel departments suggests that this is not the only reason. The second reason given is that secondments into support departments such as personnel have become seen as a necessary stage in the development of senior managers. Thus the ('white' male) human resources manager who is on a secondment reports that *'For me to become a [grade two] one of the things I have to do is a secondment'.* Given the new status of secondments, and their relative scarcity, it is to be expected that those with the greatest power - the more senior operations managers - will limit inclusion to themselves.

Indeed, meeting the needs of senior operations managers appears to be a primary factor in the increased use of secondments, again reflecting the greater importance and power of operations relative to personnel departments. Indeed, one 'white' male secondee to personnel notes only two reasons for secondments: these being

> *When people eventually move up to senior management they haven't got this sort of tunnel vision from having only only worked in one department... and secondly to provide some variety and diversification for employees.*

Tellingly, there is no reference to the needs of the personnel function, but only to the needs of operations and individual -operations- employees. One of the permanent personnel practitioners (a 'white' woman) certainly argues that

> *[Rest.Co.] are so operations led, because everything seems to be oh what suits operations better... the personnel department is almost used as an enhancer for the operations people rather than I feel developing greater expertise.*

b. Qualifications

Inclusion in the post of trainee manager - the highest level at which it is possible to enter the operations hierarchy - requires either a degree or GCSE-level qualifications with relevant experience either within or outside Rest.Co. All those who enter personnel positions on the basis of their operations experience first have to win access to a trainee manager post using one of these sets of criteria.

Once employed as a trainee manager, as noted earlier in this chapter, individuals have to follow a set training programme and pass an internal examination in order to move up the operations hierarchy. Moving from operations into specialist personnel positions, however, does not require any further qualifications. Thus one (ethnic minority male) interviewee explains that, in order to become a training officer requires

Just experience, at the end of the day, it's a situation that, once you're in the system and you get through the training programmes then it's all down to sort of like experience, personal experience, there are no formal qualification levels.

Indeed, professional personnel qualifications are not necessary for inclusion at any level in the personnel departments, reflecting again the greater value accorded to organisational than occupational careers by those with power over inclusion in personnel departments. Although all the permanent human resources and training officers have taken the professional qualification, they recognise that

No one's promoted on the strength of having the qualification, it's literally to support your technical knowledge ('white' woman).

As a result, not all of those on secondments to personnel positions have chosen to study for the professional qualification, although some have.

Indeed, while some personnel practitioners - notably those seeking to pursue an occupational career - argue that '*it [the IPD] should be compulsory*' ('white' woman) and that it is '*bizarre*' that some people on secondments are not taking it ('white' woman), one of those secondees - a 'white' male department manager - argues that he doesn't need the technical 'knowledge' the qualification brings. '*If I need technical advice I just speak to one of the HROs*', he notes, revealing a model of manager similar to that of the '*generic [City Council] manager*' noted in the analysis of City Council.

c. Gender

At the time of the research, around half of the posts in personnel departments are filled by men and half by women, mirroring their proportions in support departments in

Rest.Co. in general. This represents an increase in the number of men in the personnel departments over previous years. One female ('white') personnel practitioner notes that her department was all female when she joined it six years previously, but now the manager, the senior human resources officer and the other human resources officer are all male: only she and the two administrative staff are female.

Clearly, it is impossible to draw any conclusions from such a small sample. However, the move to recruit people into personnel positions from operations management, and the increase in the level of operations manager usually offered secondments to those posts, would have an indirect, negative effect upon the inclusion of women, since only just over 31% of restaurant managers are women, and only just over 11% of managers above restaurant manager level. Indeed, all of the women identified in officer level personnel positions in Rest.Co. were recruited either from personnel posts outside Rest.Co., or from operations positions within Rest.Co. at the level of restaurant manager or below.

Given the increasing importance of operations management experience for inclusion in personnel posts, those factors affecting women's inclusion in operations management positions have knock-on effects on their inclusion in personnel positions. The hours which operations managers are expected to work is one key factor: '*[a] nine to five job... it's definitely not*', one ('white' female) personnel practitioner notes. One male personnel practitioner (of ethnic minority origin) reports that

> *A lot of the friends I used to have I've lost because they'd be going out night clubbing and I'd still be working, nights I'd be working till midnight,*

while another 'white' female practitioners reports that '*I worked every weekend... it... affects your personal life*'. These hours of work have a disproportionately negative effect upon women's careers when they have children: one of the 'white' female personnel practitioners explains that one reason why she does not want to go back into operations management herself is that

> *I don't think I want to go back working night shifts and weekends and so on, I've got two very small children and ... personally for me I don't think it would work.*

Indeed, another ('white') female personnel practitioner reveals that although '*the training they get and the pressure they [men and women] are under that's exactly the same*', still '*We do have quite a lot of females dropping out of the [restaurant manager] job... That might be I don't know personal reasons*'. As was the case with people of ethnic minority origin, even if the company treats men and women the same, factors outside the company - in this case the division of childcare responsibilities - means that that same treatment tends to lead to women's exclusion.

In recognition of the problems of caring for children while working in operations management, Rest.Co. has introduced a part-time manager scheme, under which male and female managers with dependent children can not only reduce their hours, but limit the times when they are available for work, in return for a salary a little below the pro-rata rate. However, a ('white') woman points out that

> *You certainly can't be a restaurant manager working part-time. If you are currently a restaurant manager and you want to go part-time you have to take a demotion.*

Moreover, she argues that

> *Some of these people are still working forty hours per week, but because they have this label of part-time they suddenly don't get developed.*

It is thus impossible for a part-time manager in operations to win a secondment to a personnel position.

One 'white' woman also expresses a belief that women are more likely to be excluded from personnel positions because of the expectation that they will need maternity leave. She reports that

> *Two of us [in a regional personnel department] became pregnant within the same month... The regional manager just went ape, and actually, actually said, couldn't you have planned this better.... Recruited into the department at that time was a male... Now you can infer what you like from that, but I personally*

feel that the worry about people going on maternity leave has definitely hit all of
the service departments.

Another reason why managers might actively seek to include at least some men in personnel positions is indicated by the claim of an ethnic minority male personnel practitioner, who was the first man in his particular personnel department, that

There were times when I thought was I selected just because I was a man and they
they were trying to address the issue that it was seen very much as a girlie job, if
you like.

What is significant here is not only the possibility that gender may have been a criterion in his inclusion, but also his belief that being seen as a *'girlie job'* is negative, something which managers might wish to alter. It is possible that - as in the example from Watson's (1977) research - being staffed by women may reduce personnel's credibility with those with power in the organisation, and hence gender may be a criterion for inclusion in personnel posts.

The final way in which gender affects inclusion in personnel positions in Rest.Co. is through its effects upon the development of close working relationships. Since senior operations managers have great influence over recruitment to personnel positions - the seconded human resources manager was appointed to the post by a senior operations manager- and since the work of the personnel practitioners is largely with operations managers, developing good relationships with people in operations can both increase the possibility of inclusion in personnel positions, and make it easier for those already in personnel positions to do their jobs effectively - and thus, perhaps, gain inclusion in more senior personnel positions. One 'white' female personnel practitioner explains that

I think men do better at the moment in our organisation in [support] departments
than we do, and I think that they network brilliantly, because, and , I work with
[Mike] and [John], whenever they make phone calls to any of the restaurants, the
first five minutes is always spent talking about how Sheffield United did, last
Saturday, you know, but whenever I ring, you know, I'm not interested in in
football at all, and I'll get straight into the business, yet I know that the

camaraderie they're able to build up or the kind of affinity, to get on the same
level, they have an advantage because of this kind of sporting thing..... If I go out
and want to spend two or three days in [the] field, I'm likely to have to book a
hotel room. When [John] goes out, he'll stay at a manager's house.... If a male
manager says to [John], come and stay, that's great, they get the football on,
have a couple of cans in the evening. You know, so it's that kind of barrier that I
think in [Rest.Co.] I'm up against.

The ethnic minority origin man, cited above, who was previously the only man in his
personnel department, similarly reports that being of a different gender made relating to
others, this time within the department, more difficult:

I suppose it was very uncomfortable in some ways, sometimes you would feel that
you were intruding in conversations maybe, I don't know, it's, it's just at work,
you just have like boys would be chatting about football and, you know.

Interestingly, he suggests that this discomfort might have been due to his stereotypes of
women and his expectation that there would be differences and thus difficulties, rather
than that there necessarily were any:

Whose fault is it, is it the department's fault for who they are or is it me creating
those and I'm falling into stereotypes and sort of preconceived ideas?

As with the attribution of credibility, it is the characteristics *attributed* to people on the
basis of their gender which appears to be important.

Relationships in Rest.Co. developing more easily between people of the same gender
would make it more difficult for women to gain inclusion in personnel departments in
Rest.Co. as those with power over inclusion, as in City Council, were usually male. This
is acknowledged by interviewees: one 'white' woman comments, for example, that

[The company's mentoring scheme] tends to be more successful if they're [the
mentees] partnered with a male, because they get, as they go on trips with them
to visit restaurants, do customer service reports, and so on, they get greater
visibility, and it brings them on.... it would seem that the male mentors have been
of a higher position and therefore had a greater opportunity to expose these

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people to meet, to network, and to have greater visibility amongst higher status restaurants, groups of people, whatever.

The implications of being the token male are therefore not, as Kanter (1993) argues, the same as the implications of being the token female. In Rest.Co., the group the isolated man felt excluded from due to his gender was that of the low-status personnel practitioners, whereas that the woman cited feels excluded from is the higher status operations managers. Whilst being isolated in a department can cause pressures and difficulties, it is the ability to build relationships with those - to borrow the words of one of the interviewees from City Council - *'in a position to... make things happen to me'* which matters most, and in Rest.Co. this is people outside the personnel department.

d. Being 'Known'

Being 'known' is possibly an even more significant criterion of inclusion in Rest.Co. than in any of the other case studies analysed. This is because, although external recruitment to personnel departments involves a process of advertising, internal recruitment - the path which has become dominant for officer-level posts- does not. In spite of some claims that all internal vacancies are advertised on an internal vacancy list, the findings indicate that only one of the seven people interviewed who was recruited to personnel from operations management – an ethnic minority man - actually applied for his post. In all the other cases, in the words of one personnel practitioner ('white' female), *'people are approached'*. Indeed, this interviewee states that positions would only be advertised internally *'where no-one's kind of immediately come to mind'*.

Being known to those people in Rest.Co. who are responsible for nominating people to personnel officer positions - these being existing personnel practitioners and senior operations managers - is therefore a crucial criterion for inclusion in such posts. One ('white' female) personnel practitioner, when working in operations, sought personnel practitioners' advice over recruiting hourly-paid staff:

So they'd kind of got to know me a little bit, and one of the officers was going on maternity leave and I was asked did I want to cover it.

Given that the personnel practitioners and senior operations managers are based in the regional offices, being located near to, and thus being seen in, those offices is therefore important:

There are some people who, let's say they're working out in [Town X], who are not seen in the office very much, who would dearly love a position here and be ideally suited, yet a person who's in [Town Y] would stand a greater chance of it

one 'white' woman claims.

Being known is also significant for inclusion in administrative personnel posts, although less so, as formal recruitment procedures are followed, and known individuals still have to apply alongside others. One personnel administrator interviewed (a 'white' woman) first gained inclusion in Rest.Co.'s office through a friend she knew who worked there, who was able to tell her about a secretarial vacancy in the accounts department. Although she was not known personally, being the friend of someone who was known, as was the case in Utility Co., may have provided managers with the 'sense' of knowing her. After her appointment -initially to the accounts department - she then helped out in the personnel department, and was subsequently appointed to a post there. As she explains

It was fortunate in that I'd been down there helping anyway, so the personnel manager already knew me very well... I didn't really know the job as such, but because I'd helped out with other things and she knew me, I think she thought perhaps better the devil you know.

Being personally known can also help to overcome negative stereotypes and expectations, for example, like those related to ethnic origin discussed above. Thus the ethnic minority man who found that non-ethnic minority people suspected that his appointment to a management position was not based on merit also notes that '*people that knew me well were quite happy*'.

However, where individuals are not personally known, someone's sense of knowing them can, as in earlier case studies, be provided through knowledge of a social group to

which they are judged to belong, either because it is a group which the other person also claims membership of, or because the other person has previous knowledge of people from that group. Thus, in relation to disability, one ('white' male) interviewee notes that some managers recruit more disabled staff than others because

They've got better knowledge.. of it, you know, they might have a friend or

relative that's disabled so they know... that.. the majority of disabled people can

offer, you know, have got a lot to offer.

However, although where an individual has a positive experience of someone from a particular social group the sense of knowledge that imparts may help the inclusion of others who are categorised as being in that same social group, where the experience is negative, the sense of knowing others from the same social group might serve to exclude them. Inclusion, as identified in relation to the other case studies, is thus based not only upon the bare fact of knowing someone, but also upon the knowledge, or sense of knowledge, that they will behave in desired ways.

e. Behaviour

As in all of the other case study organisations the behaviour demonstrated thus also facilitates - or hinders - inclusion in the personnel departments. It is not enough, for example, to have senior operations experience to win a secondment to a personnel position - the performance given while in operations is also significant. In particular, the behaviour has to demonstrate expertise. Indeed, almost all of the personnel practitioners interviewed are acutely aware that it is not enough to have expertise - it has to be *shown* to those with power over inclusion. '*You have to show that you have good people practices'* ('white' woman); *'If people perform well and work hard and show they have the ability...'* ('white' man); *'proved themselves as... displaying the necessary skills'* ('white' woman) (my highlights) are some of the quotations which reveal this. Indeed, only one interviewee (a 'white' woman) - interestingly someone who was recruited from outside, and so perhaps is less aware of the key norms of Rest.Co. - states simply that '*They've got to be capable'.*

However, the behaviour given in operations is not always observed directly by those able to grant inclusion in personnel departments, but is often based upon customer. service reports, reports from mystery diners, visits to the restaurant and - crucially - restaurant turnover. These are assumed to reflect the behaviour of the manager, and mirror managers' assumptions that they, as individuals, determine a restaurant's success (*'I love the ability to see a restaurant that's not performing well and in three months, four months time I can turn it around'* one male ethnic minority manager notes).

Moreover, as has been pointed out in relation to other case studies analyses, the definition of 'ability', 'good people practices' and 'good performance' are not unambiguous. One Rest.Co. interviewee ('white' woman) bemoans the fact that inclusion in personnel positions is often based upon criteria such as *'[a senior manager] having a good visit to a restaurant in the past four months'*. What constitutes a *'good visit'* can vary according to the particular concerns of the senior manager who is visiting, as is revealed by the 'white' woman, quoted earlier, who claims that one senior manager wanted to see *'pretty white girls'*, and that restaurant managers who wanted to please him would therefore ensure that that was what he did see. *'They [restaurant managers] will say well we know what he likes when he visits the restaurant, and they..... perpetuate it'*, she continues.

Individuals therefore need to identify what their managers desire to see, and then behave accordingly. The 'white' male human resources manager interviewed who is on a secondment, when asked if he could have refused to take the secondment, explains that

> *It's all about perspectives... My perspective of myself is I am absolutely brilliant, all right, and I should be promoted. I don't know whether the vice-president's regional manager would have exactly [that] perspective of me, and whose perspective is more important? Well, unfortunately it's not my perspective, it is the person who signs my annual performance review, and if their perspective is that this is the right thing for me to do, hey, I'm not going to argue.*

'Good performance' is therefore not objective, but rather a subjective construct. In order to be judged to have performed well - to get a good performance review, or a

'*good visit*'- an individual therefore has to conform to his or her manager's definition of good performance.

As this implies, a further behavioural norm crucial for inclusion in Rest.Co. is therefore demonstrating agreement with one's manager and showing deference to him or her. An example of this occurred during one of the research interviews. When someone (of lower rank) came into the training room which was being used for the interview in order to tidy it up, at the (ethnic minority male) interviewee's own insistence, he was told to go away and return at the interviewee's convenience. Although there were other rooms which the interview could have been moved to, the interviewee was apparently annoyed at the junior person's presumption in interrupting him. However, when the interview was interrupted by a more senior manager, wishing to use some of the training room facilities, the interview was suspended indefinitely, at that manager's convenience, while the interviewee showed great interest in everything the senior manager did and said and laughed enthusiastically at all of his jokes. Of course, following whatever a manager wants in such ways also enables the impression of shared identity, of shared interests, to be created, and thus may facilitate the creation of the kind rapport discussed earlier.

Of course, individuals do not only have to show conformity to whatever managers want, but also to the values of Rest.Co. as a whole. One of the arguments for appointing internal people to personnel posts is that, as one ethnic minority male personnel practitioner points out,

> *[Rest.Co.] is, as with any organisation, has it's own culture, you know, and, and you've got a problem, you recruit somebody from outside and yes they know the job but they don't know the [Rest.co.] system, they don't know the culture, so it's unquantifiable whether they're going to fit in there.*

'Fitting in' is clearly crucial for inclusion, and, as in the other case study organisations, individuals may demonstrate that they 'fit in' through their behaviour.

The use of the internal recruitment market, and also requiring all operations managers to attend the same training programmes at each stage of their career, helps to ensure that individuals know and conform to those norms (again supporting Johnson's, 1972, claim

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that such a 'uni-portal system' serves to create 'shared identity', ibid.: 54). Rest.Co.'s performance review system, which, as indicated above, requires people to be assessed on certain behaviours valued by the organisation also helps.

The extent to which individuals are required to show conformity is evidenced by the written information offered to Rest.Co. managers attending training programmes in the corporate training unit, which requires them to behave in accordance with Rest.Co.'s key values, for example of tidiness:

> It is requested that you keep classrooms and lounge clean. Waste bins are provided. Please empty the bin when necessary

and neat appearance:

> Do not expect admission to class if you are wearing jeans, cords, chinos, T-shirts, tennis shoes or trainers, sports socks or sweatshirts. In cold weather, if a leather jacket or pullover is worn to [the training unit] they should be left in the cloakroom provided.

The information concludes:

> Your conduct and dress must at all times reflect the high standards expected of a [Rest.Co.] manager.

The statement assumes the existence of a shared 'Rest.Co. manager' identity, and the behaviour of those wishing to belong to that group has to conform to its - very specific and detailed - norms.

One key norm to which people must conform in order to win higher levels of inclusion in Rest.Co. personnel departments is demonstrating commitment to the company. *'People have got to be committed'* one 'white' woman notes, while another (a 'white' female personnel administrator, who was upgraded as a result of her 'good' behaviour) explains that there is an award - worth a third of annual salary - given *in 'recognition of your commitment to the company and your job'*:

> *I think whatever you do in [Rest.Co.] you have to be seen to be committed to your job and the company, and to also want to succeed, to want to do a good job*

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she explains.

This need to demonstrate commitment to Rest.Co. is apparent in many of the interviews, when interviewees are careful to emphasise that the career moves they chose were for the benefit of the company, rather than for any individual gain. One 'white' woman, for example, initially claims that, having been a store manager, '*I thought I've worked a long time in operations, is there anything else I can do for the company?*' and that now she thought that her two year secondment in personnel ought to be extended because '*I think therefore really to be beneficial for the company I think you need a little bit of time*'. Only later did it emerge that she had also wanted the position because she had found the hours necessary in operations too difficult. One norm was therefore putting the company first, or, rather, giving the *appearance* of putting the company first.

The norm of showing commitment is linked to another norm which is another key criterion for inclusion in both operations management and then personnel positions in Rest.Co: working hard and flexibly. The expectations that operations managers (an increasingly necessary step on the route to inclusion in personnel) will work long and anti-social hours, and the fact that the pro-rata pay is reduced if an operations manager is unable to be fully flexible, have already been discussed. One ethnic minority man, cited above, notes generally that '*If people perform well and work hard and show they have the ability*' (my highlight) the company is prepared to reward them. Indeed, one 'white' female personnel practitioner argues that in her current position '*The workload is so high. I think it is a little bit too much. It's like the last three weeks I have one day off*'.

One particularly striking feature of this last quotation is the fact that the words '*I think it is a little bit too much*' are said after a pause and in a whisper - even though the interview is being conducted in a separate room, and the rest of the interview is conducted in normal tones. This suggests two further norms which have to be conformed to, and which this interviewee fears she was breaking by making the statement she did: not criticising the company, and not revealing any difficulties.

The former is in evidence throughout the interviews. Another interviewee – again a 'white' woman - hesitates before discussing examples of managerial prejudice, on the

first occasion checking again that no one in the organisation will be told what she has said, on the second considering '*I mean, again, should I say this, should I not.....*' This reluctance to criticise the company may also help to explain why, as mentioned above, ethnic minority interviewees claim that the company does not disadvantage people of ethnic minority origin, before identifying various situations in which their careers were made more difficult as a result of their ethnic origins, and why, even in these situations, excuses are sometimes made for Rest.Co.: '*Obviously the company hasn't got a strategy to deal with that*' one ethnic minority origin man says of one situation he encountered. Not criticising the company to an outsider, and hence demonstrating loyalty to it, is clearly an important norm.

However, this apparent discrepancy between the individual incidences narrated by those interviewees and their claims that ethnic origin does not affect careers in Rest.Co. might also reflect the other norm mentioned above: that of not revealing difficulties. As discussed above, one of the ethnic minority men interviewed is reluctant to associate himself with the difficulties encountered as a result of ethnic origin, and both of the 'black' male interviewees of ethnic minority origin are keen to stress that they have dealt successfully with any problems encountered.

In part, as in earlier case studies analysed, this appears to be an attempt to reject categorisation as of ethnic minority origin. However, it also serves - as in Manuf.Co. - to 'show' expertise by concealing any difficulties which might call that into question. Thus, in another example, one of the ethnic minority men interviewed claims that the ability to deal with stress is what distinguishes people who succeed in Rest.Co. from those who do not. However, by 'dealing with stress' he actually means concealing it: '*You might be like shaking up inside, but on the outside it, it's good.* Moreover, although another interviewee (another ethnic minority man) claims that that individual was very keen to enter training work, and requested - and was refused - the opportunity on numerous occasions - he himself at first omits to mention this and claims that his manager nominated him. Again, difficulties such as this rejection are to be concealed.

Summary

As the above analysis reveals, ethnic categorisation does have a significant effect upon inclusion in personnel positions, but primarily indirectly, through its effect upon the operations management positions through which most personnel positions are now accessed. This effect arises from treatment by customers and by colleagues and managers in operations, although only those who are not of 'white' skin colour appear to experience negative treatment - a point which will be returned to in the following chapter. This treatment increases the pressure under which those individuals work, pressure which is further increased by their awareness of their role as 'tokens' (c.f. Kanter, 1993).

Gender, being known, possessing the 'correct' type of experience and behaving in the 'right' ways are also key criteria, while external qualifications are shown to be of limited importance. That organisational experience is valued over specialist personnel experience, even for inclusion in the most senior personnel positions, reflects the lower status of personnel and the greater value placed upon organisational rather than occupational careers. Gender is also particularly significant, largely again because of the power of the male-dominated operations function, and also because of the incompatibility of the hours worked in operations with childcare responsibilities. If there are few people of ethnic minority origin in personnel positions in Rest.Co., it is notable that there are - and never have been - any *women* of ethnic minority categorisation in the departments above the level of personnel administrator.

Being known to those with power over inclusion appears, if anything, to be even more crucial for inclusion in Rest.Co. than in the other case study organisations, because of the process of identifying people to fill personnel vacancies. Meanwhile, behaving appropriately is again important, the behaviours necessary for inclusion being showing deference to one's manager, showing expertise - partly by concealing any difficulties encountered - working hard, being flexible, and demonstrating commitment and loyalty to the organisation - including showing that the organisation's needs are more important than one's own.

Certain interviewees experience some difficulty in demonstrating the appropriate behaviours. Indeed, the need to avoid criticising the organisation, to conceal difficulties experienced, and to put the company first leads to more contradictions within interviews in Rest.Co. than in any of the other case study organisations, as some interviewees struggle to reconcile the tension between their 'Rest.Co.' and 'interviewee' performances.

Significantly, it is the two 'black' ethnic minority interviewees (both male), and the two women who entered officer-level posts from operations management (both 'white'), who demonstrate this tension. In the case of the two ethnic minority male interviewees, this is because they have faced particular difficulties as a result of their ethnic categorisation, describing which creates tensions with their need to avoid criticising the organisation and to conceal difficulties faced. In the case of the two 'white' women, it is partly again because of difficulties they have experienced or noticed as a result of their gender, but also because their first commitment is to their family rather than to the organisation, yet they still feel obliged to try to give the impression that it is not. No such tension is evidenced by either of the other women (again 'white') interviewed - a personnel administrator, who has not sought such high levels of inclusion, and an externally-recruited officer, who, it appears, has not adopted the organisation's norms so fully. People categorised as of ethnic minority origin - notably those with a different skin colour from the majority - and some women, it appears, experience particular conflicts in their attempts to demonstrate those behaviours which may lead to inclusion.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: ANALYSIS OF CAREERS AND EXPERIENCES OF ETHNIC MINORITY ORIGIN PERSONNEL STAFF

The first aim of this thesis, as laid out in the introduction, is to analyse the careers and experiences of personnel staff who categorise themselves / are categorised by others as being of ethnic minority origin. By so doing, the thesis aims to identify the structures and processes which lead to inclusion in personnel departments, and any relationship of ethnic categorisation to these.

Mechanisms Affecting Experiences and Careers of Ethnic Minority Origin Personnel Staff.

The analyses in chapters five to ten reveal that there are a number of ways in which the experiences of people of ethnic minority origin may differ from those of their 'white' colleagues. This difference of experience is apparent in a broad range of organisations, evidence of some such difference being apparent in each of the case study organisations. In some instances respondents and interviewees suggest that the different experience occurs as a result of 'blatant discrimination' (to use Benokraitis and Feagin's (1995) typology). Often, the evidence indicates, this serves to exclude people of ethnic minority origin, as in the case of the ethnic minority male questionnaire respondent who claimed that he had been turned down for a negotiating position because it was feared that the union might have objected to his ethnic minority origin, or as some ethnic minority interviewees (of both genders) from City Council and Utility Co. believe to be the case in some 'white' managers' failure to appoint people of ethnic minority origin.

In other instances, however, some interviewees argue that such 'blatant discrimination' serves to include people of ethnic minority origin. In Town Council, for example, the policy of creating positive action positions for people of ethnic minority origin suggests that some personnel practitioners were initially appointed at least in part because of their ethnic minority origin, and a similar practice is reported to have been followed in City Council until shortly before the research. Indeed, the findings suggest that one (female, ethnic minority) personnel manager in City Council continues to select her staff partly on the basis of their ethnic minority categorisation. Within Utility Co., also, the evidence

indicates that a male ethnic minority manager prefers to appoint individuals he categorises as being of the same ethnic origin as himself.

Not all of the discrimination on the basis of ethnic origin indicated by the research, however, falls into Benokraitis and Feagin's (1995) 'blatant' category: some of it is 'covert' (ibid.) There is evidence of this sort of discrimination in two of the case study organisations, City Council and Town Council, where some interviewees argue that ethnic minority individuals have been given responsibilities, but not the support necessary to succeed in them - *'there's a deliberate setting up to fail sometimes'*, one interviewee ('white' female) from Town Council notes - or encouraged into marginal positions, usually dealing exclusively with ethnic minority issues. As Benokraitis and Feagin note, the effect of such 'encouragement' is again exclusion from more powerful groups, in this case in personnel departments.

It is notable that evidence of blatant and covert discrimination is mainly found in three of the case study organisations: Utility Co., City Council and Town Council. This may reflect the fact that, according to interviewees, ethnic origin either was or still is a formal criterion for inclusion in each of these organisations (ethnic minority origin being argued to be a formal criterion for inclusion in Town Council, and to have been a formal criterion for inclusion in City Council in the past, whilst being argued to have been a formal criterion for exclusion in Utility Co.) The evidence of blatant discrimination on the grounds of ethnic origin in Town Council and City Council may thus be explained by the fact that it is these two organisations which, according to interviewees, encourage or encouraged managers to appoint people at least partly on the basis of their ethnic minority origin, while the opposite was the case in Utility Co. Covert discrimination in Town Council and City Council, interviewees suggest, arises or arose because it is a way for managers to subvert that policy of positive discrimination, whilst, superficially, appearing to conform to it (*'They [managers] do often appoint people who can't cope with posts and then give them inadequate support to do it....almost to prove that a person can't do it'* one 'white' woman from Town Council argues).

As the analyses in chapters five to ten make clear, however, 'blatant' and 'covert' discrimination are not the only mechanisms affecting ethnic minority careers and

experiences in personnel departments, and reduced evidence of such types of discrimination in Rest Co. and Manuf.Co. does not mean that people of ethnic minority origin in these organisations have exactly the same experience as their 'white' colleagues. Indeed, the research findings indicate that much of the effect of ethnic origin upon inclusion in all the case study organisations falls rather into Benokraitis and Feagin's 'subtle discrimination' category.

An example of such 'subtle discrimination' is the reduced support which the evidence suggests some ethnic minority individuals' receive from 'white' managers, support which Dreher and Ash (1990), Ayree et al (1996), and a number of the questionnaire and case study participants themselves, argue affects subsequent careers. The discovery of this reduced support concurs with Alderfer et al's (1980) conclusions that people of ethnic minority origin may be less likely to gain access to supportive mentoring relationships with 'white' superiors, and Thomas's finding that even if they do the benefits of that mentoring may be reduced (Thomas, 1989). Indeed, the evidence gathered indicates that the support given to ethnic minority staff, and the number of them, is much greater where there are managers who categorise themselves as being of ethnic minority origin - in Operating Unit X in Utility Co. and in the remaining directorate personnel department in City Council, for example. However, since the majority of personnel managers do not categorise themselves as of ethnic minority origin those individuals who are categorised as such are more likely to be excluded by such a process.

Other examples of 'subtle discrimination' identified by the research concern access to challenging tasks, and the opportunity to demonstrate ability. Again, the importance of this for successful careers has been identified by earlier researchers (for example Snizek and Neil, 1992; White et al, 1992), and is further supported by the responses received from questionnaire and case study participants: one 'white' (male) manager from Town Council, for example, notes that a crucial factor in his career was that *somebody gave me the break'*. Again, the evidence discussed in chapters five to ten suggests that managers are more likely to give such opportunities to people they categorise as being of the same ethnic origin as themselves. The manager quoted above argues that, unlike

him, some ethnic minority staff in Town Council '*have not been let loose in quite the way they could be*'.

Within Rest. Co. and Manuf.Co., much of the different experience of personnel practitioners categorised as of ethnic minority origin appears to arise not from the actions of personnel colleagues but of those outside the personnel departments, notably line managers, and line managers are also argued to have a negative effect upon the experiences and careers of people of ethnic minority origin in City Council. The fact that groups outside personnel departments influence the careers and experiences of those inside them is not surprising, given research about the need for personnel practitioners to have credibility with line managers (c.f. Watson, 1977), and the low status of the personnel occupation in many organisations, which results in them conforming to organisational rather than occupational criteria and practices (c.f. Jenkins and Parker, 1987). Thus in Rest.Co. and City Council, the'handmaiden' function of the personnel departments (c.f. Storey, 1992) means that criteria of inclusion in personnel departments often reflect line or operations managers' desires. Even in Manuf.Co. where the findings indicate that personnel specialists have more power, and are able to impose occupational personnel careers upon the organisation, individual personnel specialists still need to work closely with individual line managers in order to perform their role effectively.

The findings also indicate that organisational policy or strategy also affects the careers of people of ethnic minority origin in personnel departments, as in the policy of seeking to increase the proportion of people of ethnic minority origin in Town Council. Again, personnel managers often have limited power over such policies or strategies, though they may be closely involved in writing the chosen policy up. Thus, according to interviewees, the afore-mentioned Town Council policy was largely driven by ethnic minority councillors, while the removal of the similar policy in City Council was led by a change in councillors, and in Utility Co. the adoption of a policy of equal treatment resulted initially from legislation imposed by the government.

The fact that people and groups outside personnel departments may cause personnel practitioners of ethnic minority origin to have different experiences and thus possibly different careers from their 'white' colleagues is significant for two reasons. Firstly, it

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reveals that ethnic origin may be a criterion of inclusion even where personnel practitioners themselves do not wish it to be. Secondly - and following on from the first - it questions the applicability of the closure model developed by Weber (1978), according to which exclusion is effected - and the criteria of exclusion chosen - only by those *within* the group in which inclusion is sought. This point will be explored further in chapter twelve.

The Relationship of Ethnic Origin to Other Criteria

The analysis in chapters five to ten, however, also indicates that ethnic origin is not the only criterion which affects careers in personnel departments, and that the experiences and careers of individuals of ethnic minority origin are therefore not only dependent upon their ethnic categorisation. Indeed, while some of the effects of ethnic categorisation identified are direct - people being argued to have been included in / excluded from personnel positions as a direct result of their ethnic categorisation, as for example where people categorised as of ethnic minority origin are argued to have been included in positive action posts in Town Council - many of them are indirect, affecting people's ability to demonstrate some of the other criteria of inclusion.

For example, a number of the interviewees and respondents, as discussed above, believe that ethnic origin affects the work experience individuals are afforded. This has an *indirect* effect upon inclusion in personnel positions and hence personnel careers, since experience, and having been able to demonstrate appropriate behaviours, are themselves criteria of inclusion identified in the research. Indeed, the fact that people of ethnic minority origin may have been excluded from gaining necessary experience is part of the rationale for positive action (Commission for Racial Equality, 1981).

The research also finds examples of qualification requirements indirectly excluding people of ethnic minority origin, supporting Murphy's (1984, 1988) argument that qualifications requirements reproduce the status quo. In Utility Co., for example, several interviewees argue that a refusal to recognise overseas qualifications excludes a number of people of ethnic minority origin who were not educated in Britain, while some personnel managers at Manuf.Co. fear that the company's policy of recruiting mainly from a limited range of universities - not including those ex-polytechnics in which people

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of ethnic minority origin are most likely to be studying (Law, 1996: 180) - might mean that people of ethnic minority origin are more likely to be excluded than their 'white' counterparts. Moreover, one (ethnic minority female) personnel manager in City Council claims that the professional qualification can also exclude people of ethnic minority origin, arguing that its use as an entry requirement *excluded certain people, there were very few black people doing IPD courses'*.

The requirement to be 'known', as noted in the analysis of the case study results, may also indirectly affect the careers of people of ethnic minority origin, because where the manager is not of ethnic minority origin (which most managers are not) they are less likely to be known to him or her (for example, in Utility Co. being related to the manager is argued to be important, which is less likely to be the case if one is of a different ethnic origin) and less likely to belong to other groups which would give the manager the impression of knowing them (for example, the freemasons). Moreover, it has been noted that the perception of shared ethnic origin itself can lead a manager to believe that he or she knows the individual (Dasgupta, 1988), and can therefore trust him or her to share the same premises (Perrow, 1979) and thus to behave in a co-operative manner (Zucker, 1986; Good, 1988; Humphrey and Schmitz, 1996).

Given that being able to predict behaviour is the reason for including 'known' people, it is hardly surprising that demonstrating particular behaviours is found to be another significant criterion of inclusion. Indeed, conformity to behavioural norms is the key criterion of inclusion advocated by 'management of diversity' approaches (see discussion in chapter two). Again, this is found to indirectly affect ethnic minority careers in personnel departments.

For example, chapter nine notes that all interviewees of ethnic minority origin from City Council disagree with the organisation's new approach to equality, and are sometimes not prepared to conform to the behaviours required by the new approach. It is also noted that ethnic minority personnel practitioners in Rest.Co. and Manuf.Co. appear to feel that they have to conceal any problems faced as a result of their ethnic origin and go without support in relation to those problems in order to conform to behavioural norms of demonstrating competence at all times and concealing any difficulties. Jenkins'

argument that some behavioural criteria upon which recruitment decisions are based, such as 'manner' and 'speech style', are ethnocentric (Jenkins, 1986b) is further supported by the experiences of the ethnic minority personnel manager in Utility Co., who, according to a 'white' woman, *'because he's Indian ... doesn't come across as he ought to'*.

However, even though such criteria may have a disproportionately negative impact upon the personnel careers of people of ethnic minority categorisation, because their effect is indirect, they do not necessarily have a negative effect upon the personnel careers of *all* such individuals. Indeed, the research results show that it is possible for some people of ethnic minority categorisation to win inclusion in senior levels within personnel departments - one of the questionnaire respondents is a director of personnel, and six (15%) have achieved management level in their departments - in spite, or even because, of those criteria of inclusion.

In the case study organisations, there are a number of examples of people of ethnic minority categorisation winning inclusion on the basis of possession of required qualifications or experience - for example the (male) ethnic minority interviewees in Rest.Co. who entered personnel after gaining appropriate operational experience and qualifications - being 'known' - as in the case of the ethnic minority woman in Utility Co. who won promotion because her managers *'knew me and knew my work potential'* - or behaving appropriately - for example the ethnic minority woman who won inclusion in the ranks of Town Council personnel officers through her polite, grateful and non-threatening behaviour. Whilst achieving these criteria may be more difficult for people of ethnic minority categorisation, it is not impossible.

Nor is it always the case that people who are *not* categorised as of ethnic minority origin win inclusion. Thus in the analysis of Town Council attention is drawn to the example of a female interviewee - who is 'white' - who claims that she was excluded from applying for a promotion because her male colleague was asked to cover the duties of the more senior post while it lay vacant, and thus gained the expertise to do the job while she did not. In this example, it is the fact that the interviewee was of a different *gender* from the senior people in her department which appears to have been a key factor in her exclusion

from that group, and it is perhaps significant that she emphasised that difference, organising 'women-only' meetings for other women in the department. The negative effects of being perceived to be 'different' are well documented by Kanter (1993) and underlined by the research indicating the importance of perceived similarities for trust discussed in chapter two. By emphasising her different gender she thus risks being judged to be less trustworthy, a judgement which she in fact reinforces by organising the women-only meetings over which the male managers have no control and which are forums for criticism of those managers' treatment of women.

Ethnic Minority Categorisation as an Indicator of Difference

In the same way, the negative effect of being categorised as of ethnic minority origin often arises because in most cases it implies difference from those with power over inclusion. Thus one ethnic minority woman from Manuf.Co. notes that ethnic minority staff do not want a special mentoring scheme because they do not want to *'feel like you've been singled out'*. Indeed, the fact that to be categorised as of ethnic minority origin is to be perceived to be 'different' is underlined by the use of the terms 'ethnic origin' or 'ethnic communities' by some interviewees to describe people of ethnic minority origin, the implication being that only people of ethnic minority origin have an ethnic origin: everyone else is the 'norm' from which such people deviate.

However, being categorised as of ethnic minority origin does not always suggest difference: being categorised as of ethnic minority origin by two ethnic minority personnel managers in Utility Co. and City Council (or rather being categorised by them as being 'Asian' and 'Black - African' respectively) suggests similarity with them because they put themselves in the same category. In these instances, therefore, that categorisation appears to aid inclusion.

Nor is it the case that the perception of difference arising from different ethnic categorisations to the managers always leads to exclusion, as the earlier analysis in this section implies. In Town Council, for example, the evidence gathered suggests that being categorised as of ethnic minority origin leads to some inclusion in personnel departments in spite of the fact that the managers categorise themselves as 'white', because of the policies set at a strategic level in the organisation. However, even in that

organisation being categorised as 'different' in that way appears to provide only limited inclusion, as managers use the kinds of subtle and covert mechanisms identified earlier to subvert strategic policies and ensure that inclusion in more senior personnel positions is reserved for those who they do judge to be similar. Indeed, those positive action trainees who have subsequently been most successful in their personnel careers in Town Council, achieving the greatest levels of inclusion, are those who, having gained initial inclusion on the basis of ethnic minority origin, have subsequently resisted such categorisation.

Ethnicity as a Resource?

In fact, throughout the case studies examples are found of interviewees altering the emphasis they place upon their ethnic categorisation depending upon the particular situation they find themselves in and their assessment of it. Thus it is noted earlier that one Rest.Co. manager (an ethnic minority man) avoids categorising himself as being of ethnic minority origin when it carries negative implications but is proud to recognise his ethnic origin at other times, recalling, for example, that

> *There was only me and one other black person as a restaurant manager, and the reaction was funny because with black people working within the restaurant as crew and floor management, they thought it was great.*

In the latter situation being categorised as 'black' is positive, leading to admiration, whereas reporting difficulties experienced as a result of his ethnic origin would have suggested weakness. Moreover, being categorised as 'black', in the above example, leads to membership of a group within the restaurant, not to being 'different', whereas revealing discrimination to managers would highlight his difference from the other Rest.Co. managers.

Similarly, in Town Council and City Council a number of people label themselves as 'black' because, the findings indicate, being categorised as 'black' can, in the case of Town Council, and could, in the case of City Council, not only lead to some level of inclusion through the positive action policies, but also to membership of groups of similarly categorised staff - the 'black workers group' in Town Council, and informal networks centred upon the equal opportunities advisors in City Council. Indeed, the high number of senior ethnic minority staff in City Council, as noted in the analysis of that

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case study, means that being categorised as 'black' continues to provide membership of a large group.

However, as in Rest.Co., not all people who could be categorised as of ethnic minority origin in these and the other case study organisations always do categorise themselves in this way, but again resist such categorisation where they perceive that it will hinder inclusion, and seek instead to be categorised according to more 'positive' criteria. Thus while some people in the case study organisations sometimes seek to deploy their ethnic minority categorisation in order to achieve their goals, others, or in other situations, seek to deploy some of the other criteria which can afford inclusion, for example possession of degree qualifications, ability to conform to the required behaviours, gender, or age. Thus for example, when they share the same gender as the person with the power to grant inclusion individuals sometimes seek categorisation according to gender. Age categories, too, are sometimes used as a basis of group formation: in Utility Co. similar age has facilitated a close relationship between a manager and one of his subordinates, in spite of the fact that the individuals concerned allocate themselves to different ethnic categories when forced to use ethnic categorisations by the researcher.

These findings appear at first to support Wallman's (1986) claim the ethnicity is a resource, and Rex's suggestion that ethnicity is 'latent' (Rex, 1986), to be used or not as circumstances suggest. However, as Miles (1982) has argued - and as was noted in chapter one - there are weaknesses with Rex's and some other situational approaches, which the research findings highlight. As Miles notes, although such approaches acknowledge that 'race' or 'ethnicity' is a social construction, treating it as a valid field of enquiry in its own right conflicts with this acknowledgement and accords it an independent, concrete status. Thus Rex's notion of 'latent ethnicity' implies that ethnicity exists even if it is not used. Wallman's conception similarly accords objective, concrete status to ethnic categories in arguing that ethnicity is a 'resource' which may be used as a source of identification.

The research findings, however, reveal some conflict over who can lay claim to membership of certain ethnic categories - i.e. who possesses that resource of 'latent ethnicity'. For example, when the researcher contacted the head office of Rest.Co. and

asked to interview personnel practitioners of ethnic minority origin, she was put in touch with a 'white' women who was born in Germany, and was partly shocked and partly amused to find that she had been put forward as an 'ethnic minority', since she has never regarded herself as such. Clearly, her different national origin and first language prompted her colleague to label her as 'ethnic minority', while her skin colour and the fact that she was born in Europe led her to categorise herself differently. In another example, again from Rest.Co., a (male) personnel officer who was born in South America struggles when asked to describe the ethnic composition of his department, explaining that '*It depends whether you count sort of like me [sic] as a white'*.

As that interviewee points out, the ethnic categories themselves are shifting and variable:

> *It depends on how you want to categorise people.... you find that different companies, different organisations, different sectors, some of them have eight categories, some of them have four, some of them have ten and whatever.*

This shifting nature of the categories is also apparent in the findings of the exploratory questionnaire, where some respondents altered the categories given in the questionnaire or ticked one category but added an additional one also. Clearly, it is not merely the *membership* of ethnic categories which is situational, as Wallman argues, but the construction of the categories themselves. It is therefore more accurate to state, as Barth (1969) does, that it is ethnic *ascription*, rather than ethnicity itself, which is situational.

It is, however, equally clear that, as Jenkins (1997) has argued, ethnicity is not infinitely malleable: those interviewed are not able to claim membership of just any categories; indeed, the categories to which they can lay claim are limited. (Hence the reference in some earlier paragraphs in this chapter to people who '*could* be categorised as of ethnic minority origin). However, this is not because ethnicity is grounded directly in material reality, but rather because the characteristics upon which claims to membership of an ethnic group may be based, such as skin colour, birthplace, and cultural norms of behaviour, have that grounding. The ethnic group itself is a category, membership of which is accorded on the demonstration of some of those criteria.

Moreover, the fact that ethnic groups themselves have no material reality but are categorisations does not mean that they do not have material effects: as Jenkins has argued, ethnic groups are 'imagined but not imaginary' (Jenkins, 1997: 169). Indeed, the research findings analysed here make clear that it is the *category* to which one is allocated which matters in relation to personnel careers, rather than the fact of 'being' of some essential ethnic minority origin. It is, for example, the fact of being categorised as of ethnic minority origin in Town Council which appears to contribute to initial inclusion, because of the organisation's desire to increase the proportion of people entered in that category when monitoring is undertaken. Similarly, the evidence indicates that the ethnic minority (male) personnel manager in Utility Co. includes people because he *categorises* them as being in the same ethnic group as the one in which he categorises himself, and thus *expects* them to work in similar ways, rather than because they *are* the same.

Indeed, the clearest evidence that it is ethnic categorisation, rather than ethnicity per se, which matters is perhaps precisely the way in which interviewees seek to manipulate the ways in which they are categorised, often avoiding categorisation as of ethnic minority origin. If it were not the categorisation which was significant, there would be nothing to be gained from them doing this.

People *categorised* as of ethnic minority origin thus often have different experiences within personnel departments from their 'white' colleagues, and may be excluded from or face more limited inclusion in those departments - with consequent effects upon their personnel careers - because their ethnic categorisation often symbolises difference from those with power over inclusion. However, not all of those survey participants who can be categorised as of ethnic minority origin have been excluded from the level they have sought, because they have been successful in laying claim to membership of other categories which aid inclusion, and have succeeded in ensuring that those with power over inclusion categorise them according to those rather than according to ethnic origin. (Conversely, not all of those who can be categorised as 'white' have won the inclusion they have sought, because they have been categorised according to other categories which do not afford inclusion). It is thus the identification of those categories which afford inclusion, and the ability to demonstrate membership of at least one of these and

ensure that one is categorised according to that membership, which distinguishes those who win inclusion from those who do not, not the possession - latent or otherwise - of some essential ethnic origin.

Although this chapter and earlier chapters have already applied some existing models of inequality to various aspects of the research findings, the ability of those models to articulate and explain fully the findings of the research presented here - that is, to articulate and explain the processes and structures which determine inclusion in British personnel departments, the relationships between them, and the factors which affect them - has not been consistently evaluated. It is to this evaluation that the thesis now turns.

CHAPTER TWELVE: EVALUATION OF ABILITY OF EXISTING MODELS OF INEQUALITY TO EXPLAIN THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

Marxist Models of Occupational Segregation

In the introduction the second aim of this thesis was given as being to evaluate the ability of existing models of inequality to explain the findings of the research. In order to fulfil this aim, this chapter therefore seeks to apply to the research findings a number of the models discussed in chapter two which have been influential in the study of occupational inequality and / or were identified in that chapter as being potentially useful to this thesis.

As was noted in chapter two, Marx's theories have been very influential in this area. Marx identifies relations of production as the key social structure, and the class divisions arising from them as the key divisions of society. This is helpful here, in as much as economic structures, determined by capitalism, provide the framework within which personnel departments in Britain and their hierarchies are situated. Other structures, or criteria, as they have been referred to here, such as those of ethnic origin, are perceived by Marx to determine where people are located within that primary economic framework.

However, as Hartmann (1981) has argued,

> Capitalist development creates the place for a hierarchy of workers, but traditional Marxist categories cannot tell us who will fill which places (ibid.: 18).

Indeed, although Marx recognises the existence of intra-class struggles, he argues that these are merely remnants of previous structures of division of labour which will gradually cease to exist (Marx and Engels, 1967), and thus has little interest in them and does not seek to develop a model to explain them. The model is therefore of little assistance to this thesis, which seeks to explain inclusion and exclusion from positions *within* a class of that primary economic structure.

Moreover, Marx's argument that economic relations determine ideology and social consciousness (Marx, 1970) is unable to account for the number of groupings this

research found around criteria such as ethnic categorisations which transcend management / worker and councillor / worker divisions. In these instances being categorised as of the same ethnic origin, or being perceived to have some other category in common appears to be more significant than similar position in the relations of production.

Theories of labour market segmentation and sex segregation do attempt to explain why certain social groups are concentrated in certain parts of the occupational structure. However, these theories again fail to provide an adequate explanation for the findings of this research, largely because, as noted in chapter two, they tend to focus on only one other, predetermined criterion in addition to the economic one, for example, 'race', in the case of Doeringer and Piore (1971), or gender, in the case of Hartmann (1979) or Cockburn and Ormrod (1993).

From the exploratory questionnaire and case studies, by contrast, this thesis identifies a wide range of criteria which are used to determine inclusion / exclusion in personnel departments and, moreover, reveals that individuals can win inclusion on the basis of one or more 'positive' criteria even if they possess others which would tend to exclude them. Models of labour market segmentation and sex segregation are incapable of articulating that range of criteria, or of explaining the relationships between them.

Hakim's (1979) analysis of occupational segregation is, however, helpful, recognising not only that segregation can be 'horizontal' (where different groups are concentrated in different occupational areas) or 'vertical' (where different groups are concentrated at different levels of the hierarchy), but also some of the mechanisms from which segregation arises. The former point is useful for the analysis of the research results, drawing attention to the fact that inclusion / exclusion in personnel departments does not only occur around more senior positions, but also particular types of position which, while nominally at the same level as another, may carry greater status or prestige. Thus in Town Council people of ethnic minority origin are often concentrated at the lower levels (vertically segregated, to use Hakim's terminology) but where they are at more senior levels, are often horizontally segregated into positions dealing with ethnic minority issues.

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Hakim's consideration of mechanisms also usefully articulates some micro-level actions similar to some of those identified in the research. A similar micro-level approach is taken by Cockburn (1988), who uses Hakim's model to analyse how men's actions create and recreate structures of inequality in their workplaces. In her later work with Ormrod (1993), there are also potentially useful recognitions that identity is not wholly determined by structure – that there is room for individual agency, and thus that different people of ethnic minority origin might identify themselves in different ways - and that the nature of the identities 'on offer' to them are limited by both material circumstances and also by the representations afforded them.

However, the usefulness of these analyses is still, as noted above, limited by a focus upon one criterion – gender. This renders them unable to articulate the relationships between the myriad of criteria which have been shown here to affect inclusion, and hence to specify which of the 'identities on offer' - to use Cockburn and Ormrod's terminology - lead to inclusion in a given situation and why. Whilst providing some useful insights, therefore, none of these models are able to articulate wholly the findings of the research.

Weberian Models of Closure

Unlike Marxist models, Weberian models tend to emphasise action (Crompton, 1987). Weber himself does not prioritise any particular structure or criteria, but rather perceives classes as based around various criteria, namely possession of property, monopolization of goods or services, or membership of a social class determined by a variety of factors (Weber, 1978), Similarly, he argues that status groups claim 'social esteem' on the basis of various criteria, including style of life, occupation, or family. Indeed, in his analysis of closure, Weber argues that one group seeks to monopolise access to certain resources by excluding those who 'share *some* positive or negative characteristic' (ibid: 342; my italics), and continues:

> It does not matter which characteristic is chosen in the individual case: whatever suggests itself most easily is seized upon (ibid.).

According to Weber's closure model, therefore, the characteristics used to include / exclude are arbitrary. Although he identifies some groups - property and commercial classes, status groups - which make use of such monopolistic practices, and a range of criteria around which these groups may be established, he does not limit closure to such groups or such criteria alone. Indeed, as noted in chapter two, it has been argued that the resulting flexibility of the closure model, and hence its ability to articulate intra- as well as inter-class actions, is one of its strengths (Parkin, 1979).

Weber's recognition that inclusion in different groups may be based upon different criteria, depending upon the criteria shared by those already included, partly fits the findings of the research presented here. Thus being categorised as of ethnic minority origin is found to tend to lead to exclusion from senior personnel positions in Town Council because those currently in those positions categorise themselves as 'white', and thus it suggests difference from them, while in Manuf. Co. degree qualifications are a criteria common to those already included in personnel officer positions, and thus are important for determining future inclusion. In the latter case, moreover, those included have become what Weber calls a 'legally privileged group' (ibid.) because they have written their characteristics into the formal person specifications for positions.

However, Weber's model has a number of limitations which the research here highlights. Whereas Weber perceives that each group uses only one characteristic to determine inclusion / exclusion (each group is said to use 'some positive or negative *characteristic*', not '*characteristics*'), for example, the case studies reveal that inclusion can be won on the basis of one or more of a number of criteria. Consequently, Weber's model is unable to explain *why* certain criteria are significant in determining inclusion in certain groups but not in others, or how these criteria relate to each other. As Murphy (1988) argues, Weber's model leads to a 'neglect of the relationships among the different rules of closure and hence the failure to analyse how rules of closure are structured' (ibid.: 65).

Murphy, by contrast, seeks to identify the relationships between criteria or structures of closure. His argument, as indicated in chapter two, is that property is the 'primary rule' - or criterion- of closure, and other 'rules' of closure - including those of 'race' or 'ethnic

origin' - are either derived from, or contingent upon, this primary 'rule'. However, as chapter two indicates, Murphy's model has its own weaknesses. Its macro-level focus renders it, like other macro-level models, incapable of articulating or explaining the micro-level processes and criteria by which the exclusion revealed in the research findings is effected. Without looking at the micro-level, and identifying which criteria are most significant in particular situations and why, Murphy's model is unable to explain how structural change occurs.

Murphy's concept of forms of closure being contingent upon property 'rules' is, however, at first glance, useful here, 'rules' of property indeed providing the context for the particular forms of inclusion - including that around ethnic origin - found in personnel departments. Property in this sense, therefore, is not a criterion of inclusion / exclusion, but rather the context in which inclusion / exclusion is effected: it is what people are excluded from.

This, of course, is entirely in line with Weber's original model of closure, in which people who do not possess a certain characteristic are excluded so that those who do share that characteristic can monopolise access to resources (property). It also highlights, however, why Murphy's model of criteria of closure in societies like Britain being derived from property is ultimately unhelpful for the analysis of this research: if those with property seek to protect access to it by excluding those with different characteristics from themselves, as Weber argues, then it is self-evident that criteria of inclusion / exclusion will tend to reflect the criteria possessed by those with property, i.e. be derived from property. Ultimately, therefore, this aspect of Murphy's model adds little to Weber's original one; it does not explain, any more than Weber's, why those with 'property' (in the case of this research resources which give power over personnel positions) use some criteria of inclusion / exclusion rather than others, or what the relationship is between those criteria. The precise selection of the derivative forms of closure, to use Murphy's terminology, appears as arbitrary in Murphy's model as it is in Weber's.

As noted in chapter two, however, models of closure are concerned with action as well as with criteria of exclusion or structure. If they do little to help explain the different

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criteria of closure found in personnel departments, therefore, perhaps they can provide a basis for understanding the mechanisms through which that closure is effected. Indeed, the closure model's specific recognition that exclusion involves both a criteria, around which closure is effected, and also an action, to effect that closure, is in itself helpful for the analysis of the research results.

In his analysis of the mechanisms of closure, Weber identifies one mechanism as being the development of associations with rational regulations, and, ultimately, the achievement of legal backing for that association's monopolisation of resources. As was indicated in chapter three, the personnel occupation has established the kind of association Weber mentioned, but has been unsuccessful in using that to control inclusion in its positions, and it has been noted that many personnel practitioners are not members of the occupational association (see for example Marginson et al 1993, Hall and Torrington, 1998).

This contention is clearly supported by the research results, which indicate that although existing personnel employees may be sponsored to study for professional personnel qualifications, these are often not necessary for entry to personnel positions. However, the existence of groups of personnel practitioners who seek to impose such 'professional' entry criteria upon their personnel departments reveals that certain groups *are* seeking to monopolise access to personnel positions by this means.

Within Rest.Co., in particular, a struggle is found between those who seek to restrict access to personnel positions to specialist personnel practitioners, with professional qualifications - thereby hoping to include those who pursue occupational career strategies (Brown, 1982) - and those who seek to fill them with people with operational experience, thus including people who pursue organisational career strategies (ibid.). Similar struggles over the value of occupational or organisational career strategies for inclusion in personnel positions are also identified in City Council and Utility Co. (Interestingly, in City Council, occupational careers continue to be important for inclusion in senior personnel positions, in spite of personnel managers' claims that it is organisational careers that are to be the basis for inclusion. This contradiction between

the stated values and actual practice of these individual managers will be explored further in chapter thirteen.)

Indeed, reflecting again the failure of the personnel occupation to establish a national monopoly over access to personnel positions, the extent to which occupational personnel careers are necessary for inclusion in personnel positions is a key variable between the case study organisations. Whereas within Rest.Co. it is organisational career strategies that tend to lead to inclusion in senior personnel positions, in Town Council and Utility Co. it is occupational strategies, in Manuf.Co. it is a combination of occupational and organisational strategies, while in City Council it is claimed to be organisational strategies but is in reality often occupational ones. These differences, as has been noted, reflect the different levels of power of the personnel specialists in these organisations, and reveal that closure is a process of struggle, in which different groups seek to impose different criteria of inclusion.

Chapter two reveals that Parkin (1979), Kreckel (1980) and Murphy (1984; 1988) all differentiate between the actions of those who currently possess the resources, and seek to protect their access to those resources by excluding others, and the actions of those who are excluded, and are responding to that exclusion. This notion that there is some kind of a struggle over inclusion, that the group which is being excluded seeks to overcome that exclusion and win inclusion, thus corresponds to some degree with the findings of the research presented here. However, closer examination of the research findings reveals a number of weaknesses in the models, and these are explored below.

As discussed in chapter two, Murphy further divides the 'usurpationary' strategies of those who seek inclusion into two forms: 'inclusionary usurpation' and 'revolutionary usurpation' (Murphy, 1984: 560). At first glance, the actions of those seeking inclusion (or further inclusion) in the personnel departments appear to fit the model of 'inclusionary usurpation'. One 'white' male personnel manager in Town Council, for example, is quoted in chapter six as stating that

I would like now for black staff to be taking leadership, and [saying]..... we don't
have to join the club and wear the clothes and use the same language, we can be
different, we can bring in alternative ways

but notes that instead ethnic minority staff in the organisation are '*unfortunately more*
aware, wrapped into their career move.... rather than into their community'. Rather
than seeking to change structures, therefore, these people are working as individuals to
win inclusion within the existing structures.

However, the attempt to apply Murphy's models of usurpation to the findings of the
research presented here reveals some inadequacies in that model. In the first place,
Murphy's definition of inclusionary usurpation - this being where the excluded group
struggles 'to become included as incumbents represented in the present structure of
positions in proportion to their numbers in the population,' (Murphy, 1984: 560) –
reveals that his model assumes group membership to be unproblematic and unchanging,
individuals apparently indentifying themselves constantly with the same group, whose
numbers can be calculated and known. This, of course, conflicts with the findings of this
thesis, which indicate not only that individuals may be categorised into a multiplicity of
groups, but, as the analysis of ethnic categorisations in chapter eleven reveals, that
individuals may seek to change that categorisation to fit the particular situations in
which they find themselves, and moreover, that those categories are not fixed but are
themselves contingent to some extent upon the situation. Murphy's model is thus unable
to articulate the processes found in the research presented here.

Moreover, even where those seeking inclusion in personnel departments do seek to
radically alter the structures or criteria upon which inclusion is based – which would
suggest some similarity with Murphy's model of 'revolutionary usurpation' – they again
do not fit his model in all respects. Thus, some personnel specialists in Rest.Co. would
like to change the requirement for senior operations experience for inclusion in more
senior personnel positions, to a requirement for occupational experience – this being the
experience they possess. However, such experience is an example of individualistic
rather than collectivist criteria (c.f. Parkin, 1974), and thus lacks the collective, group
element implicit in Murphy's model.

Furthermore, where the research finds that the structures upon which inclusion is based have been altered, it is not by those seeking inclusion – as in Murphy's model of 'revolutionary usurpation', and indeed in other existing models of closure - but either by those who are already included, or those who are neither included nor seeking inclusion (a point which will be returned to below). As an example of the former, it is an (ethnic minority female) personnel manager in City Council, someone already included in a position of power in a personnel department, who, according to the evidence presented, has appointed, mentored and supported personnel staff at least partly on the basis of ethnic origin and gender, thereby radically altering the criteria rewarded with inclusion in her department from that required by the organisation as a whole. Murphy's models of usurpation do not provide a model for this kind of 'usurpation' – if we can indeed call it that – which is effected not by those excluded by the current structures, but by those included in them. Indeed, none of the existing models of closure are able to do so.

This failure arises from the inability of the existing closure models to explain precisely the myriad criteria of inclusion and the relationships between them. As a consequence, none of them are unable to recognise what the research presented here reveals, namely that people who are included do not share all of the same criteria, and may in some instances share some criteria with some who are excluded, around which new groups and alliances may develop.

As stated above, the research reveals that structures of inclusion are also sometimes altered by people who are neither already included, nor seeking inclusion, and their failure to recognise and incorporate these third party actions is a further weakness of existing models of closure. Thus, in Town Council, for example, the research reveals that ethnic minority councillors have been influential in making ethnic minority origin one criterion for inclusion in at least some situations, and the ability of line managers to influence inclusion in personnel departments in Rest.Co., City Council and Manuf.Co. has also been noted. However, neither Murphy's model, nor the other existing models of closure, are able to articulate this process, all of them conceptualising closure as a dialectic between just two parties – those already included, and those excluded.

The division of strategies of closure into two distinct types, those effected by those currently included, and those effected by those excluded, in reaction to their exclusion, is thus a key limitation of existing closure models. In reality, as the research analysed here indicates, other groups may also be involved. Moreover, as will be explored further below, there is no fundamental difference between the strategies adopted by the various groups. Those who are currently excluded, or seeking inclusion, do not simply react to attempts to exclude them, but are constantly involved in the negotiation of those criteria by which they should be categorised and according to which their inclusion / exclusion should be determined, as are other, external groups. The dialectic of exclusion - reaction proposed in the existing neo-Weberian models does not exist in reality.

Thus the case study findings reveal that, in their attempt to negotiate categorisations and criteria of inclusion favourable to themselves, those seeking inclusion consciously 'show' criteria which they perceive might afford them inclusion, and distance themselves from criteria which might lead to exclusion, often because they suggest difference from those included. By so doing, they seek to alter the criteria upon which decisions about their inclusion are to be based. The efforts people in the case studies make to avoid being categorised as of ethnic minority origin when such categorisation would suggest difference from those currently included, discussed earlier, provides an example of this process.

Indeed, one ethnic minority female interviewee from Town Council argues that men who could be categorised as being of ethnic minority origin are able to win inclusion from 'white' male managers because of their common gender. Her evidence suggests again that the former in fact actively seek to avoid being grouped with other people who are categorised as being of ethnic minority origin, noting, for example, that they resist her race equality strategies more than 'white' people do. Moreover, she argues that ' *I think a lot of black men see black women as more of a threat* '. Ethnic minority women present a particular threat since being associated with them might lead to the men being categorised with them, as people of ethnic minority origin (which would suggest difference from those already included) rather than as men (which suggests similarity). Given the fact that, as argued in the preceding chapter, ethnic categorisations are not infinitely malleable, the strategy for many of those who are likely to be categorised as of

ethnic minority origin is thus not to seek re-categorisation as 'white' - usually an impossible task - but rather to seek categorisation according to alternative criteria.

Other examples of individuals seeking to be categorised according to characteristics which they perceive could lead to inclusion are found widely throughout the case studies, and have been documented in chapters six to ten. Indeed, individuals' awareness that they have to 'show' appropriate criteria is noted in those chapters. The Rest.Co. interviewees' awareness that ability has to be 'shown' has already been discussed in chapter ten. Similarly, one ethnic minority man from Town council, discussed in chapter six, reports that *'I've shown them commitment, I've shown them enthusiasm'*, while various personnel practitioners in Manuf.Co. (chapter seven) are conscious of the need to 'show' competence by revealing any difficulties only to trusted mentors, and in Utility Co. (chapter eight) one manager ('white' male) looked for *'demonstration of initiative'* (my highlight).

The analysis of the research findings undertaken above reveals a further problem with existing models of closure - their reliance upon the action / structure dualism. In the work of Weber (1978), Parkin (1979), Kreckel (1980) and Murphy (1984; 1988), analyses of social structures (which have been termed criteria here) and action (or mechanisms of closure) are kept separate, as if the one can be understood in isolation from the other. However, although this provides, as noted above, a useful tool for analysis, and although in the earlier stages of this thesis examples of criteria and mechanisms have been discussed separately, the careful reader will have noticed the tensions implicit at such times, the way in which questions of criteria inevitably arise when mechanisms are considered, and vice-versa. Thus, in the preceding paragraph, one of the *mechanisms* of inclusion noted is that of the individual who has 'shown them commitment', commitment being the *criterion* he has demonstrated. Indeed, it would be impossible for criteria not to arise when mechanisms are considered and vice-versa, since, as the above analysis reveals, the identification and negotiation of the criteria of inclusion / exclusion, and relatedly the negotiation of the criteria according to which the individual is to be categorised, *are* the mechanisms by which inclusion / exclusion is effected.

The difficulty of applying the action / structure dualism to the analysis of inclusion / exclusion is of course only apparent when micro-level analysis is being undertaken, as here. At the macro-level, the division appears unproblematic, and this is why it does not appear to be a difficulty in the work of the closure theorists mentioned above. Although Parkin (1979) argues that social closure can be used to explore intra-class struggles, he, like the other theorists mentioned, concentrates on macro-level structures rather than upon the analysis of concrete micro-level cases. Thus, although these models and the dualisms they utilise (between structure and action, and also between the actions of those included and the reactions of those excluded) are useful starting points for the analysis of the research results, they are ultimately unable to articulate how people are excluded from or included in personnel departments, and why.

Critically, separating structure and action results in a deterministic approach to inequality, and ultimately denies the possibility of change by failing to recognise the ways in which structure and action interact. As Giddens claims:

> Structure is not as such external to human action... Structure is both the medium and the outcome of the human activities which it recursively organizes. (Giddens, 1987: 61).[i]

The weakness of macro-level approaches is that they can perceive only the structures, not the micro-level actions which produce and are produced by those structures. As Cockburn (1988) argues, 'something more [about the reproduction of inequality] can be learned by looking at small-scale local mechanisms' (ibid.: 32).

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[i] Giddens coins the word 'structuration' to describe this process. While it is recognised that this model has been influential in the development of abstract models of the relationship between structure and action, the focus of this thesis is not upon such models, but upon identification and explanation of the relationship between ethnic origin and inclusion. The fact that, in order to avoid the failings of existing models of closure, the model of inclusion which will be developed in chapter thirteen will render the structure – action dualism irrelevant, will thus be a noteworthy consequence of the micro-level analysis undertaken here, but it was not one of its aims. The debates around Giddens' model are therefore beyond the scope of this thesis.

It is, therefore, necessary to seek other models which may be able to explain more precisely how the interplay of structure and action results in the inclusion of some people in personnel positions and the exclusion of others. As noted in chapter one, Smaje (1997), seeking to overcome the dualism of structure and action in his analysis of ethnicity, suggests that Bourdieu's theory of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1984) holds the key, and it is thus to that theory that this analysis now turns in its attempt to explain the patterns of inequality identified in personnel departments.

Symbolic Capital

Usefully, for the purposes of this research, Bourdieu recognises that individuals possess many different characteristics:

> The individuals grouped in a class that is constructed in a particular respect...
> always bring with them, in addition to the pertinent properties by which they are
> classified, secondary properties which are thus smuggled into the explanatory
> model. This means that a class or class faction is defined not only by its position in
> the relations of production.... but also by a certain sex-ratio, a certain distribution
> in geographical space, and by a whole set of subsidiary characteristics (Bourdieu,
> 1984: 102).

Moreover, Bourdieu goes on to state that those subsidiary characteristics may function as 'principles of selection or exclusion' (ibid.).

This notion that individuals bring a variety of criteria to their class faction - which Bourdieu states may be defined primarily by occupational group, and any of which may form the basis of inclusion / exclusion - fits the research results presented here. Thus, according to Bourdieu, while membership of the personnel occupation remains the key classification, the other secondary criteria which members bring with them also come to define who should be included in the occupation. Furthermore, Bourdieu points out that possession (or lack of possession) of one of these secondary criteria becomes easily confused with possession (or lack of possession) of the whole set of defining criteria (ibid.: 106). In this way, these secondary criteria become 'symbols' of possession of the primary criteria, and people may be excluded from the occupational group for not possessing one aspect of this 'symbolic capital'. Thus it could be stated that being

categorised as of ethnic minority origin may lead to exclusion from some personnel departments because being categorised as 'white' has become one of those secondary criteria.

Bourdieu also recognises that these secondary criteria, or symbolic capital, include particular, 'apparently most insignificant techniques of the body' (ibid.: 466), such as 'ways of walking or blowing one's nose, ways of eating or talking' (ibid.), again showing his model's ability to encompass the whole variety of criteria identified in the research, which included specific behaviours (see discussions in chapters six to ten for examples). All of these criteria, Bourdieu argues, constitute the 'class habitus, the internalized form of class condition and of the conditioning it entails' (ibid.: 101). The class habitus, moreover, Bourdieu argues, functions below the level of consciousness, so that individuals who do not possess the appropriate habitus are perceived not to belong to the 'class', without those who label them as such being aware of the reasons for that label. This, Bourdieu suggests, is why the habitus is a particularly potent criterion of exclusion (ibid.: 466).

Bourdieu's theory also, at times, dovetails action and structure in a way which again fits the research findings presented here. He notices, for example, that people categorise others because there is an advantage to them in doing so: 'the laying down of boundaries ... is inspired by the strategic aim of 'counting in' or 'being counted in' (ibid.: 476) and that

> Commonplaces and classificatory systems are thus the stake of struggles between the groups they characterize and counterpose, who fight over them while struggling to turn them to their own advantage (ibid.: 477).

As noted above, the identification of those categories which will afford inclusion and the attribution of an individual to a particular category, is thus the action by which inclusion / exclusion is effected.

Bourdieu's model of the action which can be taken by the person seeking inclusion also accords with the findings of this research. As already noted in chapter two - but worthy of repetition here - he claims that:

> Social identity is the stake in a struggle in which the stigmatized individual or group, and, more generally, any individual or group insofar as he or it is a potential object of categorization, can only retaliate against the partial perception which limits it to one of its characteristics by highlighting, in its self-definition, the best of its characteristics, and, more generally, by struggling to impose the taxonomy most favourable to its characteristics, or at least to give to the dominant taxonomy the content most flattering to what it has and what it is (ibid.: 475-476).

Thus the research finds that individuals seeking inclusion in personnel departments seek to emphasise those criteria which they perceive will afford them inclusion, and to ensure that these become part of the dominant taxonomy.

Bourdieu's recognition that the capital possessed by individuals is symbolic is also helpful. What is perceived is not 'class' membership itself, but rather a symbol of it, and this, as Cohen (1985) has argued, makes it possible for individuals to demonstrate membership of the 'class' (or other group) by showing or using the symbols commonly associated with it, without actually being identical to others in the 'class'. This is because, as Cohen has noted,

> Symbols are often defined as things 'standing for' other things. But they do not represent these 'other things' unambiguously (ibid.: 18).

Thus,

> By their very nature symbols permit interpretation and provide scope for interpretive manoeuvre by those who use them (ibid.: 17-18).

Moreover,

> Because symbols are malleable in this way, they can be made to 'fit' the circumstances of the individual. They can thus provide media through which individuals can experience and express their attachment to a society without compromising their individuality (ibid.: 18).

The recognition of the symbolic nature of criteria reveals how individuals may manipulate those criteria in order to gain inclusion in personnel departments. Firstly, the fact that there is a gap between symbol and meaning, as Cohen points out, leaves room

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for individuals to demonstrate that they belong to the included through adoption and use of appropriate symbols. Thus, as Goffman (1971) has shown, individuals may 'perform', presenting their audiences with a particular 'front' that suits the individuals' needs - in this instance, that demonstrates that they belong rightly with the 'included'. Again in line with the findings of this research, and in line with Bourdieu's findings about the range of symbolic capital which constitutes the 'habitus', Goffman notes the variety of symbols which may be used in such performances, these ranging from the setting in which the performance is undertaken to the 'personal front', including items such as

Insignia of office or rank; clothing; sex, age, and racial characteristics; size and looks; posture; speech patterns; facial expressions; bodily gestures, and the like (ibid.: 34).

Secondly, as indicated above, Bourdieu is quite clear that individuals may be categorised on the basis of just one symbol. This would imply -although Bourdieu himself draws back from this conclusion, and this is discussed further below - that inclusion may be won by 'performing' just one or a limited range of the necessary symbols (indeed, Goffman points out that the individual only 'possesses a limited range of sign-equipment' with which to stage his or her performance (ibid.: 39)). This accords with the research results, which suggest that individuals are able to win inclusion by demonstrating possession of just one of the many criteria which might symbolise that they belong to the same group as those already included.

Finally, since symbols, as Cohen has noted, 'stand for' other things (albeit not unambiguously), there is the possibility that the symbols which lead to inclusion in personnel departments may change or be changed. Although Cohen does not look explicitly at such changes of symbol - indeed, he argues that in the case of social communities symbols often remain the same while their meaning changes - he does note that new symbols gain currency to define community boundaries that had previously been defined geographically (Cohen, 1985: 117). Moreover, he argues that 'The community can make virtually anything grist to the symbolic mill of cultural distance' (ibid.), thus making it possible for new symbols to become important as new points of difference are perceived.

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However, although Bourdieu's theory brings many useful insights to the analysis of these research results, its determinism and its consequent inability to articulate social change, noted in chapter two, remain key weaknesses. Thus Bourdieu claims that position in the relations of production is the key criterion of classification, all 'secondary' criteria (symbolic capital) being simply those criteria which people in that particular class or class faction possess. In this respect, Bourdieu's theory has a similar weakness to that of Murphy (1988) and other closure theorists, discussed above, in that by ultimately focusing upon macro-level structures he fails to analyse the relationships between micro-level structures or 'secondary' criteria, and thus his model is unable to articulate change.

This weakness arises from Bourdieu's failure to pursue all the implications of his concept of symbolic capital, for example, the way in which - as noted above - individuals may exploit the gap between symbol and meaning to achieve inclusion. Bourdieu himself notes that:

> It is the relative independence of the structure of the system of classifying... in relation to the structure of the distribution of capital... which creates the space for symbolic strategies aimed at exploiting the discrepancies between the nominal and the real (Bourdieu, 1984: 481)

Such exploitation of the 'discrepancies between the nominal and the real' (ibid.) would make change a possibility, allowing individuals to bring in some new criteria, which would gradually change the 'habitus' and allow others to gain inclusion on the basis of those new criteria. However, at the end of his work 'Distinction', the futility of struggles over symbols, their inability to actually change anything, is asserted:

> But one has only to realize that the classificatory schemes which underlie agents' practical relationship to their condition and the representation they have of it are themselves the product of that condition, in order to see the limits of this autonomy. Position in the classification struggle depends on position in the class structure (ibid.: 483-484).

Bourdieu also fails to pursue the full implications of his claim that individuals are able to struggle to highlight their most favourable characteristic, notably, that some of the characteristics individuals are able to demonstrate may be more favourable than others, i.e. match those of the class 'habitus', while others do not. The logical consequence of this - because Bourdieu claims that the individual may be categorised on the basis of just one criterion - is, as already argued, that he or she may be able to win inclusion on the basis of one criterion which accords with the 'habitus', in spite of not showing the other criteria associated with it.

Part of the problem, as indicated above, is Bourdieu's failure to separate out precisely those criteria which constitute the 'habitus'. By identifying the various criteria which could afford inclusion in personnel positions, the research undertaken here reveals that some (but not all) of the criteria possessed by those currently included are also shared by those seeking inclusion, thus providing a means by which those seeking inclusion can gain it. By refusing to look below the level of the 'class habitus', however, Bourdieu is unable to recognise those aspects of the 'habitus' which may appear in more than one class, which provide a possible overlap between classes. Indeed, Bourdieu's theory ultimately implies that there is no such overlap, and that there is no discrepancy between the nominal and the real to be exploited, the habitus of each class being entirely different because each class is in 'reality' entirely different.

As noted in chapter two, the claim that class or occupational classifications have material reality is itself exceedingly problematic in a theory which shows how classification systems may be struggled over. That material resources provide the context for exclusion, that they are what people are excluded from, is again not in dispute: it is Bourdieu's assumption that because differential possession of material resources is 'real' the classification of such possession is also 'real', and hence that there are discrete occupational groups which do have discrete forms of habitus, that is questionable. The claim that all secondary criteria are determined by position in the relations of production, and the subsequent assumption that these secondary criteria do not need separate analysis, thus denies the possibility of change, and of the kinds of movements between groups identified, at a micro-level, in the research.

Ultimately, therefore, as Calhoun (1993) has noted, Bourdieu's theory reverts to structuralism, denying the interaction of structure and action which was identified earlier. In its conclusion, therefore, Bourdieu's theory adds little to the understanding of the research undertaken here; however, in its earlier stages, and in particular in its emphasis upon symbolic capital, it provides some useful insights into and explanations of the processes occurring in the reproduction of inequality in personnel departments.

Although there are at first glance some similarities between Bourdieu's (1984) model and Barth's (1969) situational theory of ethnicity, discussed in chapter two, the two are therefore ultimately quite different. Although both are interested in the boundaries between groups, in how one group is distinguished from another, the boundaries fulfil quite different roles. For Bourdieu, they are ultimately permanent markers, grounded in material differences, which lock people permanently into their particular, unchanging occupational classes, whereas for Barth they are nominal categories, which may be based around different criteria depending upon the situation. As a consequence, Barth perceives that ethnic categories and their membership can change, as the criteria around which they form, and which differentiate them from other categories, change. One of the challenges here is therefore to produce a model which incorporates both this insight of Barth's and Bourdieu's insights regarding the development of the habitus.

Although no one existing model of inequality is able to explain by itself the inequality identified by the research, therefore, the above discussion shows a number of models which contribute to an enhanced understanding. The following chapter will apply these insights to the analysis of the particular inequalities identified in personnel departments, in order to develop a new model which can explain the processes and structures which underpin inequality in personnel departments and which can then be applied to different occupations and different situations.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: PROPOSED MODEL OF INCLUSION IN PERSONNEL DEPARTMENTS.

As indicated above, this chapter builds upon the insights revealed in the previous chapter to develop a model of the processes and structures – including those of ethnic origin – which underpin inequality in personnel departments. Thus, in accordance with the third aim of this thesis, this chapter will develop a model which will overcome the weaknesses identified in those existing models, and additionally be capable of application to different occupations and different situations.

Earlier in this thesis it has been argued that being categorised as being of a different ethnic origin from managers often affects inclusion in personnel departments because it reduces managers' 'sense of knowing the other' (Good, 1988:45) and thus their expectation of shared understanding and shared values. This suggests that ethnic origin may be a way of assessing 'acceptability' (to use Jenkins', 1986b, terminology).

However, as noted in discussion of behaviours which afford inclusion in Utility Co., the distinction between criteria of acceptability and criteria of suitability becomes difficult to maintain when specific situations are analysed. Indeed, the research findings reveal that those criteria which Jenkins labels as 'functionally specific', such as educational qualifications and training, may actually have what Jenkins would term a 'functionally non-specific role', serving to reproduce the status quo and ensure manageability (as Murphy, 1988, also argues) as in the example of the requirement for people wishing to move into personnel officer positions in Rest.Co. to have completed set operations manager training schemes.

In the opposite manner, the case studies and questionnaire survey reveal that ethnic origin, which might be assumed, perhaps with the exception of certain jobs specific to certain ethnic origins, to be a 'functionally non-specific criterion', was in fact used by some managers to assess functional competence: i.e. was used as a way of assessing *suitability*. Chapter five quotes questionnaire respondents' opinions that there is a *'lack of faith and confidence in people from ethnic minority origin'* (ethnic minority woman) and that such people are *'not regarded as highly'* (ethnic minority woman), while

chapter eight reveals that one ethnic minority man from Utility Co. argues that *'I think they still have this thing about Asian people at [Utility Co.] - that they're not good at managing'*, while another interviewee from Town Council (a 'white' man) argues that *'there's a protective thing'* around ethnic minority employees: *'Do these people really have the skills?... There's a little bit of covering our backsides... which restrains people, you can't make mistakes'*.

If the criterion of ethnic origin is not only used to indicate 'acceptability', therefore, what precisely does it indicate? It is this which must be ascertained in order to understand the relationship between ethnic categorisation and inclusion, including how ethnic categorisation relates to the other identified criteria.

Symbolising Potential

A key point to note from the above examples is that the people categorised as of ethnic minority origin are not excluded because they *are* less able to perform or to fit in with other workers, but because managers *fear* in advance that that might be the case. This recognition concurs with interviewees' own claims that what is being assessed when making decisions about inclusion is 'potential', 'potential' being 'that which is *possible*, opposed to what is *actual*; a *possibility*', or, in the case of the adjective, *'possible* as opposed to *actual'* (Simpson and Weiner, 1989: 224; my italics).

Thus, within Utility Co., one interviewee ('white' male) reports that *'If you have potential you'll be identified on an individual basis'* and given further support, and an ethnic minority woman explains that she was promoted because her managers *'knew me and knew my work potential'*. An ethnic minority man from Town Council similarly explains how *'I got recognised as having personnel assistant potential, so I was more or less assimilated into becoming a personnel assistant'*, while in City Council a personnel practitioner describes how an individual was promoted because *'she had potential, it was nurtured, she was given responsibility and it was developed and she had support from those of us around'*. Indeed, one member of the personnel development committee in Manuf.Co., which makes decisions about who to put forward

for new positions, describes its role as being to '*try to assign potential*' to individuals, in order to determine who should be put forward (my highlights).

The issue is therefore one of judging *potential* outcomes rather than actualities. While some of the interviewees regard this judgement of potential as unproblematic - the Utility Co. woman just quoted, for example, claims that managers '*knew my work potential*' (my highlight) – others, however, recognise that it is not. Thus one ethnic minority woman from Manuf.Co., having claimed that the personnel development committee members '*try to assign potential*', explains that this is based upon:

> '*Lots of different criteria... and then you try to make a judgement, based on what that individual's experiences are, whether they've got the ability to move to the next grade... and ideally it's mostly technical capability and you know ability to, to do report writing and ... all those sorts of things.*'

This quotation reveals the interviewee's recognition that an individual's *future* potential cannot, by definition, be *known*, but has to be assessed by indirect means – in this example, through looking at their *past* experience.

In other words, the assessment has to be based upon *symbols* of potential. As the examples cited at the end of the preceding section indicate, the ethnic origin attributed to individuals sometimes also serves as just such a symbol of potential, leading to inclusion / exclusion through its effect upon judgements of potential. (Precisely what the potential being sought is, and how the potential symbolised by perceived ethnic origin relates to that, will be explored later in this chapter).

Critically, however, the interviewee just cited also recognises that such assessments of potential are open to conflict. Thus, she claims, the committee members can only use the individual's past experience to '*try to make a judgement*' (my highlight). Moreover, she implies that the criteria upon which those judgements are based may also vary, noting that: '*ideally it's mostly technical capability*' (my highlight). Other interviewees also argue that assessments of potential need to be looked at more closely: another ('white' woman) from Manuf.Co. argues that the personnel development committees '*ought to*

really look and say... why is it that we've chosen these people [to receive high potential ratings]', while a 'white' male manager from Town Council argues that:

> *'We assess she's got potential... I'm also certain that's the area where discrimination might be around, because you might say what you're doing is developing this type of person but not this type of person'.*

Indeed, it will be argued here that the fact that inclusion in these personnel departments is based upon judgements of potential, which is by its very nature intangible, provides space for conflict over inclusion for three key reasons. In the first place, there is the possibility that different individuals or groups may seek to include people with the potential to achieve different outcomes.

As the above quotations regarding potential show, most interviewees do not regard this aspect of potential as problematic; rather, there appears to be an assumption that there is a common understanding of the nature of the potential that is being sought (thus, for example, the ethnic minority man from Town Council quoted earlier in this section does not question what the *'personnel assistant potential'* he was identified as possessing actually was, nor does the City Council manager quoted query precisely what *'potential'* the individual cited possessed).

However, when pressed, interviewees find it difficult to define explicitly the sort of potential they seek: for example, when an interviewee from Manuf.Co. ('white' male) attempts to define the potential being sought by the personnel development committee, the definition is tautologous: the personnel development committee, he argues, identifies *'What we think their [employees'] potential is, how far we think at a given time they can get in the company'.* The potential sought in this instance is thus apparently the potential to progress within the company - progression which is in fact determined by precisely those judgements about the individual's potential to progress within the company.

The fact that the personnel practitioners interviewed do not appear to view this aspect of potential as problematic does not, however, necessarily mean that there *is* a common understanding or agreement over the nature of the potential being sought. In fact, some

of the conflicts over the criteria of inclusion identified in chapters five to ten suggest that the opposite was true in many cases. Indeed, by analysing those included in / excluded from the case study personnel departments and the reasons for their inclusion / exclusion it will be possible to identify different types of potential which different groups seek to reward with inclusion. This analysis will be undertaken later in this chapter.

In the second place, there may be conflict over who should be included because assessment of potential depends upon the symbols available to the individual/s making the assessment. Analysis of the case study data in the preceding chapters has already revealed how individuals seeking inclusion seek to exploit this by emphasising those criteria or symbols which they believe might lead to inclusion, and attempting to conceal or downplay those which they believe might lead to exclusion. However, not everyone has the same opportunity to highlight 'positive' symbols: thus the ethnic minority woman from Utility Co., quoted earlier in this section, argues that she has been promoted within her department because the managers '*knew me*' and thus, she argues, '*knew my work potential*'. Had the people making the appointment not known her and her level of performance in relation to other tasks, and thus had to base their assessment upon other criteria, she may not have been appointed.

Moreover, as Cohen notes - and this is the third source of conflict over inclusion - although 'Symbols are often defined as things 'standing for' other things... they do not represent these 'other things' unambiguously' (Cohen, 1985: 18). 'Behaviour', Cohen argues 'does not 'contain' meaning intrinsically; rather, it is found to be meaningful by an act of interpretation' (ibid.: 17). Moreover, he goes on to state that:

> Interpretation implies a substantial degree of what, faute de mieux, we must call 'subjectivity'. When it is a feature of social interaction, subjectivity clearly suggests the possibility of imprecision, of inexactitude of match, of ambiguity, of idiosyncracy. In other words, different people oriented to the same phenomenon are likely to differ from each other in certain respects in their interpretations of it..... These interpretations are not random. They tend to be made within the terms characteristic of a given society, and influenced by its language, ecology, its traditions of belief and ideology, and so forth. But neither are they immutable.

They are, rather, responsive to the circumstances of interaction, both among individuals and between the society as a whole and those across its boundaries. The vehicles of such interpretations are symbols. By their very nature symbols permit interpretation and provide scope for interpretive manoeuvre by those who use them (ibid.: 17-18).

Symbols, therefore, are the vehicles through which phenomena are interpreted, and while the interpretations individuals derive from them may be influenced by characteristics of the society in which they exist, not all individuals from the same society will give the same interpretation. Furthermore, the interpretation may vary according to other features of the interaction, such as the availability of other symbols. The same phenomenon may therefore lead to a different judgement of potential depending upon the individual making the interpretation and the symbols presented to him or her.

While the personnel practitioners who recognise that they make use of judgements of potential do not appear to recognise that the *nature* of the potential being sought is ambiguous, they do recognise that *assessments* of that potential are, and this is the basis for many of the concerns over assessments of potential previously quoted. Thus, as already quoted, an ethnic minority woman from Manuf.Co. notes that committee members can only '*try to assign potential*' (my highlight), it being the assigning of potential, rather than the identification of the type of potential sought, which is regarded as problematic. The fact that potential may be interpreted differently by different people is also recognised by another ('white' male) Manuf.Co. interviewee, who notes that the committees assess

What we think their [individuals'] potential is.... There are risks involved, because people who think they are of higher potential will actually leave the company.

Similar variations in judgement of potential are recognised in Town Council. One personnel practitioner from that organisation comments that '*It's strange how my*

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management does not recognise this [potential] but it's always outside managers who recognise this potential', and '*[It's] always people outside who recognise my potential, rather than internally'*. Thus, also, a 'white' male personnel manager from the organisation argues that, having assessed potential, '*that's the area where discrimination might be around, because you might say what you're doing is developing this type of person but not this type of person'*. It is the subjective interpretation of potential placed upon different symbols, according to this manager, which may lead to discrimination.

It is, however, important to note that while these interviewees only appear to find the *interpretation of symbols* of potential problematic, and not for example the actual type of potential being sought in the first place (the penultimate interviewee cited above, for example, is certain that he has 'potential' - it is just others' ability to see that that varies), the variations in judgements of potential they note may not only arise from different interpretations of the same symbols. It may also be, as indicated above, that the variations arise from different availability of symbols, or indeed from conflicts over the type of potential being sought in the first place - the *potential for what?*

If we are to understand why and how categorisation of ethnic origin affects inclusion in positions in personnel departments in Britain, and how it is that some individuals who could be categorised as of ethnic minority origin are able to win inclusion while others are not, such conflicts over the judgement of potential need to be mapped out and their sources - whether it be in the different types of potential being sought, the different symbols available to those making judgements, or the different interpretations placed upon those symbols - understood. The following section therefore explores in detail the *types* of potential being sought of personnel practitioners in each of the case study organisations, and the *symbols* which lead to positive or negative judgements regarding possession of that potential. These findings will then be summarised in a table.

Types of Potential Sought and their Symbolisation
Given that, as already discussed, those interviewed during the course of the case studies do not define explicitly the type of potential - the 'potential for what' which various

parties desire and seek to reward with inclusion in their personnel departments, this will now be identified through two means. The first is the analysis of those who are included in / excluded from personnel positions in the case study organisations. The second is the analysis of the symbols which lead to that inclusion / exclusion and the interpretations people place upon them, in other words, *why* possession of a particular symbol leads to an individual's inclusion, and thus what the potential is that is being rewarded.

a. Types of Potential Sought of Those Included in Personnel Departments in Town Council

The fact that being categorised as being of ethnic minority origin is sometimes a criterion of inclusion in Town Council, through the implementation of the organisation's positive action scheme, is noted in chapter six. The 'white' man administrating the council's positive action budget notes that the budget enables the council to include *'ethnic minority individuals'* who would not otherwise meet the criteria for inclusion in the organisation: *'in the normal recruitment that we have we wouldn't be appointing those people into those posts'*.

The potential expected from those recruited under positive action is not, primarily, the potential to be effective or competent at their job, as is evidenced by the fact that certain of those individuals have been trained and developed *beyond* the level necessary for effective achievement of their job (see discussion in chapter six). Moreover, one 'white' woman argues that *'I've seen people be appointed on the basis of colour who were not adequate to the job'*.

Rather, interviewees suggest that the potential being sought from using ethnic minority categorisation as a criterion of inclusion is often the *potential to alter the (perceived) ethnic composition of the workforce*. The ('white' male) positive action budget administrator thus states that *'one directorate tries to use it [the budget] to influence their profile in the employment of black people'*, while an ethnic minority woman argues that a manager might choose to recruit someone of ethnic minority origin because *'I need to make my workforce more representative [of the local community]'*. Another interviewee -who categorises herself as 'white' woman - argues that there is *'less opposition'* to discrimination when it is in favour of people categorised as of ethnic

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minority origin - even if the person concerned *'isn't really up to the mark'* - *'because we need to have a higher black profile in the office'*.

However, not all interviewees agree that inclusion should be on the basis of potential to alter the (perceived) ethnic composition of the workforce. Some argue that inclusion should be rather on the basis of the *potential for occupational expertise*, arguing in fact that recruiting someone because of their potential to change the (perceived) ethnic composition of the workforce rather than their potential for occupational expertise, *'isn't any good for them, or... the organisation'* because

> *It's not getting the best person for the job, somebody who was better for the job has been overlooked or alienated, has lost their opportunity, [and it] doesn't serve the community well because all other co-workers see is people being appointed who aren't up to the job* ('white' female).

The outrage felt when people are perceived to have been sent on training courses because of their ethnic categorisation, rather than because the courses are relevant to their positions, indicated above, also reveals a belief that potential for occupational expertise should take precedence over the potential to alter the perceived ethnic composition of the workforce. Indeed, and as has already been indicated, those personnel practitioners widely categorised as being of ethnic minority origin themselves concur with this, stating that they desire inclusion on the basis of their individual, job-related 'merits' rather than their perceived membership of a particular ethnic group.

Making the workforce more representative of the local community is a strategic concern, valued by those who set the strategy for the organisation, such as the Chief Executive and councillors, and implemented through centrally-written policies. The positive action budget, for example, was set up by a Chief Executive, and the fact that successive Chief Executives have refused to touch it, in spite of making cuts in many other areas, is evidence of the importance attached to changing the (perceived) ethnic composition of the workforce at that strategic level. We may therefore say that the potential to alter the (perceived) ethnic composition of the workforce is the potential sought by *those at a strategic level* in the organisation.

The concern that those included should have the potential for occupational expertise, on the other hand, is found amongst the individual personnel managers and implemented by them individually, through, for example, the person specifications they draw up for the positions over which they have responsibility, or the ways in which they allocate the tasks over which they have responsibility. Hence the example of the ('white' male) Town Council personnel manager, cited above, who has refused to give challenging work to one subordinate, telling her, according to the subordinate, that she '*might not write it the way I like to write it*'. That personnel manager underlines the importance of only offering inclusion in more senior positions to those with the potential for occupational expertise when he notes that, although enabling someone to progress in personnel is '*about letting go and being able to live with the mistakes*', in the current climate of local government

> *There's a lot more issues around who are we, how effective are we, there's a little bit of covering our backsides.. which restrains people... you can't make mistakes.*

Thus we may say that, in contrast to the first type of potential identified, the potential for occupational expertise is sought by individual personnel managers i.e. *those at a (personnel) managerial level* in the organisation.

However, it is important to note that the managers adhere to a particular model of what constitutes occupational expertise, based upon that which the managers themselves possess, and it is to this model that individuals have to be judged to have the potential to conform (hence the importance of someone being able to '*write it the way I like to write it*'). Having occupational expertise is therefore not the only sort of potential which the managers seek from those they include, particularly in more senior positions: they also seek the *potential not to threaten their position*, whether by challenging the status quo which gives the managers their own power and inclusion (Roper, 1994, notes how managers seek to include those with similar backgrounds to themselves for this reason); making mistakes which would reflect badly on the manager (hence not giving someone responsibility was seen to be part of '*covering our backsides*'; my highlight), or causing the manager difficulties in other respects, for example, by refusing to recognise their authority. The potential for occupational expertise is thus sought partly because it reduces the potential to threaten the manager's own position.

Individual managers' desire to include only those who will not present a threat explains why one ethnic minority man, discussed in chapter six, (who is reported to have 'potential' of some kind) failed to gain inclusion in more senior positions after he reacted to perceived discrimination by firstly accusing someone outside the department of discrimination without going through his manager - thus ignoring her status as head of department and causing her some embarrassment - and secondly taking that manager to industrial tribunal. Although he may have been judged originally to have the 'potential' for occupational expertise, he has demonstrated the potential to threaten his manager's position, and thus has not been afforded further inclusion.

The criteria which afford inclusion in Town Council, which have been analysed in chapter six, may therefore now be seen as symbols of these key types of potential: the potential to alter the ethnic composition of the workforce, sought by those at a strategic level in the organisation, and the potential for occupational expertise and the potential not to threaten the manager's position (to which the previous potential for occupational expertise contributes), which are sought by individual managers in personnel departments. Clearly, being of ethnic minority origin aids inclusion where the first type of potential is sought, but could hinder it where the second and third type of potential is sought, being perceived to be different from the manager in any way, as noted in chapter eleven, tending to reduce the manager's expectation that a person will behave in the same way as him or her and, relatedly, to reduce the manager's trust that that person will not harm him or her (c.f. Dasgupta, 1988; Good, 1988).

b. Types of Potential Sought of Those Included in Personnel Departments in City Council

Within City Council there was, until a few years before the research, a similar attempt to alter the (perceived) ethnic composition of the workforce to that which is still taking place in Town Council. One personnel practitioner, who categorises herself as 'white' woman, argues that the old equal opportunities policy meant that *'you had to know the group that was running the sort of mafia, ... the race mafia... if you came from that particular group you would be all right'*. As a result, she argues,

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We did end up with a proportion of ethnic minority staff which sort of more or less matched the proportion in the borough as a whole', but also *'some appointments were made of people who did not have the skills and abilities to do the post that they were appointed to.*

Again, it is claimed that potential to change the (perceived) ethnic composition of the workforce took precedence, in some instances, over the potential for occupational expertise.

However, as noted in chapter nine, including people on the basis of their potential to alter the (perceived) ethnic composition of the workforce has ceased to be organisational policy. The new policy, according to a 'white' man in the central strategic personnel unit, is *'looking at people on their merits not for their gender or ethnic background or whatever'*. As indicated in chapter nine, a key aspect of the 'merit' - or rather potential merit - now sought by the organisation is the potential to conform to the new organisational values and practices, such as devolving power and serving line managers. Whereas in Town Council it is the potential to alter the ethnic composition of the workforce which is valued by those at a strategic level, therefore, in City Council it is the potential to conform to those organisational values and practices.

As in Town Council, potential for occupational expertise is not a key aspect of the strategic model of desired potential in City Council. Indeed, specialist occupational expertise is being devalued by those at a strategic level - the organisational structure, for example, it is said, *'shouldn't necessarily be determined by if you like professional judgement'* and *'the strict professional career path... is disappearing quite fast in [City Council]'* (both 'white' men). As noted in chapter nine, this is reflected in the devolution of many of personnel departments' previous responsibilities to line managers and the fact that the number of personnel policies have been reduced to a minimum. The symbols which demonstrate possession of the type of potential desired by those at a strategic level, therefore, are those which demonstrate organisational rather than cultural assets (c.f. Savage et al, 1992).

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The potential those at a strategic level desire of personnel practitioners thus reflects the low power of the personnel occupation within City Council, and seeks to impose a strategy of 'conformist innovation' rather than 'deviant innovation' upon personnel practitioners (Legge, 1978). However, as in Town Council, the strategic model of desirable potential is not always implemented by individual personnel managers when they effect inclusion. Although they might not have the power to impose a different model at a strategic level, they do have a degree of power over inclusion within their own departments, and this enables them to impose additional, and even sometimes contradictory, requirements.

Chapter nine thus reveals that, in spite of the claims of those in strategic positions that organisational careers are more important than occupational ones, all of those in 'architect' or 'contracts manager' personnel positions (c.f. Tyson and Fell, 1986) have actually been included by their managers partly on the basis of personnel qualifications or experience, i.e. on the basis of cultural assets (Savage et al, 1992). In other words, they have been included on the basis of assets which symbolise *potential for occupational expertise* as well as the strategically-desired *potential to conform to organisational values and practices*. Indeed, only those in Tyson and Fell's 'clerk of works' positions are not required to show symbols of potential occupational expertise.

Indeed, the ethnic minority woman manager of the remaining directorate personnel department studied has sufficient power over her own department to be able, apparently, to award inclusion at least partly on the basis of the potential to alter the (perceived) ethnic composition of the workforce, even though it conflicts with the type of potential now sought by those at a strategic level. '*There were very few senior Africans, Africans working in the department and as an African I wanted to address that*' she explains. Unsurprisingly, both of the other people in the department - both of whom she appointed - are categorised by her as being of African origin.

That manager still, however, requires the potential for occupational expertise from her staff in addition to potential to alter the workforce composition. Interestingly, however, the symbols by which she judges this type of potential are different from the symbols by which other personnel managers in City Council judge it. Whereas they

have appointed, or say they would appoint, people with professional qualifications and occupational experience, the directorate personnel manager does not take professional qualifications or previous personnel experience into account, even for the 'contracts manager' positions: she has recently recruited someone to her unit who has neither personnel experience nor professional qualifications. Rather, she assessed potential occupational expertise by making the individual do *'some tests... she came through them and I thought yes, you can develop'*.

As in Town Council, the symbols which individual personnel managers seek are those they themselves demonstrate - thus the ethnic minority woman directorate personnel manager, who is the only manager studied in City Council who does not value professional qualifications, is also the only manager studied not to have the qualification herself; she is also the only manager categorised as of ethnic minority origin studied, and the only one still to value ethnic minority origin. Given the earlier finding that being perceived to be different results in reduced trust (see discussion in chapter two and subsequently in chapters six to eleven), the fact that managers reward those whom they perceive to possess the same symbols as themselves suggests again a desire to include only those who do not have the potential to threaten their positions.

However, because of the business unit structure of City Council, and the 'handmaiden' role (Storey, 1992) it imposes upon personnel units in the organisation, it is not only the types of potential sought by those at strategic and (personnel) managerial levels which can affect inclusion in personnel units, but also those sought by other unit managers - i.e. by the personnel departments' clients. Thus, in the personnel business unit studied, one reason for requiring personnel staff to have professional credentials is, according to the ('white' male) personnel unit manager interviewed, that it provides *'apart from anything the credibility in selling our services to managers'*.

In order to have the credibility they need with non-personnel managers, therefore, staff in the personnel business unit have to demonstrate potential for occupational expertise to them, using symbols which *those* managers interpret as demonstrating that potential - in this case, the possession of professional credentials. Indeed, it may be only because

the remaining directorate personnel department has not yet had to win contracts from business units, and thus has not yet had to present the symbols those units' managers desire, that its manager is able to use her alternative symbols of occupational expertise. Whereas in Town Council, therefore, we find two significant loci at which types of potential, and the symbols of that potential, are defined - 'strategic' and '(personnel) managerial' - in City Council, because of the reduced status of some of the personnel departments we find three: 'strategic', '(personnel) managerial', and 'line'.

Moreover, previous research (Collinson, 1991; Watson, 1977, discussed in chapter three) has shown that where personnel practitioners are recruited for their credibility to line managers, certain social groups (in the case of Collinson and Watson's research women) are more likely to be excluded because membership of that social group results in low credibility with line managers - in the terms of this thesis, symbolises reduced potential to them. That this process might tend to lead to the exclusion of people categorised as being of ethnic minority origin from personnel positions in City Council, as well as women, is suggested by the findings discussed in chapter nine. One interviewee, for example, who categorises herself as female and of ethnic minority origin, is quoted as arguing that her career has been hindered because *business unit [managers] are predominantly white male '*. As she explains:

> *In terms of gender, for organisational reasons, careers in personnel are affected by whether or not the organisation values a female being a decision-maker, or sees a female as being a credible person to be able to make decisions, important decisions... also with regards to ethnic origin it's exactly the same.*

c. Types of Potential Sought of Those Included in Personnel Departments in Rest.Co.

The types of potential sought by those at these three loci - 'strategic', '(personnel) managerial' and 'line' - are also all significant for inclusion in personnel departments in Rest.Co. As the analysis in chapter ten reveals, adherence to organisational values and practices as opposed to occupational ones has become increasingly crucial for inclusion in Rest.Co. Whereas some earlier appointments to personnel positions were on the basis of occupational qualifications and experience, i.e. symbols demonstrating *potential*

occupational expertise, such symbols are now no longer greatly valued. Rather, as at the strategic level in City Council, it is demonstration of the *potential to conform to organisational values and practices* which is now valued more highly.

As in City Council, this is a strategic decision: it is the senior managers to whom the heads of the personnel departments report that have decided that personnel positions are usually to be filled internally, by secondment from operations positions, rather than externally, by people with occupational experience and qualifications. The nature of the organisational values it is necessary to demonstrate in order to win inclusion in senior operations positions - and thus in personnel positions - is also defined at a strategic level and conveyed through such means as the performance review mechanism, training courses and exams, and corporate awards.

According to the strategic model of potential sought, effective performance of the personnel function is implicitly bound up with the potential to conform to the values and practices defined by the organisation, rather than with those defined by the personnel occupation. Indeed, the policy of including people for following organisational rather than occupational career strategies (c.f. Brown, 1982) is explicitly intended to ensure that the personnel departments conform to organisational rather than occupational values. As one ('white' male) senior secondee to a personnel department argues:

> *It helps focus all of the service departments onto what is actually required by [Rest.Co.].... Although I've not been formally trained in Human Resource training, as it were, it is I suppose my expertise as management, and therefore I'm able to ensure that all of the people are working to the company goals.*

However, some degree of occupational expertise *is* needed within Rest.Co. personnel departments: the personnel secondee quoted above notes that '*if I need technical advice I just speak to one of the HROs [Human Resource Officers]*'. However, it is people in the less senior positions in the departments who have the occupational expertise, and their potential for occupational expertise does not only not grant them further inclusion, but actually excludes them from more senior positions. Thus one permanent human resource officer (a 'white' woman), who has several years of personnel experience and

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the professional qualification, argues that she cannot progress to a more senior personnel position because those are now to be filled by people with operational experience, i.e. people who demonstrate the potential to conform to - and keep the personnel department in line with - organisational rather than occupational values and practices. Moreover, the fact that there is already one person with occupational expertise in a permanent position in her department means that such potential is not even required for inclusion in the other human resource officer positions there.

As the analysis in chapter ten reveals, however, the type of potential sought by those at a strategic level is not supported unanimously within personnel departments. Some - notably, those who are in permanent personnel positions - argue that it is the *potential for occupational expertise* (potential which they, after all, are best able to demonstrate) which should be rewarded with greater inclusion. However, unlike in City Council, these individuals have no power to impose the type of potential they seek, since they are not in managerial positions. Indeed, they are not in managerial positions, as the preceding paragraphs indicate, precisely because they have been judged to have the potential to impose such occupational values and practices on the departments, and thus to undermine the type of potential desired by those at a strategic level. Unlike in both City Council and Town Council, therefore, the research found no evidence of individual personnel managers *undermining* the type of potential desired by those at the strategic level.

That is not to say, however, that there is *no* difference between the type of potential sought by those at (personnel) managerial and strategic levels. As is the case with some managers in City Council, the findings indicate that individual personnel managers in Rest.Co. may seek *additional* types of potential from those they include. As well as including people who have the potential to conform to organisational values and practices they also, like individual personnel managers in Town Council and City Council, seek to include people whom they judge do not have the potential to threaten their own position. Thus one personnel manager in Rest.Co. is suspected – by a 'white' female interviewee - of preferring to recruit male personnel practitioners in order to prevent too many staff being on maternity leave at the same time, because he perceives

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that such an occurrence would cause him difficulties managing the department. Gender, in that scenario, is a symbol by which that personnel manager assesses potential threat.

Because of the 'handmaiden' role (Storey, 1992) of personnel departments in Rest.Co., and the organisational careers (c.f. Brown, 1982) individuals are often required to follow to win inclusion in them, the types of potential sought by line managers are, as in City Council, significant.[i] The type of potential sought by this latter group, like that sought by personnel managers, is similar to that sought at a strategic level and does not undermine it. The organisational values and practices to which individuals are required to have the potential to conform, in the strategic model of potential sought, are, after all, based upon the values of the operations function of the organisation - i.e. of the line. Nevertheless, the type of potential sought by line managers is not synonymous with that sought at a strategic level: line managers, like personnel managers, desire additional types of potential also.

The additional potential desired by line managers is the potential *to understand and develop a good rapport with them*. This is not so that the personnel practitioners cannot present a threat to the line, as in some of the other case study organisations, since the balance of power in Rest.Co. is such that personnel practitioners cannot present a great threat. Rather, it is so that the interaction with personnel practitioners can be both as beneficial as possible for the individual line managers, because of the shared understanding, and also enjoyable.

Thus, as analysed in chapter ten, one ('white' female) personnel practitioner reports that one of the barriers to further inclusion she faces is difficulty in developing close relationships and networks with (predominantly male) operations managers, and explains how male colleagues use symbols of common interests such as football, and indeed

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[i] Although it was noted in chapter ten that customers and colleagues in operations may also have some effect upon inclusion in Rest. Co.'s personnel departments, it was also noted that this effect is only indirect. As already indicated, this section details the types of potential sought of personnel practitioners themselves; thus, even though they may have subsequent indirect effects upon inclusion in personnel departments, the types of potential desired of operations staff by customers and operations colleagues are beyond the scope of this analysis.

gender, to develop those relationships, those shared symbols -as Dasgupta (1988) suggests- indicating potential for the desired understanding and rapport. Because of the power of operations managers in Rest.Co., such networks aid further inclusion in personnel - the personnel practitioner interviewed believes that the networks one male personnel practitioner has been able to develop with operations managers have been influential in his promotion to senior human resources officer.

Perception of shared ethnic origin might also symbolise that desired potential for understanding and good rapport. One ethnic minority man, for example, notes that when delivering training to operations managers *'you can relate to certain people on a course obviously if they are from the same origin as you, and I'm sure it works the same way round for anyone else'.*

Within Rest.Co., therefore, the type of potential sought at a strategic level has a key impact upon inclusion in personnel departments, and particularly upon inclusion in the more senior positions in them. However, although there is no evidence of that strategic model of desirable potential being undermined, the types of potential sought by personnel managers and line managers sometimes add further requirements to the strategic model, such as the potential not to threaten the manager's position, and the potential to understand and develop a rapport with line managers.

d. Types of Potential Sought of Those Included in Personnel Departments in Utility Co.

In the past, the type of potential sought of those included in personnel departments by those at a strategic level in Utility Co. had some similarities with that currently sought by the strategic level in Rest.Co., personnel practitioners having been recruited internally, and most personnel practitioners having entered their first personnel position within the organisation after experience in other parts of the organisation. However, as noted in chapter eight, and unlike in Rest.Co., it was only possible to enter the lowest grades in those local personnel departments without personnel experience, thus individuals tended to gain inclusion in low personnel grades in Utility Co. and then work their way up the personnel hierarchy.

Nevertheless, the fact that many personnel practitioners started their careers elsewhere in the organisation, and then had to progress up the personnel hierarchy within the organisation, and the fact that professional qualifications were not important, still indicates that organisational assets were more significant for inclusion than 'cultural' ones (c.f Savage et al, 1992). The potential being sought through that strategy of internal recruitment *was*, therefore, the *potential to conform to organisation values and practices*, and to undertake personnel responsibilities *in line with* those. Those values, as discussed in chapter eight, concerned loyalty to the organisation and reliability.

However, as has already been discussed in preceding chapters, the potential desired of those included in personnel departments by those at a strategic level has now shifted. Whereas in Rest. Co. there has been a shift from rewarding cultural to rewarding organisational assets (c.f.Savage et al, 1992), within Utility Co. the shift has been in the opposite direction. Increasingly, it is cultural assets, rather than organisational ones, which organisational policies reward: in other words, symbols of potential occupational expertise rather than of potential to conform to organisational values and practices. Moreover, as part of this shift, initiative and the ability to come up with new ideas are rewarded rather than the reliability and loyalty of before.

Thus, as a 'white' male manager from Operating Unit Y explains, the policy is now for people to be recruited externally to personnel departments in the organisation, either to the lowest grade personnel position or, if graduates, to trainee management positions. Indeed, as discussed in chapter eight, inclusion in senior personnel positions is increasingly based upon degree and professional qualifications rather than organisational experience. The removal of the previous organisational policy of promoting people on the basis of length of service - symbolising reliability and loyalty to the organisation; the claim of one (ethnic minority male) manager that the graduates included by the new policy are '*think tank*' rather than reliable, and the fact that professional qualifications are encouraged, provide further evidence that the type of potential sought by those at a strategic level is now the *potential for occupational expertise* and the *potential to use initiative*, rather than the potential to conform to the traditional organisational values of loyalty to the organisation and reliability.

As in Town Council and in the directorate personnel department in City Council, however, there is evidence of conflicting types of potential being sought by some at a (personnel) managerial level, notably by the ethnic minority male personnel manager in the local personnel department studied in Operating Unit X. Like the directorate personnel manager studied in City Council, the local personnel manager studied in Operating Unit X continues to adhere to the old strategic model of desired potential: the *potential to conform to organisational practices and values of loyalty to the organisation and reliability.* Thus this manager continues to include people on the basis of length of service, this providing him with a symbol for judging potential for organisational loyalty and reliability, and excludes those with degrees, which he interprets negatively as symbolising the potential to be unreliable and move on quickly from the department.

In part, the conflict between the type of potential that manager seeks and that sought by those at a strategic level may reflect the nature of the work undertaken in local personnel departments in Utility Co. which, as noted in chapter eight, tends to be largely 'clerk of works' with a small element of 'contracts manager' (c.f. Tyson and Fell, 1986). The potential for occupational expertise and the ability to come up with new personnel ideas, valued at a strategic level, may be more appropriate for the kinds of 'architect' roles undertaken at head office than for the roles undertaken in the local personnel departments; certainly, the manager's own contention is that '*[I] don't need a brain of Britain, I need a good solid worker'*.

However, the type of potential that manager seeks could also reflect his desire - like that of personnel managers in the other organisations discussed so far - to include people who do not have the *potential to threaten his position.* People who are unreliable and do not stay long in his department could clearly cause him difficulties. Moreover, as noted in the analysis of types of potential sought by personnel managers in Town Council, people who possess different criteria from the manager - in this case degree qualifications rather than long experience - may be judged by the manager to be less able - and thus more likely to let the manager down - and may also threaten his or her position by undermining the basis upon which he or she won inclusion and calling into question the way in which he or she works.

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Further evidence that this is the case is provided by the fact that the local personnel manager interviewed in Operating Unit Y (a 'white' man), seeks potential which is very different from that sought by the manager in Operating Unit X, and much closer to that sought by those at a strategic level. Even when recruiting to the lowest grade personnel positions he claims that

I personally am looking very much to an interest in the personnel subject... if they just tell me it's a matter of record keeping then that generally doesn't entice me to think they're a suitable candidate, I'm looking for somebody that's really got an interest in people policy, organisation design, etcetera. Also a demonstration of initiative...

The nature of the work by itself does not, therefore, render such potential unnecessary, as the local personnel manager in Operating Unit X argues. Rather, it is the desire to include people who do not have the potential to threaten their positions which explains the differences in the two managers' definitions of desired potential. The requirement to have potential for occupational expertise, symbolised by cultural assets such as professional qualifications, does not threaten the local personnel manager in Operating Unit Y as it does the local personnel manager in Operating Unit X: he does not possess such strong symbols of the type of potential previously sought by those at a strategic level, and is already studying for the professional qualification himself.

As in the other organisations studied, therefore, individual managers seek to include in their departments people who they judge do not have the potential to threaten their positions, causing them no difficulties and sharing their values. The symbols by which the individual managers assess that potential are, again, those symbols which they themselves possess, which, as Heider (1958) argues, leads them to believe that the person concerned will resemble them in other ways also. Thus the 'white' male manager in Operating Unit Y has committed himself to demonstrating possession of the type of potential now sought by those at a strategic level, and consequently seeks that in those he includes. By contrast, his counterpart in Operating Unit X (an ethnic minority man) continues to include those who symbolise a form of potential which is no longer desired

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at the strategic level, but which he himself demonstrates, and the criteria he takes to symbolise that potential are the same criteria as he himself possesses: length of service, age, and categorisation as of 'Asian' ethnic origin.

As in the other case study organisations discussed so far in this chapter, therefore, the types of potential sought by those at strategic and (personnel) managerial levels, and the symbols by which those are assessed, are both significant for inclusion in personnel departments, and the two are sometimes - but not always - in conflict. However, unlike in Rest. Co. and City Council, there is no evidence that line managers have any significant influence. Whereas City Council and Rest Co. have adopted a model of the personnel function in which personnel practitioners' role is to support line managers, Utility Co., like Town Council, continues to require line managers to conform to centralised rules and procedures which the personnel departments are responsible for drawing up and monitoring. Personnel departments in Utility Co. thus retain a large degree of autonomy from line managers and, indeed, power over them, and as a result the line does not influence inclusion in them.

e. Types of Potential Sought of Those Included in Personnel Departments in Manuf.Co.

Within Manuf. Co. the centrally-imposed model of personnel careers is that people progress within the personnel function within the organisation. However, unlike in Utility Co., where cultural assets have become more important than organisational ones, within Manuf.Co. the assets which afford inclusion are those relating to the personnel occupation *within* Manuf.Co. Thus 'cultural assets' in Savage et al's (1992) sense, such as professional qualifications, are not valued. Indeed, it is noted in chapter seven that neither personnel experience outside Manuf.Co., nor non-personnel experience within Manuf.Co., leads to inclusion in non-administrative personnel positions in the organisation: it is the combination of the two which is necessary.

The type of potential valued at the strategic level is thus the potential to have occupational expertise and understand and conform to the values and practices of the personnel occupation as it operates *within* the organisation, or, as it will be termed here, the *potential to have occupational - organisational expertise and to conform to*

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occupational-organisational values and practices. The fact that this potential is desired at a strategic level in Manuf.Co. is evidenced by the central policy requiring personnel practitioners to follow a centrally-specified career path within the personnel function, which seeks to create conformity to the occupational - organisational values and practices.

Interestingly, there is little evidence of the potential desired by individual personnel managers conflicting with this strategic model, and this contrasts with the position in most of the other case study organisations. Indeed, even in Rest.Co., where there is little conflict between the type of potential sought by personnel managers and that sought by those at a strategic level, there is nevertheless a degree of latent conflict between non-managerial personnel practitioners and those setting the strategy over the type of potential which is desirable. Within Manuf.Co. the only evidence of even this latent conflict occurs over the value given by those at a strategic level to the ability to conform to a particular pattern of work - working part-time or taking time off work hindering further inclusion - with which some of the female personnel interviewees – both 'white' and of ethnic minority origin - disagreed.

Why, then, is so little conflict apparent between the types of potential sought by those at strategic and (personnel) managerial levels within Manuf.Co. as compared to some of the other case study organisations? In the first place, and unlike in City Council and Utility Co., the potential sought by those at the strategic level has not changed in recent years, and so the existing personnel managers were all included on that basis. There is thus no need for them to seek to subvert it because it neither threatens their self-identity (c.f. Roper, 1994), leads to their own exclusion, nor challenges their established ways of doing things. The fact that almost all of those above administrative levels have followed exactly the same route into and through the personnel function in Manuf.Co. also reduces the likelihood of variation between the types of potential desired by different managers, the career path having effectively provided the kind of 'uni-portal entry system' which Johnson (1972) notes ensures 'shared identity' (ibid.:54).

The power wielded by the personnel departments and personnel managers within Manuf.Co., noted and explained in chapter seven, is also significant. There is virtually no

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conflict between the types of potential sought by those at strategic and (personnel) managerial levels not only because the managers conform to the strategic model themselves, but also because the strategic model of desired potential is to a large extent the model personnel managers developed, and is therefore one which serves to reproduce the power of the personnel occupation - and thus of those within it - rather than to undermine it, as in some of the other organisations studied. By definition, therefore, conforming to the type of potential desired by those at a strategic level in Manuf.Co. means that an individual will not be a threat to the position of personnel departments or to the position of the managers within them, which is precisely what the individual personnel managers in the other case study organisations seek when they impose alternative models.

The fact that personnel practitioners in Manuf.Co. are required to move jobs every two or three years, in order to increase their occupational expertise, rather than staying in one job for longer as line managers would prefer, is evidence of personnel managers' ability to impose the potential they desire of their staff on the strategy of Manuf.Co. Thus, although the personnel occupation *as a whole* may not have achieved the level of closure associated by Johnson (1972) with 'professions', within Manuf.Co. the personnel managers' power over organisational strategy has led to something like the 'formal establishment of monopolies' (Weber, 1978: 342) which Weber argues is the end-goal of closure.

The fact that there is no conflict over the type of potential desired, however, does not necessarily mean that there is no conflict over the symbols by which that potential is assessed or their interpretation, although the creation of the 'shared identity' noted above reduces this. Indeed, the earlier analysis of the case study reveals a recognition that personnel managers might disagree over the 'level' of potential they judge a particular individual to have. The impact of any such differences, however, is reduced by the centralised way in which people are recruited to and promoted within the personnel occupation in Manuf.Co. Whereas in some of the other organisations studied individual personnel managers have a considerable degree of power over the inclusion of people in their departments, and so are able to include people on the basis of their individual assessment of symbols of potential, it is noted in chapter seven that in Manuf.Co. such

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decisions are taken collectively by a committee of personnel managers. As the earlier chapter notes, the only occasion when personnel managers have individual, direct power over inclusion is in the recruitment of individuals to vacation jobs.

Although there is no evidence of conflict between the types of potential sought by those at strategic and (personnel) managerial levels within Manuf.Co., some conflict is apparent between those and the types of potential sought by line managers, as the above example of the policy of rotating personnel jobs indicates. Whereas the strategic / (personnel) managerial model seeks the potential to have occupational - organisational expertise and to conform to occupational - organisational values and practices, and to be no threat to the individual manager through such conformity, the line model desires that personnel practitioners should not have the potential to threaten the position of those on the line - hence line manager's desire for personnel practitioners to remain in their posts, so that the line managers have security arising from continuity. Hence, also, some line managers' alleged preference for female personnel practitioners whom - as noted in chapter seven - they may perceive to be less of a threat to them and their ways of doing things. Nevertheless, although, as discussed in chapter seven, line managers can make personnel practitioners' jobs more difficult, their power to impose the type of potential they desire upon the process of inclusion in personnel departments is very limited by comparison with the power of personnel managers to impose the type of potential they desire.

The Places and Ways in which Conflict over Symbols which Afford Inclusion Occurs

As the above analysis indicates, conflict over the symbols which afford inclusion occurs in a number of different places and ways in the case study organisations. Firstly, there is often conflict between some of the types of potential sought by those at a strategic level, personnel managers and line managers (and relatedly between the symbols by which that potential is assessed). Secondly, within two of the case study organisations conflict is identified between the types of potential sought by different personnel managers, and thus again between the symbols rewarded with inclusion. Thirdly, conflict sometimes occurs over the symbols by which different individuals assess the *same* type of potential, notably because many of them look for similar characteristics to those which they

themselves possess, which vary. Fourthly, there is conflict between the potential, and the symbols of that potential, which afford inclusion in personnel departments in different organisations. These various sites of conflict are summarised in table 8.

The outcomes of these conflicts, as already noted separately in relation to each of the case study organisations, are affected by the different roles of personnel departments, and the different balances of power between those at a strategic level, personnel managers and line managers in each organisation. These differences, along, of course, with any differences in the types of potential desired by these parties in the different organisations, leads to differences in the potential which is rewarded with inclusion in personnel departments between different organisations, and hence explains the absence of a single career path into and through the personnel occupation which was noted in chapter three.

Thus within Manuf.Co. personnel managers' central role in managing industrial relations has given them the power to ensure that the type of potential sought by those setting the organisational strategy rewards their occupational-organisational expertise and values, and thus contributes to the reproduction of the power of the personnel departments and those within them - in line with Armstrong's (1984) argument. Within Town Council, although those setting the strategy have some influence over inclusion, individual personnel managers have sufficient power over their departments to be able to undermine that strategic model, particularly where inclusion in more senior positions is concerned, and impose their own individual model of desired potential. By contrast, the adoption of the 'human resource management' practice of devolution of personnel responsibilities in City Council and Rest.Co. has, in line with Guest's (1987) and Tyson's (1987) arguments, resulted in greater power of the line in those organisations, and hence in strategic models of desired potential which reflect organisational or line values rather than occupational ones, and in the potential to have credibility or good rapport with line managers being significant for inclusion or further inclusion in their personnel departments.

Table 8: Comparison of key types of potential sought by different parties in the case study organisations, and key symbols by which they are assessed. (Note: where different types of potential are desired by different personnel managers in the same organisation, these are numbered '1' and '2' in the column labelled 'personnel managers'.

Case study Organisation:	Key types of potential sought by:			
	Those at a strategic level *(and key symbols by which assessed)*	Personnel managers *(and key symbols by which assessed)*		Line managers *(and key symbols by which assessed)*
Town Council	i) To alter the (perceived) ethnic composition of workforce *(Categorisation as of ethnic minority origin, notably particular skin colours)*	i) To have occupational expertise *(Having similar characteristics to manager; 'being known' to have occupational expertise)* ii) to be no threat to manager's position *(Having similar characteristics to manager; 'being known' to be no threat.)*		Not significant
City Council	i) To conform to organisational values and practices *(Behaviours in accordance with organisational values and practices of empowerment, devolution, serving the line).*	1. i) To conform to organisational values and practices *(Behaviours in accordance with organisational values of empowerment, devolution, serving line)* ii) to have occupational expertise *(having occupational experience and qualifications)* iii) to have credibility with line *(possessing the symbols desired by the line, notably occupational qualifications, being male, not being of ethnic minority origin)* iv) to be no threat to manager's position *(having similar characteristics to manager; 'being known' to be no threat)*	2. (Directorate personnel manager): i) To alter (perceived) ethnic / gender composition of workforce *(categorisation as of ethnic minority origin / female)* ii) to have occupational expertise *(performance in test set; previous behaviour)* iii) to be no threat to manager's position *(having similar characteristics to manager; 'being known' to be no threat).*	i) To conform to organisational values of serving line and devolution of personnel *(Behaviours in accordance with organisational values and practices of empowerment, serving the line)* ii) To have occupational expertise *(Occupational experience and qualifications and having similar characteristics to line managers.)*

	Key types of potential sought by:			
Case study organisation	Those at a strategic level *(and key symbols by which assessed)*	Personnel managers *(and key symbols by which assessed)*	Line managers *(and key symbols by which assessed)*	
Utility Co.	i)To have occupational expertise *(occupational qualification)* ii) To use initiative *(Degree qualification; behaviours demonstrating initiative.)*	1. (Manager in Operating Unit Y) i) To have occupational expertise *(occupational qualification)* ii) To use initiative *(behaviours demonstrating initiative)* iii) be no threat to manager's position *(sharing same symbols as manager).*	2. (Manager in Operating Unit X) i) To be loyal to organisation and reliable *(length of organisational / departmental service; behaviours demonstrating reliability; not possessing degree; sharing some characteristics - notably ethnic origin - with manager)* ii) to be no threat to manager's position *('being known' to be no threat; sharing other characteristics with manager).*	Not significant
Rest.Co.	i) To conform to organisational values and practices *(Operations experience within organisation; 'showing' operational expertise; not criticising organisation)*	i) To conform to organisational values and practices *(Line experience within organisation; 'showing' line expertise; not criticising organisation; not possessing long occupational experience or occupational qualifications)* ii) to be no threat to manager's position. *(Sharing some characteristics with manager; not being female)*		i) To conform to organisational values and practices *(Operations experience within organisation; 'showing' line expertise; not criticising organisation; not possessing long occupational experience or occupational qualifications)* ii) to have a shared understanding and rapport with line managers *(having some similar characteristics to line managers.)*

Case study organisation	Key types of potential sought by:		
	Those at a strategic level *(and key symbols by which assessed)*	Personnel managers *(and key symbols by which assessed)*	Line managers *(and key symbols by which assessed)*
Manuf.Co.	i) To have occupational - organisational expertise and to conform to occupational-organisational values *(Having degree qualification; having followed the approved personnel career path within organisation; 'showing' expertise in accordance with occupational /organisational status quo).*	i) To have occupational - organisational expertise and to conform to occupational-organisational values and practices *(Having degree qualification; having followed the approved personnel career path within organisation; 'showing' expertise in accordance with occupational /organisational status quo)* ii) to be no threat to manager's position. *(as for i) above, as all are characteristics shared with manager).*	i) Be no threat to line *(Behaviours in accordance with values of line rather than personnel occupation; being female).*

However, the adoption of practices associated with human resource management does not always reduce personnel managers' power over inclusion. In Utility Co. the move towards a human resource management model has resulted in the development of a more strategic role for personnel in the head offices of the operating units; as a consequence the potential for occupational expertise and the symbols associated with that have become more significant for inclusion in personnel positions, and there is no evidence of line managers having any influence over it. The case studies therefore support Storey's (1992) claim that some personnel practitioners have gained power from the shift towards a human resource management approach by adopting more strategic roles (as in the head offices of Utility Co.) while others have lost power by being forced into 'handmaiden' roles, serving the line (ibid.).

Indeed, the conflict between the desire for those included in personnel departments to have the potential to conform to organisational values, and the desire for them to have the potential for occupational expertise, conforming primarily to occupational values, is found in many of the case study organisations. Personnel managers' different positions in relation to this conflict reflect the different strategies earlier research has shown 'professionals' adopt within organisations in order to gain power (Larson, 1977; Legge and Exley, 1975). Thus, those personnel managers who conform to the strategic definition of desired potential, and seek to include in their departments others who will similarly conform to that, may be seen to be adopting Legge and Exley's strategy of 'conformist innovation' (Legge and Exley, 1975: 79). Meanwhile, those who seek to impose an alternative, occupational model may be seen to be adopting the strategy of 'deviant innovator' (ibid.: 85).

Again, however, the choice of strategy is shown by the case studies to be partly dependent upon the power of the personnel manager relative to other parts of the organisation. Thus those in a 'handmaiden' role (Storey, 1992), as the comparison of managers in City Council reveals, have less power to impose a 'deviant' definition of desired potential on inclusion in their departments than those with greater autonomy.

Legge and Exley's (1975) model does not, however, adequately explain the types of potential sought of those included in personnel departments in Manuf.Co., assuming as

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it does that organisational values are something created by people outside personnel departments, to which personnel practitioners must either conform or against which they must struggle. This is clearly not the case within Manuf.Co., where personnel managers have been successful in imposing their values upon the organisation. As noted above, personnel practitioners within Manuf.Co. appear to have already acquired the 'professional' status which Legge and Exley argue personnel departments seek through the strategies of conformist or deviant innovation.

What is at stake in these struggles over the types of potential required is control over the process - and outcomes - of closure. Each of the parties involved seeks to control the closure process in order to shape the personnel occupation in a way which serves their own desired ends, by including those who have the potential that they desire. For individual personnel managers and those on the line, as has been shown, these desired ends always incorporate some desire to protect or enhance their current individual position, something which they seek to achieve by excluding those whom they judge to possess potential values or levels of ability which would threaten that position.

The ends to which those who set the strategy of the organisation seek to turn the closure process, however, are of a different order. Unlike the '(personnel) managerial' and 'line' models of desired potential, the strategic models are not influenced by anticipation of personal interaction with the individual included, and so questions about an individual's ability to threaten one's individual position through day to day actions do not arise to the same degree. As a consequence, the strategic models of desired potential are concerned more exclusively with the development of the organisations in particular directions, based upon the particular sets of values held by those who form that definition (hence the use of the term 'strategic' to describe this order of definition).

While existing personnel managers seek to include those who possess symbols suggestive of similarity with themselves, therefore, because these symbolise the potential not to threaten the manager's position, those at a strategic level do not have to be so concerned with such symbols of similarity - either with themselves or with those already in personnel departments. Thus in Town Council, for example, the strategic model seeks to include those categorised as being of ethnic minority origin in personnel departments

in order to alter the perceived ethnic composition of those departments, i.e. to include individuals precisely because they possessed those symbols of difference from those already in the departments, and in spite of the fact that those symbols would have suggested difference from many of those responsible for drawing up the strategy also.

This explains why one ethnic minority origin man in Town Council, as already cited, found that *'it's always people outside [the personnel department] who recognise my potential, rather than internally'*. Those people outside the department are willing to support his inclusion in the department in spite of - or because of - the fact that they categorise him as being of a different ethnic origin from themselves, because the potential not to threaten their position is not a concern of theirs as it is of his immediate line manager, while the potential to alter the perceived ethnic composition of the departments is.

An alternative model of closure

In identifying that closure in personnel departments is the result of the struggles of different parties at strategic, personnel managerial and line managerial locations in the organisations to include in the departments those individuals whom they judge to have the potential to achieve the particular ends they desire, and in revealing that those judgements of potential are based upon interpretations of symbols, this thesis presents a very different model of closure from that presented by previous theorists. In chapter twelve it was argued that existing models of processes of closure are inadequate because they fail to take account of the usurpationary actions of some of those already included, and the actions of those who are neither members of the group nor seeking inclusion in it, but nevertheless seek to exert control over inclusion in that group, and, moreover, because they assume a dialectic of exclusion - reaction which does not exist in reality, and which suggests that strategies of exclusion and usurpation are of a different order. The preceding identification of conflicting models of desired potential, and conflicting interpretations of symbols of that potential, suggests an alternative model.

According to this model, closure is a multi-faceted struggle between a number of different parties. Some of these will have already won inclusion in the group, and will be seeking to protect their position by including only those whom they perceive will present

no threat to them or indeed will enhance their position, perhaps in addition seeking to alter the composition of the group in accordance with their political ideals, as in the case of the directorate personnel manager in City Council. Others will belong to peer groups, outside the group under investigation, and will not be seeking inclusion in it, but rather seeking to protect or enhance their own individual and group position by ensuring that those who are included will support their position, as in the case of the line managers in some of the case study organisations. Still others will be outside the group and not seeking inclusion in it, but this time seeking to control inclusion to the group in order to ensure that it facilitates the development of the organisation in a particular strategic direction. Finally - and it is to this set of individuals that this analysis will now turn - there will be others who are not yet included in the group, but are seeking to win inclusion.

The above analysis of the types of potential sought by those at strategic, personnel managerial and line managerial locations does not appear to incorporate this final set of individuals. This is because the research indicates that individuals seeking inclusion have to demonstrate a type of potential sought by one of the other parties in order to win inclusion (a point which will be explored more fully below). However, this is not to say that they do not have their own models of the type of potential which *ought* to be included.

In fact, although the research methodology only surveys those who had won at least some degree of inclusion in personnel work, it does survey many who are seeking to win inclusion in higher levels of personnel departments, for example, in management level positions, and reveals that their opinions of the type of potential necessary for inclusion in such groups often conforms at least in part to one of the strategic, personnel managerial or line managerial models. However, on some occasions individuals seeking such further inclusion hold different ideas of the type of potential which should be included. Thus, as noted in chapter twelve, some non-managerial personnel practitioners in Rest.Co. believe that the potential to have occupational expertise should be more important for inclusion than the potential to conform to organisational values and practices.

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Significantly, it is those who cannot demonstrate the symbols which indicate potential to conform to organisational values and practices, because they do not – and never now will be able to acquire – sufficient operations experience, who argue for that alternative type of potential. This is because the types of potential which those seeking inclusion believe ought to be the basis of inclusion reflect the potential they themselves are best able to show: inevitably, what they want to be included is themselves.

These individuals, however, have no power to impose their models of desired potential *directly* upon the closure process. If they want to impose the type of potential they believe should be rewarded with inclusion upon the closure process, they have to do so through attempting to alter the strategic, managerial or line models of desired potential, for example, by voting for councillors who support a particular model of desired potential in one of the local government organisations studied.

However, this does not relegate all those seeking inclusion to a reactive role in the strategies of inclusion / exclusion, as in the models of such as Parkin (1979) and Murphy (1988), in which such individuals are apparently only able to respond to exclusion after it has happened through adopting a reactive strategy of 'usurpation' (ibid.). Rather, the model presented here recognises that those seeking inclusion play an active part in the initial process of inclusion / exclusion, not through imposing their model of desired potential directly upon it, but through influencing the symbols by which possession of that desired potential is assessed, and the interpretations placed upon them.

It is the recognition that inclusion is based upon *symbols* of potential which is significant here. As Cohen (1985) argues, and as has been pointed out earlier in this chapter, the gap between the symbol and the phenomenon it symbolises allows individuals to interpret that phenomenon in different ways. Moreover, as already noted, although

> [Those interpretations will] tend to be made within the terms characteristic of a given society.... Neither are they immutable. They are, rather, *responsive to the circumstances of interaction*, both among individuals and between the society as a whole and those across its boundaries (ibid.: 18; my italics).

Thus although the interpretation may be partly ethnocentric, individuals seeking inclusion in personnel departments may influence others' assessments of them through their interactions.

This is possible because, as has been explained earlier in this chapter, these interactions are 'situated events' (Jones, 1996: 7) which contain a multiplicity of symbols, and it is from these multiple symbols, rather than from just one, that meaning is drawn. The individual is thus able to overcome the negative interpretation which would be arrived at from some of the symbols he / she possesses by putting on a 'performance' (c.f. Goffman, 1971), demonstrating other symbols which are assessed positively and ensuring that he or she is categorised and his or her potential assessed according to those. Hence, 'being known' to the manager - i.e. having interacted with him or her - and having been seen to behave in appropriate, non-threatening ways, can overcome the negative assessments of potential which might arise from some of an individual's other symbols. Indeed, a large number of examples of individuals using the point of interaction in this way to downplay symbols which they perceive to have negative implications for their inclusion, and to emphasise those symbols which they perceive to have positive implications, have already been noted in preceding chapters and sections.

Moreover, the fact that the interpretations of symbols are affected by the process of interaction, and by the myriad of other symbols also presented in that interaction, makes it possible for the interpretation derived from a particular symbol to be changed through the proximity of other symbols which carry different meaning. One ethnic minority woman from City Council notes that such alteration of interpretation is possible, claiming that:

> *It's very hard for people who are in the status quo to have people who have not normally been in the field before... they haven't had Black people in these roles before... but it's a matter of them changing their perception of other people, other societies* (my highlight).

Indeed, many of the interviewees who categorise themselves as being of ethnic minority origin desire to bring about just such a change through their interactions. One such (male) personnel practitioner in Rest.Co., for example, notes that racism exists and

argues that *'the only thing I can do is make myself an example, a good example, of what a black person should be '*. Indeed, he believes that his performance in the organisation does mean that *'it's changing slowly, people's perception of how someone like myself should be handled. '*

Other examples of changes in the interpretation derived from particular symbols include the changed interpretation of being female in Rest.Co., where, after several female personnel practitioners went on maternity leave, it apparently became a symbol of potential threat to the manager's position and thus lead to exclusion, and the interpretation placed upon having a degree by one of the personnel managers in Utility Co., whose experience of some graduates lead to him interpreting a degree as a symbol of unreliability.

However, as these examples and Cohen's own argument indicate, while the interpretations derived from symbols are not immutable, they do present some resistance to change. Thus, in the above examples, the change in interpretation is a slow process, involving a number of interactions with, often, a number of people. Although such change in interpretation can and does occur, therefore, there is little evidence from the research of a single individual being able to change the negative interpretation derived from one of his or her symbols to a positive one, through his or her own actions. Rather, individuals who possess a symbol which would lead to a negative interpretation tend to avoid that negative effect through the strategy, noted above, of changing the symbol itself, ensuring that the interpretation is based upon a more 'positive' one.

Through these strategies, the research reveals, individuals seeking inclusion are actively involved in all stages of the closure process. They do not passively wait to be excluded or included in a group such as a personnel department or a particular subset within a personnel department, and then, if excluded, seek a way of overcoming that exclusion, as existing models of closure suggest, but rather continually seek to demonstrate the type of potential which they believe will be rewarded with inclusion, and to do this they seek firstly to influence the symbols by which they are judged, and secondly – over the longer term - the interpretations derived from them. The precise identity of the symbols which lead to inclusion /exclusion and their interpretations are therefore not imposed by

one party, but are the result of continual interactions in which those seeking inclusion play an active part.

The failure of earlier closure models to recognise that closure is an ongoing process, the result of continual interactions, is therefore a key reason why they misconceptualise closure as a dialectic of quite different strategies of exclusion – usurpation. This in turn is an inevitable consequence of their macro-level focus, which causes them to ignore the many ongoing interactions and mechanisms of closure occurring at the micro-level, and thus to suggest that closure occurs only once and at one point - for example at the point of entry to a profession (c.f. Johnson, 1972) - and that all those excluded can do is to react to that one-off decision.

The micro-level analysis undertaken here, by contrast, reveals that closure is continually occurring. Each of the various mechanisms of closure analysed in preceding chapters - lack of support from managers, lack of access to important information and networks, indeed, all of the processes of access and treatment discrimination analysed in chapter two and recognised in the analysis of the questionnaire survey and case studies in chapters five to ten, may be seen as sites of closure in their own right, restricting access to scarce and desirable resources. Exclusion from sponsorship or mentoring relationships with managers, for example, prevents individuals from accessing resources such as support (Greenhaus et al, 1990), practical help and career advice (White et al 1992), which may lead to inclusion in more senior positions. Indeed, following this line of analysis, *each interaction* is a site of closure which, depending upon the performance of the individual seeking inclusion and its interpretation by the other party, may lead to access to some desirable resource or exclusion from it.

Closure, therefore, is not a 'one-off' occurrence, but rather a continual process, effected through a multiplicity of interactions and mechanisms throughout an individual's career. The point of entry to a personnel department is not the only point of closure in the department, but the first of many, each restricting access to further resources. Moreover, the research reveals that inclusion becomes more restricted the further an individual tries to progress within personnel departments. The reason for this is evident given the preceding analysis. Not only are there fewer positions at such levels -i.e. resources are

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more scarce - but also the ability to harm one's manager or member of the line, or to affect the strategy of the organisation, becomes greater the more senior the position, and so demonstrating that one possesses the type of potential desired becomes even more important. It is precisely for this reason that the treatment discrimination described in chapter two occurs, making it more difficult for some people to progress within organisations or occupations even after initial inclusion has been achieved. Models of closure which do not recognise its continual nature are unable to explain the existence of such ongoing treatment discrimination.

Lacking such recognition, existing models of closure are not even able to explain the structure of those occupations to which, following Johnson (1972), they have frequently been applied: so-called 'professions'. The stratification within such occupations (c.f. Child, 1982; Armstrong, 1984; Bresnen and Fowler, 1996), noted in chapter two, can again only be explained by a model which recognises that closure occurs at many points within the occupation, so that individuals may win inclusion at some points but not at others. The fact that such stratification is also occurring in personnel departments, between for example the 'clerk of works' and 'architect' roles (Tyson, 1987), has also been noted both through the literature and through the research undertaken. Again, understanding the allocation of individuals to these different levels of personnel departments - understanding, for example, the processes by which groups such as women may be 'pushed aside' from positions involved in strategic decision-making (Legge, 1987: 34) and become concentrated in less influential personnel positions (McKay, 1986; Long, 1984), requires an appreciation of closure as a continual process which becomes 'tighter' the greater the power afforded by the group to which it restricts access.

This model is also able to explain how, as discovered earlier in this chapter, different types of potential may be necessary for inclusion at different levels in personnel departments. Thus in Town Council, for example, the strategic model of desired potential - to alter the perceived ethnic composition of the workforce - affords inclusion at lower levels, but it is the potential sought by personnel managers which affords inclusion in more senior positions, reflecting both the relative power of different parties

to impose their models of potential and the importance they attach to restricting access to the positions concerned.

The complexity of the closure process provides both difficulties and opportunities for those seeking inclusion. In the first place, they need to identify the type of potential which will be rewarded with inclusion and then seek to demonstrate that - hence the concern in Manuf.Co. with 'ticking the boxes' and double checking that career moves will provide the necessary symbols of conformity to occupational-organisational values. Where strategic, managerial and line models of desired potential vary, the individual has to identify whose model of potential to try to demonstrate, and which symbols are most likely to be interpreted as demonstrating that potential, and then produce an appropriate performance. Doing this successfully requires great skill, as the performances and the symbols they emphasise may need to change from situation to situation, the interpretation derived from symbols varying from individual to individual and situation to situation. Thus, for example, for the female personnel practitioners interviewed in Manuf.Co., drawing attention to their gender was of benefit in interactions with certain line managers, but could lead to isolation in other situations.Being skilled in such performance is thus essential if inclusion in the most senior positions in personnel departments is to be achieved, and errors or misjudgements lead to exclusion.

However, while the need to be able to adapt one's performance to the shifting requirements of each situation presents difficulties for those seeking inclusion, it also, as noted above, presents opportunities. The fact that there may be more than one model of desired potential may provide alternative routes to inclusion; the fact that closure is based upon a multiplicity of interactions may provide opportunities for mistakes to be made and redeemed through future interactions, and, crucially, the fact that closure is based around interpretation of the myriad of symbols which constitute each 'situated event' (Jones, 1996) allows individuals seeking inclusion to influence the symbols by which they are assessed and even, in the longer term, the interpretations derived from them, and to win inclusion in spite of possessing some symbols which would normally lead to their exclusion.

The findings presented here conflict with Bourdieu's conclusion in his work 'Distinction' (Bourdieu, 1984), in which it is argued that each class possesses a different set of symbols, which prevents movement between classes and thus prevents change. By contrast, the research findings presented here reveal that, while social background may influence the type of symbols available to the individual seeking inclusion, the fact that each individual possesses a myriad of available symbols, and that those already included are not a perfectly homogeneous group themselves, often enables the individual to present at least some symbols which those already included interpret as indicating the potential they seek (these symbols often, as Bourdieu argues, being those which they themselves possess), and thus to win inclusion. The fact that parties outside the group may also have some power over its closure processes provides further opportunities for change to its composition. Once the individual has won inclusion, moreover, the characteristics or symbols possessed by the group members are changed by the other symbols the individual brings with him or her, paving the way for the possible inclusion of individuals on the basis of those new symbols, and thus to further change.

The model presented above is unapologetically complex by comparison with the simpler, macro-level models of earlier closure theorists. Far from being a process occurring only at one point of entry to a group, in which those currently included seek to subordinate those they do not wish to include, who then react to that exclusion, and in which the identity of those included is determined ultimately by their possession of property - and thus not amenable to change - the model presented here reveals a process which: is continually occurring through a multiplicity of micro-level interactions; becomes more restrictive the greater the power wielded by the group it protects; is the site of a struggle between various parties over the nature of the potential desired from those who are included, and where the identity of those included is determined through the interpretation drawn from some of the many symbols they present - a process in which those seeking inclusion play an active part.

In recognising this greater complexity, the model presented here is able to explain what earlier models of closure and other models of occupational inequality cannot, notably how it is that members of certain social groups, such as those based upon ethnic categorisations, are able to win inclusion when other members of the same groups are

not, and how the characteristics of those included can change over time. It is for this reason that the model's complexity is presented without apology, for it is precisely the recognition of the complexity of the closure process which enables the production and reproduction of occupational segregation to be understood.[ii]

[ii] As the preceding analysis implies, it is the contention of this thesis that this model is not only applicable to personnel departments. The models it draws upon are all models which are applicable beyond personnel departments, and earlier research has shown that the same models that are applied to the personnel occupation may be applied to other groups and classes also (see for example Timperley and Osbaldeston, 1975; Armstrong, 1984; Legge, 1987).

Moreover, while the research focuses upon inclusion in personnel departments, it also, as an inevitable by-product, gathers data concerning the inclusion of the researcher in the case study organisations, both in terms of achieving access to the organisations, and access to individual interviewees and their experiences. Analysis of the research process reveals that the model developed here from analysis of inclusion in personnel departments may be applied to the inclusion of the researcher in the case study organisations also.

Analysis of the research process shows, for example, that gatekeepers and individual interviewees also sought particular potential from the researcher - notably the potential not to cause harm (hence the reason why assurances of anonymity were necessary before any access - or inclusion - was granted). As in the inclusion of staff in personnel departments, the inclusion of the researcher depended upon her recognising the potential desired - it was rarely explicitly articulated - and presenting those of the available criteria which would symbolise it. Thus, for example, the equal opportunities manager at Manuf.Co. presented continual barriers to the research for a number of months, explaining on each occasion that it would not be a convenient time for the researcher to enter the organisation. Access - or inclusion - was only achieved when the researcher realised that the fear of being harmed was the unspoken reason for the continued exclusion, and informed the manager that she too was working in equal opportunities and understood the difficulties involved, subconsciously using that shared characteristic to symbolise shared understanding and trustworthiness. Access to interview both the equal opportunities manager and other senior managers was immediately forthcoming.

The fact that the closure model presented here may also be applied to the research process is significant not only because it reveals its wider applicability, but also because it has implications for the argument that the researcher needs to be of the same ethnic origin as the interviewee, discussed in chapter four, to which it was promised that this thesis would return. The model suggests that perceived shared ethnic origin may indeed symbolise the potential for shared understanding and trustworthiness which gatekeepers and interviewees seek, and thus may lead to greater inclusion. However, it also reveals that

This model also has the benefit of overcoming the divide between structure and action which has been observed in many of the models discussed in chapter twelve. Indeed, it will be noted that it has not been necessary to distinguish between structure and action in this chapter, for the simple reason that at the micro, symbolic level there is no distinction. The concept of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1984), as Smaje (1997) suggests, provides a way out of the structure - action dualism. Symbols, as the preceding analysis has revealed, are both the structures around which inclusion / exclusion occurs, and also, because they are a vehicle for interpretation, the action through which those structures are created and recreated. The act of symbolic interpretation is the point at which structure and action converge.[iii]

the researcher and interviewee possess a myriad of other available criteria which may also be used to symbolise the desired potential. Shared experience of working in personnel, and of studying for the professional qualification, for example, served as a potent symbol of that desired potential in many of the research interviews, and compensated for differences of ethnic categorisation and, indeed, gender.

Other characteristics presented also demonstrated that potential: in one interview with someone who could be categorised as of ethnic minority origin the 'white' researcher's admission that she, too, had experience of working in a home office-funded post resulted in a more informative interview, again in spite of apparent differences of ethnic categorisation. As in inclusion in posts in personnel departments, ethnic categorisation is just one symbol upon which decisions about the level of inclusion a researcher is to be afforded may be based, and by recognising the potential desired, and presenting other available criteria which will symbolise that, the researcher may alter the judgement in his or her favour.

This also provides a theoretical explanation for the success of the method of the 'active interview' (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995), discussed in chapter four, since that technique enables the interviewer to present the kind of performances outlined here, and thus to become actively involved in the presentation and interpretation of the symbols available to him or her, rather than passively accepting the interpretation placed upon them by the interviewee.

[iii] Once again, this is not to deny the value of analysing the impact of macro-level structures upon occupational segregation, and the fact that available symbols and interpretation of such symbols are partly dependent upon social background etcetera has already been noted. Rather, it is to acknowledge that such macro-level structures are, ultimately, the product of micro-level processes of symbolic interpretation, and that any definitions of macro-level structures, while essential if we are to be able to articulate the world in any way, are thus inevitably crude approximations of reality.

This chapter has therefore presented an alternative model of closure which is capable of articulating and explaining inclusion in personnel departments. In particular, unlike many of the existing models discussed in chapter two and again in chapter twelve, the model presented here is able to incorporate numerous different criteria, or structures of inequality. Nevertheless, the focus of this thesis is, as the thesis' title makes clear, upon the particular relationship between ethnic origin and inclusion in personnel departments. The following chapter therefore concludes the thesis by considering how, given the model of closure presented here, ethnic origin, specifically, relates to inclusion in personnel departments in Britain.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN: SYMBOLISING POTENTIAL: ETHNIC ORIGIN AND INCLUSION IN PERSONNEL DEPARTMENTS IN BRITAIN

Using the model presented in chapter thirteen, it is now possible to explain the relationship between ethnic origin and inclusion in personnel departments in Britain more fully. This chapter therefore concludes the thesis by drawing together the various preceding analyses to reveal the particular ways in which ethnic origin relates to inclusion in British personnel departments, and in so doing to show how the relationship between ethnic origin and inclusion in personnel departments can be a particularly complex and problematic one.

Ethnic origin is, as the above model reveals, one of a myriad of symbols by which the potential desired of those included in personnel departments may be assessed; indeed, the research reveals that it is a symbol which is very often used for that purpose. Although earlier analysis has revealed that ethnic groups have no material reality in themselves, but are rather categorisations, membership of which are themselves attributed on the basis of possession or demonstration of particular material symbols such as skin colour or country of birth, the fact that ethnic origin is a classification system does not mean that it does not have material effects. As already noted, ethnic categories may be symbolised by various material characteristics, but they also have symbolic power themselves. It is therefore through the act of symbolic interpretation that, to borrow again Jenkins' (1997) terminology, the 'imagined' category of ethnic origin comes to have 'non-imaginary' effects.

It is, for example, because it symbolises ethnic minority origin, and because of what that in turn can symbolise, that a physical characteristic such as skin colour may have the kind of impact upon inclusion identified in the research findings. This is apparent, for example, in the comment of an ethnic minority woman from City Council (already quoted in chapter thirteen) that:

> *I understand it's very hard for people who are in the status quo to have people who have not normally been in the field before, because..... they haven't had*

black people in these roles before, so therefore.... it's a matter of them changing
their perception of other people, other societies.

It is not '*hard*' for '*people in the status quo*' to have '*black*' people in those roles because those people have a different skin colour, but because that different skin colour leads to them being categorised as of a different ethnic origin, which also suggests differences of cultural values and norms, of coming from '*other societies*', and thus leads to a '*perception*' that they will behave in different ways.

It is thus because being categorised as of ethnic minority origin is often to be put in a different category from those currently included, that such categorisation often leads to exclusion by individual personnel managers. The different ethnic categorisation symbolises membership of different 'societies' and thus of different values and behaviour and reduced trustworthiness. As Kramer et al (1996) note,

> Social categorisation creates cognitive benefits that can operate as substitutes for other mechanisms on which trust is more usually predicated (ibid.: 367).

It is also worth highlighting here, particularly in view of Banton's claim that 'ethnicity is largely a matter of group identification' (Banton, 1983: 106), that the category which matters for inclusion is not ultimately that to which the individual allocates himself or herself but that to which those with power over inclusion allocate them. As noted in chapter thirteen, individuals seeking inclusion influence the closure process by *influencing* the symbols by which potential is assessed and, in the longer term, the interpretation derived from them: the interpretation itself is ultimately carried out by someone else, and it is therefore ultimately their categorisation and what it symbolises to them which matters. Thus, as the interviewee from City Council quoted above notes, it is those with power over inclusion who need to change their '*perception of other people, other societies*'. As a Rest.Co. interviewee ('white' male) explains with regards to one site of closure - the performance review:

Whose perspective is more important? Well, unfortunately it's not my
perspective, it is the person who is doing the annual performance review.

The fact that many people categorised as of ethnic minority origin are so categorised because of their skin colour means that they cannot achieve inclusion by securing categorisation as one of the 'white' ethnic 'majority': as noted in chapter eleven, ethnicity is not infinitely malleable. (Of course, not all ethnic minority categorisations are embodied in skin colour, as the cases of the two 'white' individuals from Rest.Co. who are at times categorised as of ethnic minority origin shows. However, as Mason (1995) notes, skin colour is particularly significant in the British conception of ethnic origin.) As Weber (1978) argues, the difference between physical and cultural characteristics in the closure process is that it is easier for people seeking inclusion to assimilate the latter than the former. More so than in the case of symbols which are not embodied, such as possession of particular qualifications, or demonstration of particular ways of behaving, therefore, individuals seeking inclusion are limited in the degree to which they can alter the ethnic categorisation to which they are accorded.

'Black' ethnic minority individuals *are* sometimes able to get themselves allocated to other ethnic categorisations which afford inclusion: such as being allocated to the category of 'African' by the manager of the directorate personnel department studied in City Council, or to the category of 'Asian' by the manager of the local personnel department studied in Operating Unit X of Utility Co. However, as noted above, they are universally unable to secure allocation to the 'white' categorisation which affords inclusion in the majority of the departments studied. All those whose ethnic origin is embodied in skin colour other than 'white' can do in most instances is therefore to try to avoid categorisation according to ethnicity altogether and seek to achieve inclusion by, as Bourdieu says, 'highlighting... the best of its characteristics' (Bourdieu, 1984: 476).

This is where the myriad of symbols upon which it has been shown that inclusion may be based becomes significant. In situations in which having a skin colour which is not 'white' does not symbolise desired potential, those who have such skin colour may still be able to win inclusion by showing other symbols which do suggest that potential, in other words, by ensuring that they are categorised by those symbols rather than by ethnicity. This is precisely what case study participants are doing when, time and time again, those who could be categorised as of ethnic minority origin resist that categorisation and, instead emphasise other symbols which will afford inclusion.

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Examples include the ethnic minority origin woman included in the personnel officers' group in one department of Town Council because she showed polite and non-threatening behaviour (page 127-8), the ethnic minority origin women in Utility Co. and City Council who achieved the professional qualification in order to win inclusion (pages 159 and 180), and the ethnic minority origin man in Rest.Co. who demonstrates the appropriate deferential behaviour to senior managers (pages 215-6).

However, it is not only the fact that ethnic categorisations are often in embodied in skin colour which makes it difficult for those categorised as of ethnic minority origin to avoid its exclusionary tendencies. The cultural component of ethnicity (see discussion in chapter one) has further implications. Notably, as noted in chapter two, the 'belief systems' of members of different cultures may lead to misunderstandings and different ways of behaving (Good, 1988: 46). Thus those who possess such different belief systems may be both less able to identify whose model of potential is most significant at a given site of closure and what one's various available criteria might symbolise to those whose model matters, and therefore which to emphasise. Not only are those categorised as of ethnic minority origin therefore less likely to be judged to symbolise desired potential at first glance, and more likely to have to consciously avoid categorisation by ethnicity and seek categorisation according to other criteria, but they are also likely to be disadvantaged in identifying and then demonstrating what those other positive criteria might be, for example, what the appropriate behaviours are.

This may explain the different experiences, noted in chapter five, of the questionnaire respondents who were born in Britain compared with those who were born outside Britain. The findings suggest that those who were born outside Britain have found it more difficult to win inclusion than those, allocated to the same ethnic categories, but born in Britain. Not only are they - as noted in relation to Utility Co. - less likely to possess British qualifications, but also less likely to be able to read the organisation and identify - and conform to - the values and behaviours which may compensate for their ethnic categorisation. As one Utility Co. interviewee (a 'white' woman) noted of her Indian-born manager: *'**Because he's Indian** [he] doesn't always come across as he ought to'* (my highlight).

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These findings reveal further weaknesses of the positive action strategy adopted by Town Council to those noted in relation to such strategies in chapter two. In the first place, such a strategy categorises participants according to their ethnic minority origin, and indeed draws attention to that categorisation, which is precisely what the research findings suggest people who can be categorised as of ethnic minority origin should seek to avoid, since such categorisation often leads to exclusion. (This may be one reason why many of those who entered Town Council by such a route are keen to conceal the fact - indeed, the research findings suggest that such concealment is an appropriate strategy for winning further inclusion.)

In the second place, the inclusion given to those in such positive action posts is limited, and this certainly appears to be the case in Town Council. The research indicates that positive action trainees in Town Council are allocated to special posts, additional to the main staffing of their departments; consequently, the opportunities for them to identify and practice the performances which will afford further inclusion are likely to be more limited. Thus one female ex-positive action interviewee, asked for any final comments, concludes that the 'important thing' is that 'positive action posts' should be 'proper jobs' and not just 'tacked on' to the department.

Indeed, the fact that being categorised as of ethnic minority origin apparently won them some initial inclusion in their personnel department is doubtless one reason why some of the Town Council interviewees continue to try to use that categorisation to win further inclusion, although this is an ultimately unsuccessful strategy, as the analysis of the case study in chapter six indicates. Not only do the positive action posts therefore make it more difficult for individuals to identify and practise demonstrating those criteria which will afford further inclusion in the mainstream of personnel departments as easily as posts already in that mainstream, but they suggest, wrongly, that ethnic minority categorisation will lead to inclusion in the future also. Thus people who may be disadvantaged in 'reading' the organisation in any case are further disadvantaged by having erroneous strategies suggested to them.

Indeed, the research indicates that the difficulties people who could be categorised as of ethnic minority origin face in identifying appropriate strategies for inclusion may be

particularly marked in personnel departments. In many organisations - and all of the case study organisations - these are the departments which are involved in writing the policies which articulate the strategic model of desired potential, in as much as it relates to ethnic origin. That is, people in those departments often write those equal opportunities or management of diversity policies which state, for example in the case of Town Council, that the organisation is particularly keen to increase representation of people of ethnic minority origin, or in the case of Rest.Co. that people are 'selected, trained, promoted and treated on the basis of their relevant skills, talents and performance and without reference to race, nationality, ethnic origin....'.

That does not pose a particular problem where personnel managers adhere to the policies they help to write, as is the case in Rest.Co. - the research not having uncovered any evidence of personnel managers in Rest.Co. treating people differently because of their ethnic categorisation. However, the findings show that it does cause confusion in Town Council, where personnel managers have responsibility for articulating the strategic model of desired potential, namely that people are to be included at least partly on the basis of their ability to alter the (perceived) ethnic composition of the workforce, and at the same time impose their own personnel managerial model, whereby those who have different characteristics from the manager are likely to be excluded because they symbolise a threat to his or her position.

This conflict between the strategic and (personnel) managerial models has angered some of the Town Council interviewees who can be categorised as of ethnic minority origin. These interviewees have been led to expect further inclusion (or at the least not to be excluded from more senior positions) because of their ethnic minority categorisation, because of the policies their manager has helped to write, but find out that that does not happen in practice. As one of the Town Council interviewees (an ethnic minority woman) who has attempted to use her ethnic minority categorisation to secure further inclusion in her department argues *'The people in here actually write the policies but they don't abide by them themselves'*. Indeed, she cites an occasion when she wanted to do a project which was given to an unpaid trainee, contravening organisational policy regarding staff development:

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So what I did was highlight the actual sentence [in the policy] what it said and took it to the person who wrote it because they were the ones who were not following it, and he said I know I wrote that, I also know I don't follow it myself.

The policy is an ideal which those at a strategic level in Town Council would like the organisation to achieve. Although the personnel managers interviewed also claim to aspire to that ideal, where managing their own department is concerned they, like other managers, are concerned to ensure that those they include - particularly in more senior positions - have occupational expertise (according to their own definition of it) and pose no threat to their own position. Thus, when the above interviewee asked her manager why he would not give her other project work,

What he said was they might not write it the way I like to write it, and I just like to write everything myself because I know it's going to be the way I want it and everything, and you're just thnking you're not even giving me the opportunity, you can't just say to somebody oh I'm not going to like the way that you write it you've never seen what type of work that they do.

Of course, this research has shown that judging what work people will do before they do it is precisely what symbols such as ethnic categorisation *are* used for.

In Conclusion

This thesis has thus revealed that categorisation of ethnic origin affects inclusion in personnel departments because it is a powerful symbol of the potential of those seeking inclusion, suggesting to those concerned the values and ways of behaving which the individual categorised may be expected to manifest. In most, but not all, situations ethnic minority categorisation has been shown to symbolise undesirable potential, the exceptions being where it suggests similarity to the individual personnel manager concerned, or where those setting the organisation's strategy desire the potential to change the ethnic composition of the workforce.

However, the above analysis has revealed that those seeking inclusion can overcome the negative effects of ethnic minority categorisation, even where those ethnic

categorisations are embodied, by avoiding categorisation according to ethnic origin and securing categorisation according to some other criteria (and, perhaps, over the longer term, by altering the interpretation placed upon the particular ethnic categorisation). This, it has been argued, is made possible by the fact that symbolic interpretation arises from interactions between individuals, enabling the individual seeking inclusion to influence the symbols by which his or her potential is assessed and, to some extent, the interpretation drawn from them.

Nevertheless, doing this has been shown to require a clear understanding of the various types of potential desired by different parties in an organisation – the significant parties being those setting the organisations' strategies, personnel managers, and in some organisations line managers - and which is most significant in each situation, as well as an understanding of how those parties will interpret the various symbols they are shown. Both of these have been shown to require a good understanding of the organisation and its power structures, and of those people within it who have power over inclusion – understanding which cultural differences may make problematic.

It has been argued that the model of closure presented here, and the explanation of the way in which ethnic categorisation relates to it, may be applied to situations outside personnel departments. However, it has been further suggested that personnel departments, because of their involvement in writing equal opportunities' strategies, are perhaps unique in the confusing messages which they may send to those seeking inclusion in them about the relationship between ethnic categorisation and inclusion, and that these messages may make it even more difficult for those categorised as of ethnic minority origin to win inclusion in them. As one ethnic minority female questionnaire respondent notes, the lack of clear directions about how to access personnel positions means that *'Personnel is probably perceived [by people who could be categorised as of ethnic minority origin] to be too vague and therefore too risky'*. Through its analysis of the various types of potential desired by different parties, and the different ways in which that potential may be symbolised, this thesis has revealed just how vague and how risky - and yet consequently how full of opportunity – inclusion in British personnel departments actually is.

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APPENDIX ONE:

COPY OF EXPLORATORY QUESTIONNAIRE

Survey of Ethnic Minority Personnel Specialists

Section one: Career profile

1. Please indicate your current economic activity (please circle the appropriate box):

Employee	1
Self-employed	2
Student	3
Unemployed, seeking work	4
Not in employment, and not seeking work	5

2. If you are currently an employee / self-employed, please give details of your current job:

Office use

Job title:_____

Year started:_____

Name of Employing Organisation (if self-employed please indicate this):_____

_____

Main duties: _____

_____

3. How satisfied are you with your current job?

Very satisfied	1
Quite satisfied	2
Slightly dissatisfied	3
Very dissatisfied	4

Why is this?_____

_____

_____

4. If you are not currently working in personnel, but have worked in personnel in the past, please give details of your most recent personnel post:

Job title: _____

Year started: _____ Year finished:_____

Name of Employing Organisation: _____

Main Duties:_____

_____

How satisfied were you with this job?

Very satisfied	1
Quite satisfied	2
Slightly dissatisfied	3
Very dissatisfied	4

Why was this?_____

_____

5. Would you recommend a job in your current / most recent personnel department to someone of ethnic minority origin? Yes ☐ 1   No ☐ 2

Please explain why:_____

_____

6. Please list all other jobs both within and outside personnel (but excluding holiday work) which you have held (in chronological order):

	Year started	Year finished	Name of employing organisation	Job title
a)				
b)				
c)				
d)				
e)				

7. What kind of work did you want to do initially (ie when you started looking for your first job?)_____

Why were you interested in that kind of work?_____

_____

If you were not initially interested in personnel work, please explain how you came to specialise in personnel: (circle appropriate box)

I decided to move into personnel work	1
The first job offer I received was in personnel	2
I applied for a general traineeship and was placed in personnel	3
I was moved to personnel from another area by employer	4
other (please specify):	5

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8. Please describe the kind of post you would like to be in in five years' time:

Job title:_____ ☐

Industry:_____ ☐

Areas of responsibility:_____ ☐

Why would you like to be in this kind of post and this industry in particular?
_____ ☐
_____

What, if anything, do you think might prevent you from achieving this kind of post?
_____ ☐
_____

---

9. Has your ethnic origin ever affected your recruitment to personnel posts, in any way?
Yes ☐ 1   No ☐ 2   Not sure ☐ 9

If yes, please give examples, if possible:_____ ☐
_____
_____
_____
_____

10. If you are working in or have worked in personnel, do you feel that your experience of working in personnel has been different in any way from that of most white personnel staff?   Yes ☐ 1   No ☐ 2   Not sure ☐ 9

If yes, please give examples, if possible:_____ ☐
_____
_____
_____
_____

Section two: Qualifications and training

11. If you are working in or have worked in personnel, please give the highest qualification gained before you entered your first personnel post:_____ ☐
_____

12. Had you studied personnel management before you entered your first personnel post? Yes ☐ 1 ☐   No ☐ 2 ☐

13. Please list below qualifications (excluding professional memberships) gained since you entered your first personnel post:

	Qualification	Year gained	Sponsored by employer? (please delete)
a)			Yes / No
b)			Yes / No
c)			Yes / No

14. Are you a member of the Institute of Personnel Management? Yes ☐ 1 ☐   No ☐ 2 ☐

15. If yes, in what year did you first become a member of the IPM?_____

Please indicate which type of membership you hold (please circle appropriate box):

Companion ☐ 1 ☐   Fellow ☐ 2 ☐   Member ☐ 3 ☐
Graduate ☐ 4 ☐   Student ☐ 5 ☐   Affiliate ☐ 6 ☐

Please explain how you obtained your membership (eg full-time course, part-time day-release, etc.): _____

Were you sponsored by your employer?   Yes ☐ 1 ☐   No ☐ 2 ☐   Partly ☐ 3 ☐

Why did you join the Institute of Personnel Management?_____
_____
_____

16. Please list below any other professional bodies of which you are a member:

	Professional body	Year became member
a)		
b)		
c)		

17. Is there any way in which your ethnic origin has affected your access to or experience of external personnel management education (including professional training)?

Yes ☐ 1 ☐ No ☐ 2 ☐ Not sure ☐ 9 ☐

If yes, please give examples, if possible: _____

_____

_____

_____

Section three: Ethnic minority representation in personnel work

18. Before you heard about this survey, did you think that people of ethnic minority origin were under-represented in personnel work in Britain?　Yes ☐ 1 ☐　　No ☐ 2 ☐

If yes, what do you think might be the reasons for this under-representation?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

19. Before you heard about this survey, did you think that people of ethnic minority origin were under-represented in senior personnel posts in Britain?

Yes ☐ 1 ☐　No ☐ 2 ☐

20. If you are or have been in employment, do you think that people of ethnic minority origin are under-represented in personnel work in your current (or most recent) organisation?　　Yes ☐ 1 ☐ No ☐ 2 ☐

If yes, why, in your opinion, are people of ethnic minority origin under-represented in personnel in that organisation? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

If no, why, in your opinion, are people of ethnic minority origin well represented in personnel in that organisation? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

21. Do you think that people of ethnic minority origin are better represented in some other types of management (e.g. finance) than in personnel management?
Yes ☐ 1 No ☐ 2

If yes, in which types of management do you think that people of ethnic minority origin are better represented than in personnel management? _____
_____
_____

Why do you think this is?_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

22. Do you think that the Institute of Personnel Management has a positive effect, negative effect, or no effect upon the numbers of people of ethnic minority origin in personnel work?
Positive ☐ 1   Negative ☐ 2   No effect ☐ 3   Don't know ☐ 9

Please explain your answer:_____
_____
_____
_____

23. Is there anything which you think the IPM could do to increase the proportion of personnel staff of ethnic minority origin? Yes ☐ 1   No ☐ 2

If yes, please explain what:_____
_____
_____

24. Is there anything which you think employers could do to increase the proportion of personnel staff of ethnic minority origin ? Yes ☐ 1 No ☐ 2

If yes, please explain what:_____
_____
_____

25. Is there anything which you think educational establishments could do to increase the proportion of personnel staff of ethnic minority origin? Yes ☐ 1 No ☐ 2

If yes, please explain what: _____
_____
_____

Section four: Personal details

(Please complete this section, as it will facilitate analysis of the survey. You are reminded that this survey is strictly confidential.)

26. Ethnic origin: Please tick the category out of those listed below which describes your ethnic origin most closely: (to facilitate comparisons, the categories used are those used by the 1991 Census; we recognise that some people may prefer other categorisations.)

White	1	Pakistani	6
Black Caribbean	2	Bangaldeshi	7
Black African	3	Chinese	10
Black other	4	Other Asian	11
Indian	5	Other	12

27. Gender: Male ☐ 1   Female ☐ 2

28. Age group: (please circle appropriate box)

16-19	1		40-49	5
20-24	2		50-59	6
25-29	3		60+	7
30-39	4			

29. Are you registered disabled?   Yes ☐ 1 No ☐ 2

30. Country of birth: (this question and the following question are included so that the experiences of ethnic minority personnel staff who were brought up entirely in this country, and / or went through the education system in this country, can be compared with the experiences of those who have lived elsewhere, and completed part or all of their education elsewhere).

Britain ☐ 1   Other ☐ 2

If your country of birth was not Britain, please give the age (approximately) at which you became resident in Britain:_____   ☐

I would like to be able to contact you regarding this survey, either to check that I have understood your answers correctly, or to follow-up any particularly interesting points which you may have made. Please leave your name, address and a telephone number, if possible.

AS THIS SURVEY IS CONFIDENTIAL, THE FOLLOWING DETAILS WILL ONLY BE SEEN BY THE RESEARCHER

Name:_____

Contact address (either work or home): _____

_____

_____

_____

Daytime / evening telephone number (please delete as appropriate): _____

If you have any other comments which you would like to make, or other issues which you would
like to raise, please include them on a separate sheet of paper.

Please return the survey to:

Catharine Ross
Department of Organisation Studies
University of Central Lancashire
Preston
PR1 2HE

A postage-paid envelope is enclosed for your convenience.

Thank you for completing this survey.

APPENDIX TWO:

DETAILS OF EXPLORATORY QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONDENTS

1. Ethnic Origin

Ethnic origin	Number of respondents	% of those responding to question
Black African / Caribbean	21	51.2
Indian	11	26.8
Pakistani	6	14.6
Bangladeshi	0	0.0
Other Asian	1	2.4
Other	2	4.9
Total	41	100

(Notes:
These are the categories to which respondents allocated themselves.
The categories 'Black Caribbean' and 'Black African' were merged to facilitate analysis).

2. Gender

Gender	Number of respondents	% of those responding to question
Male	10	24.4
Female	31	75.6
Total	41	100

3. Age

Age group	Number of respondents	% of those responding to question
16-19	0	0.0
20-24	5	12.2
25-29	18	43.9
30-39	13	31.7
40-49	5	12.2
50-59	0	0.0
60+	0	0.0
Total	41	100

4. Country of birth

Country of birth	Number of respondents	% of those responding to question
Britain	26	63.4
Other	15	36.6
Total	41	100

5. Level of position held

Level of position	Number of respondents	% of those responding to question
Administrative	9	22.5
Officer / senior officer	23	57.5
Manager	6	15.0
Director	1	2.5
Consultant (self-employed)	1	2.5
Total	40	100

6. Industry

Industry	Number of respondents	% of those responding to question
Energy and water	4	10.0
Metal goods, engineering	3	7.5
Other manufacturing	1	2.5
Distribution, hotels and catering, retail	3	7.5
Transport and communications	1	2.5
Banking	2	5.0
Local government	19	47.5
Health	3	7.5
Education	3	7.5
Other	1	2.5
Total	40	100

7. Membership of professional body

Level of membership	Number of respondents	% of those responding to question
Companion	0	0.0
Fellow	7	17.5
Member	6	15.0
Graduate	7	17.5
Affiliate	1	2.5
Student	10	25.0
Non-member	9	22.5
Total	40	100

(note: The questionnaire survey was undertaken prior to the recent re-organisation of the lower membership categories of the CIPD (below Graduate member). The table therefore uses the old categories).

APPENDIX THREE:

DEPARTMENTS, POSITIONS, ETHNIC CATEGORISATION AND GENDER OF THOSE INTERVIEWED IN THE CASE STUDY ORGANISATIONS.

The following lists the position held by those interviewed in each case study organisation, their department, whether they are categorised as 'white' or of ethnic minority origin (where some conflict over categorisation is apparent this is indicated) and their gender.

TOWN COUNCIL

Central personnel department:
Personnel manager / consultant - 'white' male
Personnel consultant - 'white' female
Personnel officer - 'white' female
Personnel assistant (administrative) - ethnic minority female
Personnel assistant (administrative) - ethnic minority male
Personnel assistant (administrative) - ethnic minority female

Directorate department one:
Department manager - 'white' male
Training officer - ethnic minority male
Training officer - 'white' female
Equal rights officer - ethnic minority female

Directorate department two:
Section 11 co-ordinator - ethnic minority male
Personnel officer - 'white' male
Personnel officer - ethnic minority female
Personnel assistant (administrative) ethnic minority male

Directorate department three:
Department manager - 'white' male
Personnel and training officer - ethnic minority male
Personnel officer - 'white' female

+ Manager of race budget - 'white' male

MANUF.CO.

Head officer personnel department:
Manager / head of salaried recruitment - 'white' male
Equal opportunities manager - 'white' female

Plant personnel department one:
Department manager: ethnic minority female

Plant personnel department two:
Personnel officer - ethnic minority female
Personnel officer - 'white' female

UTILITY CO.

Operating Unit X:

Local personnel department:
Department manager - ethnic minority male
Head of section (supervisor) - ethnic minority male
Head of section (supervisor) - ethnic minority male
Personnel assistant - 'white' female
Personnel assistant - ethnic minority male

Operating Unit Y:

Head officer personnel department:
Manager / senior consultant - 'white' male

Local Personnel department 1:
Assistant department manager - 'white' male
Personnel officer - 'white' female
Personnel officer - ethnic minority female
Administrative assistant - 'white' male

Local personnel department 2:
Clerk - ethnic minority female

CITY COUNCIL

Central personnel unit:
Unit manager - 'white' male
Administrative assistant - ethnic minority female
Principal consultant (principal officer) - 'white' female
Senior consultant (senior officer) - ethnic minority female
Senior consultant (senior officer) - 'white' male
Information consultant (officer) - ethnic minority male
Equal opportunities monitoring officer - ethnic minority female

Business unit personnel department:
Department manager - 'white' male

Directorate personnel department:
Department manager - ethnic minority female

Development unit:
Manager - 'white' male

REST.CO.

Head officer personnel department:
Human resources officer - 'white' male
Training consultant (senior training officer) - ethnic minority male
Training officer - 'white' female (but categorised by some as of ethnic minority origin because born outside Britain, although within Europe).

Regional personnel department 1:
Senior human resources officer - 'white' female
Senior human resources officer - ethnic minority male (but categorised by some as 'white', because of 'white' skin colour, although originates from outside Europe).

Regional personnel department 2:
Department manager - 'white' male
Training officer - ethnic minority male
Human resources officer - 'white' female
Senior human resources secretary (administrative) - 'white' female.

APPENDIX FOUR:

SAMPLE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. Current job

(-What is it?
-Who do you report to / work with?
-How did you come to be in that job? (career path to date, education, etc.)
-Why did you apply for a job in personnel / training?
-What requirements were there for your current job (qualifications, experience etc.)?)

2. Department

(-Describe your department - who is in it, what duties it covers, etc.
-Where do you recruit people from to the department? What experience / qualifications are necessary to gain initial access to the department?)

3. Support

(-What staff development have you received since being at [X]?
-Have you done the IPD? Why / why not?
-Does anyone offer you advice on your career?
-Who do you network with at work? What networks do you find useful?
-Who would you turn to for support at work?)

4. Equal Opportunities Initiatives

(-What does [X] do, as far as you are aware, to ensure equal opportunities? Who's responsibility is it?
-Have you been involved in any equal opportunites initiatives at [X]? What were they? What were your opinions of them?)

5. Effects of ethnic origin / gender

(-Do you think that ethnic origin affects careers in personnel in [X] (has affected your career in any way?)
-Do you think that gender affects careers in personnel in [X] (has affected your career in any way?)
-Does ethnic origin or gender affect the experience of working in personnel in [X]?
(-If no effects, why not? What does [X] do that makes it different from some other employers?))

Is there anything else which you think I ought to know regarding equal opportunities in personnel / training?