If Your Face Don't Fit

An Investigation into Ethnic Minority Employment in the North West Media

University of Salford, 2004 – 2005

Preface

In 2004 the School of Media, Music and Performance at the University of Salford was awarded an ESF (European Social Fund) grant in order to investigate the representation of ethnic minorities in media employment. This report entitled ' *If Your Face Don't Fit* ' explores the barriers that prevent ethnic minorities from seeking, gaining and succeeding in media employment in the North West of England. The research was conducted by a team of researchers based in the International Media Centre in Salford between June 2004 and June 2005. Focus groups and 50 in-depth interviews with media employees and young people aspiring to enter the industry comprise the data for this project. The aim of this investigation is to inform future policy at both a regional and national level. The publication of this report is intended to ensure the findings are shared with policy makers, educational institutions, media organisations and communities throughout the North West. Recommendations are made according to the findings and examples of best practice are offered to improve the position of ethnic minorities in the media.

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Introduction.

Ethnic minorities represent only 5% of the media workforce (Skillset website, *The Media in the North West*, 2005), even though they make up 8% of the population in the North West (Office for National Statistics, *Census*, April 2001). The aim of this report is to give voice to workers from bme communities in order to hear and understand their experiences with the media and to make some small steps towards addressing these employment imbalances. To this end we conducted over 50 semi-structured interviews and held a series of public meetings in the North-West. As our aim is to give voice to these communities a long introduction here would be inappropriate. However a few remarks need to be made to place this work in context.

In 2003 the School of Media, Music and Performance and Mediatrust conducted an investigation into the disturbances that took place in Oldham, Blackburn and other small towns in the North-West in the summer of 2001. ('Community Cohesion and the Media', 2004) In 2001 the Observer newspaper conducted a survey of violent incidents perpetrated against members of ethnic communities which revealed that the North-West remained a high-risk area for bme peoples. When investigating the coverage of the disturbances by talking to the communities we found considerable anger at both the shallow coverage of the local press and the lazy adoption of stereotypes by national media 'up here on a visit'. The communities felt that their lack of representation in the media at both journalist and managerial level meant that there could never be a very fair and balanced representation of their views.

In 2005, the year of our interviews for this project, the Observer's report was updated and it was alarming to note that little had changed. While the police believe that the reporting mechanism may have looked like more incidents are documented there are many signs that racism remains an

unpleasant undercurrent in British public life. The headline is that 23 racially motivated murders have taken place in the past four years. But alongside this "convictions for racially aggravated offences have risen by more than 30%."

It is perhaps no surprise to find that one in five members of ethnic communities have considered leaving the country because of racial intolerance.

In the early stages of this project in 2004/05 the General Election was underway. Immigration became one of the issues that informed the debates with a series of Tory MPs calling for stricter border controls and Labour being asked to 'respond' to what was described as a crisis. The popular press helped amplify these issues with a series of scare stories with appropriately shocking 'research' from bodies such as Migration Watch. Once again the climate for bme peoples was charged and many felt uncomfortable with the way the media treated their situation. As Gary Younge wrote in the Guardian 'Racism is Back.' When we were coming to the edit of this document in the Winter of 2006/07 the 'race question' was once again on the agenda due to the imminent 'tidal wave' of new immigrants from the accession states and the much-discussed BNP membership of a principal dancer with the English National Ballet. A further storm erupted over the alleged racist bullying of Shilpa Shetty on Celebrity Big Brother. The 2001 census reported that there are 7 million people from ethnic minorities in the UK. As a substantial and growing percentage of the population it is unfortunate that those from BME (Black and Multi-Ethnic) communities risk becoming remarginalised every time such stories emerge.

In 2005 and 2006 both the BBC and Granada launched several initiatives designed to increase the number of people from bme communities in the media. It remains to be seen how successful these will be. However what we discovered in our work in the North-West is that there is a great deal of willing to help

improve the situation. At the public meetings we saw and heard from many people of all ages who had issues with the way in which they saw the media operating but were anxious to try and make a difference. This report is part of the process of making a change by using survey data to chart the range of experiences felt by bme peoples and the media. What the report reveals is the need to treat the new member of staff as more than simply a representative of his or her colour. The report cover all stages from perception of the media through to the rarely articulated experiences of those who are from a bme background and working in the media but still finding subtle but powerful forms of racism active in the workplace. CRE (Campaign for Racial Equality) Chair Trevor Philips draws our attention to the low-level acts of racism committed by people who do not consider themselves to be racist, the 'mundane conflicts which can suddenly become highly charged where name calling all too easily reveals the racism beneath the surface'. By interviewing those rarely questioned about their working lives we have helped give voice to some of this mundane but persistent racism.

For those already in the industry these findings may be disheartening. For some it will be depressing to hear how difficult it is for people from ethnic minorities to rise to middle or upper management levels. But changes are occurring.

Another aim of the report is to look at some of the myths that inform debates about the communities -– from the cultural factors that inform decision-making to the role of the parents. Our aim has been to look at the stereotype and then move past it. One of the many valuable outcomes that might emerge from the report is that parents develop a greater understanding of how the media work and the sort of conditions that their offspring might encounter. Employers could learn of some hidden factors that inform the lives of bme people. For example one significant space where expectation meets reality is the placement. As we shall see this can be a very mixed blessing for bme people. For many people the placement is their first introduction to the

working world of the media and the experience can be disquieting. We hope a greater sensitivity to the significance of placements for bme people is another outcome of this report.

It is our belief that improved representation within the media may lead to better or at least a more accurate representation of the communities and their problems. What we found while working on this project is a complex situation in which incoming ethnic journalists find that they are often alone in a newsroom and find it a priority to 'fit in' rather than write in a way that relates to their identity. We were also disturbed to find that despite various levels of satisfaction with their working conditions when any 'Black' issue arose the ethnic journalist was automatically turned to as an 'expert' for the problem. The comment 'Because the people involved had brown skins you automatically assume it's got to be my business' comes not from a trainee but from the Chair of the CRE. Despite the best intentions of employers here is still a sense in which bme people are emblematic of some imagined community rather than being seen as writers, journalists, and producers in their own right.

If mainstream media fail to fully acknowledge the contribution made by ethnic people to British life then they are also ignoring the sound economic benefits to be had. The agency Starfish recently reported that some sectors of the communities have high spending power that goes unacknowledged by advertisers. But despite this some producers believe that there is a reluctance by the industry to deliver ethnic content to mainstream audiences. In short there are missed opportunities that need to be rectified for a variety of social, cultural and political reasons.

It was enormously encouraging to have so many members of bme communities assemble for the four seperate meetings we held in four locations. At each of these we opened with an introductory talk and then followed this with group work. In each of these leaders from the community facilitated discussions while notes were taken. Each of the groups then fed back to the

larger group at the end of the evening. This process enabled us to build up a detailed picture of the BME community's relationship to the media. More than 150 people in the North-West leant their time to the project. This is proof, if it were needed, that communities feel very strongly about the media and their representation within it. We also have to thank the many people already working in the media who gave their time to the project by working in focus groups and giving so much of their time in interviews.

One of the frustrations we encountered at these meetings and interviews was that reports from well-meaning institutions had regularly been conducted in an attempt to correct imbalances, better speak for the communities etc. But once the work is done it is not always the case that the communities read about the work or gain an insight into the research. Our aim is publishing this document ourselves is to reach as many communities as possible to at least highlight the issue of representation and hopefully develop an understanding.

The plan of this report is straightforward: in the first three chapters we consider the academic background to work on ethnic minorities and the media; the second section gives voice to the BME communities discovered through focus groups and interviews. The aim here is to contrast the theoretical material with the lived experience of the people.

'If Your Face Don't Fit' is largely the work of the two research assistants Katherine Davies and Nazia Awan who worked on the project for over a year. They prepared material for the focus groups, conducted all of the one-to-one interviews and gathered most of the research material. At the end of this they compiled their reports. This project depended hugely on their contribution: it would not have happened without them.

Eli Tams took on the very large job of transcribing all the interviews. Ed Granter did some editing work on an earlier

version of the document. John Goulden provided invaluable support - from technical help on the focus groups to computer work on several versions of the document. Mediatrust were vital administrative partners throughout the project.

I designed and lead this project and then ordered and edited this document into what I hope is a readable and useful format. Any repetitions or mistakes herein must be attributed to me.

Dr Gareth Palmer
March, 2007

Executive summary

- despite improvements in recent years there remain deep-rooted yet almost imperceptible barriers to progress for bme workers.

- bme workers remain under-represented at middle and upper management levels in media organisations.

- class remains a significant yet unarticulated issue for bme workers as the media is perceived as an overwhelmingly middle-class institution.

- a mild form of Islamaphobia which has increased since 9/11continues to inform attitudes to many from the Asian communities.

- bme workers are automatically expected to be experts on any ethnic issues that arise.

- some local media continue to speak or write of one community instead of recognising diversity.

- there is a lack of understanding in bme communities about how the media operate.

- role models for female members of bme communities are rare (although this has increased substantially at the BBC in the last 18 months)

- employers and educational establishments do not do enough to promote understanding of the media as a career option.

- there is a widespread feeling that some appointments are tokenistic and simply used to fulfil contractual obligations.

Chapter 1: Ethnic Minorities and the Media

The relationship between Britain's ethnic minority population and the media has been problematic. There are two central issues: the first concerns the manner in which ethnic minorities are presented and depicted; the second refers to the opportunities offered to ethnic minorities in order to obtain information, entertainment and cultural satisfaction from the media. The media industry itself has long been aware that the conduct and quality of the depiction of ethnic minorities in the media needs to be carefully considered, as does the question of access. However, research tracking the level of representation of ethnic minorities in entertainment and news media has made slow progress over the years.

1.1 Misrepresentation

Entertainment Media

Ethnic minorities have tended to be inadequately represented in British entertainment media. Soap operas and other TV programmes are lagging behind in their portrayal of ethnic minorities. This tendency is particularly problematic in a multicultural country such as Britain where 7.9% of the population are from ethnic minority backgrounds (Office for National Statistics, *Census*, April 2001). Ethnic minorities are a visible part of British society and yet continue to be underrepresented in entertainment media. When ethnic minorities are featured, portrayals are often negative and stereotypical (BBC, 2000; Millwood Hargrave, 2002). Although the problem has been acknowledged, little has been done to improve the position of ethnic minorities in the British media.

In 2000, Greg Dyke spoke of the need for a more diverse British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) during his tenure as Director-

General of the BBC. Speaking at the *Race in the Media Awards*, he said,

> "We still too often portray ethnic minorities as problem centred – bugged by crime, bad housing, poor schooling, poverty… we rarely rate the high performers, the entrepreneurs, the innovators, the risk takers, the campaigners." (Dyke, 2000)

However, in entertainment media today, such problems continue. For example, Indian characters in *Coronation Street* are associated with corner shops and familial pressures. The character, Sunita Parekh was disowned by her parents because she ran away from a forced marriage. In *Eastenders*, the one Black family on the square recently buried their son (Paul Trueman) after he was murdered due to his involvement in gangs and drugs. Research commissioned by Broadcasting Standards Commission (BSC) et al (2002) revealed that audiences felt that the treatment of such issues by the media was inaccurate and failed to reflect changes amongst minority communities over time. Dr Khalid Anees from the Granada Advisory Group argues that the media need to represent the communities that they serve. He goes on to say,

> "I want someone to be appearing in Coronation Street or Eastenders not because they are a Muslim character; they happen to be Muslim but they are an integral part of the scene anyway… It could be a doctor, or a shopkeeper, or anybody, but they should be there for who they are and not for the fact that they are Muslim." (*Gloves Off*, 2005)

There is also evidence in British films of ethnic minority characters being included just to make a point as opposed to being an integral part of a plot. Hanif Kureishi's, *My Son the Fanatic* (1997) is about a Pakistani taxi driver who has an affair with a White prostitute and whose son becomes an Islamic fundamentalist. In Simon Beaufoy's *Yasmin* (2004) a young

Muslim woman has been forced by her father to marry her cousin from Pakistan.

Entertainment media has failed to keep up to speed with the increasing numbers and rising expectations of ethnic minorities and perhaps even the wider audience in Britain (CRG, 2001). Critics and advocacy groups have begun to pressure the industry to produce programmes and films that adequately reflect the racial and ethnic diversity we find in our communities. For example, there is a perception amongst broadcasters that there has been an increase in the amount of representation on-air and a growth of programming which is relevant to ethnic groups. Furthermore, *Channel 4*, *BBC 1*, *BBC 2*, *Choice FM* and *Kiss 100 FM* have been commended for broadcasting minority interest programmes (BSC et al, 2002). In entertainment media, the success of stars such as Meera Syal, Raghav, Rudolph Walker and Lenny Henry are cause for satisfaction. Films such as Gurinder Chadha's, *Bend it Like Beckham* (2002) and *Bride and Prejudice* (2004) have proved popular amongst both minority and White communities.

But although significant progress has been made, there still needs to be better representation of minorities on screen. *Top 10 TV* (2000) examined numbers of visible ethnic minority faces on British television and how they were portrayed. People of Asian, Chinese and other ethnic minority backgrounds were found to be practically invisible in British television. Ethnic minorities were eight times less likely than their White counterparts to contribute to everyday subjects such as gardening, cookery, hobbies and other lifestyle interests (CRG, 2000). South Asian people were found to be the most under-represented. Compared with the real world, where they accounted for 3.7% of the population, they were almost invisible on television at just 0.9% of UK TV programme participants. Other ethnic minorities (Chinese and all other ethnicities) accounted for only 0.2% of participants in UK programming (CRG, 2000:23).

Multicultural Broadcasting: Concept and Reality (2002) examined attitudes towards multicultural broadcasting in the UK. 69% of the sample representatives from the television industry said that the perspectives of ethnic and racial minorities were not featured enough on television, with 45% of a radio sample agreeing that this was true of radio (Milwood Hargrave, 2002). Participants in the research (comprising both the audience at large and practitioners from within the television, radio and advertising industries) wanted to see more ethnic minority representation both in documentaries and the news.

Documentaries

Focus groups at a public meeting in Burnley conducted by the University of Salford in 2004 revealed that ethnic minorities felt that that there have been few representations of Black and Asian communities in recently aired documentaries on television. Progress was considered slow and limited as fair representations of reality are often aired 'when no-one is awake to watch them.' Programmes such as *The Secret Policeman* (2003) exposing institutional racism were commended, but it was argued that there are not enough of them. Similarly, the transmission of the BBC2 series, 'Islam UK', was praised by members of the Muslim community for its balanced and subtle description of Islam. However, the series was shown late in the evening and thus would not have attracted a large audience (Milwood Hargrave, 2002:34).

Ethnic minority campaigners have called on the media to scrap controversial documentaries that reinforce racial stereotypes while failing to present adequate solutions such as *The Trouble With Black Men: a polemic* (2004) and *Edge of the City* (2004). The former looked at the problems suffered by Afro-Caribbean boys in the education system and the latter focused on Asian men in Bradford targeting young girls for sex by plying them with drugs. *The Future of multi-Ethnic Britain – The Parekh Report* (2000) stresses the fundamental role of television in

portraying ‘the traditions of African, Asian, Caribbean and Irish cultures’ but also the need to show them as ‘dynamic’ and ‘developing.’ The reality is disappointing as this remains a future hope as opposed to a present achievement. Arranged marriages have been put forward by Asian communities as an example of how Asian people and their values and lifestyles are stereotyped negatively. Anger was expressed by South Asians about the way in which arranged marriages were portrayed as synonymous with forced marriages in factual programming (Millwood Hargrave, 2002:33). They felt that such a bias occurred because programme-makers and the White community in general, did not understand that arranged marriages can be consensual.

News

The relationship between ethnic minorities and the news media has not always been one of conflict. In the late 1940s, the British Media welcomed 500 Jamaicans arriving in Southampton to begin work. *The Daily Worker* headline read “Five hundred pairs of willing hands.” (23 June, 1948; cited in Ainley, 1998:3) Subsequent reporting stated that the Jamaican community had found jobs and were settling down (July, 1948). The media’s welcome of immigrants was maintained for 10 years as was a self imposed censorship regarding race related stories (Ainley, 1998). The press in particular went out of its way not to report any aspect of race relations that was considered dangerous to racial harmony. This censorship was applied when according to Rose et al (1969), almost 60% of the White population perceived immigrants as a ‘threat.’ The media’s self imposed censorship also concealed the discrimination that ethnic minorities were experiencing in Britain. It was believed that a focus on racial problems would lead to further conflict; there was a demand for labour in Britain from its former colonies during this period and the media wanted to refrain from creating tension and adverse publicity (Cashmore & Troyna, 1983).

It was the 1958 disturbances between Black and White communities in Nottingham and Notting Hill that marked changes in the manner in which the media reported race related stories. There were virtually no Black journalists employed in the national press at the time therefore reporting was mainly from a White perspective. Cottle (1999) argues that if journalists are White and middle-class, this will undoubtedly influence the sensibilities and knowledge base informing journalistic output. Ainley (1998) argues bias is the result of 'structural racism, media censorship on racism and the government's lack of financial support to local authorities with high concentrations of immigrants'. No in-depth analysis was offered to demonstrate the difficulties encountered by Black immigrants in housing, education and employment.

Similar problems have been noted in the North West with the reporting of the disturbances in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford in 2001 where the media generally failed to express the experiences of prejudice, discrimination and deprivation endured by ethnic minority communities. *Community Cohesion and the Media* (2004) refers to the misrepresentation of Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities during this period. Van Dijk argues that the opinions of ethnic minorities are less asked for or found "less credible or newsworthy." (2000:37)

> "There is a polarisation of 'us' versus 'them' that problems concerning immigrants are often dramatised and they don't often get a chance to express their views and ideas in the media." (McGuire & Reiner et al, 2002)

Public debate about the role the media play in promoting perceptions of different cultures within British society has been heightened with coverage of events during and since September 11th 2001. For example Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities have expressed concern about the portrayal of Islam in the media with regards to negative portrayals and that only certain

aspects of the Islamic faith were thought to be depicted, such as the views of fundamentalists (Millwood Hargrave, 2002:34). Minority communities are seldom featured in the media as experts or professionals. They continue to be portrayed in negative, stereotypical ways and as threats to White society in the news media (Rose et al, 1969; Hall, 1990; Cottle, 2000). Most analyses of news media messages indicate that immigrants are often linked with negative stories or often talked about in relation to crime and problems. For example, numerous studies over the years note the media's use of stock stereotypes of Black people as 'trouble-makers' and 'dependants' (Hartman & Husband, 1974; Barry, 1988; Hall, 1990). Such tendencies are particularly problematic as there is evidence to suggest that people transpose mainstream media images into their perceptions of the society in which they live. The depiction of ethnic minorities in the media has a powerful impact on individuals who have little or no direct contact with ethnic minorities (Van Dijk, 2000). The media are a part of a process of naturalizing ideology, generating positions which we take up unconsciously. These interpretive frameworks can define people of colour as part of a problem. Hall highlights the news as a site of conflict and debate, a pivotal place where 'race' is constructed as a problem (Hall, 1990). If stereotypes of ethnic minorities provoke or exacerbate discriminatory behaviour throughout society then the media have an important responsibility to question these. It is in and through representations that members of the media audience are variously invited to construct a sense of who 'we' are in relation to who 'we' are not, whether as 'us' and 'them' or as 'citizen' and 'foreigner' (Cottle, 2000:2).

But the influence of the mass media on the public image of minorities is only one part of the complex relationship between ethnic minorities and the media. The media not only influences how ethnic minorities are viewed by others, but also how ethnic minorities view themselves.

1.2 Under-representation

Community Cohesion and the Media (2004) suggests that one of the causes of the misrepresentation of Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities in the North West news media during the 2001 disturbances was the low number of ethnic minority journalists. This meant that the situation was not properly understood. The authors recommended employment targets to reflect the ethnic diversity of the local population for the press and broadcast media. This recommendation is further supported by several authors that indicate the employment of more ethnic minorities in the media is a possible remedy to counter negative depiction. Ainley (1998:1) states that that the greater employment of ethnic minorities in the media is of prime importance to "eradicating the White media values which make nonsense of the claim that Britain is a multi-racial multicultural society." She goes on to say that many injustices are being challenged by ethnic minority journalists in White media as they may be able to educate other journalists regarding their communities and culture (Although our report does not reveal a great deal of this). In addition, it has been suggested that better representation will help towards creating a greater sense of belonging within British society. It will also help towards fostering understanding of the different cultures among other communities, including the White population, within the UK (Millwood Hargrave, 2002:1).

However, Britain's newsrooms (in print, radio, television and on the internet) lag far behind in the recruitment of ethnic minority staff at every level. Ainley (1998) argues that Black and Asian faces are rare amongst Britain's 'news breed' - the journalists who gather and process the nation's news. No more than twenty Black journalists were employed during the mid-1990's in national newspapers out of a workforce of 3000 (Ainley, 1998:1).

This problem is not limited to the field of journalism. Ethnic minorities represent around 7% of the workforce in the audio-

visual industries, even though they make up over 30% of the population in London where the industry is concentrated (Skillset Annual Survey, 2004). Media industry representatives have expressed concern that ethnic minority groups are still under-represented in employment terms and that better representation is particularly needed in decision-making roles (Millwood Hargrave, 2002). The Guardian newspaper, October 13, 2000) The Channel 4 presenter, Krishnan Guru- Murthy argues that,

> "It is embarrassing – no appalling – that there is nobody from an ethnic minority in top level management at the *BBC, ITV Network Centre, B SkyB* or *C5*. Even at *Channel 4,* the two most senior Black people are in charge of multicultural programmes. And it is not because there are not no suitably qualified people from ethnic minorities." (cited in Wells, Guardian, 13 October, 2000)

It is important to recognise that there are a number of possible explanations for this under-representation such as, discrimination within the industry itself (Ainley, 1998) lack of opportunities due to socio-economic disadvantage and discrimination within the education system itself which prevents ethnic minorities from achieving the qualifications necessary to be successful in media related careers (Cohn, 1997). Some ethnic minorities are put off applying because they perceive mainstream media as a White and middle class industry which is closed to minorities. At the RIMA awards ceremony in 2000, Greg Dyke talked about the culture of the BBC,

> "It's more about the culture of the organisation - a culture that many from ethnic minorities do not find inviting, attractive or relevant. A culture that has still to recognise and fully understand multicultural Britain. A culture that is still rooted in another, earlier Britain."

It is essential to acknowledge that it is still a much debated question whether an under-representation of certain groups in journalism may affect news content. The problem of misrepresentation is very complex and cannot be solved simply by boosting the number of ethnic minorities employed in the media. Factors such as what is considered 'newsworthy,' sources of information, news organization goals and news policy determine news content (Cottle, 2000). Such issues clearly require further investigation.

Ethnic Media

When faced with their misrepresentation some ethnic minorities have sought to select their own themes, express their own views and influence their own public images. By establishing their own newspapers, magazines, television and radio stations, creating their own film production companies, and forming their own advertising agencies which often specialize in helping companies reach a minority market, ethnic minorities are expressing themselves. Ethnic media are often considered to be crucial for the empowerment of ethnic minorities and for the sustaining of cultural particularity, while challenging the domination of mainstream culture (Wilson & Gutierrez, 1985; Riggins, 1992; Husband, 1994). For example, specialist Asian stations have been found to play an important role for the Asian communities, especially the older members. Such stations are valued because news coverage addresses their countries of origin and is considered to be more in-depth and less biased. Asian music is played as well as programmes and phone-ins on issues of particular interest to the communities which are often addressed in ways that are specifically relevant to them. Such features allow individuals to keep in touch with their culture, religion, language and communities (Millwood Hargrave, 2002:18). But although radio and television stations may now broadcast in many languages, ownership and therefore control over news and editorial policy often does not rest in minority

hands further emphasising the need for minorities in decision-making roles. As we shall see this is an issue that needs consideration by employers.

1.3 Research Focus

Ethnic minorities are significantly under-represented across the whole range of entertainment and news media. While minorities have achieved a long overdue increase in media presence recently crucial issues of portrayal and participation remain to be resolved. The Skillset Employment Census (2003) revealed that ethnic recruitment in the media industry is far higher in London than anywhere else in the UK. The North West is the largest centre of production in England outside London and the South East. The sector is well developed, with Manchester being the key production centre for broadcast and facilities; Merseyside is a growth area for new media, as well as an independent production for film and broadcast; while Cheshire is a popular base for independent production companies. However, the 4.3% of ethnic minorities in media employment is lower than the national average. In short: while the North West has a large concentration of ethnic minorities the face of the industry is predominantly White and middle class. Authentic and realistic representation of bme communities in the North West media will help the ethnic minorities situated there to be seen as part of mainstream society and encourage a better understanding of their cultures. As the Community Cohesion report referred to earlier recommends:

> "That all local press and broadcast media commit themselves to employment targets, which will more accurately reflect the ethnic diversity of the local population. These targets should relate to the figures of people from ethnic minorities who occupy positions on the editorial staff." (2004:11)

Although the situation has improved somewhat over the past three years, ethnic minorities remain under-represented. As we

wrote in the introduction ethnic minorities represent only 5% of the media workforce even though they make up 8% of the population in the North West. Statistics indicate that even where ethnic minorities are employed in the media industry, they are not reaching the decision making levels and are therefore unlikely to have a great deal of input into the nature of reporting.

In short there is a need for better representation of minority role models, in news, entertainment and advertising both to set standards for ethnic minorities and to reduce stereotypes too long prevalent in the North West media. Little research has been conducted in the UK on the experiences of ethnic minorities working in the North West media industry. There is also little research into the experiences of ethnic minorities working or seeking to work in the media industry specifically. Furthermore, important gaps continue to exist within current social research on ethnic minorities and the media. This project will attempt to uncover the reasons for the low representation of minorities in the media and try to find ways to address this problem.

1.4 Research Questions

This project will attempt to address the following questions:

1. What are the barriers that prevent ethnic minorities from seeking a career in the media?
2. What are the barriers that prevent ethnic minorities from gaining media employment?
3. What can be done to encourage more ethnic minorities to consider the media as a career?
4. What are the experiences of ethnic minority people working in the media?
5. What action can be taken to improve the standing of ethnic minorities in the media?

Definition of Key Terms

Ethnic Minorities

Diversity within minority groups needs to be respected and understood. Terms such as ‘Black’ and ‘Asian’ ignore the individuality of minority groups. Such monolithic references are a form of ethnocentrism. Race is a socially constructed phenomenon that has no fixed, universal meaning across space or time. Meanings are negotiated in specific contexts and are heavily influenced by political, economic and social particulars. Miles (1989) argues that societies construct races as real, different and unequal in manners that are of importance to social, economic and political life and maintain them through the operation of the dominant ideology reproducing institutions of society. Thus, Miles (1989) rejects the concept of race and develops the idea of a process of ‘racialization’ as the key analytical tool of his approach. Racialization refers to those instances where social relations between people have been structured by the signification of human biological characteristics in such a way as to define and construct differentiated social collectivities (Miles, 1989:75).

There are problems when ethnic minorities are grouped together as one category in terms of their experiences of the media. However, it is apparent that all candidates from ethnic minorities are susceptible to particular barriers when it comes to seeking and sustaining employment in the media industry in comparison to their White counterparts. Thus, in this study, the term ‘ethnic minorities’ will be employed to refer to a diverse group of individuals situated in the North West of England that do not trace their ethnic lineage to the UK. Although ethnic minorities share common goals and struggles, they are linguistically, religiously and culturally distinct. Ethnic minorities will be referred to separately when referring to cultural and religious differences.

Media

All media are associated with more or less elaborate forms of audience participation.

‘Mass media’ is the generic term for the internet, newspapers, book publishing, radio and television. Other media include the recording industry, movie industry and theatre.

Chapter 2: Possible Barriers to Employment

This chapter will use existing research to assess some of the barriers that could be preventing ethnic minorities from seeking, gaining and succeeding in media employment. It is important to note that the media industry is notoriously difficult to break into regardless of ethnic origin. However, the barriers discussed below have a particularly detrimental effect on the career opportunities of those from minority backgrounds. This section will therefore draw upon research on the media in this country, the US and on ethnic minority experiences in the labour market in general. Due to the limited amount of existing work in this area, it has not been possible to provide a detailed analysis of the differences between different forms of media and the specifics of the industry in the North West. Where possible the differences in the experiences of different ethnic groups have been highlighted but as most existing research has failed to draw out these differences, this has not always been possible.

2.1 Discrimination within the industry

Discrimination within the media industry has largely been cited as one of the major barriers preventing ethnic minorities from succeeding in media employment. Indeed, discrimination can occur at every stage of a media career from applying for a training course, the job application process and initial recruitment through to the lack of opportunities for progression and promotion experienced by many ethnic minorities in media careers. The majority of the literature dealing with such racial discrimination talks about all ethnic minority groups as one homogenous group who are all thought to share an experience of suffering discrimination because they are not White. However, as discussed earlier, it is clear that people of different ethnic origins with religious and cultural differences will experience different barriers to media employment. Thus, more research is necessary in order to look in more detail at the interplay

between ethnicity, culture, religion, community and experiences of discrimination.

Gaining a qualification

It is now common for those entering professional media careers to be educated to degree level and many entering the industry have specific media degrees. 98% of journalists have a degree or postgraduate degree level qualification (Journalism Training Forum, 2002:8) and 66% of those in the audio visual industry are educated to graduate level with 24% possessing postgraduate qualifications (Skillset Workforce Survey 2003:11). The late eighties saw the establishment of the first media graduate courses and now the majority of the UK's University's offer some form of media qualification, often at both undergraduate and postgraduate level.

This increase in the level of education expected of those entering the media industry means that ethnic minorities hoping to pursue such a career must ensure that they get accepted on - and complete - an appropriate qualification in order to compete with other applicants. Another section will discuss some of the structural and economic factors which make it difficult for many ethnic minorities to achieve a degree. It may be because discrimination is a barrier to seeking a media qualification in the first place.

Current literature suggests that many minorities are often discouraged from applying for media courses by the education and careers guidance systems. According to Cohn (1997:170-171), discrimination and low expectations suffered in the early educational career of ethnic minorities can lead to low self-esteem, lack of enthusiasm for education and general feelings of discouragement. In the future this can even lead to a feeling of being an 'outsider' in the workplace. Thus, experiences of discrimination in education can clearly impact upon the career choices of minorities and could be inhibiting them from

pursuing media careers. There is also evidence to indicate that ethnic minorities can suffer discrimination in getting accepted onto journalism and media courses. Ainley's research found that minority applicants were regularly rejected from accredited journalism postgraduate courses due to acceptance criteria that favour graduates from red-brick institutions (less likely to be attended by ethnic minorities) and straightforward racism: "For most Black journalists, applying for mainstream courses and being regularly rejected when they have aptitude is discouraging." (Ainley, 1998:46) Indeed, many of the journalists Ainley spoke to had found that when attending job interviews they were treated with a lack of interest or asked to explain their views on Third World politics.

The research indicates that some careers officers discriminate on ethnic grounds. For example, in Ainley's (1998) study of the experiences of ethnic minority journalists, she found that the majority of her sample had negative experiences of the careers service (1998:42) and in their work on the role and quality of the careers service, Cross et al (1990) found that many minorities were receiving 'negative evaluations,' and that "popular stereotypes affected some careers officer's assessment of abilities and personalities of Black people." (In Ainley, 1998:42) It is therefore possible that careers advisors are failing to encourage minorities to pursue 'non-traditional' careers such as media work. However, the impact of the careers service must not be overplayed as young people from ethnic minority backgrounds are likely to experience a complex system of stereotyping from many different sectors and could be discouraged from pursuing such careers in other ways. Wrench, for example, argues that; "in reality, careers officers did not have much effect on the formation of a young person's occupational aspirations. Their contact with the young person was too short and too late." (1992:140) While the careers service is said to be improving when it comes to issues of equal opportunities: "…there are still local services where race and equal opportunities consciousness remains as dormant as it was

before, more people within the service have become aware of their role in relation to ethnic minority clients." (Wrench, 1992:145)

Cohn's research also indicates that once minorities get accepted onto courses they can face barriers due to discrimination from other pupils. As one of his interviewees said:

> "For a while I was pretty passionate about journalism. I went to (a certain university) for a little while … and it was a lot of fun, but (this school) was just not the place for me. I just didn't like it … It was a place where I met 17-year-olds who had never met a Black person in their life … It was really tense. I mean swastikas on the door, hate mail. It was not fun. I found myself seeing fewer and fewer Black people in the classes … I got tired. You just want to be left alone. So I came home." (Cohn, 1997:167-8)

The idea that ethnic minority students can feel isolated on media courses is reinforced by Ainley's work where she finds that those journalists from minority backgrounds who do get accepted onto media courses are often the only non-White student: "There appears to be an un-stated law that only a token few Black people be accepted for journalism training. Once this quota is filled it does not matter how good the next Black applicant is." (Ainley, 1998:49)

There are also indications that the curriculum in media education institutions can undervalue multi-cultural awareness and that institutions fail to employ minority staff and to actively attract minority students (Wilson and Gutierrez, 1985:164-5). Although this research raises some important points about the barrier of discrimination within media training; an analysis of the *experience* of being the only minority student on the course and the role of staff/teachers in preventing/facilitating the discrimination described here is necessary. There is also a lack

of research into the experiences of minorities on undergraduate courses and whether their treatment differ from postgraduates in any way.

It is very difficult to ascertain both the extent to which the forms of discrimination outlined above act as barriers to minority employment in the media and how these barriers impact differently on students/potential students from different ethnic groups. One of the reasons for this may be the failure of most institutions to undertake ethnic monitoring. This lack of monitoring makes it possible to blame the low numbers of ethnic minorities working in the media industry on a lack of applications or, as Wilson and Gutierrez (1985:164) found in their American study of ethnicity and journalism; a lack of qualifications. However, those minorities who do seek to enter the industry are often more qualified than their White counterparts: 71% of the minority journalists interviewed by Ainley (1998:19) were graduates compared with 55% of other journalists. This certainly indicates that ethnic minorities are applying for - and succeeding in gaining - media qualifications so it is necessary to look to other areas of discrimination within the industry.

Applying for jobs

Despite the lack of research into the experiences of people when applying for media jobs, it appears likely that the ongoing conflict between ethnic minority communities and the media discussed above has resulted in many bme people being dissuaded from seeking media careers. For example, Hacker (1997:72) found that for African-Americans, “the dominant media are most certainly White…To their eyes, the mainstream media speak for a White nation which expects all citizens to conform to its ways … those who wish to move ahead in this world should do their best to emulate White demeanour and diction.” Thus, it can be seen that the way mainstream media represents ethnic minority communities can create a perception

that there is no room for minority culture or voices within the industry. Wilson and Gutierrez's (1985:136) work supports this argument suggesting that the effect of the lack of visible minorities in mainstream media results in minorities experiencing a lack of confidence in their status which in turn may cause a degree of alienation between minorities and White society.

Stone and Tiffin's (2000) investigation into the attitudes of people from ethnic minority communities towards careers in the police force may offers a useful parallel into the way that minorities can be deterred from pursuing careers due to 'bad press.' They found that, "The police were thought not to understand people who had different cultures from their own, and to stereotype people from minority ethnic communities." (Stone and Tiffin 2000:viii) These researchers also found that minorities were deterred from pursuing careers in the police force due to a perception that they would not be able to progress, an opinion partially informed by a lack of visible police officers from ethnic minority backgrounds:

> "Male and female respondents in Black Caribbean (…), Black African, Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups perceived the police as a job where their career goals would not be realised, either because it would take longer for a person from a minority ethnic community to get to the top or, more significantly, they would not be allowed to reach the higher echelons of the police at all." (Stone and Tiffin, 2000:12)

This fear of a lack of opportunity for progression is also reflected in the work of Gottfredson who argues that;

> "Perceptions of job accessibility would be expected to influence vocational aspirations through their impact on one's expectations for obtaining those jobs. People

> are likely to weight their preferences according to these perceptions in order not to waste time pursuing 'poor bets.' People will balance their preferences with their sense of what is possible." (Gottfredson (1981) in Cohn, 1997:169)

Similarly if ethnic minorities think they may be pre-stereotyped by the media then they may well be discouraged from considering working in the industry. More research into minority perceptions of the media industry is necessary in order to assess the impact of media misrepresentations and whether this influence the consideration of media as a career option.

An argument can also be made that ethnic minorities are at a disadvantage when it comes to the advertising of media positions with many people finding work through networks of media professionals to which ethnic minority groups often do not have access. For example, Clive Jones (Skillset Chair) commenting on the Skillset Workforce Survey (2003) argues that access to the industry is a problem which needs addressing:

> "The survey reveals that only around a quarter of the workforce secured their first position in the industry through the formal process of applying in response to an advertisement. The vast majority entered the industry through less formal routes. It will be difficult to redress the demographic balance of the workforce unless more open and transparent recruitment practices are introduced." (2003:7)

Indeed, the Skillset Workforce Survey revealed that only 28% of respondents had entered the industry via a job advertisement and 21% of all respondents found out about their job through friends or relatives. Our own research here suggests that ethnic minorities appear to be disadvantaged by the use of more informal recruitment practices and are much more likely to enter the industry through the traditional path of responding to a job

advertisement. White applicants on the other hand are more likely to gain employment through making contact with a company or finding out about the vacancy through a friend or relative. There is evidence to suggest that when more of an effort is made to target ethnic minority groups when advertising for media positions, the take up is high. A BBC survey undertaken in 1988 found that when journalism jobs were advertised in ethnic publications, there was a huge response by individuals from minority backgrounds. In short if the advertisements are in the right place then the response is good.

Recruitment

Despite the challenges facing those from ethnic minorities gaining work in the media, it is clear that minorities do still apply, although largely they don't appear to have as much success as their White counterparts. For example, 22.5% of all applicants for employment at the BBC were from minority backgrounds compared to only 13% of new recruits (AsiansinMedia.org, 22/02/05). This indicates that there may be occurrences of discrimination at the recruitment stage. As Ainley states;

> "Despite blatant racism common in Britain's media, by the 1980's hundreds of Black Britons were choosing journalism as a career and hoping to put the records straight. But the media, especially newspapers, accepted only a few – for most the doors to mainstream journalism remain closed." (Ainley, 1998:7)

One theory as to why ethnic minorities appear to suffer discrimination in the recruitment stage of their media careers is that the media is owned and run by mainly White and middle class executives who are looking to employ people like themselves. This argument is clearly outlined by Cottle who observes that journalists "come predominantly from White

middle-class homes, select educational institutions and share similar middle-ground political values." (1999:195) This tendency to recruit people from a similar background can also mean that some people from ethnic minority backgrounds fit the image of a potential media employee more than others. As a recent report for The Guardian states; "There is a tendency in any company for staff to replicate the existing culture and we want to ensure that we do not just employ ethnic minority or disabled staff who are like us, but that we seek people with different skills, talents and life experiences." (Case study: diversity. Guardian Unlimited, September 17, 2004). According to Smith (1983), those ethnic groups who are more successful are more 'socially desirable' to White society than others in that they have lighter skin and no community accent (in Cohn 1997:168).

In his article, 'Hideously White,' Creeber demonstrates how the history of British broadcasting has led to this lack of diversity. He states that the BBC has produced a unanimously recognised and persuasive product that "has certainly been responsible for producing a form of cultural hegemony that has helped to dictate and form British public opinion and social attitudes for nearly a century". In particular, the BBC has played a crucial role in conceiving and cementing notions of 'Britishness.'" (Creeber, 2004:28-29) Creeber goes on to highlight the way that the BBC came to symbolise national solidarity and thus constructed attitudes about society that were "rather narrowly defined." (2004:30) Creeber argues that this history has rendered British terrestrial television insufficient to meet the demands of minority audiences. The link between the formation of a somewhat narrow definition of 'Britishness' within terrestrial broadcasting and the lack of diversity within the staff of such organisations is clear. The research on this issue from the perspective of applicants themselves outlined in this report enables us to understand how these ideas of 'social desirability' impact upon the behaviour of those applying for media jobs.

Discrimination is often subconscious. For example, Hacker found that when confronted about the issues of staff diversity most media companies will argue that "the point is not whether all races are represented, but that race is immaterial." (1997:72) He also maintains that White people, and especially those working in the media industry, like to think of themselves as being liberal and so chose not to entertain the idea that they do discriminate against people who are not like them. In 1981 David Smith's explored this issue by conducting an experiment concerning job applications. Smith used a method of correspondence testing where application letters were sent to a sample of advertised jobs – one from a White candidate and one from an ethnic minority candidate. The results indicated that applicants from Asian and West Indian backgrounds suffered discrimination in 30% of cases (1981:178-9). According to Smith; "If nearly one third of Asian and West Indian applicants fail to get an interview because of discrimination, we can expect a still higher proportion to fall by the wayside because of unfair treatment by the time the selection is finally made." (1981:179)

But this was over a quarter of a century ago. Are such prejudices at work in 2007?

There is evidence to suggest that race discrimination is present in the media industry today. Ainley, writes that "Black journalists find it four times more difficult to get jobs than White journalists because of colour discrimination, whether direct or indirect." (1998:2) The Black Members Council of the National Union of Journalists also report on " the discrimination that is still rampant in the employment practices of many media organisations." (NUJ website September 9, 2005) Ainley (1998:60) points out that although they don't employ many ethnic minority staff members, every national paper has two or three. For some the appointment of such limited numbers is evidence of tokenism

Career progression

Whilst it is important to boost the numbers of ethnic minorities working in the media industry if the nature of reporting is to be influenced, it is vital that they are also represented in decision making positions. Wilson and Gutierrez (1985) use the term 'gatekeepers' to describe those people who are involved in the process of selecting which news goes out to the public. The gatekeeping function is a form of 'agenda-setting' for the whole of society. (1985:134) It is in these crucial 'gatekeeper' roles that ethnic minorities are critically underrepresented in this country. The Skillset Survey of the audio-visual workforce found that, "Representation of women, ethnic minorities and disabled people remains unacceptably low, particularly in high-end skill areas such as directing, camera, sound and lighting." (Clive Jones commenting on survey results, Skillset Workforce Survey report 2003:7) This point is reiterated by CRE Chair Trevor Philips who stresses that "change simply isn't happening fast enough…vast chunks of the media…remain unable to relate the whole of our national story." (Cited in Skillset, *Women and Ethnic Minorities Missing in the Media,* online, 2005) Indeed, describing the experiences of her interviewees Ainley ascertains; "There is not so much a glass ceiling but a cement ceiling." (1998:64)

There are a number of possible explanations as to why ethnic minorities are not being promoted to become 'gatekeepers' within the industry. Firstly, many people from minority backgrounds who do successfully enter the media industry are limited to reporting only on areas relating to minority issues and communities. This is something that we found in our work. It is possible, given the low level of priority given to minority community media output by the mainstream broadcasting and print media that those who work in these sectors are less likely to earn respect, credit for their work and ultimately promotion opportunities. Another one of the main barriers to promotion faced by ethnic minorities working in the media industry is a

difficulty being accepted into workplace culture in an industry where contacts and networking are crucial to progression. Although covering the American media industry, Warren Breed's work 'Social Control in the Newsroom' (discussed by Wilson and Gutierrez, 1985:142-6) provides a useful context in which to understand newsroom culture and why minorities are often excluded. Breed argues that all newspapers have covert policies concerning issues of politics, class. and business which can be implemented through editing processes, informal conversations and news planning conferences. These unofficial policies are not documented and must be learned by journalists. The policies are invariably "defined in terms of White majority perception" (1985:142) and sanctions such as "reprimand, loss of esteem amongst colleagues, and lessening of opportunity for upward mobility in the organisation" (1985:143) are applied if the policies are not adhered to. One of the aims of this report is to ask whether such covert and unofficial policies exist in the North-West and whether they result in sanctions or setbacks for those workers who either have different perspectives on politics, class and religion or have not yet 'learnt' these policies. In this light it may be worth noting the comments written by a journalist in response to the 2002 Journalism Training Forum's survey:

> "Newspaper journalism fosters a culture of the clique. Anyone who does not fit into the prevailing clique's clearly defined pigeon-holes tends to be viewed with suspicion and end up being marginalised or forced out. People may be tolerated for their usefulness, but few are promoted to the hierarchy, which remains a club that promotes only those who they recognise as younger versions of themselves." (2002:60)

Research into media workplace culture has reinforced the belief that there are barriers for ethnic minority workers. Simon Cottle, for example, looked at ethnographic studies of news organisations and argues that "the unspoken acceptance of both

shared news values and a widespread professional ideology of 'objectivity'" means that in order to be successful in the industry, ethnic minorities often have to distance themselves "from acting as advocates for those minority groups and interests they might otherwise seek to serve." (Cottle 1999:196) The idea that minorities must in some way distance themselves from their own cultural heritage is powerfully reinforced in Hacker's research where the accounts of journalists clearly reveal that those from minority backgrounds must assimilate in order to progress in their careers. For example, Hacker describes the sort of ethnic minority employee that the media industry is looking for:

> "Not far beneath the surface is an image – more accurately, a fantasy – of the ideal Black workmate. Needless to say, he or she adapts readily to the company of Whites, and has no problem with being the only Black in the room… [If the topic of race arises], the model workmate will assure those present that they are not culpable…" (1997:74)

Hacker's work also demonstrates some of the fears felt by editors and media workers when it comes to employing minorities: "What those on board want to know is whether a Black candidate will turn out to be hostile, political, resentful and hence likely to be unhappy with his or her assignments and surroundings." (1997:73) It is clear from this research that the quality and validity of media output concerning minority representation will not improve if those minorities working in the industry continue having to assimilate and conform to the industries' existing values in order to become a 'gatekeeper' and exert any influence or power over output.

The final barrier to the career progression of minorities in the industry is straightforward racism. The Journalism Training Forum's 2002 survey found that 17% of all respondents had suffered discrimination at work, with ethnic minorities being

more than twice as likely to have recorded discrimination as Whites. A further 28% of ethnic minority journalists did not know whether or not they had been discriminated against leaving only 39% of ethnic minority journalists able to state that they have not suffered discrimination at work (2002:59).

To conclude, despite the relative scarcity of material relating specifically to ethnic minority experiences in entering and succeeding in media employment, it would appear that barriers to success do occur in the form of direct and indirect discrimination experienced whilst training, looking for work, applying for jobs and progressing in media careers. This however, does not describe the complete picture as structural inequalities in society serve to disadvantage many ethnic minority people and prevent them from achieving their goals or setting goals in the first place. These economic and class based barriers are much more deep-rooted than simple discrimination and must be briefly outlined.

2.2 Structural inequalities: Socio-economic disadvantage

Whilst this project is focused specifically on barriers to media employment, a general overview of the inequalities that exist in Britain in terms of socio-economic disadvantage offer a useful insight into potential barriers to successful media careers.

Historically, ethnic minority communities have suffered disadvantage from the time of their arrival in Britain. The first wave of migration came mainly from the Caribbean and the Indian subcontinent and saw people arriving in Britain to find work. These migrant workers were filling a huge demand for labour caused by the post war expanding economy and were thus concentrated in jobs that were not being filled by White workers. Despite the fact that many arrived in Britain with skills, minorities worked mainly in unskilled manual jobs. A small proportion of those who were qualified doctors found

work in hospitals and surgeries but were generally given more junior posts. As Ballard and Holden write:

> "Whether coloured immigrants were manual workers or professionals, it remains generally true to say that they have taken the jobs for which no White Britons could be found, and that these jobs are, by definition, the ones which are less well paid, less pleasant, or less prestigious." (1975:163)

Racial discrimination in employment did not become unlawful until 1968 so it was common for employment agencies and companies to refuse to employ minorities. Brown suggested that Black and Asian people were "more likely…to be unemployed, and those who are in work tend to have jobs with lower pay and lower status than those of White workers." (Brown, 1984:293)

It is not just in employment that ethnic minorities have historically been disadvantaged; immigrant workers were forced to live in poor quality, mostly rented, housing in undesirable inner city areas due to the fact that they were not eligible for council housing at this time and could not afford to buy suitable accommodation due to their low wages[1]. This resulted in ethnic minority groups living in concentrated areas and as Brown states, "the housing circumstances of Black [and Asian] people in Britain are in many ways unusual and inferior to those of White people." (1984:68) The second wave of immigration (involving mainly the families of the first wave immigrants) in the 1970's has been described as a period of consolidation and segregation, with minorities settling into communities, but remaining excluded from White society. The variety of jobs available to minority workers grew and the passing of the 1965, 1968 and 1976 Race Relations Acts gave ethnic minorities formal rights and made racial discrimination in both housing and work unlawful. Racial discrimination in employment

[1] Ethnic minorities are still overrepresented in deprived inner-city areas where access to services, including good quality schools, can be limited.

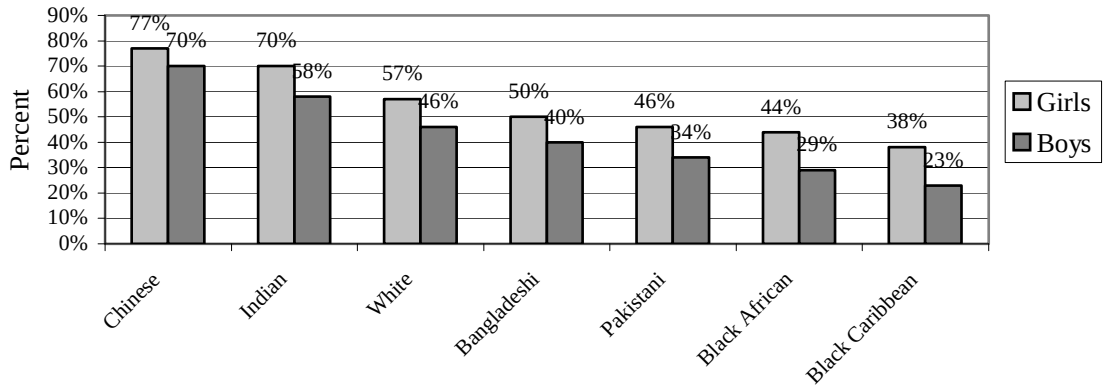
remained rife however and although - due to a gradual reduction in discrimination and the enterprising nature of many minority communities – many ethnic minority people did become more economically powerful, in general racial equality has still not been achieved.

Contemporary statistics indicate that many ethnic minority groups are still suffering economic disadvantage today. The Cabinet Office Report, 'Ethnic Minorities and the Labour Market' (March 2003) highlighted a number of problem areas. For example, "Britain's ethnic minorities have consistently experienced unemployment rates twice those of Whites" (2003:18) with Bangladeshis and Pakistanis experiencing particularly low rates of economic activity. Furthermore, ethnic minorities can expect to be paid less than their White counterparts, Bangladeshis being particularly poorly paid with male average weekly net earnings of £155 less than Whites in 2000. Indeed, four-fifths of Pakistani and Bangladeshi households and around two-fifths of other ethnic minorities have incomes at or below the national average compared to a quarter of White households. Indians in general remain the least disadvantaged ethnic minority group in terms of pay and Indian men actually earned an average of £10 more a week than Whites in 2000. (DfES, 2003:21) Disparities between ethnic groups in terms of eligibility for free school meals also gives a clear indication that a significant proportion of children from certain ethnic groups are experiencing poverty with as many as 50% of Bangladeshi pupils, 42% of Black Africans, 35% of Pakistanis and 30% of Black Caribbean's eligible compared to only 14% of Whites, 12% of Indians and 11% of Chinese pupils (DfES, 2003:9). Many minority groups are also still predominantly employed low down the occupational scale with only 11% of Black Caribbeans, 12% of Black Africans, 14% of Bangladeshi and 15% of Pakistani workers employed as managers or senior officials. Again it is only Chinese and Indian groups who are as well represented as Whites in these top end jobs with 20% of Chinese workers, 21% of Indians and 18% of Whites working as

managers or senior officials. (EOC, 2004:10) It does appear that aside from Indian and Chinese groups, all other ethnic groups are, generally speaking, experiencing inequality in terms of employment rates, pay, poverty and power.

Research by the Department for Education and Skills (2003) has highlighted the fact that these ethnic groups are also suffering disadvantages in education. This will obviously have a huge impact on the career prospects of these groups. The graph below indicates the disparity between ethnic groups in relation to educational attainment with Black pupils in particular severely under-achieving. Indeed, such has been the concern over the low level of educational attainment amongst Black pupils that Trevor Philips has recently suggested Black pupils should be schooled separately. It is only Indian and Chinese groups who are now starting to achieve better results than Whites while Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils achieve lower GCSE results than their White counterparts.

Proportion of young people achieving five or more A*-C grade GCSE's (England, 2002)



Source: DfES, 2003:12

It is important to note that Black Caribbean pupils are around three times as likely to be permanently excluded from school as Whites, with the latest figures indicating that forty-one in every ten thousand pupils of Black Caribbean heritage are permanently excluded from school. (DfES, 2003:19) This

obviously has severe implications for the educational and career success of these Black pupils.

Given these figures it is perhaps surprising to learn that ethnic minorities are actually more likely to continue in full time education after the age of 16 than Whites (with 69% of White 16 year olds remaining in full time education compared to 77% of Pakistanis, 79% of Bangladeshis, 82% of Blacks and as many as 91% of Indians (Youth Cohort Study, Cohort 11, sweep 1, 2002 in DfES, 200324)). Furthermore, 39% of Indians of working age were working towards a degree qualification in 2002 compared with 30% of Pakistanis 36% of Black Africans, 64% of Chinese people and only 26% of Whites. However, Black Caribbeans were still underrepresented with only 22% of those of working age studying for a degree. (Labour Force Survey, 2002 in DfES, 2003:25)[2]

Although ethnic minority groups are continuing into post-16 education and studying for degrees (which on the surface should be helping them to achieve media careers), they appear to generally be taking much more time-consuming and difficult routes into degree education than their White counterparts. For example, minority degree applicants (particularly Black applicants) are much more likely to gain entry to higher education through an Access qualification than Whites with far more Black students entering higher education at age 21 or over. (DfES, 2003:27) UCAS 2000 data also indicates that most ethnic minority pupils are less likely to achieve 21 or more 'A' level points than White pupils (only 19% of Black Caribbean students, 26% Bangladeshi, 28% Black African and 29% of Pakistani students achieved these results compared to 40% of Indian students, 46% of Whites and 50% of Chinese students (in DfES, 2003:27). This will obviously make it harder for minorities to gain places on the more competitive courses (such as media) and to attend good quality, prestigious institutions.

[2] Due to low number reliability problems, it has not been possible to provide figures for all ethnic groups.

Thus, although ethnic minorities with UK citizenship account for 15% of all undergraduates in English Higher Education institutions, they are concentrated in a relatively small number of less prestigious institutions (predominantly modern (post 1992) universities in London and the larger cities). Indeed, in London, minority students account for 60% of full-time undergraduates at modern universities and only 36% at older universities. (DfES, 2003:28)

When assessing the barriers preventing ethnic minorities from entering and progressing in media careers, it is important that the socio-economic factors discussed here are taken into account. Arguably, socio-economic disadvantage can prevent media employment on a number of levels. Firstly, the offspring of parents on low wages are likely to struggle to afford to pay for media training courses, relocate to one of the few cities where there is a multitude of media work available and live off the notoriously low media starting wages. Those students who perform badly in school are also less likely to achieve the qualifications necessary to compete for media positions. Secondly, people whose parents have been excluded from White society and actively prevented from gaining professional positions in the workplace may experience a lack of status and unequal access to the intrinsic social knowledge required to say the 'right thing' in job interviews, 'fit-in' with workplace culture or successfully network with other professionals. These forms of social 'armour' are part of what Bourdieu terms 'capital.' 'Capital' can be economic but also social (i.e. having access to significant contacts and relations), symbolic (i.e. possessing "prestige and social honour" (Jenkins, 1992:85) or cultural (i.e. possessing knowledge that is widely believed to be legitimate). When looking at the networking and workplace culture at the heart of the media industry, it is easy to see how the possession of 'capital' is vital to success. Indeed, according to Bourdieu it is access to 'capital' that determines relationships of domination and subordination within 'social fields' (arenas where society's power struggles occur). It is clear that many minorities may find

themselves in socially subordinate positions because of a lack of access to 'capital' and the link between media success and access to 'capital' can clearly be seen in the area of 'cultural capital' in particular. Bourdieu uses the example of the education system to explain that because the curriculum is defined by the socially powerful, those pupils who have not been socialised in a way that gave them access to these narrowly defined definitions of what constitutes knowledge often fail to achieve success in education. Similarly, because the media industry is dominated and controlled by the White middle-classes, 'news-value' is defined almost solely from this perspective too. It is therefore likely that many ethnic minorities have not been raised in an environment where views and perspectives are defined along the same lines. Thus, they experience a lack of access to cultural capital. It is in this manner that inequalities are reproduced with those people raised in White, middle-class homes having a sort of pre-disposition to fitting into media culture and sharing a similar perspective with editors and producers:

> "the disposition to make use of the School and the predispositions to succeed in it depend…on the objective chances of using it and succeeding in it that are attached to the different social classes, these dispositions and predispositions in turn constituting one of the most important factors in the perpetuation of the structure of educational chances as an objectively graspable manifestation of the relationship between the education system and the system of class relations." (Bourdieu, 'Reproduction' in Jenkins, 1992:112)

2.3 Cultural Factors

Finally it may be useful here to introduce some of the cultural barriers that could be hindering ethnic minority success in media employment. Analysing minority ethnic culture as a possible

barrier to media career success must be done with extreme caution. Culture is often cited as the sole cause of ethnic minority under-representation in the industry and can be used as an 'excuse' for failing to address the structural inequalities and discrimination within the industry. It must also be remembered that there is no one homogenous 'ethnic minority culture' and that even within each ethnic group there are cultural differences related to such things as region of origin, current location within Britain, religion, class and gender. It is all too easy to stereotype ethnic minorities and to assign pre-determined cultural values and beliefs to all minorities regardless of their differences. However, whilst it is imperative that overstatement is avoided we have to acknowledge that, for some, cultural factors may present a barrier to media employment. There has been very little research in this area and the work undertaken in this project will seek to gain a deeper understanding of the interplay between cultural difference and the nature of the UK's media industry. Therefore this section merely aims to highlight some traits that could prove to have an impact for certain ethnic groups on their employment in the media.

Firstly, DfES statistics reveal that ethnic minority students as a whole are most likely to be reading for degrees in subjects such as Computer Sciences, Medicine and Dentistry and Law than humanities based subjects (HESA, 2001 in DfES, 2003:30). The DfES goes on to highlight that Black Caribbean and African students are statistically more likely to be studying Biological Sciences, Creative Arts and Design and Law and Engineering, whereas Indian and Pakistani students were found to favour subjects such as Medicine (and Medicine Allied subjects), Dentistry and Law (DfES, 2003:29). More research is necessary to find out how and why these minorities choose such subjects.

Secondly the Cabinet Office's evaluation of the position of ethnic minorities in the labour market (2003) also found that there tended to be a high rate of self-employment amongst Asian groups, with Pakistani and Indian men consistently being found

to have higher rates of self-employment than their White counterparts. Black groups in contrast were found to have the lowest level of self-employment of all ethnic groups (DfES, 2003:24). This report does at least highlight the fact that certain working patterns are more common for some ethnic groups than others and that these patterns may not adapt with equal ease to the nature of some media work.

Finally there are also familial differences between the ethnic groups which are likely to impact on people's availability to work in the media. For example, according to the 2001 Census, Bangladeshi and Pakistani women were much more likely than women from any other ethnic group to be out of the labour market because they are looking after the home and/or family with Black-Caribbean women being the least likely to be at home (40% of Bangladeshi women and 36% Pakistani were economically inactive due to family responsibilities compared to 14% of Indian women, 13% Chinese, 12% Black African, 11% White and just 8% Black Caribbean (EOC, Additional Tables, Accessed 18/03/2005). Whilst further research is necessary to understand the implications of these statistics for the careers of individual women the unpredictable nature of some media work may be a barrier for women with families to care for. As we shall see this is something that affects women from some ethnic groups more than others.

But to reiterate: while certain cultural traits are certainly significant for ethnic groups it is important not to see them as limiting. It is certainly impossible to derive any real understanding of the barriers to media employment from statistics alone and this is why further research into this area is so essential. For example, when studying the employment patterns of ethnic minority graduates, Ballard and Holden (1975) had been led to believe that a major barrier to career success was a reluctance (perceived by careers officers) amongst ethnic minority job seekers to relocate away from home in pursuit of employment. However, their research actually

revealed that minorities were just as willing as Whites to move away for a job indicating the importance of separating real traits from stereotypes when conducting research into minority groups. (1975:164). Clearly more work needs to be done in this area.

Chapter 3: Methodology

A qualitative approach

An investigation into experiences of discrimination, structural inequalities and cultural barriers is a sensitive topic for research and thus a method was required that would put participants at ease and allow them to discuss their concerns in an unconstrained manner, rather than impose some form of rigid framework to their answers. “Qualitative methods are concerned with producing discursive description and exploring social actors’ meanings and interpretations.” (Blaikie, 2000:232) Previous research in this area has tended to focus on the low number of ethnic minorities working in the media industry but the reasons for this discrepancy require further investigation. Little research has been conducted which gives ethnic minorities aspiring to enter the media industry and those already working within it, the opportunity to record their experiences. Following Bristow & Esper (1988), the participants in this research were considered to be the experts of their own experiences. By giving them the opportunity to define themselves, to demonstrate their diversity and realities, they are able to present a new image of themselves. Thus a strategy of investigation is required that will treat the participants involved as authorities. As the methodological considerations are related to the research aims, a qualitative approach is indicated by the emphasis on exploring the experiences of those working in and aspiring to enter the media industry. This technique enabled an understanding of those being researched by locating the meanings that they place on events, processes and structures of their lives and for connecting those meanings to the social world around them (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Semi-structured interviews

As a research team, we had an important role in giving ethnic minorities aspiring to enter and those working in the media a voice that has been unheard for so long. Thus we wanted to refrain from presenting a distorted version of their realities in any way and the qualitative interview was thought to be the most appropriate method to employ. The semi-structured interview offered access to the ideas, thoughts and memories of the participants in their own words, rather than in the words of the researcher (Reinharz, 1992). Here the interviewer asks major questions the same way each time but is free to alter their sequence and to probe for more information (Fielding & Thomas, 2001). The objective of this technique is to elicit rich, detailed materials that can be used in qualitative analysis. The object is to find out what is happening as opposed to determining the frequency of predetermined kinds of things that the researcher already believes can happen (Lofland, 1971:76).

The work of feminist writers such as Oakley (1981) and Stanley & Wise (1990) influenced our approach to this method of working with their emphasis on egalitarianism and empowerment. These writers suggest that understanding comes through an equal exchange of conversation which is best achieved when the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee is non-hierarchical. Conversely, the scientific ethic of detachment and role differentiation between the researcher and the researched is emphasised in dominant modes of interviewing where focus is placed on objectivity. As Stanley writes 'objectivity is a set of intellectual practices that separates individuals from knowledge of their own subjectivity'. (Stanley 1990:1)

The role of the interviewers was extremely important in establishing trust, which in turn was imperative in obtaining good quality data. The interviewers adopted an informal, conversational style when conducting the interviews. The semi-

structured interview allows more flexibility in the exchange while retaining the advantages of a structured interview which ensures all relevant points are addressed. While the original script of the interview guarantees the uniformity of topics across the whole sample, each particular interview is different due to the new questions elicited by the particular answers given by the interviewee. However, this is a time-consuming method, requiring further time to collect the data and analyse the responses.

It is important to obtain some background information prior to conducting the interviews to allow for a more relaxed and informed dialogue. Thus, participants were sent a 'personal details form' and a 'consent form' before any interviews were arranged. Consent forms were devised to obtain permission from the participants to take part in the study. Parental consent was obtained for the under-18s where a separate consent form was used. All participants (and their parents when necessary) were informed of the research aims and reasons for the interviews in writing before any data was collected. They were also told that their interviews would be recorded on audio-cassette or mini-disc and subsequently transcribed before analysis. Interviews were arranged once the personal details forms and signed consent forms were sent back to the research team.

Interview schedules

Separate interview schedules were designed for *young people*; *students / jobseekers* and *media employees*. The schedule consisted of open-ended questions that were addressed in each interview. Young people were asked about their career aspirations and their views of the media. Students and jobseekers were asked to discuss their views on working in the industry and to give reasons for their choice of career. Media employees were asked questions about their career history and their experiences of finding work and working in the media. The

interview schedules consisted of open-ended questions that were addressed in each interview. This approach produced non-standardized information that allowed the research team to make full use of the differences between the participants while also giving participants the opportunity to discuss any concerns in elaborate detail. The following question was included in the schedules to ensure this was the case:

- *In terms of what we have discussed, is there anything else that is of importance to you that you would like to add?*

The schedule designs were then sent to the University of Salford Research Governance and Ethics Committee for approval to ensure none of the questions were of a sensitive nature. Schedule designs were modified subsequent to the piloting of earlier versions to two young people, two students and two media employees. These individuals were then asked the following questions at the end of the pilot to establish if any of the schedule questions were ambiguous, inappropriate or insensitive.

- *What did you think of the interview?*
- *Did you find any of the questions offensive / inappropriate?*
- *Were any of the questions unclear?*
  (If yes, which ones and why?)
- *Is there any area that I failed to cover which you feel is of importance?*

Feedback from the participants proved very useful as several questions were later reordered and reworded. The pilot interviews also helped the interviewers to get a better idea of what to expect.

All of the interviews were treated in accordance with the *Data Protection Act.* .ie the information has been anonymised. Research was only carried out once approval had been obtained

for the design from the Research Governance and Ethics Committee at the University of Salford.

Focus Groups

Focus groups were considered a useful method for discussing questions around media and ethnicity as individuals may benefit from hearing the opinions of others before constructing their own. This socially-oriented qualitative method avoids what can sometimes appear strained and artificial in one-to-one interviews. Focus groups allow the facilitator to explore any new issues as they arise in the discussion. Given that one of the research aims is to bring people together to consider solutions to problems that immediately impact on the region this method seems ideal. A qualitative method such as the focus group can work well with those involved because it can offer a greater degree of shared ownership of a project. This notion of ownership and a community moving together is a sub-theme of the work. However, it is important to acknowledge that sometimes focus groups can be overwhelmed by strong individuals who may be guilty of overpowering the discussion which can lead some individuals to be reluctant to speak, and in some cases feel resentful.

Three public meetings were to be held in Burnley, Oldham and Salford, where smaller focus group discussions also took place. Media representatives, educators, young people, students and media jobseekers in the North West were invited to attend.
Focus group facilitators were briefed with the questions to be addressed at the meetings. The research team emphasised the importance of creating a permissive environment to the facilitators, in order to ensure the discussion progressed in a relaxed fashion. The facilitators all had considerable experience in this area and were more than capable of steering the group discussions away from irrelevant issues and towards the agreed subjects. Scribes were employed to take notes of the discussions and the meetings were filmed to ensure any important quotes

were not missed. Permission to film was obtained prior to the meetings. All participants were given the option of not being recorded but nobody objected.

3.1 Sampling

Which groups were targeted and why

In order to gain an understanding of the experiences throughout the careers of ethnic minorities in the media it was necessary to conduct interviews with people at various stages of their careers. Thus the sampling strategy targeted young people who were considering embarking upon media careers, university students and graduates who were in the process of looking for work in the media and those who were already employed in the media industry. This enabled us to gain an understanding of what sort of factors influence the career choices of young people from ethnic minority backgrounds, the barriers and experiences faced by those looking for media work and the successes and barriers to career progression experienced by those who had already found work in the media.

The research team also felt it important to gain a diverse sample in terms of both gender and ethnicity, particularly when considering the importance of accounting for the many religious and cultural differences within and between Britain's ethnic minority communities discussed in earlier chapters.

Sampling methods

Due to the qualitative nature of the research, it was not necessary to achieve a sample that would be statistically representative of the North West region, thus a number of sampling strategies were employed to achieve the diverse sample required for the project.

As mentioned earlier, three public meetings were hosted (in partnership with The Mediatrust) in Burnley, Oldham and Salford in order to conduct the focus groups. The Mediatrust were able to use their industry contacts to ensure that a number of media professionals from ethnic minority backgrounds were invited, along with community representatives and young people interested in pursuing media careers. All attendees were asked whether they would be willing to take part in interviews for the project and a number of media employees and job seekers were recruited.

Although useful for gaining some media employee and jobseeker interviews, the public meetings did not provide a complete sample. One reason for this was that the ethnic minority populations of Burnley and Oldham are predominantly Pakistani and Bangladeshi (of Burnley's ethnic minority population 60% are Pakistani and 19% Bangladeshi and of Oldham's ethnic minorities, 46% are Pakistani and 33% Bangladeshi (2001 Census). This meant that the Salford event alone did not provide enough interviewees from other minority groups. It also proved difficult to approach young people for interviews at the meetings as it was deemed inappropriate to request contact details from minors without seeking permission from their parents or guardians.

Snowball sampling

Snowball sampling techniques were employed, mainly to boost the numbers of media employees in the sample. Snowball sampling involves building a network of contacts from one or two initial sample members. Although time-consuming, this method proved very useful and a number of the media employees that had attended the public meetings were able to put the Research Assistants in contact with colleagues and acquaintances who in turn recommended others who might be able to help.

Newspaper advertisements

A number of job-seekers and two of the college students interviewed were accessed through the publication of a press release in a number of local Asian newspapers: The Asian Leader, The Asian Image and The Asian News. Although obviously targeting only interviewees from the North West's Asian communities, this method enabled us to access graduates who are not affiliated to a university, community project or media organisation but who are looking for work. Unfortunately it was not possible to replicate this sampling strategy for other ethnic groups as there is no equivalent infrastructure of ethnic minority specific media outlets in the area for non-Asian ethnic minority communities.

Sixth Form colleges

Sixth Form Colleges across the North West were contacted and two colleges allowed a Research Assistant to go into the building and interview young ethnic minority media studies pupils. This sampling strategy was beneficial in a number of ways. As well as enabling the Research Assistants to interview a number of young people in a single day, going into colleges meant that the interviews could take place in a neutral location where the young people's safety could be assured. The cooperation of media studies tutors at both colleges also meant that parental consent could be obtained for all interviewees under the age of eighteen.

University media courses

The research team was based within the University of Salford's School of Media, Music and Performance and were thus able to recruit a number of ethnic minority students from a range of the School's undergraduate and postgraduate programs. When combined with the students and jobseekers accessed through the

newspaper advertisements and public meetings this provided us with a diverse sample of both students and graduate jobseekers.

Speculative letters

In order to increase the ethnic diversity of the sample of media employees, letters or e-mails (accompanied by a follow up telephone call) were sent to ethnic minority media employees who did not attend the public meetings and who were not accessed through the snowball sampling techniques discussed above. Although response rates are notoriously low for this method of sampling, a number of media workers did respond and the sample was successfully diversified using this method.

Success of sample

The combination of sampling methods discussed above resulted in a sample of fourteen young people, thirteen students and media jobseekers and twenty-one media employees. The young people were aged between sixteen and twenty-one, the majority of students and jobseekers were in their early to mid twenties but ranged in age between nineteen and forty-one and the media employees ranged from 16 to 54. The tables below display the ethnic, religious and gender diversity achieved in the sample:

Young people – Ethnicity

Ethnic group	Number in sample
Black-Caribbean	3
Pakistani	5
Bangladeshi	3
Indian	1
Chinese	2

Young people – Religion

Religion	Number in sample
Muslim	8
Christian	1

Sikh	1
No religion	4

Young people – Gender

Gender	Number in sample
Male	8
Female	6

Jobseekers and students – Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Number in sample
Indian	3
Chinese	1
Black-Caribbean	2
Iranian	1
Black Other	1
Bangladeshi	2
Greek	1
Korean	1
Russian	1

Jobseekers and students – Religion

Religion	Number in sample
Hindu	3
Muslim	3
Christian	4 (including 2 Christian Orthodox)
No religion	3

Jobseekers and students – Gender

Gender	Number in sample
Male	2
Female	11

Media employees – Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Number in sample
Pakistani	11
Kashmiri	1
Black-African	1

Black-Caribbean	5
Indian	2
Dual Heritage	1 (Jamaican and Irish)

Media Employees – Religion

Religion	Number in sample
Muslim	12
Christian	5 (including 1 Catholic, 2 Church of England)
Hindu	1
No religion	2
Refused	1

Media Employees – Gender

Gender	Number in sample
Male	12
Female	9

As these figures indicate, the sample of young people contained a good ethnic mix, with slightly more Pakistanis than other groups, although the religious mix was predominantly Muslim. The youth sample also contained a fair gender divide. The student and jobseeker sample was extremely ethnically diverse and also contained four non-British students. However, the students and jobseekers interviewed were overwhelmingly female. The two males that were interviewed had replied to the newspaper advertisements. Very few male students or jobseekers attended the public meetings and there were low numbers of ethnic minority men studying in the School of Media, Music and Performance in general. This gender disparity must be taken into account when reading the analysis of student interviews. Finally, although great effort was made to ensure that a diverse sample of media employees was achieved, there were far more Pakistani interviewees than any other group. South Asians in general accounted for 67% of the sample of media employees. Although this could, in part, be a reflection of the high proportion of Pakistani people living in the North West region, this disparity is due mainly to the fact that the snowball

sampling techniques used to recruit many of the media employees involved contacts who worked predominantly in Asian specific media organisations.

Despite the fact that the sample of students and jobseekers was predominantly female and that the sample of media employees contained a large number of Pakistani interviewees, there was an adequate ethnic mix to enable some basic comparisons to be made and considering the difficulty in locating and accessing ethnic minority media employees, who are so low in numbers anyway, the sample obtained can be deemed successful as all the major ethnic groups in the region are represented.

The samples also contained representatives from a range of different media with students studying courses such as journalism, broadcasting and documentary production. Media employees included mainstream and ethnic minority specific newspaper journalists, editors, radio presenters, broadcast journalists and freelancers.

3.2 Ethical considerations

Informed consent

In order to ensure that interviewees were not deceived or coerced into partaking in this study, informed consent was gained from all those who took part. Davidson Reynolds lists four conditions whereby a researcher may be confident that an individual has made a self-determined decision to become a research participant. These include the "competence to make decisions abut one's future," the "receipt of full and complete information about possible effects," a "comprehension of information," and "a situation that allows a voluntary choice." (1979:86) In order to ensure that participants achieved "full and complete information about possible effects" all interviewees were given a letter outlining the aims and objectives of the research as well as information about how the data would be

handled and used and as much information as was available about the likely outcomes of the research. To ensure the "comprehension of information," participants were initially asked by the interviewer whether they had any questions or concerns about the interview and every effort was made to ensure that all questions were answered in full.

Due to ambiguity over whether minors possess the "competence to make decisions about one's future," parental consent was gained for all those interviewees under the age of eighteen. Special care was also taken in the explanation of the research aims to young people to ensure that they fully comprehended all the information they had been given.

Confidentiality

Despite the fact that many participants stated that they did not object to the use of their name in this project, numbers were allocated to all interviewees to protect them from being identified. Confidentiality was particularly important for the students and media employees (who may have experienced problems due to talking openly about any experiences of discrimination within their university or organisation) but was in turn more difficult to achieve. Media employees are particularly vulnerable to identification because there are so few ethnic minorities working in the media industry in the North West, making it more likely that people will recognise them. For this reason organisation names were only used in the context of work experience placements and applications so that the media employees interviewed could not be identified by their place of work. Some students were also vulnerable to identification due to the fact that there are likely to be very few people from their particular ethnic group studying media in the North West. All interviewees were warned of these risks of identification before their interview.

3.3 Research; conduct and analysis

Using the interview schedules

Despite the fact that the youth and student interviews were piloted, some problems with the questions remained. A number of young people found the schedules to be slightly repetitive particularly in terms of the questions asking them about their career ambitions in general and then those asking whether they had considered working in the media. Some young people also had problems commenting on whether some people have more difficulties than others getting jobs in the media and considering that they had not yet attempted to look for media work themselves and that most of them did not know anybody in the industry this was perhaps an unfair question to ask. Despite these problems, the youth interview schedules generally worked well and the opening questions asking about career plans and subject choices served as a useful 'warm-up,' easing the (often nervous) young people into the interview and getting them talking.

In some respects the opposite was true for the students and media employees' schedules as the initial 'warm up' question asking them to talk about their career history was possibly too effective. Often this opening question would result in such lengthy explanations that later parts of the schedule had to be rushed through, especially considering that the majority of the media employees had only a limited amount of time to spend on the interview. The questions asking about parental reactions to career choices were also sometimes slightly embarrassing to ask of those media employees who were in there fifties. However, despite these problems the student and media employee interviews were particularly effective and most participants talked about their experiences and opinions in an extremely uninhibited way resulting in a large amount of rich data.

Other practicalities

All interviews were recorded using a small tape recorder. Most interviewees were undeterred by the presence of the tape recorder and although some of the young people did seem aware of it when it was first switched on, during the course of the interview they seemed to relax and forget it was there.

Another practical consideration was the location of the interviews. A key priority was to ensure the safety of the Research Assistants. Although most of the young people were interviewed in their school or college and many of the students and jobseekers were prepared to travel to the University, some had to be interviewed in their homes and in these cases the safety of the Research Assistants was protected through keeping in regular contact with the office. Most media employees were interviewed in their place of work. Although this was a safe option, in some cases it was not possible for a quiet room to be found and the presence of background noise and regular interruptions caused some problems.

Gaining and maintaining rapport

It was particularly important when interviewing the young people that an effective rapport was gained and maintained. Many appeared nervous about the interview and it was necessary for the Research Assistants to work hard to put them at ease by asking them questions about their day, which subjects they were enjoying and what they were doing that evening before embarking on the interview questions. Although this worked with most of the young people, some remained quite monosyllabic and it was extremely difficult to get some young people to expand on their answers.

Some of the interviews with students/jobseekers and, in particular, media employees suffered the opposite problem and were somewhat difficult to control. In some cases participants

veered far from the subject matter and the Research Assistant conducting the interview was forced to interrupt in an attempt to return the discussion to a more useful area. For this reason some of the interviews were extremely long. In instances where media employees had a limited amount of time to spend on the interview it was sometimes necessary to be relatively firm about asking questions. The balance between maintaining control of the interview, whilst at the same time remaining polite and allowing interviewees the freedom to express their views was sometimes difficult to achieve.

Finally, in some interviews the ethnicity of the interviewer had a direct impact upon the development and maintenance of rapport. For example, in one interview involving a female Muslim ex-media employee and a female Muslim interviewer, the interviewee commented that she felt more comfortable talking about her experiences to another Muslim woman and as a result the interview generated very rich data that would perhaps not have been achieved had the interviewer not been Muslim herself. In another case, a dual heritage interviewee expressed doubts that a White interviewer could fully understand his experiences, a sentiment echoed by another interviewee of Caribbean heritage. It was obviously impossible for all participants to be interviewed by someone from their own ethnic or religious group but most interviewees seemed comfortable talking about their experiences regardless of the ethnicity of the interviewer. It was felt that by listening carefully to the opinions and experiences of the participants and being reflexive about how far it is possible for a White researcher to understand how it feels to experience discrimination or isolation due to ethnicity that good quality data could be generated regardless of the ethnicity of the interviewer.

Ethical considerations revisited

There were some further ethical considerations that were not planned for and arose during the course of the research. One

issue was that despite the fact that the purpose of the project and roles of the Research Assistants were explained to all participants, a number of the young people, students and jobseekers interviewed seemed to feel that they would be able to receive some form of careers advice during the interview and asked the opinion of the Research Assistant about their career progression. This presented the ethnical dilemma of trying to ensure that participants also gained something positive from the research process as neither of the Research Assistants had any expertise in the area of media careers advice. There was a certain degree of guilt associated with generating such useful data from the interviews but being unable to answer the questions posed by the interviewees themselves. In order to go some way to overcoming this problem, participants were offered a number of industry careers leaflets and all the young people interviewed were invited to a short open afternoon at the School of Media Music and Performance where they could look at the production facilities and talk to lecturers about their career plans.

Another ethical issue that arose was that of causing potential harm to the subjects. Although the interview schedules were not regarded to be psychologically harmful; a number of young people appeared anxious when asked about their career goals and ambitions, stating that they are felt very stressed and uncertain about what they wanted to do. This was an unexpected problem and in situations where the interviewees appeared to be suffering some form of distress that line of questioning was immediately dropped.

The transcription process

All the interviews were transcribed by a freelance transcriber who is not based in the North West area and to whom none of the interviewees were known. This means that the confidentiality of all participants was further anonymised assured. The transcriber was also a social researcher and this

resulted in high quality transcriptions that were sensitive to the nature of the areas being discussed.

Conducting the focus groups

In 2003 the project director lead a research project with the Mediatrust and Home Office North-West which explored community responses to the disturbances that took place in the North-West in 2001. (Community Cohesion and the Media) On that occasion three towns were chosen – Oldham, Blackburn and Bury and the attendees were broken down into three focus groups composed of approximately 12 people – the upper limit for focus groups but still workable. In order to create a responsive environment every effort was made to create new groups so that individuals would not adopt a group mentality or talk to friends. Each group would always include media representatives, educators and young people.

For the most part these discussions progressed very well however on one or two occasions feelings ran high and individuals who had been close to the reporting of the disturbances began to dominate the discussions to the exclusion of others.

As a result of these experience we made changes for this project.

The meetings held in Oldham, Blackburn and Salford began with the project director giving the background to the project. This was then followed with a description of how the evening would proceed. All participants were encouraged to express their opinions freely.

After a brief discussion to clarify house rules the participants were then broken into three focus groups ensuring that, just as in the Community Cohesion project, representatives of education, the media and the community were dispersed throughout each group

At the end of each focus group the facilitator wrote up the results. He or she then presented a series of bullet points which were written up on a clip-board. Each group was asked during this session if there were any points they wished to add. In short all means necessary were taken to ensure that the focus groups worked to produce a true reflection of what each member believed. These points were then discussed by the larger reassembled group.

Analysis

Glaser and Strauss's 'grounded theory' method of analysis was followed to ensure that as far as possible all the themes created from the data remained as true to the meanings of those people interviewed as possible. The grounded theory approach to qualitative analysis is useful because it begins with the raw data and builds up to a theory. As the authors argue, "Grounded theory can help to forestall the opportunistic use of theories that have dubious fit and working capacity." (Glaser and Strauss: 1967:4) Commonly occurring opinions and experiences were therefore noted, building up to the creation of the sub-themes and major themes outlined throughout the report. Thus, as far as possible, the themes that were created were not based on preconceived ideas. However, despite the use of this method of analysis it is inevitable that the ideas, views, gender and ethnicity of the researchers will have impacted on the analysis. One drawback to using the grounded theory method is that the biography of the individual interviewees is lost as the data is divided thematically. In order to overcome this problem, the following chapters have been written using numbers to identify the participants thus making it possible to ascertain some sense of the participants' biographies.

Chapter 4: Results and Findings

We begin this chapter with a summary of findings from the various focus groups. As noted above focus groups work on the basis that peoples' ideas do not form in a vacuum and are successful if self-disclosure is facilitated through a permissive environment. We believe that the range of focus groups held in the three locations produced responses that might never have emerged in the context of a formal one-to-one interview. This is not to say that we find any huge discrepancies between the two methods but that naturally the sociality of the focus groups can produce a more striking expression of opinion.

What follows are summaries of what took place in the focus groups in Burnley and Oldham.

Q. 1 <u>What positive steps could be taken by BME groups to improve their standing within the media?</u>

- Negative reporting and use of stereotypes need to be challenged.

- Resist the pull to London by creating a Northern 'hub'

- More BME people should be encouraged to apply for jobs in the media.

- The careers industry and media themselves must do more 'reach out' work into the communities.

- Educators should make it plain that careers opportunities do exist in the media for BME communities.

- Parents need to know more about the career structure of the industry.

Q. 2 How is Islam represented in the Media? What can Muslim faith communities do to address this?

- Local press need to develop a greater sensitivity to local communities.

- When newsworthy events occur the national press 'swamp' the area. This can lead to the lazy use of stereotypes from visiting journalists. It is therefore important to establish good local links.

- Islamophobia is a huge very real problem that the media has helped develop. 'The media can (and regularly does) perpetuate stories that Islam is not tolerated.' Only negative stories featured.

* Islam is depicted principally through the evocation of war and terrorism

How can this be addressed?

- One solution is to investigate why people don't complain enough to the media about this representation (although the feeling that people are speaking up for the first time was also expressed).

- Awareness training has to take place starting in the schools.

- Find a clearer role for the inter-faith councils.

- Seek structural changes in media.

- BME community to set up their own independent media.

Q. 3 Are BME groups unwilling to commit to the media as a career? If so what can be done to address it? Would it make any difference if there were more BME representation in the media?

- No lack of enthusiasm but a lack of knowledge about how the industry works.

- The media is not seen as a 'cool' profession

- Lack of role models for Asian women.

- Advertising for jobs etc are not often put in places where the BME community look.

- More recognition that the 'Asian Community' is very diverse and that each strand needs role models.

- New Media seems more of an option because of the freedom it offers.

- BME groups seem interested in setting up own media.

- Need for media to form partnerships with educational institutions.

- Parents are an influence and see media as a risky job.

- Accents were seen as an issue by many participants. This was allied to the fear that working in the media might in some way betray one's roots.

- There is a perception within the Asian communities that much of the media is owned by Jews. This leads many Muslims to believe that they are bound to be misrepresented by the media.

These results were then considered by the project team. After some discussion we altered the questions for the last event in Salford.

Focus Group One looked at '**what actions can be taken to improve the standing of BME groups in the media?'** The main findings were:

- Stereotypes are produced far too often and that this is the result of journalists not thinking through a situation. The BME community believe that the repetition of these stereotypes is very harmful because they actually inhibit thinking. Regularly mispronouncing names does not help.

- Employers need to do far more to encourage the participation of the BME community in the media both in terms of input and job opportunities.

- BME people need to feel empowered to express themselves when working in the media.

- Media organisations should report on their successes in attracting some ethnic minorities. This might in turn serve to boost recruitment.

* Boost the value of the North by creating a 'hub' and resisting the pull to London.

Focus Group Two discussed the question '**are some groups misrepresented by the media**?' The main finding here were:

- Irritation expressed that the use of the term 'Asian' and 'Black' hid a multiplicity of cultures, religions and ways of life.

- Few representations in popular culture and on boards such as Manchester Chamber of Commerce. This also misses business opportunities.

- The belief in some sections of the community that a 'get rich quick' mentality prevails and that the virtues of

education and long-term investment have to be made. This coupled with a lack of understanding of how media careers progress is distancing potential BME workers.

- The media is a middle-class institution many feel excluded from.

The third focus group looked at the **barriers preventing ethnic minorities from seeking careers in the media**.

- Several participants believed that 'if your face don't fit' then you had no chance of progressing

- Class still plays an important role which should be taken on board in any discussion.

- The need for representation. Just seeing someone from BME background worked as an inspiration for some.

After these focus groups finished in December the one-to-one interviews began in earnest. (The results are analysed below).

The team considered the interview data and the focus groups to produce modified questions for the last meeting in May during which some outline formulations based on the research would be made

4.1 Interview results

Practical Themes

This section provides some background information about the sample and aims to provide a brief overview of the levels of information available to those seeking media work, how experienced and qualified the sample were, what factors attracted interviewees to the media industry and how they feel about media reporting. In later sections we provide a much more detailed insight using extracts from the interviews.

Have those who are yet to enter the media industry received careers advice?

	Young people	Students/jobseekers
Yes	9	7
No	5	5

Of those young people who did receive careers advice, the media was mentioned in only 6 cases. However, it must be remembered that many young people had not considered media themselves at the time they received advice.

Although only 9 young people had received careers advice, 13 of the 14 young people interviewed felt that they knew where they could access careers advice if they felt they needed it. Most of these mentioned a careers service provided within their college as the place they would go to for more information, with one person stating he would speak to industry professionals and one stating that she would use the internet for information.

Of the 7 students and jobseekers who had received careers advice, 3 had received advice from their university; others had not had any careers advice since they were at school.

The table below shows where those students/jobseekers who feel they need more information would go to for advice:

Internet	1
Tutors	4
Industry professionals	1
Careers Service	2

Sources of information

From where are people getting their perceptions about what it is like to work in the media?

	Young people	Students/jobseekers
Tutors	5	1
Industry professionals	2	5
Careers literature	1	-
Careers websites	-	1
Industry events/open days	1	1
University prospectus	1	-
Television	5	-
Novels	1	-
Work experience	-	3

The table above clearly indicates the importance of college and university tutors in shaping young people's perceptions of what it would be like to work in the media. It is also clear that young people at college are much more likely to form their perceptions from television whereas the students and jobseekers had more access to industry professionals from whom they could seek advice.

How well informed was the sample?

The table below indicates how well informed young people in the sample felt they were about media careers.

Not well informed	8
Adequately informed	4
Well informed	2

The figures above indicate that despite the fact that most young people know where they can go to access further careers information, the majority felt that they were not adequately informed about the media industry as a potential career and only two considered themselves to be well informed.

Qualifications

The table below indicates the highest level of qualification achieved by the media employees interviewed.

Postgraduate degree/Masters degree	4
Degree	10
HND	1
A-levels	4
College senior	1
GCSE's	1

Three of the four media employees for whom A-levels were their highest level of qualification were studying for degrees at the time of the study.

Reasons for career choices

Young people were asked what it was they enjoyed about studying media. The range of responses received is listed below:

- Not classroom based
- Filming and researching
- All aspects
- Production and editing
- Performing
- Good fun
- Very practical
- It is a 'different' choice
- It is a glamorous industry
- Media theories are interesting

Professions that young people wanted to enter

The young people in the sample wanted to enter the following professions:

News reporter
Actor
Producer
Editor
Researcher
Director
TV Presenter
Radio presenter
Film maker
Journalist

Students/jobseekers and media employees were also asked what it was about the media industry that attracted them to pursue media careers. The range of responses is listed below:

- Media is more interesting that stereotypical professions
- Media work has great variety
- Always wanted to do something artistic
- Enjoyed media studies at A-level
- Motivated to reduce current bias and stereotypical portrayals of ethnic minorities in the media
- Suits creative nature
- Appealing image of being a journalist
- Documentaries are interesting
- Always enjoyed English and writing
- Other ‘traditional’ subjects were not creative enough
- Very interested in sports
- Wanted to work in a dynamic and fast paced industry
- Enjoyed a work experience placement
- Got involved in a community radio station and enjoyed it
- To overcome barriers faced by ethnic minorities in accessing the industry
- Fame
- Encouraged by teacher
- Job satisfaction
- Enjoy meeting different people
- Interested in religion and culture

- Interested in current affairs

Views of working in the media / experiences of working in the media

Media employees' professions

The media employees in the sample had the following jobs:

Broadcast journalists
Print journalists
Producer
Editor
Researcher
Radio presenter
News reporter
Writer

Finding a job in the media

The table below contrast's young people's impressions of finding work in the media with media employees' actual experiences.

	Young People's Views	Media employees' experiences
Difficult	8	23
Easy	1	0
Don't know	5	0
Total	14	23

The media employees unanimously agreed that finding work in the media was at best difficult. Based on their own experiences some thought that it was becoming easier for ethnic minorities to enter the industry due to employment targets and various other initiatives.

> "The fact of the matter is if there are a thousand jobs and every year twenty thousand people come out of university with a degree in media or journalism there won't be enough jobs for everyone coming through…there were 250 applicants for every position in our training scheme" (M10).

A young Mirpuri female is considering rejecting the media as a career because it is so competitive (Y12). Only one individual believed that entry was easy provided one had the right qualifications and motivation. Young people were asked about what they imagined it would be like to work in the media. The table below contrasts their views with those already in the industry.

	Young people's views	**Media employees' experiences**
Working hours	sometimes 24 hours, long and hard, very long, awkward, often have to work late to meet deadlines, hectic, flexible, depends	flexible, not bad, can be quite long sometimes, ok
Pay	quite big, very high, really good, hopefully good, alright, ok, depends, starts off low but gets better, don't know	start at 18K as a broadcast journalist, start at 12K as a print journalist, TV pay is better than radio, not especially good, a lot lower than expected, minimal,

		low paid, poor, worse than expected, bad
Working atmosphere	nice big offices, lively, energetic, fast paced, very busy but fun, a lot of pressure, friendly, lots of people rushing about, stressful, interesting, good, hectic	very professional, organised, nice, exciting, buzzing, fab, friendly, helpful, unprofessional, ok, lonely
Attributes to succeed in the media	posh accent, good background, good qualifications, flexible, time management, good looks, fair skin, motivation	peoples skills, communication skills, motivation, work quickly to strict deadlines, language skills, research skills, flexible, friendly, patience, organisational skills

Working hours

The majority of the media employees described their working hours as ‘flexible’ and ‘not bad’ in contrast to young people who perceived hours in the media as ‘sometimes twenty-four hours a day’ (Y7; M8) and ‘very hectic’ (Y13; Y3).

Pay

Big differences were noted here. Nine young people perceived pay in the industry as either ‘good’ or ‘very good.’ Two thought it varied, “You can go from like a hundred quid a day to a hundred thousand a day!” (Y12) and two were unsure. The media employees suggested that pay in television was much higher than it was in radio. Basic starting salary for a broadcast journalist was stated at £18,000 (M1). Journalists for local newspapers tended to start on around £12,000. None of the media employees disclosed their salaries. Employees working in the mainstream described their pay as ‘lower than expected’ and ‘not brilliant.’ Many said that they were in the industry because this was what they wanted to do and that ‘hey were not in it for the money’. “I think you have to really want to do it and if you really want to and you get the opportunity to do it you will enjoy it. I don’t get paid very well but I do enjoy my work” (M20).

Employees working in ethnic media described their pay as ‘minimal,’ ‘a lot lower than expected’ and ‘bad’ (M2; M5; M14; M15).

Working atmosphere

Young people tended to perceive the media industry as a ‘very rushed,’ ‘busy,’ yet ‘fun’ and ‘exciting’ place to work. Participants spoke of ‘a lot of pressure’ and a ‘hectic,’ ‘friendly’ environment (Y2; Y11; Y12; Y13). Descriptions of those outside the mainstream tended to be more glamorous than those of actual media employees. But the latter also described their

working atmosphere as ‘friendly,’ ‘buzzing’ and ‘exciting’ (M3; M8; M10). Almost all of the employees described a positive atmosphere.

Attributes to succeed in the media

Young people attached importance to a privileged background, good qualifications and the ability to speak eloquently for broadcasting posts. The media employees however, attached significance to flexibility, communication skills and the ability to work to strict deadlines. Both groups highlighted the importance of motivation.

Ethnic mix in the workplace

The table below contrasts young peoples’ views on ethnic mix in a media workplace with media employees’ experiences.

	Young people’s views	Media Employees’ Experiences
Very ethnically mixed	1	0
Quite ethnically mixed	1	1
Not very ethnically mixed	8	22
Don’t know	4	0
Total	14	23

Although the majority of the young people believed that a media workplace would be not very ethnically mixed, they believed things had improved (Y1; Y6). Almost all of the media employees worked in a ‘not very ethnically mixed’ environment, whether it was in mainstream or ethnic media.

Work Experience

Half of the sample of students/jobseekers interviewed had completed some form of work experience. The table below indicates how these 7 students got onto work experience placements (some of the students had completed more than one placement):

Through High School	1
Through writing a speculative letter/making a phone call	2
Through University	5
Through a mentor scheme	1

As the table above indicates, students and jobseekers got their work experience placements mainly through their university. Two interviewees did achieve placements through contacting media organisations themselves. Two other students also mentioned trying to gain work experience placements this way but had no success.

The range of work experience completed by the students/jobseekers in the sample is outlined below:

- One day in the editing suite at the BBC
- Runner and researcher at Midlands Asian Television
- GMR placement
- Key 103 placement
- North West Tonight placement
- German TV network
- Runner at Radio Lancashire
- Channel M placement
- BBC four week placement

Chapter 5: Views on the media industry

The Representation of Ethnic Minorities

This section will consider how our participants felt about the representation of ethnic minorities. This is significant in that an understanding of how bme people feel about the media may affect their willingness to respond to and work for the industry. We asked :

Are some groups misrepresented by the media?

	Young people	Students/job seekers	Media employees
Yes	11	13	18
No	3	-	1
Don't know	-	-	1
Total	14	13	21

The table above indicates that almost all those interviewed for the project felt that some groups are misrepresented or stereotyped by the media. Muslims were the group thought most likely to receive unfair treatment by the media.

Misrepresentation of ethnic minority groups was considered a very serious problem by almost all of the interviewees. In answer to the question: Who is misrepresented?'

> "At the moment Asian Muslims in the UK. And Blacks as well. You very rarely hear of positive stories regarding these ethnic groups. It is often the bad stories, the terrorism stories, the increase in crime, the shootings and stuff, those are the stories associated with these ethnic groups rather than positive stories" (M18).

It was suggested that one reason for such misrepresentation was that the media look for somebody to blame for current social problems.

> "Partly because of underlying prejudices, and partly because it's easier and convenient. Sometimes for example with asylum seekers people like to have a scapegoat, somebody they can blame and asylum seekers are convenient scapegoats" (M6).

A Muslim woman said she felt frightened about how she would be treated by the public due to the misrepresentation of Muslim women in the press.

> "I think people in Asia, people in Africa, I think Muslims, are definitely misrepresented because it's always nice to have a scapegoat for anything that goes on, and at the moment it's good old Muslims who are at the forefront of all these social problems. They're at the forefront of housing problems, they're at the forefront of job unemployment. You've got the likes of the BNP who are really giving a plug to their own organisation and using the fact that there are so many Muslims in this country and they don't want to follow the laws of the land. And it really does create a moral panic, and it does actually create a self-fulfilling prophecy. People are being told that Muslims are like this and they appear like this because yeah we do wear hijab, and yes we don't choose to sit next to men if we're on the bus if we had a choice between sitting next to a woman and sitting next to a man we'll sit next to a woman. And immediately people think yeah they do like to alienate themselves so maybe the BNP are right. I'm scared it's an extreme fear but I also fear that this is what's happening" (M15).

Another reason for misrepresentation was a lack of understanding and knowledge of minority groups. “It’s whether these people have enough understanding about the faith and about political history” (M1).

> “No one has really bothered to get to know or understand Black people. I am not saying that you have to, but certainly if you are going to write about them or represent them you should. I have always said that although there is a clash, and as a journalist you always want the most information, the best information, but if I was sent on a story to Moss Side, and it meant writing information that was going to cause harm to a community, I wouldn’t do it. If it is just for the sake of the story, I mean there are consequences. Talking about stereotypes, if you are going to help to enhance that stereotype, then what kind of role are you playing?” (M12).

It was argued that not enough research was done prior to reporting, by journalists that are unfamiliar with minority-related issues.

> “In the bad old days in Manchester when they had the gangs and everything the reporting in the Manchester Evening News was a disgrace it was just completely biased. If anybody got caught with a bullet or anything it got front page news. Whereas if you were to ask the police about the history of crime in this city they would tell you that White areas like Salford had problems with gangs long before but it went unchecked” (M9).

Selective reporting contributed to problems of misrepresentation. One Black media employee stated that ethnicity was only mentioned in relation to crime if the individual was from a minority background. Thus problems

become associated with ethnic minorities in the minds of the public.

> "When it suits the media to refer to colour they do, when it doesn't they don't. Say rape. You would be listening to the radio and they would say 'a rape has occurred in x y z town. Police are looking for a Black man 7 feet tall' whatever. Then you will hear a story, 'a rape has occurred in x y z town and police are looking for a man 6 foot 3 tall'. And there would be no colour. It doesn't sound much, but people begin to build up a picture in their mind, that all rapists are Black. You try and explain that to the journalists but they don't get it. Fortunately the BBC has a plan now to always mention the colour when giving any description we must include the colour. But there was a rape reported this morning on this station that didn't mention the colour. My statement is this, if we take a decision to say the colour then we must say it all the time. There are other things I have a problem with. Every time there is a story from Africa, it is negative. People begging, people starving. But parts of Africa are like the centre of Manchester it is not just one country. Parts of it are grown up, colour telly, bars. But all we see is people in the middle of a field begging for food. I want to see how the world is, good and bad" (M10).

Muslims were thought to endure widespread misrepresentation.

> "You wouldn't have to look far… you could pick up any copy of the Daily Mail, you could watch the news, then often Islam is used concurrently with terrorism and fundamentalism and that is a stereotyping of a community and that does unfortunately happen. So it actually occurs all the time both in print and in visual media" (M16).

> "I think Muslims they have had a lot of unfair press. You'd switch on the television and there'd be a programme about 'oh this Muslim youth of eighteen was up to no good'. Or, they don't. It makes you wonder who makes these programmes, how accurate are they, and a lot of the time they are misinformed, it's all about scare-mongering. I find that when I do watch, when I read a newspaper or if I watch a programme on the television, I don't believe everything I read. I think that whenever there seems to be any sort of ill in British society, people tend to pick on Muslims, Muslims are the perpetrators. You just think where do they find these stories from?" (M2).

However, it was not only minority groups that were thought to be misrepresented,

> "I think actually White lads are misrepresented because you have all those things about anti social behaviour. You know my Black colleague was saying that Black people are unlikely to go to the media about things so they don't get reported, but more White people will phone up the paper and say there is this local lad who is causing trouble and so you will get to see that lad and rightly or wrongly think he is trouble. So white youths do get a hard time" (M20).

Some interviewees argued that journalists have an important responsibility to provide a balanced view which they did not always fulfil:

> "Honour killings. A lot of people I know don't really agree with it, but the newspapers show it in a way as if it is common practice. Maybe there are some people who do it but there are a lot of people who are against

> it as well and the papers should show both sides. But maybe it is because they are staying silent" (M4).

This is particularly important because the media is often used as a learning tool by those individuals who do not know much about minority communities.

> "When for example there was a particular drama or documentary it would always be about the same old tired old issue, the downtrodden Asian women in the kitchen, very quiet, very submissive. And there'd be programmes about Asian forced marriages, and that is what the general public would then pick up, saying 'your community, your women are always in the house, never out of the home, you live in a very patriarchal society where the men are very dominant'. And I think part of that, it is starting to change, but those sorts of stereotypes exist. When people meet you initially, even when I was doing my degree at university someone said 'oh are you going to have an arranged marriage? and I was like 'what made you say that', 'oh because there was this programme on the other week and there was this girl and her parents were going to take her to Pakistan and get married and your Pakistani so it's the same culture" (M2).

While some positive representation does occur this is mostly shown very late at night. Interviewees believed that the negative heavily outweighed the positive.

> "Efforts have been made by Channel Four, they had an Islam season which looked at the different aspects of this faith. Sadly that's when 9/11 happened and whatever positive work was done, was undone by this incident so it's a tough one" (M1).

Under-representation

Some media employees discussed how when they were younger, seeing ethnic minorities on television was rare.

> "Its just the way we grew up I know when I was growing up if ever we saw a Black person on television we get more excited but now I couldn't really answer for people. But yeah I think if you see another Black or an Asian face you do feel a bit better yes" (M20).

> "There was a point at one time when if I used to turn on the television and if there was an Asian actor or an Asian presenter or an Asian newspaper, you'd say 'oh my God there's an Asian person on television' because we're not used to seeing Asian people on television" (M2).

Although there was considered to be an increase in Asian representation in the media, many interviewees expressed concern that much of this representation was Indian, not Pakistani or Bangladeshi.

> "I think you never find anything to do with Pakistanis in the media- it is always Indian. If you do see anything of Pakistanis it is always these stories they portray the wrong way. Like the drama Yasmin where her family and her husband force her to wear the hijab then she goes out and changes into western clothes a completely different person" (M11).

A young Pakistani journalist felt that Indian culture was more popular than Pakistani and Bangladeshi culture.

> "I think it might be that Indian culture is more popular, because Bollywood films are more popular,

> and not many people know Pakistani films. I think a lot of Asian artists are Indian as well. I don't think Pakistani people have much of an identity in the media" (M4).

One of the reasons for this under-representation may be that some practicing Muslims (Pakistanis and Bangladeshis) fear that they will not 'fit in' in the industry because they associate the media with 'networking events' and 'parties' (M13; M1). Those that do not drink may feel that such a career would involve pressures to assimilate and compromise their beliefs. Such restrictions do not apply to all Indian communities.

> "Most positions are taken up by the Indian community, again they have a tendency to be able to mix in better with indigenous communities and whereas I think Muslims or Pakistani background, there are those cultural or religious restrictions maybe, you know the pub culture thing" (M1).

Successful Asians in the media such as Meera Syal, Sanjeev Baskar and Kirishnan Guru-Murthy and Raghav are all of Indian descent and belong to the Hindu faith. Interviewees spoke of virtually no Muslim representation in the media and felt that more needed to be done by the media to encourage such groups to enter the industry. Positive representation of South Asian communities was usually Indian.

> "A lot of the time when we look at South Asian culture that is positive, it is like saris, hennas, Bollywood, and all this and it is actually quite distinctly Hindu. 'Goodness Gracious Me' is predominantly Hindu people talking about the South Asian community as a whole, but you don't have much in the way of Muslim South Asian people getting a chance to speak out for themselves. It seems that anything Muslim is a bit of a taboo subject lets be

> honest. I find it frustrating as an Asian because the media does define who you are as an Asian, so if you are represented a certain way in the media you start emulating that. I think it is quite profound the way that the media shapes reality. Asians are depicted in a certain way and I find the Asian people I hang around with, they do start imitating what they are projected as in the media which is worrying. Like I say a lot of it is Hindu for example, and as a Muslim a lot of it is very alien to me" (M17).

As the media fail to distinguish between Pakistani, Indians and Bangladeshis, South Asians are often perceived as a homogeneous group. The racial, linguistic and cultural differences amongst South Asian communities are usually ignored.

> "Some people don't understand the difference between whether you're Pakistani or you're Indian or you're Hindu or you know they mix up religion and culture. There's certain people I'd speak to and they might be Hindu and they'd say 'oh' but people assume, they watch a programme about Muslims and they think they're, we're all Asian so we're all the same. That is a problem, there doesn't seem to be any distinction, the media, what they try to do is have these programmes on television thinking we're making these programmes that aren't, they're not representative of who and what Asians are" (M2).

A female broadcast journalist working in the mainstream spoke of little opportunity of covering positive ethnic minority related news.

> "In terms of ethnic minorities I think regionally in the North West representation of ethnic minority stories is very poor… there is no excuse or reason why we

> shouldn't get more ethnic minority coverage of stories in the North West because they are certainly out there it is just that people who are making the programmes don't have the overview to do anything about it.. I think coverage and representation of all ethnic minorities is very poor regionally and even nationally. I don't know on average if you look at a months worth of viewing you may get if you are lucky one or two stories a month which feature a Black or Asian person. It is very poor and I think that has been acknowledged but not enough to tackle the situation" (M13).

We shall consider other examples of this under-representation later in the report when we look at the work experiences of bme people.

Mistrust of the media

The negative portrayal of minorities combined with the low numbers of ethnic media workers on screen may be breeding a mistrust of the media that deter people from applying for jobs. This has been felt most keenly in Muslim communities due to the reporting of these groups since 9/11. "In the Muslim community there is a wide mistrust of who the media are and what they are up to. Whenever the Muslim community see the media it is always from the perspective that they are being attacked and they are being vilified" (M16). Some ethnic minorities are also reluctant to share their realities with White journalists as they do not trust them due to negative reporting (M4; M20) which may lead to further misrepresentation. "The media never report positive stuff either about Black people. So again Black people won't come to the media and say for example 'my six year old daughter got five of us out of a burning house!" (M20).

Other media employees felt that the negative stereotyping of their ethnic groups not only made them feel unwelcome in the media, but that managers would be reluctant to employ them due to how they were perceived in the media.

> "We are less likely to succeed because of how we are perceived and that is due to the representation of our ideology, of Islam. And 9 /11 hasn't helped. But we are perceived to be more inclined towards our religious beliefs so people see Asian Pakistani Muslim individuals as people that have extreme views about their religion. If you are a Muslim you are immediately cornered and put in certain categories. We are at the bottom really. I don't understand why the wider society perceives Asian Muslims to be different from other Asians. It shouldn't be the case. Yes we do have our boundaries but it doesn't mean we can't do the job as good if not better than the next individual" (M5).

Some bme employees were troubled by negative reporting of their communities and felt they lacked support in the workplace from White colleagues who just did not understand such issues. This can lead to feelings of isolation further emphasising differences between individuals at work.

> "The people that I was working with seemed to have a very casual attitude to the news, it is entertainment, the media, that kind of thing. They weren't really empathising with the people they were reporting about. Maybe they couldn't see them as someone they could empathise with because they are different or whatever but I do remember that casual attitude. Some of them were like 'come on, lighten up world, chill out'. This is a showbiz that kind of thing. Quite a fake kind of atmosphere, quite superficial, so I felt that I didn't really fit in because a lot of the things that were

> happening were quite close to me emotionally and personally" (M17).

However, this was not the case with all individuals. Misrepresentation of ethnic minorities made some individuals more determined to enter the industry in order to make a change.

> "You see all the biased reporting and the exaggerations and all the rubbish that is sometimes written in the tabloids and even reported in the mainstream media especially about my religion as a Muslim. And I want to go into the media and I want to correct that misinformation. I want to be the person who helps direct it in the right way. Not to let someone who doesn't know much about my culture or my religion to say anything about it when they don't really know what they are talking about" (S5).

Lack of role models

Young Asian people mentioned names such as Raghav and Jay Sean when thinking about minorities in the media. Only 6 out of 14 young people felt that there were enough ethnic minority role models working in the media. Many felt that there had been a recent increase in numbers but felt that they were still 'too low' as only a few came to mind. A young British Black Caribbean, male stated, "You see a lot more now, but I think it is done on purpose to be honest" (Y3).

Many interviewees complained of a lack of role models in the industry to look up to (M8; M12; M2; M15; M17).

> "I think in this day and age now especially there needs to be lots and lots of role models in the media whether it is television, radio or interactive journalism… I think we need many more ethnic minority journalists

> and many people working in all media in order for us to send out a positive message to those who are studying at the moment, who want to get into media further" (M5).

Some media employees stated that they would have felt more motivated to pursue their media careers had they seen more individuals from minority backgrounds that were successful in the industry.

> "It wasn't as if people were saying 'yes go ahead and do it' because others have done it because there were no other Black faces that I was associating with journalism, apart from Trevor Macdonald who was on TV. I was thinking, not only is he on television but he is in a very prominent role. Yes that is what I would like, not necessarily to be on television. But I am thinking if he is a journalist I want to be a journalist. I mean there weren't many around at all. I would see the odd one in the nationals but there weren't many" (M12).

This suggests that a lack of role models in the media could deter individuals from considering the media as a career. A writer of dual heritage referred to a lack of successful Black actors in British entertainment.

> "I think America is ok. I mean it is a much bigger country and they have realised there is a market for Black entertainment, since hip hop and all that and there is a Black entertainment channel and lots of successful actors like Laurence Fishbourne, Halle Berry, Wesley Snipes. They do all right but in Britain there is not one, not one! There is not one British A list actor that is of colour. There are a few English Black actors in American films" (M9).

It was also suggested that the few role models that did exist, were not truly representative of ethnic minorities. Individuals spoke of a particular 'look' or 'image' sought by media managers.

> "When I think of a certain look, I think of someone like Connie from Blue Peter! I do, I don't know why, because she's very confident, she's smart, she's presentable, I wouldn't say she's gorgeous, but she's a good-looking girl. Very well-spoken, she's very very well-spoken, which I think… they are things that are important but not everyone will have those things, they'll be some things of those that a person wouldn't have, and they're very lucky to have someone like Connie because she's quite versatile and she can adapt to different situations" (S12).

Current role models in the industry were thought to have a very 'Western' look, a look which promoted a 'White middle-class ideal.' The afore-mentioned Connie Huq, does not wear traditional Islamic dress. Muslim women in the sample spoke of how very few women were shown on television wearing headscarves (M17; M15). A Muslim female questioned if Muslim women such as Connie Huq would do as well in the media if they wore traditional Islamic dress. She felt that a Muslim woman that did not wear a headscarf would do much better in the industry than one that did, due to the negative portrayal of Muslim women in the media.

> "Would someone want to employ me as a journalist if I did wear a hijab?...I just feel as though I wouldn't feel comfortable being in the workplace wearing a hijab because I feel that people would treat me differently and the bottom line is you do want to fit in with your colleagues" (M2).

Successful minorities in the industry were thought of as coming from very privileged backgrounds.

> "Of course there is Trevor McDonald but he is just an icon really he is neither Black nor White he is just a grey haired man who drinks Guinness and serves up the news. The guy… how obsequious was he when Tony Blair offered him that award? He is probably a royalist and everything. It goes back to that culture thing. It's not just about the colour of your skin. It's about your background, where you are from. I bet Trevor McDonald doesn't have any affinity with working urban class Black people of his own generation or others. Not to take anything away from the guy he is at the top of his field. But how often can you keep turning to Trevor Macdonald?" (M9).

So Rahman, Trevor Phillips and Krishnan Guru Murthy were also perceived to have come from privileged backgrounds. Thus it was suggested that current ethnic minority role models in the industry were not truly representative of their communities.

> "Sometimes I think these people aren't truly representative of the community. Again even within the community and within the Asian media you get your different types. Someone who is very culturally aware and expresses that, very religiously aware and expresses that. Then you'll get your coconuts who are so westernised they're really no different from the indigenous community so therefore they don't bring anything into their work really and that's annoying because I think there should be a real mixture of people and not just those people who can join in with pub culture and who can basically get on. Those who perhaps don't follow that particular culture are still struggling" (M1).

A number of those media employees who are working in predominantly White organisations felt that the presence of even just one other ethnic minority staff member helped them to feel comfortable and less isolated at work:

> "I think it definitely helps [to have an ethnic minority role model at work], like as I say the team there were absolutely brilliant and I didn't have any problems whatsoever, but it is nice to see another Black person. You don't feel you are on your own" (M20).

Conversely, a lack of role models can result in some workers feeling disillusioned. As M17, who encountered no role models on her work experience placement, stated:

> "I find that [the lack of role models] quite hard, it makes me think 'where do I fit in?' It makes me feel quite alienated to be honest. So it has been quite damaging I am afraid, I can't even say there are many role models [in any other media outlets] that I can look to" (M17).

Will more ethnic minorities make a difference?

There are two issues here – the possibility that more ethnic minorities could become role models and, secondly, the potential difference they might make to reporting. Most media employees felt that ethnic minority journalists would be able to make a difference in reporting on minority related issues. For example, it was believed that a Muslim journalist would help combat the misrepresentation of Muslims in the media. "Now that Islam is such a big thing in this country, and the majority are so ignorant of the religion, I think they could tell people what's what" (M3; M14).

> "Because I think Muslims remain silent on a lot of things. Like if somebody in Iraq is held hostage

> they don't really condemn it immediately, they might condemn it if they are pressured, or if there has been a bombing, there is no loud Muslim voice saying this is wrong… I think there should be more Muslim columnists like Yasmin Alibhai Brown, or Sikh or Hindu columnists. Because I think there are a lot of good writers in the ethnic media, if you read Eastern Eye there are a lot of opinionated people in there. But I think they should go over to papers like the Mirror or the Sun and get their opinions over to the majority" (M4).

The view of media employees, students and youths was generally that ethnic minorities can make a difference in reporting. "Of course it would, because people from minority communities should have an understanding of those communities and then should be able to represent those communities in a much fairer way" (M16). However, media employees felt that there was still a long way to go as increasing numbers are only part of the solution. Simply recruiting ethnic minority staff without attempting to accommodate racial and cultural differences does not work. The answer to improving the position of ethnic minorities in the media is not that simplistic. "It is the ethos of the organisation that needs to change. That needs to be embodied and when it is we will all be happy but it will take a long time to do that" (M16). Media companies need to do more than just adjust how they recruit, but tackle both industry and external perceptions of who works within the media.

Another potential benefit of more ethnic employees was that the communities would be more willing to discuss their experiences with individuals like themselves, thus producing more representative stories (M3; M20).

> "I mean sometimes I have done stories and I know I got more out of them because they were Black talking

> to another Black person. Because Black people sometimes don't trust White journalists." (M20)

Another Black man thought representation of Black people wasn't as bad today as there are more Black people in the media. "I think it's not as bad as it used to be, there's more Black people representing the media so they are actually speaking for the Black people" (M7). However, it was suggested that in order to make a 'real difference,' more minorities were needed in decision-making positions.

> "I think it's a case of having practising Muslims within the media in order to make that difference, and if they're vocal and know what they're on about… lone voices don't get heard and if you have a group, a force, who can reflect it in a positive way and make the changes at a senior level" (M1).

> "It depends on what jobs they do. If you just have like runners or an assistant cameraman to make up the numbers that won't change anything at the level of output, of deciding what work gets produced. Black producers would be good. If you are not going to have Black producers then you might as well forget it. And if you don't have Black scriptwriters you might as well forget it, people in creatively decisive roles" (M9).

Some respondents felt that although successful minorities in the media were seen on television, there were not very many and the few 'token' individuals that existed were not in decision-making positions.

> "I'm not saying let's have their face on television because it looks really good, it looks like everybody's being so nicey-nicey to ethnic minorities. I think they

should be in the background and actually pushing the buttons, making some decisions" (M15).

"I think it's quite appalling, I think it's very tokenistic, I find it really stupid how I switch on the television and I say oh gosh, about five years ago there were like a couple of people and I thought oh wow that's an improvement, and now I look and it's like tokenistically you switch over every channel you'll see an Asian face there, an Indian face there, a Black face there, and it just seems so tokenistic. I don't think it's real, and then when I go to the BBC Newsroom and I look around and I see how many White faces there are… there is not an equality structure going on at all" (M15).

"I think if you look at it on a general level, you think we seem to be everywhere, whenever I switch on the box I always tend to find whether it's Granada we've got, there's someone I think she's called Nina Hussain, she does mainstream, which is nice to see an Asian woman do mainstream news on ITV. BBC I don't think I've tended to see any on BBC. Then I think obviously you get the ones on Channel Four; Krishnan Guru Murphy and Samina Khan., but what I tend to see is the same old faces… I don't seem to be seeing any new faces that crop up. And I often wonder, they've got these token people that pop up on our screens on a daily basis but then you wonder behind the screens, such as programme-making, camera men, producers, directors, how many of them are there. I was actually talking to someone the other day and they said that there isn't even one Asian newspaper editor. If you think about it there's not even one" (M2).

A Black editor discussed how some ethnic minorities in the workplace have not resisted assimilation.

> "When ethnic minorities get into jobs, they almost become Whiter than White. They lose their individuality and just fit into what is going on. It used to happen in the old days in the newspapers, and it used to happen in the police. If there were more journalists who could make a stand it would help" (M10).

Thus while recruitment scheme give reasons for optimism much work still needs to be done to improve the representation of communities, work that will in turn increase respect for the media and encourage recruitment.

Chapter Six: Preparing for the Media

The previous chapter provided us with insights from those mostly outside the profession. In this section we will look at a range of factors that may be hampering both recruitment into and understanding of the media. These includes cultural differences, friends and family, gender and experiences at university

Cultural differences

> "My religion would come into it in that say there was a party where alcohol was served or I had to go to dinner where people were drinking on the same table where I was sat. Now as a Muslim that is something that is forbidden and I cannot do it. Now if I was to keep giving excuses and not going to these things I think that is going to hinder me in my career because that is where a lot of the networking and making contacts takes place. So if I am not at those places, I am not at those functions, I think I am going to miss out on a big chunk of getting to know the right people, so if future jobs come up, you know, just being a well known figure. So I think that's really going to be an obstacle, a big one" (S5).

Choosing a career is not a culturally neutral decision. Interviewees had a range of responses to their background. Some found that the fact that media was an untraditional career path in their culture was a motivating factor. They expressed a wish to be different and to break down stereotypes:

> "I have always been interested in media. Instead of going down the stereotypical route of business I thought I would go for media, something I wanted to do… It was a bit different doing journalism I suppose

> because all my cousins have done courses in accountancy and when people are like 'What are you doing?' and I say journalism they are like 'ok' They don't quite get it!" (S2: Indian, Female, media student).
>
> Interviewer: "In terms of your whole decision to go into media, has your culture or your religion had any influence on this?"
> M8: "Yes, because it's not, how can I put it, the kind of subject that most Asian people go for, they normally go for business, or doing law, or something like that which is a lot different to going into the media" (M8: Indian, Female, media employee).

A number of interviewees felt that the way their cultural background had influenced their career choices was that media misrepresentations of their religion or ethnic group had motivated them to improve portrayals. This was particularly predominant amongst Muslims; again this is probably due to the particularly negative portrayal of Islam in the British media:

> [Talking about why news media appealed to her] "I just think it's definitely the ideal sort of area because it's current affairs, it's newsy, and as a Muslim, to be honest with you, I would rather be able to help reveal the facts about things that are going on, especially back home in the Muslim countries, because it really really makes one's blood boil when you see these negative images on the television, when you see these programmes about the BNP … I feel kind of responsible because I'm a Muslim and I know that's not what my Islam says" (M15: Pakistani, Female, media employee).

Although it was predominantly Muslims who felt motivated to improve the representation of their faith in the media, a

Christian student shared many of the sentiments expressed above when she talked about feeling that she wants to pursue a media career to counteract negative portrayals of the Christian faith:

> "Coronation Street a few years back now… there was a Christian woman and she was made out to be off her head, like she had mental problems, and sometimes that is putting us down because anyone who doesn't know the faith will think we are like that. My culture, yes I want to show people and get involved to show people that there are some bad aspects but also good as well. We need to reflect that in our culture as well" (S7: Black-Caribbean, Female, student).

Thus it appears as though, for some people, entering the media profession carries with it a responsibility to try to influence the way their religion or culture is represented. However the notion that the media careers of ethnic minorities are inherently guided by cultural responsibility is exactly what some ethnic minority media workers are trying to escape from. Some people reported wanting to be able to focus on their career without always being perceived as a spokesperson for their particular ethnic or religious minority. Indeed, it was found that doing so could actually be detrimental to their career prospects. M12 talks about his experiences of trying to break away from notions that he is responsible for the portrayal of Black communities in the North West. He also gives an example highlighting that for many ethnic minorities working in the media, their work may sometimes actually alienate them from their community:

> "I don't feel responsible, I feel like a journalist. If I am responsible I am responsible as a journalist, not as a Black journalist. In that situation it is down to me how I handle it. It doesn't make any difference whether the person you are dealing with is Black or White. I was covering a trial at the magistrates here;

> the case of a young Black girl that had been arrested, and she said during her arrest that three officers raped her. Now that was like lighting a touch paper as far as the media was concerned and I had to cover that story. The Black people in the community saw me as the enemy, the other side; if I wasn't with them I must be on the other side. But I was just doing my job as a journalist. I am a journalist as far as work is concerned, I don't wake up every morning thinking 'I am a Black person,' I wake up every morning thinking, 'I am a journalist and I am going to work'" (M12, Black-Caribbean, Male, journalist).

While the misrepresentation of minority communities could prove to be a motivating factor, some interviewees felt that their cultural heritage in general was, as one Chinese college student put it, their "unique selling point" (Y12). For example, Y12 felt that his Oriental and Western upbringing motivated him to pursue a film career:

> "I have just got an interest in films really. I have just grown up with films and watched most genres of my type of movies, like Oriental. I have got like Oriental background and I have got British and Hollywood, all mixed. So I have probably got more of a range of ideas than most people" (Y12: Chinese, Male, college student).

Another young college student of Caribbean heritage also felt that he was motivated because his culture is often at the forefront of popular media culture:

> "My culture is all over the media all the time. I am a young urban Black male that they like to keep on pushing everywhere so it does have a big impact because everywhere I look I always see some form of influence from my background all over everything;

> football, music, everything to do with performance" (Y2: Black-Caribbean, Male,).

As well as acting as a motivating force in helping people to decide to pursue media careers, cultural factors did also result in some limitations. Many of these are gendered issues relating to women's safety and respectability and will be discussed shortly but a number of South Asian interviewees also commented that their cultural background meant that they were reluctant to move too far from the family home, particularly to study media courses at University. This finding echoes the work of Pilgrim (2001), who argues that Muslim women are under pressure to remain in the family home and are raised to believe they should stay near male relatives who will offer guidance and support. However, it was not just women who felt they wanted to apply to University near to home as a number of male college students also expressed a desire to study at a university close to home. This also relates to barriers such as relocating to London faced by many ethnic minority job seekers discussed in other chapters.

Impact of family and gender on career choices

> "[Media] it's not, how can I put it, the kind of subject that most Asian people go for. They normally go for business, or doing law, or something like that which is a lot different from going into the media…[Interviewer asks why Asian people favour business and law] Because there's not as many barriers as there is in television or radio…being an Asian I think there will be barriers for me going into the media…" (M8: Indian, Female, media employee and student).

Although many interviewees felt that their gender had little impact on their career choices, for most people of South Asian heritage, the influence of cultural factors on career choices was highly gendered. Most South Asian interviewees (male and female) felt that their parents and community would react more

positively to the prospect of a male pursuing a media career. Although many of the South Asian women interviewed did not feel that their career plans were affected personally by this gender difference, most felt that males had more freedom when it came to career decisions. Y8 for example, felt that his experiences of choosing Media Studies A-level would have been more difficult if he were female:

> "I think it is different for females. Yes because lads generally in Asian families, they have more support. They give you a lot more than girls. It's just different types of family. A more modern type of family would allow anything. A family that is really strict would prefer the girl to follow what the parents say" (Y8, Pakistani, Male, college student).

These views were also reinforced by Y10 who felt that making career choices in general would be easier if she were male:

> "Yeah I do think it would be a lot different [if she were male], yeah. In my culture, I mean my mum's ok but like the rest of the family the boys are allowed to do what they want really" (Y10: Indian, Female, college student).

Although none of the South Asian women interviewed had been placed under pressure to abandon ideas of pursuing media careers, a number did face some gender related barriers. For some it was regarded as less culturally acceptable for women to partake in presenting or aspects of media work that would involve being in the public eye:

> "It depends on the family but I think generally culture wise, I don't think many people would approve if a girl was presenting or what not, I'm not sure if they were behind the scenes but if they were in front then there would be a lot of judgements. Generally [the]

> culture is based on respect and how you perceive yourself and what people think, which I think is stupid but people would frown on it – as in the majority [of people]" (Y5: Pakistani, Male, college student).

M17 talked about being very aware that she was one of only two women in the whole office wearing a headscarf on her work experience especially considering it had been a difficult decision to start wearing it in the first place:

> "I feel that the headscarf is something that sets me apart and makes me stand out a lot. It actually took me about a year and a half before I wore it, a lot of times psyching myself up to do it…being Asian is cool nowadays with Goodness Gracious Me and East is East. But if I wear a headscarf that would be like totally alien and people wouldn't know how to take it, it is not cool let's just say…" (M17).

For S12, these issues surrounding female respectability, although not dissuading her from continuing to pursue a media career, do play on her mind, making her believe that it would be very difficult for an Asian woman like herself to enter the media industry:

> "You have to be, so to speak, confident and you're kind of in the lime-light depending on what sector you're in, …the family I'm from are very modern thinking, but I just thought other people might think, you know, 'what's she doing' type of thing, and it wouldn't look very good" (S12: Bangladeshi, Female, jobseeker).

M5 also worried about how Asian men would perceive her if she became well known through her media work, although ultimately she found that she was respected within her community for being passionate about her work:

> "There were some apprehensions yes. Especially when I was working for [names a local Asian newspaper]. The fact that I was going to go out, and I was going to be, my name would be known to a lot of people. So how would Asian men perceive me as an Asian woman working for the media which gets a lot of exposure and highlights a lot of issues? So in that respect there were apprehensions… Luckily as I am quite passionate about issues I got respect for that and was not treated as someone who was just in it to seek exposure for myself" (M5: Pakistani, Female, media employee).

An issue that affected more of the South Asian women interviewed was that of personal safety and reputation with many reporting that their family and friends expressed concerns about working anti-social hours, going out into the streets to chase stories and talking to men unknown to them. This support's Pilgrim's (2001:17) contention that many Muslim women are brought up to rely on male family members for their personal safety. M13, for example, was initially daunted by the prospect of interviewing men, although she did overcome this trepidation:

> "I think in terms of cultural difficulties I think one of the difficulties I had initially was that because I was brought up in quite a strict Muslim upbringing sometimes I would find it quite daunting to speak to males, especially Asian men. They weren't used to being approached by a female and asked questions. So that was one of the other difficulties I faced at the time. But once again you have to overcome those difficulties because I can't say 'I won't interview them, it's women only'" (M13: Pakistani, Female, media employee).

These worries about interviewing men were also experienced by a young Bangladeshi jobseeker:

> "My limits would be like, if for example I was socialising. Talking with men is the main thing. Obviously I would talk in a business-like manner. I wouldn't cross those, I'd try to be good, so to speak, yeah professional all the time and just keep it at that level. With women I'm ok, I can be friends, I can be, you know, I don't mind. But with men I have to just be careful really. Just for my own protection really. I wouldn't say that's so much a religious thing but for most women I think, not necessarily just Muslim women, but maybe more so with Muslim women" (S12, Bangladeshi, Female, jobseeker).

M15 also found that she faced cultural barriers to going out and interviewing at night; something which other media workers suggested would be a career hindrance:

> "Culturally there are certain restrictions. I cannot be out 24/7, I cannot go out and do filming at two o'clock in the morning. I remember one [names a news reader] saying to me one day, 'Oh [name] … if I go to a gay club and I do filming and interviewing it's something that you wouldn't do.' …and he said, 'Well, that's the difference between you and me. I can go out to these places and you can't" (M15: Pakistani, Female).

Ultimately, this woman decided that she could go out at night if it was for work purposes but it is clear that it posed a cultural dilemma, particularly when considering that a colleague told her it was something that others were prepared to do.

Finally, a number of the South Asian women interviewed expressed concerns that media work may be incompatible with

starting a family, something that seems particularly important when it is considered that Bangladeshi and Pakistani women are much more likely to be economically inactive due to looking after the home and family than women from other ethnic groups (2001 Census in EOC Additional Tables, accessed 18/03/2005). M8 for example, felt that many Asian families would assume that their daughters would get married after completing their studies and that embarking upon a career, such as media, would not necessarily be encouraged:

> "Most Asian families always think that once you've done your degree then you get married and find a job and that's it. Not many Asian families will support you into going into the career choice you want to, but being a boy it's different because they have a lot more freedom than girls do" (M8: Indian, Female, media employee).

These concerns that a media career may not be compatible with an expectation to marry were also echoed by students who both felt that this pressure put a time-limit on their careers:

> "I think the main theme is like the marriage thing, you're gonna have to get married and then it'll all be over kind of thing and then it's like whether your husband and your in-laws and all that want you to pursue your career and that kind of thing. So it's always like you do all the work that you want to do now because you don't know what's gonna happen when you get married. I know it sounds silly, but it's true, it's reality" (S12: Bangladeshi, Female, student).
>
> [When asked whether her career choices and the reactions of her family would be different if she was male] "Maybe in terms of time, and as they say a girl gets to a certain age and people think it's nice for her to settle down, in that kind of respect it might be

easier if you were male" (S8: Indian, Female, jobseeker).

One of the most common perceptions among interviewees was that the media industry is an insecure, risky and unstable place to work. The importance placed on career stability was evident in both South Asian and Black-Caribbean cultures:

> "My first year at university I was studying graphics and everyone was happy with that because I guess there is a more stable career there. But my second year my parents were a bit wary and kind of worried like; 'fair enough, I understand you want to do it but are you going to get a job afterwards?'… I still get hassle, like 'When's the work coming?'" (S3: Black-Caribbean, Male, jobseeker).

> "I told my Mum 'I'd like to go into this' and she said 'yeah, I will support you all the way.' But I think she wanted me to go into politics or something that I'd know I would get a job out of definitely and a proper salary… she thought it is not that secure. She still asks questions now like 'What is it you are going into? How much money are you going to earn?'" (S7: Black-Caribbean, Female, jobseeker).

When the economic hardship endured by first generation immigrants to Britain from the Asian sub-continent and Caribbean are taken into account it is perhaps unsurprising that older generations of these communities place much value on having a stable and secure income. Indeed, many South Asian interviewees talked abut how some careers are favoured in their communities, largely because of their security and lack of risk:

> "With any Asian parents the obvious thing they want you to do is something like medicine, or law,

pharmacy, they regard it as lucrative; the Asian type careers" (M2: Pakistani, Female, media employee).

"I think they [the Indian, Sikh community] think it's not a very good job and doesn't pay that much. They think I should become a doctor" (Y10: Indian, Female, college student).

"Well, I think that like in my culture, stereotypically everyone wants you to study to be a doctor or a lawyer. It's kind of annoying because I think it is pretty close-minded but I don't think it exists so much anymore as it was before… I don't think it is like, because a lot of Asian people would go for something that is seen as stable, and I don't think they have been exposed to much media type of work" (Y5: Pakistani, Male, college student).

South Asian interviewees in particular also commented that there is a general perception within the older people in their communities that the media industry is not particularly respectable or prestigious. But almost all of the young people, students, job seekers and media workers interviewed had very positive personal perceptions of media work in terms of its value and status. For the young it was a question of combating the older generations' stereotypical perceptions of media work. It was also the latter who were more worried by risk and the lack of stability in media work as it is the more secure and safe careers mentioned above that are seen as most high status:

"There are stereotypical Asian professions for people to go into, like medicine, accountancy and law and when you go outside these stereotypes it is frowned upon, as if it is not as valid. Even though it is the same qualification. I needed the same grades to do English at [names a university] as you would to do medicine… They both need the same qualifications but it is

> frowned upon as if that is not as academically prestigious as medicine" (M18: Pakistani, Female, media employee).
>
> "You know Asian people love their sons to be a doctor and a lawyer, and all the rest, accountants and all the rest of it. They just don't see working in the media as very respectable. Once you're in there they don't mind, but they just don't see it as one of their first options" (S9: Bangladeshi, Female, student).

Other interviewees also mentioned that some aspects of media work are viewed as more respectable than others:

> "Journalist is fine. Stuff like production of graphic design, newspapers, that's fine as well. I think the real issue comes when it's stuff like the more practical side like drama like being in front of the camera that's when the questions might be raised" (Y11: Pakistani, Female, college student).
>
> "In Korea working as a TV producer is a very popular job. If I said in Korea I was working in the BBC it would be like wow! And working with celebrities, it is a glamorous job" (S11: Korean, female, student).

However, despite the fact that almost all South Asian interviewees - from young people to those well established in their careers - commented on the greater prestige that accompanies a career choice such as medicine or law; very few were actually affected by these popular stereotypes and were pursuing their media careers with little backlash from their respective communities.

It is also important to note that although issues of respectability were mentioned predominantly by interviewees of South Asian

heritage, it was also a factor for people from other ethnic groups:

> "She [her mother] wasn't impressed by that [the fact that her daughter had started to study media]. Because she would have liked me to do something like medicine that looks better, so she could go to her friends and say, 'Oh my daughter is studying medicine or she does business.' I know a lot of African, well African heritage, young people like me who do medicine, business, all that kind of stuff, that really gets you a proper job" (S6: Black African, Female, student).

As well as doubts about the stability and respectability of media careers, some interviewees mentioned that members of their communities mistrust the media due to negative portrayals of their lives and beliefs. This seems to particularly affect Muslim groups, which given the current prevalence of Islamophobic attitudes in the press discussed in Chapter One, is not surprising:

> "In the Muslim community there is a wide mistrust of who the media are and what they are up to. Whenever the Muslim community see the media it is always from the perspective that they are being attacked and they are being vilified…" (M16: Pakistani, Male, media advisor).

Some interviewees attributed these negative perceptions to a lack of knowledge and understanding of media careers within some ethnic minority communities, especially when considering that what little knowledge many people have of the workings of the media industry constitutes being on the receiving end of negative portrayals and stereotyping:

> "If I tell anyone I am a journalist they [people in the Asian community where he lives] say 'What's that?'! That is how ignorant they are of the industry" (M3: Kashmiri, Male, media employee).

> "Sometimes I feel that relatives and friends of the family don't really know what I do, they don't seem to understand the concept of a journalist. I have to explain that I work on a newspaper or read the news on the radio. If I mention the word journalist they don't really seem to grasp what it entails" (M14: Pakistani, Female, media employee).

Despite the negative perceptions and lack of understanding discussed here, for some interviewees embarking upon a media career is seen as a very positive and prestigious career choice by members of their family and community:

> "They [friends and family] were glad that I wanted to go into the media because they thought it was different and it is something not many people have done. It could open doors for many opportunities and pave the way for something new" (Y2: Black-Caribbean, Male, college student).

> "I think they [my parents] would be really impressed, really happy if I got a job in the media" (S2: Indian, Female, student).

> "I don't think they [her parents] really understood what it was about and because of our culture and background there are going to be certain barriers" (Y1: Bangladeshi, Female, college student).

The interviews unveiled a complex pattern of influential factors. Although many interviewees (again particularly those of South Asian descent) talked about their parents being wary of them

pursuing a media career or expressing a preference for them to follow a more 'traditional' and stable career path, the vast majority of those interviewed found their parents to be supportive of their decision and did not feel they should change their ambitions as a result of these perceptions. The experiences of Y1 (Bangladeshi, Female, 17, college student) are typical in that although her parents had reservations about her choice of a Media A-level they were happy for her to do what she wanted:

> Y1: "Well my dad and mum are kind of old fashioned, they didn't really get media. They were like, 'What's that going to lead to? Can't you just do normal A-levels?'"
>
> Interviewer: "So they were a bit concerned?"
>
> Y1: "Yes they were a bit concerned but now they say to me, 'Oh well, it is what you want to do so you go ahead and do it' and I'm doing it and enjoying it."

Another student of Black-Caribbean heritage also described how his parents were wary abut the stability of media work and the competitive nature of the industry but once it was clear that that was what he wanted to do they were incredibly supportive:

> "I still get hassle, like 'When's the work coming?' Like my dad is a barber and he has contact with a lot of people. So he is constantly handing out CV's like speculation whether I can get this or that… my Dad has come to the conclusion that there are more opportunities in London. So off his own back he has found a landlord, a room and everything for me… So they are happy and they are willing to make sacrifices for me to get work" (S3: Black-Caribbean, Male, jobseeker).

One woman working in the industry also spoke of how her parents worried that she would face discrimination:

> "They did advise me not to go into the media because they said it's very difficult to break into: 'You're an ethnic minority, you're doubly disadvantaged, think before you go into it'" (M2: Pakistani, Female, media employee).

At least two interviewees admitted that they had altered their career plans slightly in view of their parents objections but neither had felt it necessary to give up on a media career altogether. One Bangladeshi college student for example described how she had rejected the idea of going into film acting because her father felt it was not a respectable choice and would have preferred her to go into news broadcasting. Eventually a compromise was reached and the student is now hoping to work as a children's television presenter. This indicates that when making career plans, although issues such as parental approval and perceived respectability can factor in the decision-making process, the final choice is often a result of a complex interplay of cultural and other considerations with room for negotiation and compromise:

> "My dad is not very happy with me acting in films, but TV he goes 'that's fine'… It's just taboo in our culture… It's because I'm a girl and it's one of the most sexiest things. But I don't care. I'm still doing it. If I want to do it I will. He will get used to it. He does at the end, eventually I get my own way… He said 'news reporter' which I am happy with, but I can't keep a serious face! I'm always smiling and it would look really bad if I was saying some bad news and I was smiling about it. That's why I think children's presenting would be more my thing" (Y6: Bangladeshi, Female, college student).

Another Black-Caribbean journalist talked about how his parents pushed him into learning a trade (the cultural norm for young Black men in that particular inner city area) because they felt he had little chance of success in the media industry. As a result the interviewee did not pursue his media career ambitions until later in life:

> "My parents said to me, 'Don't be a journalist, get yourself a proper job.' I listened to all that nonsense and went off, trained to be a joiner, and did various other jobs throughout the years but I always knew that I wanted to be a journalist. I just never got any type of encouragement" (M20, Black-Caribbean, Male, Journalist).

Despite the fact that a number of interviewees found their parents to be concerned about their plans to pursue a media career, many found their family to be very proud of their career choices:

> M3: "My parents didn't interfere because they knew that [to become a journalist] was what I wanted. They didn't say 'become a doctor or a lawyer' they said 'be what you want, as long as you enjoy it then we are happy.'"
> Interviewer: "So what was their reaction when you actually did start to work in the media?"
> M3: "Happy. Big time – seeing your by-line in the paper!" (Pakistani, Male, media employee).

> "I think my family are quite proud of me now, they are very supportive and understanding. My mother always listens to me and wants to know when I'm on air!" (M13: Pakistani, Female, Radio presenter).

Other interviewees found that their parents were proud specifically because pursuing a media carer was breaking away

from stereotypical careers associated with their ethnic and cultural heritage. For example one college student of Chinese heritage talked about how his family actively encouraged him to break away from the stereotypical job of working in a takeaway or Chinese restaurant:

> "They think it's great [pursuing a career in film]. They think it is better than following their path which is like cooking and being a chef. That's like what the stereotype is. People think all Chinese people can cook and they can do martial arts!" (Y12, Chinese, Male, college student).

Ethnic mix whilst studying media

One of the major barriers to a successful media career experienced by ethnic minorities whilst training is the lack of ethnic diversity on most media courses. As 98% of journalists have a degree or postgraduate degree level qualification (Journalism Training Forum, 2002:8); the importance of training is clear. But almost all of the students on University media degrees and those industry employees who had completed media programs found that their classes comprised almost all White students. Interviewees tended to notice any other minority people on their course:

> "I think it is only me and x who are Black. The rest look quite English to me" (S6).

> "Not very ethnically mixed, I have one Indian girl, one other Indian (well I'm Indian) and one Pakistani boy and that's it, so there's three of us. There was a Black girl but she's dropped out in her second year" (S9).

> "I think initially I did feel a bit isolated because I was born and brought up in Bolton, I was surrounded by

> ethnic minorities all my life, we had a lot in common. When I went to university I think I was the only girl, I think it was three guys, it was very different because you felt segregated from the beginning. It took a lot for me to mix in with my peers and people from…, because there were no ethnic minorities on my course I really had to make sure that I did fit in with other people on the course, but I slowly got used to it and I adjusted to the course and I met a lot of people on the course that I did get on with so it wasn't really a problem" (M2).

Despite being aware of the low numbers of minorities, some interviewees did not appear to find this lack of diversity particularly problematic. One student commented that enjoyment of the course and friendly classmates were more important and one media worker felt that the lack of diversity whilst at University actually proved advantageous to his career:

> "In one sense I thought to myself 'If I am the only Asian I might have better career opportunities because I am the only ethnic person there'" (M3).

Two of the overseas students interviewed also interpreted the lack of diversity on their respective media courses as a learning opportunity. A Chinese student felt that it provided her with more opportunity to improve her language skills:

> "With another course – Business – you can see a lot of Chinese students … which I think is bad because they talk Chinese all the time and they say everything in Chinese and are totally different from the local students in the same class… But I am very lucky; I am the only Chinese person here. I am happy to talk to my classmates" (S1).

This perspective is in contrast to that of a Korean media student who attempted to turn her feelings of isolation at being the only East Asian course member into a positive learning experience and met with less success. As well as feeling isolated from and excluded by her classmates, this particular student also felt she was discriminated against by a lecturer at her University when she encountered language difficulties in his lesson:

> "He [the lecturer] was teaching in a way that was more difficult for me to understand. And when I asked him some questions he embarrassed me, and asked me, 'Did you read all the reading list?' Of course I can't read all the reading list. That was the time I felt discriminated, and I had not done anything wrong to him there was no reason why he should not like me" (S11).

Despite the fact that this student had attempted to treat the lack of diversity on her course as a learning experience, a lack of understanding of the barriers to learning she faced resulted in her feeling isolated, embarrassed and discriminated against. Indeed, the vast majority of interviewees felt that they would have benefited from a more ethnically diverse student body. Being so much in the minority whilst studying media appears to create a number of barriers to success both on the course itself and in terms of future career goals. One student found it necessary to constantly disprove negative stereotypes placed upon her by other students and staff members and this in turn led to a feeling that it was necessary for her to adapt her behaviour in order to be accepted.

This feeling that Black people behave differently in a predominantly White environment, such as a media course, relates to Hacker's (1997:74) work about the "Ideal Black workmate" who "adapts readily to the company of Whites, and has no problem with being the only Black in the room."

The way that other interviewees discussed their experiences whilst studying implies that the onus was on them to integrate into their predominantly White course, again suggesting a pressure to assimilate and 'fit in,' thus maintaining the status quo:

> [When asked how it felt to be on a course with just three ethnic minorities]: "Slightly uncomfortable at first but I tried to get integrated" (M14).

> "Some of the people there, I was the first Black person they had ever met, so I would give them leeway for certain attitudes" (M21).

It does appear from our findings that little support was provided to help ethnic minority students to feel comfortable on predominantly White courses. Indeed one media worker even found that when he was studying media the syllabus was culturally biased, thus hindering his learning and progression:

> "I found that because there were hardly any Black people there. I found that a lot of the work that I was given to do was constructed from a White male European perspective. I suppose as a male it was easy to play the male role, but when they were asking me to do certain things like 'Fat Friends' and things like that I found that very difficult because there was nothing in there pertaining to my culture at all. So I didn't think they were very understanding about looking for roles where they would think, 'Ok, we have only got one Black person – let's look for a play that incorporates a Black person' because I think that would have helped me much better with my acting. It is like asking someone who is White to play a Black man, it is very difficult" (M21).

It may be that these experiences of isolation, stereotyping, lack of understanding and discrimination whilst training could be dissuading people from pursuing media careers. Further research into the 'drop out' rates amongst ethnic minority media students would be beneficial. Some interviewees in this project did suggest that their experiences of isolation at University could be a dissuasive factor with one woman stating that the lack of ethnic diversity is a suggestion of barriers to come:

> "Obviously it shows that a lot of White people go into the media and there are barriers for Asian people because not many are even on the course, forget being in a job" (M8).

This notion that a predominantly White course is an indicator of future barriers is also clear in the doubts expressed by a Black female student:

> "It just made me feel I am going to have to work ten times harder to show that I can do this. Because when you feel like you are in a minority, you think where is everyone else? Do they not feel that they want to try this as well? Am I not way over my head? I think that every day" (S7).

Another student commented that she had been close to changing courses because of the lack of other minorities highlighting the question of how many minorities are dropping out of media courses due to lack of diversity:

> "When I first started my course, I was quite close to actually changing it because I wasn't with Asian people, which I'm so glad I didn't but it used to be quite tough when you start Uni and your friends are coming back like 'Oh I made this friend today and I'm hanging out with these people' and there's so many people that they've been chilling out with and I'm like

> I haven't really got that many people in common to hang around with compared to like [names a North West University] where they're all like, there's millions of them, and I had like nobody, it was a bit disheartening so I was quite close to quitting. I was considering doing Sociology … just because I thought maybe there's a bit more Asian people on there but I'm *so* glad I didn't" (S9).

Thus, it appears that although many of the students and industry employees had positive experiences in general whilst studying media courses, the lack of ethnic diversity, lack of support for those people who are in the minority and lack of understanding by both staff and students of language barriers and cultural difference are resulting in many students feeling isolated and disillusioned.

An overseas Korean student stated that a lack of ethnic diversity at university helped in improving her language skills as English was not her mother tongue. However, she also referred to feelings of loneliness which can in turn affect academic performance.

> "Since I have been at **** I feel I am so distinctive and different. But I try to take it as a challenge and try to talk to people a bit more, like Hey! I am ****, I am from Korea! But the reaction is so strange. I felt that because I am rare they would give me more interest. But what happened was very different from what I thought and people are not interested in me at all. Even when I tried to involve in a group chatting, they would try and isolate me, by using words I don't understand, like using a Mancunian word, slang words which I can't understand. Even though I stayed three years in New Zealand, and I can communicate in English, but since I came here they talk in accents I can't understand and they use slang that I can't

> understand. They say jokes and laugh and I try and join in and smile but then they ask if I have understood what they said and I feel embarrassed" (S11).

One Black student talked about constantly having to prove that she was not how a Black individual was stereotypically portrayed to be.

> "I think it is very hard, it is hard to explain. Because you feel like you have to prove to them that you are not a stereotype Black person, you don't say 'yo yo yo' all the time. You don't necessarily listen to hip hop music all the time, and you are not bling bling. I have had experience where people are like 'oh you are so different to other Black people. It is so weird. How come you are like that?'...I find that some Black people act different when they are in uni or at work where the majority is White, and they try to adapt and they try to be more White. When they are with Black people they are more Black" (S6).

Such feelings and experiences can also occur in other places of little ethnic mix such as the media workplace. However, lack of diversity on media courses was found to make no difference to others. A friendly environment, irrespective of ethnic mix was more important to one student, "I was fine about that because I get on with anyone, I don't care about the colour of their skin. So long as they respect me I respect them" (M3).

Chapter Seven: Applicants and Employers: Questions and Perception

In this chapter we will consider how applicants feel about applying to the media industry before looking at the various schemes employers have set up to improve recruitment. We conclude by considering the question of 'contacts'.

As the statistics outlined above in the Skillset Workforce Survey indicate, (2003:37), people from some ethnic groups are less likely to make media contacts and have less access to informal networks. Interviewees suggested a number of barriers to making contacts specifically affecting those from ethnic minority communities. For example, many South Asians face preventable cultural barriers to networking, such as feeling unable to socialise in pubs or bars and being excluded from networking opportunities due to working in Asian specific areas of media. (These issues will be discussed later in this section). A number of job seekers also felt that socio-economic disadvantage was hindering them from making contacts and finding media employment. We are reminded of Bourdieu's notion of social capital, something that by definition is not equally accessible to all areas of society (Jenkins, 1992:89):

> "The only way you get to know those people is by working in the industry or coming from a kind of social background where you are going to have friends who work in the industry. If you come from Longsight or Moss Side or Brixton your mates don't work in television. The guy you used to go to school with won't be a TV producer, he might work on the buses and you could get a free ride somewhere!" (M9).

One Black journalist pointed out that young ethnic minority people are struggling to even find work experience placements because their social class means they do not have access to

contacts whereas those who do have these connections have very little trouble:

> "I have been emailing with someone who is trying to get work in the media and is having tremendous difficulties. She has worked for various newspapers but she just can't land that job. On the other hand there were people at university who had a relative that worked in the media and for them when they wanted to do a placement it was 'My dad knows such and such at the Sun' and they got a placement like that! So it is tough and people said that to me before, it is often about who you know. That is why if anyone ever came to me and said 'I would like to do something' I would try and help them get work experience because it is tough" (M20).

A small number of other students and media employees felt that they face - or had faced - monetary or class barriers to studying media or planning a media career. For example, a number of interviewees had not been able to go to University due to class barriers with one media employee explaining that he did not have the opportunity to go to University until later in life, due not only to a lack of funds but also to cultural norms related to the traditional career paths of Black school leavers in deprived, inner city areas:

> "I think at that time going back to the mid '80's, something like '86, '87, if you could get an apprenticeship at Direct Works you were really doing well. It wasn't like you could go and train to be a journalist, that's impossible. No one ever told us that and to be honest we never knew that was out there. You went to the job centre you looked for jobs like warehouse person, shop assistant, you didn't look beyond that, and to be honest with you as stupid as it

> sounds we didn't know those opportunities were out there and that we could do it" (M20).

Another interviewee had similar experiences and was deterred from studying media until later in life due to the fact it was such an untraditional route for him and his peers growing up in inner city Manchester:

> "When my mother was telling me to get an education, to do this do that, and do all the positive things, the guys I was looking at, who were older than me, their education wasn't that strong, so they did what they could to earn cash. A lot of them went labouring, but the ones I knew went to the streets. I didn't want to go labouring like my mother did, because I saw her leave the house at five or six in the morning and then coming home at six at night. For what? These guys were earning like five pounds a minute for what they were doing and I saw it as a better way of earning money…" (M21).

Although both these stories were told by people who faced these barriers twenty or thirty years ago, the evidence outlined in the recently published Cabinet Office Report: 'Ethnic Minorities and the Labour Market' (March, 2003) indicates that many ethnic minorities are still concentrated in deprived areas today where University is not a common route to take. For example one media employee, when discussing why she did not complete a media related Masters Degree stated that:

> "It was the cost factor as well. I actually weighed up the fact that it would cost me about eight or nine thousand to do - with the course fees and the living expenses - and I thought at the end of that I may not be any better off. So I thought I'd go through the route of actually knocking on doors and speaking to people

> and asking them if they had any vacancies in the media in what I wanted to do" (M2).

Similar monetary concerns were also expressed by a Black German student who came to England to study media:

> "I thought a HND when I came here would be enough because I didn't want to do too much. I just wanted to go out and work, because we didn't have the money to study for that long" (S6).

Despite these obvious monetary and class barriers to completing media training, it must be noted that for one interviewee, the difficulties he encountered as a result of growing up in a deprived inner city area ultimately proved to be a motivating factor – a clear testimony to the strength of will of many of those minorities who have persevered and gained employment in the media industry despite facing some major barriers:

> "One of the main things for me was that I had a friend who went off the tracks. He was in prison for a while and the major thing was I had a conversation with him and he had got into criminal activities. He said to me, 'It is too late for me, I'm into all this.' We were talking about what we wanted to do. He said 'I can't get out but you want to be a journalist you can still do it'…then two weeks later he got shot dead. I kind of thought, you know, you go to the funeral and you start to reflect on things and those factors sort of added up and that made me go for it" (M20).

Employers are looking for a certain image

There was a feeling amongst those seeking media work and some employees already working in the media that employers are often looking for a certain type. One student and jobseeker

talked of his belief that there is a particular personality type that employers look for:

> "Maybe they need someone with a very strong personality who says 'Come on give me a chance, I'm good.' Sometimes I think Western people like the American personality, that's very strong and says 'I am good, I am number one.' Maybe that is easier for people to notice your talent" (S1).

It is clear from this speaker that the image of the 'ideal' media personality is not neutral and reflects a more typically Western personality. Other interviewees felt that employers were looking to employ people like themselves:

> "I think people here prefer their own type of people because they feel secure. They're not adventurous enough to employ different people" (S13).

> "My younger sister decided to follow my footsteps and do journalism, but despite winning awards for her work and her work experience and her contacts within the field she found it very difficult, certainly in terms of getting a job at the BBC. She found it extremely difficult because I think at that time the BBC was into recruiting like for like and people like themselves rather than perhaps people who were perhaps different to them" (M13).

> "…people who are lauded by the media, in literature and things, seem to be those people who lip synch what they have to say" (M17).

Cottle's work (1999:195) revealed that journalists tend to share the same ethnic, class, educational and political backgrounds while Creeber (2004:28-29) pointed to a 'cultural hegemony' created by the BBC. If employers continue to employ people in

their own image this has repercussions for those ethnic minorities because if and when they do find media employment they have to try to 'fit in' to a working environment where they may feel very different from everyone else.

These issues of 'difference' being a barrier to gaining media employment are reflected in the experiences of M15 who felt she may be encountering barriers because she wears a headscarf:

> "I've experienced, like when I've spoken to people in the BBC or whatever, there has been a blank screen somewhat whereby people feel that they can't ask you certain questions and they do feel uncomfortable. I happen to wear a scarf, that's all, you know I do wear English clothes so it's not like I can't dress according to the sort of British so-called 'dress-code.' But I wear a scarf and I feel sometimes that that's seen as something very negative and people feel a bit wary of that and I wonder, I'm not saying that's entirely the reason, but I do wonder whether that is partly why I [don't have as many] opportunities as perhaps somebody else" (M15).

Stereotyping appears to occur throughout the careers of ethnic minorities in the media industry. We have seen how a Black interviewee felt obliged to undermine stereotypes created about her whilst studying media at university. Two interviewees felt that they had failed to find media employment due to stereotyping when applying for jobs. For example, one Russian student felt that due to popular negative stereotypes about the quality of Russian media, her work experience and training were not valued. Another South Asian media employee however felt that stereotypes about Asian people being articulate and well educated actually proved advantageous to her career:

> "I think I have been lucky because if you are Asian you are successful by the way you are perceived by

> the wider community. I say that because I have found that to my advantage…Like if you articulate to begin with, you will be perceived to have a very good education…" (M5).

Despite this particular woman finding that stereotyping could work to her advantage, the experiences of most South Asians working in the industry was that stereotyping is generally detrimental to career prospects.

One student for example, did not want to come out and say that he felt that racism could be a problem when applying for jobs:

> S3: "I think employers should realise that England is a changing culture and there is a lot of diversity. I think it is good for them if they tap into that audience. In order for them to do that they have to employ more ethnic minorities. I don't want to say racism, that's too harsh."
> Interviewer: "So you don't think racism is a problem?"
> S3: "It is a problem, I think it is just a lack of understanding, but I don't want to say that."
> Interviewer: "Why don't you want to say it's a problem?"
> S3: "It is a factor. Maybe they want to employ their own and you have to consider that when you are thinking of a career in the industry. If there had to be five factors that would be one of them but there's a number one in my head I can't think of!"

A number of job seekers and employees felt that they had failed to get media jobs due to their treatment in the interview. A number of the sample felt that interviewers had not treated them fairly or that the interview had become awkward and unpleasant due to the behaviour of the interviewer:

> "It was kind of not like an interview but more like a police investigation of someone who had done something wrong. I don't know. He was sitting on a sofa and he got a book and tried to write something down and later I noticed there was nothing written on the paper! He kept asking more and more, he asked me more than fifty questions… I felt that kind of interview was very funny. At first I felt very nervous but later it felt like it was a fight and I had to win" (S1).

This occurred in an interview with just one employer. Although it is difficult to ascertain whether the behaviour of the interviewer in these situations was related to the ethnicity of the interviewees, it is clear that without others' present, they would be free to treat each interviewee for these positions differently. Another media employee felt he had also experienced prejudice during job interviews and that he was not taken seriously:

> "I personally thought, when I did attend some interviews there was, I wouldn't say racism, I wouldn't go that deep but there is a subtle kind of prejudice. Maybe they already have a preconceived idea of the kind of person they are looking for. If I go, no matter how bright I am no matter how I walk the walk and talk the talk they can never understand me…" (M19).

Two media employees had experienced interviews with openly hostile and racist interviewers. However although these incidents occurred over twenty years ago some contemporary job seekers are still encountering unfair, unprofessional and hostile scenes despite the use of new and more cautious questions:

> "Not only did I have to apply for loads of jobs but it got to the sort of surreal stage where I was starting to

> enjoy, not being turned down, but the sort of procedure you would go through where people would say one thing but you would see something totally different [in] their eyes and their whole body language. I remember one interview I went to in Nottingham where the editor was so obviously hostile, because as soon as I walked into the office he was surprised to see a Black reporter" (M12).

M12 went on to describe how the interviewer even asked him how he would react if he knocked on someone's door whilst researching a story and a woman screamed at the sight of him, an obviously stereotyped and racist assumption. He sums up his experiences of trying to find work:

> "Yes twenty odd years ago it was hard, it was very hard. I felt under a lot of pressure at that time, because I thought that I had done everything that had been asked of me, but when it actually came to the crunch, I was no different other than skin colour, I was no different to anyone else that was qualified, and yet I was having problems. Is that racism? Undoubtedly. Prejudice? Yes. Both of them come with a degree of ignorance I suppose if they are not used to having young Black people apply to become journalists then it might have been difficult for them as for anyone else but it's still a poor excuse" (M12).

The media is a hugely competitive business. The sheer number of applications for jobs means that feedback is very rarely available. But those who receive no feedback can become confused at their lack of success:

> "My main hurdle was not getting any replies or feedback. At least they could tell you where you were going wrong and how you could improve. It was only

> the Guardian that gave me some information and told me where I was going wrong" (M3).
>
> "I applied for Granada for work experience. I told them I'd just graduated, I applied at the BBC just to let them know that I've graduated and radio as well – BBC, GMR. I didn't actually get a reply, and I did follow them up but I didn't get anything, so I just left it. It was new to me, I was quite a young girl, felt quite shy, so I guess I didn't even follow them up as much as I could have done" (M15).

One interviewee found that even with her previous experience when she did try to chase up her applications she received standard responses as opposed to constructive feedback and felt that the media employees she spoke to 'passed the buck' and were unwilling to talk to her frankly about work:

> "I found it very challenging, very trying. It's almost like you get to one position, and people say' it's a foot in the door, it's a foot in the door', that's all you ever hear – it really drives me crazy now. But you approach people and they say 'Oh yes that sounds interesting,' and it's almost like they've all been taught this spiel that this is what they've got to say if somebody approaches them and that's how I felt. People have said 'Oh yes, well if you get in touch with her then she can help you do that' but unfortunately it's as far as it got. I did speak to somebody and I spoke to somebody else and it didn't get me any further" (M15).

A central issue is the uncertainty some feel about the reasons for their rejection. We found that interviewees asked themselves whether their rejection was due to the competitive nature of the industry or was it some form of racial discrimination?

> "There can be [disadvantages to pursuing a media career] if you have been turned down because you felt in your mind you were the right person. I think rejection is hard for everybody but if you are Asian it is extremely hard because it is immediately going to bring in thoughts of discrimination, it is going to question whether you are ever going to get there…If people don't get anywhere in a certain period of time it can be quite hard" (M5).

This sentiment is even reinforced by a Pakistani woman already working in the industry who has seen so many barriers to gaining employment she is unsure whether she would recommend the profession to other minorities:

> "I think the way I'd sum it up in one sentence is disillusioned. I think when I started this journey off when I was eighteen, initially to work in journalism or work in programme-making, I didn't really think that I'd have this struggle. If there was an eighteen-year-old girl out there now and was Pakistani, I would think, look just be careful. If you want to work in the media, have a backup plan" (M2).

(Interviewees did have more success in ethnic minority specific media but this in turn is thought by some to create it's own barriers to progression within the mainstream).

Thus it can be seen that ethnic minority jobseekers are struggling to find media employment. The general experience appears to be one of applying for many jobs and receiving no feedback.

Ethnic minority schemes

Former BBC Director-General, Greg Dyke made ethnic diversity one of his top priorities for the BBC in 2000 when he

revealed the ‘hideously White’ nature of the BBC. He set minority recruitment targets in order to enhance the diversity of the BBC workforce. Both the media employees and students interviewed were aware of such targets and thought that they were a good idea however; they felt that such aims were only a recent solution to a very old problem. As one Pakistani, female, broadcast journalist stated,

> “I think up until now, maybe in the last year, eighteen months, until diversity has really been a priority for the BBC in recruiting staff from ethnic minorities… up until now it really has been very difficult for Black and Asian people to get jobs certainly in any organisation. I think it is only now that the doors are opening because of the concerted efforts that are being made by management to recruit more ethnic minority candidates” (M13).

Other interviewees agreed that such initiatives would make it easier for ethnic minorities to enter well known media organisations such as the BBC and Granada. “I used to think that it would be very hard but now I think it’s gonna be a bit easier because they’re encouraging people from minority groups to join the BBC in various ways” (Bangladeshi, Female, jobseeker). However, not everyone shared this opinion. It was argued that there still were not enough ethnic minorities working in the media and that only a few ‘token’ individuals were employed to suggest that organisations were not taking diversity seriously.

> “I think the official policy is that they are looking to recruit people from under-represented groups… which is like ethnic minorities, females and the disabled… I know there are targets the department have to meet in order to recruit more Black and ethnic minority people… There is a feeling that because there is only one or two being recruited in each department that it is

> just tokenism, and the managers have to reach quotas and their jobs rely on it. So there is that sort of question mark over whether it is just lip service and bringing people in on the cheap" (M13).

An Arab female student felt that minorities were increasingly becoming visible in the media but was unsure of representation behind the scenes.

> "They weren't very high, but I think institutions like the BBC try to make them visible… you have got a few high profile ones, they are the ones we see. I don't know what it is like behind the scenes… the producers and directors. I don't think the numbers are very high at all, I think they are quite low" (S5).

Some young people were found to hold similar views, "on TV you see a lot, but behind the scenes, it's another story" (Y2).

The majority of the media employees were not aware of any policies within their places of work for employing ethnic minorities. Those that were familiar with diversity policies stated that they had not received any training in their current jobs. "There used to be. I myself attended diversity training at radio ****. But currently I am not aware of any diversity training that has occurred in the department I am based in" (M13).

Number of ethnic minorities in the media

	Young people	Students/jobseekers	Media employees
Enough	6	1	3
Not enough	8	10	15
Don't know	0	2	5
Total	14	13	23

The table above indicates that it was mainly the students/jobseekers and the media employees that felt that there is an inadequate number of ethnic minorities working in the media. It is likely that this is because it is these groups who have had more first- hand experience of the realities of working in the industry. Only 3 media employees felt that there was now enough ethnic minorities in the media. 15 thought the numbers were still too low and 5 individuals were not sure.

> "I think it is very poor. I think we need many more journalists and many people working in all media, in order for us to send out a positive message out to those who are studying at the moment, who want to get into media further" (Pakistani, female broadcast journalist).

A Gujarati, female jobseeker felt that some sectors of the media were doing better than others,

> "News definitely is littered with them. Cooking is sort of getting there, I think Madhur Jaffrey seemed to be doing her bit and then it seemed to have fizzled out. I'm just thinking of other programmes, I think documentaries and other things… quite serious issues seem to be covered by a lot of ethnic minorities. It's the other aspects that I don't think, early years TV, children's TV, there's representation, but not to that extent" (S8).

Granada Television have also taken diversity within the media very seriously. At a launch event for the CDN at Old Trafford (2004), Susan Woodward OBE, Managing Director of ITV Granada said, "ITV Granada is committed to positively portraying cultural diversity within regional programming." She went on to state, "we are also committed to devising mid-term and long-term community based projects that will encourage

members from diverse groups to consider a career in the media." One interviewee was very satisfied with Granada's efforts at promoting diversity,

> "I am quite impressed actually at how open Granada have been, right from [names of senior people in Granada] all the way down to the producers, they have been incredibly open, willing to take on ideas and thoughts, willing to come back to us if they disagree with us, it is a kind of dialogue that goes back and forth. We felt, I think I can speak on behalf of the others, we felt they have taken us very seriously" (M16).

As a member of the Granada Advisory group, he talked about the positive things that Granada have done,

> "They have done several things… they have invited members of the Muslim community to come and address their board, and address senior programme makers, so that people who have questions about the Muslim community or Islam in particular are free to ask them. And then we as a community would be there to answer them. And then we as an advisory group, myself and others, have had input into discussing programme content, what programme makers think when they are making it, just to be able to give some small input there, nothing directly religious of course in that but it is just some input into mainstream programming which is what it is all about really. Because the Muslim communities and minority communities want to be mainstream… that is what it is about, we don't want to be pigeonholed" (M16).

He described the advisory board being made up of about 10 or 12 lay people with an interest in the media that are not directly involved. Their roles include reviewing television programmes

for Granada. This particular member wrote in when they were initially setting it up and was accepted as a member He stated that such advisory groups were a small positive step.

Granada and the development Agency, *Media Training North West* launched a new work based learning scheme entitled The *North West Foundation Placement.* This scheme is a year long pre-employment training scheme aimed at giving ethnic minorities the opportunity to gain the experience, knowledge and skills needed to compete fairly for entry into the television and media industry

The BBC was described as 'the most desirable place to work' in a survey of 6,000 final year university students (The Guardian, 2002). This was also the case with the students in the sample. Young graduates and students constantly checked the BBC website for vacancies and placements. "I found that the other commercial channels, like ITV, Channel Four and Channel Five… it's very hard to sort of get information from them. The BBC seems to be the most open to new talent and advice" (S8). Many students believed that if they were able to obtain work experience at the BBC, this would enhance their chances of finding full-time work there.

> "I've done a lot of work experience for the BBC I know how good they are, so I thought, find out about this BBC News Sponsorship where basically they're paying for your post grad in Journalism Broadcasting, some other kind of higher qualification. It's one year, they pay for everything. So I just thought if I get in that's great because that's one year of being a student again, plus it really increases my chances of getting a job with the BBC" (S9).

Six other students also managed to obtain work experience which was organised through their universities. Most of the students and jobseekers were actively looking for work and

placements, they searched on the internet and in newspapers, following advice from their tutors.

> "I know there is the websites of BBC, ITV… they say to read the Guardian and Broadcast to keep up with it… to know what is happening… I do that. Just searching on the internet to find out what is going on in Manchester. I haven't found a leaflet as such to say *this* is happening. I mainly look in the Guardian for open days" (S7).

Only 2 individuals managed to secure media related work placements without university assistance. Some of the experiences were described as very positive as they were made to 'feel very welcome,' which, in turn, made them look forward to working in the industry. Both the media employees and the students found ethnic minority schemes as very useful and a positive step forward. A Black Caribbean reporter stated,

> "Things have changed here I mean the ethnic minority scheme counts a lot because if you showed some drive and quality then they treated you the same as everybody else and if they liked you and there were positions then there are chances you would get a job at the end of it" (M6).

Work experience was described by those established in their careers as 'fundamental to succeeding.' It was generally agreed that it would be virtually impossible to secure work in the mainstream without experience so this was the first hurdle for the students and jobseekers to overcome. Such schemes were useful in making contacts, obtaining advice and getting an idea of what it would be like to work in the industry.

> "Yeah, I've spoken to plenty of people at the BBC because I've done a lot of work experience there…

> I've been on the mentor project, which was for one year at the BBC, it was like a big work experience for ethnic minorities. So I made a lot of contacts there and we had mentors who help us and we could basically ask anybody for advice and stuff" (S9).

One young Asian female did manage to secure other placements through this opportunity that had nothing to do with her ethnicity. Ethnic minorities in the sample wanted to earn their places onto internships due to their talent, not their ethnic origin.

> "I think they need to think about qualifications and what they can bring, not just that they are in an ethnic minority. …what can we bring to them and can we do the job? I think they should look at it like that" (S7).

The media employees and students agreed that qualifications and experience were only starting points in establishing careers in the media. Nonetheless, ethnic minority recruitment schemes proved beneficial for 6 of the media employees as they managed to secure employment through such schemes. Two aspiring Black journalists managed to secure jobs as print journalists in regional newspapers upon completion of their placements aimed at ethnic minorities. A Pakistani female broadcast journalist described how she would not have had her current job if it was not for such initiatives aimed at minorities.

> "I don't think it was easy. When I decided to apply for the jobs that came up, the jobs that came up were part of a special initiative by the BBC to recruit community affairs producers specifically to run the Asian programme. So if those jobs hadn't been advertised I don't really know where I would be now or which department I would be in" (M13).

Another interviewee was actually persuaded to consider a media career after she saw a poster for an ethnic minority specific BBC work experience placement at the Manchester Mela and was impressed that not only were the BBC trying to recruit ethnic minorities but that they had done so by targeting an Asian event[3]:

> "That is when I came across this advert that the BBC had put up in the Mela in Manchester. They were offering work experience for ethnic minorities. So that kind of encouraged me because I thought 'oh they are actively going out and seeking people with a simple poster on the wall.' And so I thought 'I will give that a go,' because I wasn't sure what I wanted to do, and secretly I have always been interested in the media to be honest. So I got involved in that" (M17).

However, not everyone had such a positive story. Another young Asian female was sponsored by the BBC to complete a Masters degree in Broadcast journalism (M18). She felt that she had learnt a lot due to work experience at the BBC and although she was not expecting to enter employment upon completion, she was expecting some advice from the BBC on how to go about it. After repeated efforts she was unsuccessful in securing work in the mainstream and began work at an ethnic radio station as a broadcast journalist, for little pay and no opportunity for development. In contrast to the BBC experience she complained of learning nothing new in this new position.

Uchenna Izundu speaking on behalf of *Aspire* (Black media professionals support group) states,

> "We need more high profile sponsorship schemes to assist people with doing courses for which fees are extremely high. If work experience is to be offered to potential candidates, these need to be thought through

[3] This particular woman actually found the placement to be such a negative experience that she was ultimately dissuaded from pursuing a media career.

> carefully, so that they are as productive as possible. Individuals want to leave with a sense of ownership – they learnt some skills and have a better knowledge of how that institution functions. Better still, they leave with contacts and either some by-lines or the beginning of their ideas coming to fruition"

Two interviewees got full-time jobs as newspaper journalists after completing ethnic minority specific internships. Both journalists had positive experiences on their internships and did not feel that they suffered any resentment from other colleagues about the nature of their entry into the industry:

> "I think it all depends on your mindset because I went in there thinking, 'I am going to show you that I can be part of this team and can do this job.' I did feel slightly paranoid about it at first, but the news editor he was fantastic. He sat me down and he said, 'Look everyone knows the nature of this scheme that you are here on, we all want you to be part of the team.' The support was fantastic, everyone working there was brilliant and that kind of instantly makes you forget about all that, and makes you start to feel part of something" (M20).

> "I mean the ethnic minority scheme counts a lot because if you showed some drive and quality then they treated you the same as everybody else and if they liked you and there were positions then there are chances you would get a job at the end of it and now there's more and more minority people working here in the past two years since I've been here … so speaking for this company things are changing a bit. We've now got three Asian male reporters, one Asian female and three Black reporters" (M6).

What is clear from our research is that in order for such schemes to be successful they must be accompanied by support networks.

However, a number of interviewees faced barriers because the majority of paid positions and work experience opportunities are in London. This is a factor that can particularly affect ethnic minority jobseekers. For example, a number of South Asian interviewees found the prospect of leaving their families particularly problematic. Indeed, Pilgrim's (2001:17) work indicates that it can be frowned upon for single South Asian women in particular to move out of the family home. However, it is important to avoid developing a stereotypical image of the Asian woman who cannot/will not leave home. The issue is far more complex than this and interviewees sought successful careers whilst at the same time had feelings of being torn due to conflicting work and family commitments.

> [When asked whether she would be willing to relocate] "At this moment in time, no, because I think my family. I stayed away from home for three years when I was doing my degree and it was good but it was also very hard. Not hard, I mean I'm very self-sufficient, I'm very independent but I just, I'm very close to my family and that'd be the only thing that would pull me, not pull me back but, to me my family comes first and then everything else even my job, that's second. My family comes first then job comes second" (S12).

Other interviewees faced monetary barriers to relocating. This was particularly the case given that many media positions are initially unpaid or very low waged. When the class barriers discussed earlier are taken into account along with the socio-economic disadvantage experienced by many ethnic minority communities it can be readily understood why relocating to London is not a viable option for many minorities:

> [When asked about barriers to gaining media employment] "Just lack of experience really, because it is hard to get a work placement in the North West. It is easier to get one in London but it is unpaid so you can't afford to live there" (S4).
>
> [When asked whether he/she is willing to relocate] "London, no because I've got no family there and it is going to cost a lot of money so in the near future not London" (S3).

Contacts

> "I think it is more a case of who you know than how difficult it is in the media. If you know someone already in the media they might have the contacts that can put you in touch with someone who might have work available, but if you don't know anybody it is much more difficult because you have to start out by yourself and ring round television stations and radio stations, and ask for work" (M18).

In an earlier chapter we noted how many ethnic minorities do not have equal access to media contacts. The fact that the industry often fails to advertise positions (instead employing people known to the organisation in question) often constitute barriers hindering many ethnic minority jobseekers from finding work. Five of the media employees interviewed for this project did actually get their jobs through a contact but it is important to note that all five only had access to contacts in ethnic minority specific media, none of the media employees interviewed had any contacts in mainstream media.

M13's experience of 'accidentally' falling into the media industry through family friends shows how important luck, timing and contacts can be in finding media work, especially when the experiences of those jobseekers who have been

applying for hundreds of positions outlined in the Inequalities section are taken into account:

> "I joined [names organisation] in April 1989. Basically it wasn't actually a career choice that I made for myself. We knew some family friends who worked in the media at the time but I didn't actually make a conscious decision to work in the media or be a journalist or a producer or presenter, it all happened by accident. What happened I think was in 1988. We had two family friends who were working on Asian programmes in the West Midlands. They were basically just looking for someone to come and help out on an ad-hoc basis. One of the presenters asked my father if any of his daughters would be interested and I said yes… I started off helping out after work and at the weekends. Then I was sent on some training courses and was really able to utilise the skills I was picking up, made some packages etc. Then a year and a half down the line a full time job came up…" (M13).

M3's experience also highlights how fundamental having just one industry contact can be to getting started in the media:

> M3: "To sum up, I think it is not what you know it is who you know. If you have contacts in the industry then you are happy."
> Interviewer: "You mentioned [name of Asian journalist and editor]?"
> M3: [Name] yeah, there you go because he knows loads of people in the industry so knowing him was a big factor in getting the job at [names an Asian newspaper]
> Interviewer: "And what if you didn't know him?"
> M3: "I don't know, I would still be applying to this day."

Despite the stories of those who managed to get started in the industry because they knew the right people, most ethnic minorities are not fortunate enough to be in this position. Two of the young people interviewed did however take up opportunities to make industry contacts against all the odds. Y2 for example lives in an area of Manchester where a shooting occurred in the house next door to his. This eighteen-year-old college student took this opportunity to go and talk to the Granada news reporters (one of whom he had seen once before at a meeting held for this project) who were there to cover the story. As a result he made a useful industry contact and lined up some work-experience for himself:

> "Well I have spoken to So Rahman. I met him outside my house because he was doing a production next door because an unfortunate incident happened, and he was doing the news and I ended up speaking to him and he told me to give him a ring and maybe go down to Granada, April time, and maybe do some experience" (Y2).

Similarly Y12 did not have access to media contacts through family, friends or acquaintances but found an opportunity to meet industry professionals whilst working in his fathers' Chinese takeaway restaurant:

> "…my Dad used to own a business, and the area we lived in was quite posh and quite a lot of movie actors and directors were there, and they showed me a tour round the design sets and stuff. So I have got contacts there as well… I talked to them when I worked in my Dads shop and I used to serve them when they came in…" (Y12).

As many as eight jobseekers and employees felt that they were failing (or had failed) to find media employment due to a lack of contacts:

> "Well the saying is 'It's who you know, not what you know.' Through experience and case studies, you either find out that they know someone, or they are related to someone, so they are all kind of friends and who they trust, so you have to break into the circle" (S3).

Indeed, the findings of the Skillset Workforce Survey (2003), that many employees find work through contacts, highlights the fact that the media industry revolves around informal networks and those without access to such networks can find it difficult to hear of job opportunities. For those from the ethnic minorities the suspicion that the media is only for white insiders is confirmed when they hear of positions that aren't even advertised:

> "…really you have to send out speculative CV's. They don't really advertise jobs. If they want someone to work for them they have got that person in mind already. So again it is that circle. It is who you know not what you know" (S3).

> "Like I've been told in radio they don't advertise their jobs. They look inside the organisation first. Let's say the receptionist answering phones: 'Oh you would be good, do you fancy being my assistant producer?' 'Yeah sure!' and that is how it works. And then they put an advert out for a secretary. My tutor even said that to me. He got a Managing Director job just by talking to the boss in the pub" (S7).

This example alone points to the difficulties some ethnic minority groups may have in accessing these contacts and placing themselves in situations where they are the 'insider'

who receives a job offer. Many Muslims for example are unlikely to be drinking with a media employer in the pub.

> "I spoke with some head hunting agencies in London who just off the record told me it's a very competitive industry – a lot of people here know each other…mainly somebody knows somebody, … and the BBC; actually they're obliged to advertise. Not because they are really looking for people, they have their own people for this already. When I had this interview in the BBC I remember the people in the corridor they said 'Well, they're obliged.' So they even pay for us to bring in people from other regions, people for one night – hotel - but it's probably for them, like equal opportunities, but there's nothing equal about it" (S13).

To conclude: many interviewees felt that the introduction of minority schemes and the opportunities they offered were on the whole a good thing and to be encouraged. The differences we noted and the factors which perhaps need to be worked on are the institution's sensitivity to bme people and their cultural location. Ethnic minority schemes and placements are particularly significant for this group because they feel themselves to be outside the 'loop' of contacts. The greater the number of work experiences and placements then the greater opportunities there are for building up useful contacts.

Chapter 8: Ethnic diversity in the industry

In this chapter we will consider how ethnic diversity works in practise in both mainstream and ethnic media for students and employees with experience of such places.

The experience of being an ethnic minority employee in a predominantly white organisation was mixed. For some it was pleasant, for others it was awkward and isolating. For example, one employee explains how remote he felt on his work experience placement:

> "Well through experience it is a very White industry and from the last conference a guy made a point that it is a middle class industry, and they have the tools already through how they communicate, through how they are. So if you go into that environment and you are the only ethnic there, it's like you really do notice it…I felt awkward afterwards, I really did. Because I was looking around and I was really hoping there was a Black or Asian face there, but I was the only one there and even the runners were more or less middle class themselves" (S3).

Such feelings of discomfort and isolation whilst on a work experience placement can put potential media workers off the industry altogether, or encourage them to seek work in more diverse environments. One Pakistani woman describes her feelings about her work experience placement at the BBC. The experience ultimately dissuaded her from pursuing a media career:

> "You tend to feel really isolated. I feel if there were more ethnic minorities there together we could maybe do something but being on your own it is really

> difficult. It is amazing how being on your own can really de-motivate you" (M17).

But we also noted instances where minorities working in mainstream media were pleased to find work and did not mind being in the minority. As M10 states: "I don't think I really felt anything. It was a job that everyone wanted to do" (M10). However, as with the experiences of the students discussed earlier, it is clear for those working in a diverse environment not being 'the only one' is very important. For example, M11 describes working in an extremely diverse office: "It is like you are part of it, you are not the odd one out so it is nice, it is totally different" (M11). These feelings are echoed by M7 who works in the same organisation and describes the rarity of finding an organisation with such a diverse workforce and whose comments suggest that this is also important for personal as well as professional development:

> "It's good. It's something that has never really been on the airwaves in Manchester before I don't think. They've always had either Black stations or Asian stations or this or that but nothing has actually been like intermingled like this. I think [names radio station] has done it and they are the only ones who've done it… My experience, it's just been great really. It's been ok, I mean I've learnt a lot as well about other people with it being ethnically mixed, you also get to know about each others' cultures. That's another thing – it's a good advantage" (M7).

Thus it can be seen that an ethnically diverse workforce is important to the quality of work produced and the personal happiness and fulfilment of staff as well as staff retention.

The number of ethnic minorities employed in the national media, has increased over time, but remain low. Some of the media employees interviewed had managed to secure work in a

mainstream organisation but were situated in an ethnic minority department. Such individuals often felt isolated and found their roles very challenging as they had little support from senior management. An Asian male producer described how he was left to deal with all Asian programmes himself, just because he was of Asian origin. His superiors had little experience in this field and assumed that he would know everything he needed to because of his ethnicity.

> "The experience so far has been a challenge. It's hard work, It can be very lonely because sometimes you're just dealing with issues by yourself, issues that perhaps your editors or your senior management won't understand" (M1).

He displayed annoyance at only being approached by colleagues when they sought advice on minority issues which they were unable to deal with themselves.

> "… you'd assume that journalists will have a pretty good understanding of everything, but the reality is they don't, they're normal human beings from their own backgrounds, working in local news, and maybe their life encounters with other communities hasn't been as great and therefore they don't have very good understanding of it. Often you'll get calls saying 'we need a contact for such-and-such, we need someone, who should we turn to? Ok there's ****, let's turn to him', and that's fine you pass on details and contacts, but sometimes you think no, you should know these things. You should be able to establish these contacts. It's not something… 'just because he's an ethnic!' So in that sense there is that issue there too that you think well, he's ethnic programmes and that's all they're really good for, but there's got to be more to it" (M1).

BME employees did not want to be limited to ethnic minority related themes; they felt a 'good journalist,' irrespective of ethnicity, would be able to deal with any issue.

> "Every time there was a story regarding a mosque they'd always send me to the mosque, because 'Oh you're Muslim, so you know you go and tackle that', and it used to make me frustrated. I don't think it's fair for them to send me and say 'can you go and speak to the men of the mosque and find out more information?' 'Why can't they send one of their other reporters? Why can't their reporters go on a course to do some research and then go? I just don't understand the need to stereotype and pigeon-hole people. I don't see why that responsibility should be left to an ethnic minority journalist. They should be there to do their job" (M2).

A South Asian female broadcast journalist also spoke of having to work without support with similar responsibilities.

> "I work here by myself I don't actually have a team to work with …. I find I generally go in, do what I have to, and then come home. You don't really have time to converse with people a lot because everybody is busy doing their own thing" (M13:7).

She stated that when she got the job, her boss was looking to employ somebody Asian, "with very good regional contacts… someone who could work on their own initiative" and take care of a whole department single handed. "The assumption is that we are experts on Black and Asian issues when this might not necessarily be the case so I think that is a danger" (M13).

Minority related work was described as 'tough' in comparison to more mainstream subjects.

> "working in ethnic programmes is actually a lot tougher because you're dealing with a community who don't open up easily and you have to have those communication skills, and diplomatic skills actually to be able to convince people to come on board your programme and for them to have confidence in you, and you're really tested in many situations trying to get people involved, whereas if you look in mainstream programmes I don't think you encounter such difficulties really" (M1).

These experiences were similar to those of another media employee who had taken part in a script-writing scheme specifically for ethnic minorities and encountered an assumption that the scripts produced would only relate to the stereotypical issues affecting Black communities:

> "They didn't want writers who just so happened to be Black, writing about all sorts of stuff but from the perspective of someone who was from an ethnic minority, no they had to be 'Oh I was a single parent mum' and all that. It was like they were disappointed in our ideas… They played us one play that sounded like a video for The So Solid Crew! It was clichéd to death. They thought it was good but we were like 'What is that about?' I think in the end we educated them in that all the writers they had were doing just normal stuff, not 'issues'… It was an education to them that there were no urban gangster thrillers coming through about what it was like to live in the hood. I can do that but I don't always. I do other things!" (M7).

Another Black journalist told of how it has been assumed on a number of occasions that he is an expert on ethnic minority related themes (despite his editor expressly telling him at the time of his employment that this would not happen) and

regardless of the ethnic group in question. In one such incident he was assumed to be an expert on South African politics:

> "I remember the time when Nelson Mandela was due to be released, one of the bosses came to me and said, '[Name], you know that Nelson Mandela is going to be released this afternoon, we need someone to write a piece that captures his time in captivity, what South Africa was like at the time he was imprisoned, a bit on his time in jail, and also on the new South Africa. I found this really amusing because all of a sudden, I am the South African expert, and again it didn't make any sense… I mean there was no other Black person in the newsroom, but does that make me immediately qualified? … And I did it and I was pleased about that, but I still have a problem with things like that because it doesn't make any sense. That was somebody trying to put me in a sort of compartment, based on colour, based on ethnic background, which is nonsensical. I mean I knew no more about Nelson Mandela than probably anyone else in the newsroom…" (M12).

This common assumption that ethnic minority journalists are just experts on ethnic minority issues can be extremely damaging to career progression as many of the journalists interviewed found that experience in this field is not valued by mainstream media:

> "In terms of applying for jobs in particular, there was one job where I think the managers had difficulty grasping that although I work on an Asian project I still have skills that can be utilised in other areas. I think that can be a major hurdle for some managers or people who are interviewing candidates. It seems to be that if you are working on Asian problems they think that is all you can do" (M13).

> "I am actually applying for other jobs at the moment, if an opportunity comes up I go for it. But I haven't been successful so far. And sometimes I do wonder if I am being discriminated against because I work for an Asian organisation but I don't know" (M14).

> "I think it is a bit tougher to break into mainstream, because I think the producers or whoever think that's your specialism and they think maybe you won't be able to work in another programme, maybe you wouldn't know where to go to look, working in a programme about Catholics or something. Maybe you wouldn't know where to go to. But the point really is if you have research skills they apply to any sort of programme" (M1).

Another journalist working in mainstream media explained that even though he was not 'pigeon holed' into dealing with primarily Black stories, he was afraid that this might happen and felt it necessary to develop a strategy to prevent it:

> "When I started, I originally thought 'am I only here to do Black stories?' So when I started I held back because I wanted to show I could do other stuff as well. Then later I started to do more Black stories but I wanted to prove myself first" (M20).

> "I still worry that as a Black person starting at a newspaper that is what they see, they don't see another journalist they see a Black journalist. You wouldn't do that with a White male. You don't see someone as a White journalist, it is just a journalist. Why does someone of colour suddenly become a Black journalist?" (M12).

Some of our interviewees encountered other forms of stereotyping at work, for example by colleagues who focused

only on the differences between them. M2 experienced problems with colleagues asking her only about her culture and religion. Eventually she moved into ethnic minority specific media in order to avoid this:

> "I found that there are certain barriers being an ethnic minority working in mainstream press or even working for a newspaper because sometimes you do find that you are pigeon-holed. There are problems fitting in, I did find that for me the main thing was to go in there and do my job but obviously when you work there people start to question. They want to know about you as a person, your race, your religion, your culture. I think being a woman, a lot of them… there were certain barriers and that did put me off and I think that's why I wanted to go to [names a local Asian radio station]" (M2).

Others found that as well as focusing on ethnic differences, other colleagues made incorrect racist judgements about them based on their ethnicity. This seemed to be particularly problematic for Asian women, who are rarely represented as successful career women in the media. For example, one Muslim woman found herself to be stereotyped as being meek and quiet because of her gender and ethnicity. This has hindered her career development.

She went on to talk about how she feels that wearing the hijab would be detrimental to a woman's media career as it invokes so many stereotypical judgments about her that don't reflect the 'ideal personality' for media work discussed earlier:

> "When you're wearing the hijab in this country people do treat you differently. They think that 'Oh she's wearing the hijab, she's a fundamentalist' or 'she advocates terrorism,' or, people have these ideas in their head, non-Muslims, that they've seen in the

> media, the mainstream media: 'She's submissive, she'll have an arranged marriage,' all these connotations that come to people's mind when they're wearing the hijab: 'She doesn't want to wear a hijab, she's repressed, her parents make her wear it,' it's all of these things" (M2).

Another Muslim woman who had completed a work experience placement at the BBC felt that a judgement was also made that as a Muslim woman she would be biased about current affairs:

> "It happened [the commencement of her work experience placement] around the time that September 11th had just taken place! So I was thinking great, this is going to be great for me, a headscarfed Asian girl and I remember as soon as I actually entered the building and got introduced to the people, I felt a pressure to kind of reassure them that 'I am ok, I am one of you really' kind of thing. Nothing was done purposefully towards me but I just felt that being in there I needed to reassure them that I am not biased, I am not just someone who is pro-Muslim, pro-Islam and one-sided. I wanted them to be aware that I am someone who is open-minded and open to learning from different sources. So sometimes I would be quite annoyed about what was happening in Afghanistan and stuff like that but I would feel that I couldn't really share my feelings openly with other people because they might think 'She is getting too into this kind of thing, just get on with life'" (M17).

This subject obviously felt that she had to be extremely careful when expressing her views on the Afghanistan invasion because of her religion and ethnicity. It is these cultural barriers that may be preventing those ethnic minorities who are already working in the media from expressing their own views and influencing the nature of reporting on such issues as Islam and terrorism.

Three of our interviewees talked about instances of discrimination they experienced whilst on work experience placements. One Korean student had such a negative experience whilst on a placement at ITV that she was dissuaded from pursuing a media career altogether:

> "I was a runner for a programme on ITV. It was free of charge for one day. I tried my best… I had to find an interview on Market Street, which was really busy. I had to ask people if they were willing to help with our programme. There was also an English student from [names a University] and I think there was discrimination. I worked so hard and I didn't take any breaks but she was laid back, going to coffee shops, smoking. And because English is my second language I found it hard to communicate. But she was a good talker. We had to go somewhere in the evening to help. I offered to drive them in my car. They made me carry all the stuff into the house, and I carried all the heavy stuff into the house and set up the tripod and everything. And they gave me orders but they didn't chat to me or anything like that. And later the English girl was talking to the PA, talking about the job, saying she could get a CV and everything right in front of me" (S11).

Another woman was also put off a career in media as a result of her work experience placement at the BBC. As well as feelings of isolation and pressure to reassure colleagues that her Muslim identity would not create problems (the placement began shortly after 9/11, during the invasion of Afghanistan), she also encountered problems regarding the treatment of a Muslim guest she had invited onto a radio broadcast:

> "I was asked to organise interviews for this programme and obviously because it was current

> affairs they were going to have something about Afghanistan and they wanted me to put someone forward for interview, talking about the situation… someone who was Muslim who saw himself as a representative of the Muslim community. [was invited]… he wasn't treated well at all. They were cutting him off and putting words in his mouth. I thought 'This is outrageous! This is my one influence if you like of having a minority ethnic different culture experience and someone is trying to stop him speaking' … What happened was after I arranged that interview I found I wasn't being asked to arrange any more interviews…" (M17).

This is a typically complex story. Without any feedback from her managers this employee felt that she was being discriminated for the choice of guest. But the employee did not want to play the race card and the BBC may not have known of her complaint. And so the incident leaves only a bitter after-taste and not increased mutual understanding.

A student describes how he felt used whilst completing work experience. Although it is not clear whether or not this experience is the result of racial discrimination, the fact that many colleagues were offered paid work whilst he was not suggests that this is a possibility:

> "So I started doing things like the odd feature, reviews of clubs and certain events that were on. I think I did one or two interviews over the phone, but it was all unpaid stuff. I did it for years and years. And what pissed me off was all the times I went into the office, no one ever said 'Oh we have a job, there is a position opening.' Yet over the period of years that I worked there I saw other people were getting employed and I thought, 'This is a joke this. I am doing this work, they obviously know what I am interested in doing but

> they won't give me a full time job.' That did piss me off so I stopped doing that and that was my first foray into the media" (M9).

What this individual felt to be discrimination could end the media careers of hopeful young job seekers before they have even begun. Without feedback from managers it is hard to know how to improve. The doubts expressed by people about whether or not they have experienced discrimination in their careers also applied when interviewees were asked whether they feel that some people have more difficulties than others getting jobs in the media. Four people, when asked this question, found it difficult to tell whether their experiences were typical or not. M10 believes that, although it is difficult for an individual to answer this question, there appears to be no viable alternative explanation for the low number of ethnic minorities working in the media:" I don't know the answer to that question. However, it is still beyond me why there are so few people from ethnic minorities in the media. (M10)

One interviewee pointed out that although on the surface it appears that things are improving and the numbers of ethnic minorities working in the media are increasing, this does not mean that they have equal opportunities or that discrimination does not exist:

> "We certainly have more Black and Asian journalists here than when I started so you could say surely that is going to make things better? It should but it doesn't mean that it does. Because I look then very closely at what they do for Black and Asian journalists and I still see them treating them differently… It's like they could increase the numbers tenfold, but if the same attitudes persist then it doesn't matter how many are here. Ok, it might look better" (M12).

These doubts relate to the more subtle examples of discrimination experienced by media employees discussed – it certainly appears that although people find it hard to explain ethnic minority under-achievement in the media, they are reluctant to blame it on discrimination.

As many as eight media employees however did feel certain that some groups face more barriers than others – one mentioned the difficulties encountered by disabled people but the others all felt it was ethnic minority groups who were disadvantaged. All of these interviewees had reached this conclusion through personal experience or knowing other people who had struggled to find work:

> "I know a few Black women who have gone to [names a University] and left with good grades, and then have gone for jobs in the media and haven't got the jobs. And then White women have got the same grades and have got the jobs. You have to ask why?" (M21).

Two respondents also mentioned that those ethnic minorities for whom English is not a first language face extra difficulties, with one journalist commenting that this only applies to those with non-European accents:

> "I think people who are from abroad maybe from African countries, they also [face barriers] if you have a strong accent, unless it's European which is seen as, considered sexy. You can't be Asian and come in with a very strong Pakistani accent and be talking or working in the media industry, it just wouldn't be right" (M15).

One respondent was adamant that everybody has an equal chance of gaining media employment and succeeding in their career:

> "I think it depends on the actual individual – how much they want it and how much experience they have got and how much knowledge they have got of the industry. If they know where they want to go then they will get there eventually one day. But if you wake up one day and think 'I want to go into the media and you have not done your research, it will be difficult for you" (M18).

Many interviewees seemed reluctant to talk about discrimination unless they were absolutely certain that it has occurred and of course it is rarely possible for people to be absolutely certain about the motives behind their treatment and experiences. M9 for example talks about why the nature of the industry makes it so difficult to be sure whether a lack of success in finding work is attributable to racist attitudes within the media:

> "It's when people talk about institutionalised racism, it might be racism or it might be just habit. Like the guy said people hire in their own image. But at the end of the day if you don't get a job it is an arbitrary decision because it is a creative industry. That is unique in the creative industries in that it is arbitrary, it is 'Oh we like you or we don't.' So we can only really comment on whether an industry is serving its diverse purpose by seeing who works there and it obviously isn't, because the people who work there are not representative of the people who are applying for the work" (M9).

The way that other interviewees have discussed their experiences also suggests that there is a reluctance to raise the subject of discrimination. For example, one employee felt he "couldn't afford" to admit that his failure to do any part of his job was because he is Black. He said that if he did then, "the job would never get done…" (M12) However, when the experiences of those minorities working in predominantly white

workplaces are taken it account, it appears likely that if ethnic minority media workers are already feeling isolated due to their ethnicity, then there may also be a reluctance to draw further attention to this difference by speaking out about experiences of racism. This becomes clearer when the ways that some interviewees spoke about the possibility that they had experienced discrimination are examined more closely.

> "I think sometimes if you're an ethnic minority… I think… I know I shouldn't say this but I definitely do think that when you are an ethnic minority for example and you are a woman, you are doubly disadvantaged. I don't know maybe if I wasn't an ethnic minority would I have a better job of gaining employment? I really don't know the answer to that one but I do think there are certain barriers because for me I was knocking on doors, it wasn't that I was being complacent, I wasn't sat at home thinking 'Oh, you know what, I'm waiting for this, I'm waiting for an editor to call me up and say 'we've got a job waiting for you'. I know in the real world it doesn't happen that way" (M2).

It is interesting that this interviewee felt that she should not say that she felt she was at a disadvantage despite the fact that she is not entirely certain. There also appears to be a need to stress that she had tried very hard to find work. Perhaps there is a fear that people will assume ethnic minorities are looking for an'easy ride' if they speak out about discrimination. There is also a possibility that some minorities are afraid that an admission of discrimination will be taken as a sign of personal weakness. Indeed, we have heard students talking about feeling they have to "work ten times harder" at University (S7) and others proclaiming that if you work hard enough and want it enough, anyone can succeed in the media (M18).

Participants felt that there still were not enough minorities working in the media. “Asian people in the industry as a whole are in a tiny, tiny minority” (M5), “there should be more” (M1; M5; M8). M10 went on to say that there were not enough minorities in the media but was unsure why.

> “I don’t know how we can change that. If a Black person applied and had the necessary experience and get up and go, they would stand as good a chance as anyone, I don’t think the management would say ‘Oh we don’t want a Black person’, I don’t think that happens. When people apply we don’t know what their ethnicity is. Sometimes we do ethnic minority monitoring but it is not compulsory, and a lot of people don’t fill in the form. We end up with a pile of short-listed applications and there may be not one Black person in there” (M10).

M12 felt he did not have an equal chance of promotion because of his ethnicity:

> Interviewer: “Do you think that you stand an equal chance of getting promoted up through the ranks?”
> M12: “Honestly, no, which saddens me. I would hope after all this time that I could move up. When things do happen it tends to be for somebody else’s benefit not for yours. I know in this profession there is a lot of jealousy if someone gets to go where you would like to or someone gets a story you would like, that’s normal. But when it happens for reasons you can’t really explain, that is a bit of a downer. I have experienced a lot of that in my career.”

Two journalists had also experienced racist behaviour from other media whilst researching stories. One employee at an Asian radio station experienced racist treatment whilst phoning a PR department to enquire about potential stories:

> "I just wanted to ring them and say 'do you have any interesting stories, has anything happened overnight that we could cover?' And the response from the PR company was very negative: 'Why would you want to know? You're an Asian radio station, obviously you cover Asian news, why do you want to know what's gone on in [names place]? If it was an Asian story we would contact you,' which I obviously found was very rude…I don't know if it was ignorance, what it was…, it was just something that I don't think is acceptable in this day and age for someone to behave in that way…" (M2).

Another Black journalist found that public prejudices often compounded the difficulties he faced when trying to speak to people about stories:

> "It is alright saying on the one hand that you want to be a journalist whether it is a Black journalist or a White journalist, but that sort of interaction that you have with people… For instance at college they do not teach you how to talk through a closed door. You knock on the door, someone opens it, you introduce yourself and they slam the door in your face… There were times when things would happen and it would happen because of your colour… The point I am getting to is that what I couldn't afford to do was to keep saying that this was because I was Black." (M12).

While this journalist felt that he could not openly admit racist incidents were hindering his work, he obviously felt that these were problems he would have to overcome himself and that nothing could be gained from talking to his editor about them. Indeed, he even mentioned the pressures to succeed in getting a story, making the point that "you have probably got a news editor who is waiting for some comment" (M12).

Some media employees also reported experiencing discrimination from colleagues at work. However, it appears that these instances of racist behaviour were much more subtle, making it difficult for people to ascertain whether they had actually experienced discrimination or not. For example, M12 found that he experienced a more subtle kind of discrimination from his colleagues and manager:

> "I would say that any racism I would encounter from them would be much more subtle and I would have to say that certainly existed, there was a subtlety about it… I remember starting at [names a local newspaper] and it was three weeks before the news editor actually called me and gave me something to do. And all that time I was thinking what is he thinking? Is he thinking 'I wonder if this boy can write his name?' I just found it very strange. If I look at things closely, things don't always stand up to scrutiny. I am thinking 'Well I see how that person is being treated but I don't see myself being treated the same way, so what is that all about? So you are forever asking yourself these questions. Sometimes you come up with an answer but invariably you don't" (M12).

M13 also felt she experienced a more subtle, hidden form of discrimination at work:

> "I don't think I have faced any direct racism but I do think I have been the victim of a sort of underlying covert racism…[discussed a meeting of the BBC Black forum for ethnic minority staff where issues were raised with the editor responsible for diversity for the regions and fed back to Greg Dyke]. But I think this caused some problems for local managers. They found it difficult to deal with the issue being raised: suggesting people were being discriminated

against. They felt concerned that these issues were put to the Director General" (M13).

The fact that discrimination experienced from within the media industry is subtle, leaving people unsure whether or not their treatment is due to their ethnic origin or not, creates barriers to identifying and dealing with racism within the industry. Indeed, we have already seen that these feelings of doubt about equal treatment were also experienced by those looking for work and who were unsure about the reasons for their lack of success. The media industry is notorious for it's competitive nature and it is commonly understood that it is difficult to break into regardless of ethnicity. This again makes it very difficult to ascertain whether lack of success is in any way due to racial discrimination whilst at the same time providing a legitimate explanation for many of the barriers to finding work and career progression discussed here. Indeed, one of the main barriers cited by those interviewed was the competitive nature of the industry in general:

"…unfortunately there just doesn't seem to be enough positions. You might find there might be one position as a TV presenter at Granada at any one time, there might be two hundred people applying for that position, so it doesn't mean that you don't have the skills, it mean's there's too many, far too much competition and few places available" (M2).

"…it's just competition, it's very very difficult. I'm not saying it's unachievable but there's just far too much competition that I have found… I don't think it is all about colour. The fact of the matter is if there are a thousand jobs and every year twenty thousand people come out of university with a degree in media or journalism there won't be enough jobs for everyone coming through" (M10).

However, almost all of the interviewees stated their preference for working in a mainstream organisation (albeit on minority themes) as opposed to being employed in an ethnic minority media establishment where pay and opportunities for progression were lower. Thus competition for mainstream posts remained fierce.

Finally, it must be noted that - as with students on predominantly White media courses and journalists working in White, middle class newsrooms - some media employees expressed an almost steely determination that they would not be stereotyped, surviving the barriers inherent to media work by interpreting them as a challenge to be overcome; it is particularly interesting that the woman speaking below felt it necessary to be perceived as 'strong,' when other Muslim women felt they were stereotyped as meek and repressed:

> "It is challenging, but it is how strong you are in your convictions in what you want to do. I think it is difficult for a Pakistani Muslim woman, but however I have found that the other aspect of it is you can either make it difficult for yourself because you get bogged down in looking at yourself and your culture and worrying about what people think of you, or you can say 'I can keep all those values and principles in place but I am determined to make something of myself despite who I am. So I am not going to let the wider society pigeon-hole me'. That's the attitude I have had all along, partly because I have been lucky and also my sheer determination to come across as strong…" (M5).

This section has highlighted the uncertainties regarding discrimination in the workplace. Employees feel nervous about expressing it, particularly in the workplace, for fear they will be thought of as playing the race card and asking for special treatment. In turn managers are either unaware of these

dissatisfactions or uncertain about how to address them. The result is an uneasy calm in which invisible but very real barriers to progress remain in place.

Chapter Nine: Employment in minority media

Ethnic minority specific media can provide another perspective on news and entertainment as well as offering a vital role in providing employment and training for ethnic minorities who have been turned down in the mainstream. The majority of ethnic media employees in this study had initially applied for work in the mainstream but found that it was too tough to get into (M2; M3; M4; M5; M8; M11; M14; M15; M18).

> "I was applying for jobs as a runner on TV sets but I didn't get very far with that because they said I didn't have much experience" (M4:3).

However, rather than dwell on rejection, ethnic minorities aspiring to enter the media considered working in ethnic media. "I would love to work in the mainstream… but I think you have a lot more chance to get work in ethnic media" (M11:4). This belief lead many to obtain work in such organisations.

> "I was very lucky again that **** had heard from somebody that I had completed this traineeship and said it would be really good for you to come down for a chat. And I feel it is extremely important for me to get the experience that I need in order for me to move further. So therefore if I don't get a reply from the BBC I am not going to sit at home and think about it, I need to look at other options, and that's why I am at **** (ethnic radio station) at the moment" (M5).

Two young people felt that 'good looks' were essential to succeeding in the media (Y13; Y6). Ethnic media was found to influence their perceptions of what was required to succeed in the media. For example a 17 year old male studying A-level media stated that he would prefer to work in ethnic media as it was easier to get into. He wanted to work as a presenter on an

Asian channel and believed his ‘good looks’ were his ticket to succeeding. “I reckon looks are important… the stereotypical... tall, fair skin and stuff like that… because that’s what we mainly see on TV.” He did not think this was the case with British television. “I reckon fair skin coloured is shown more on Asian channels, they are trying to portray the image of like… White is better, whilst on like BBC channels… they have Black presenters and news readers and stuff” (Y13).

Ethnic media was generally found to be easier to get into. For example, after numerous rejections in the mainstream due to ‘lack of experience,’ a young Asian journalist managed to find work writing for an Asian newspaper.

> “I heard about it in an Asian newspaper, I think it was Eastern Eye. It just said write in so I did and the editor phoned me and he asked me to send some articles, but I told him I hadn’t worked for any other newspapers before” (M4:6).

A young woman with no paid experience in the media industry also managed to secure work at an ethnic radio station.

> “Initially I just went down, I spoke to the editor and he liked my voice. Initially that was the thing, he said’ I do want your voice’. He got me to do an audition…just to do a voice test, which I did. He asked me to read a few bulletins, and did a few exercises on news, such as once you’ve received a press release how you rewrite them…how to write a news story, how you look for the human interest angle, what makes a good news story, how you source, people on the telephone…news-gathering, working towards deadlines, I knew all of that so it really wasn’t a problem” (M2:3).

Work experience in minority specific media led three individuals to secure full-time work. An aspiring young Pakistani journalist was granted a full-time job following a work experience placement at an Asian newspaper.

> "For the work experience, at Asian news I went through my college for work experience, and then from there I just asked them if I could do extra shifts. For Asian **** (newspaper) my cousin knew **** who is the MD at Asian **** and I chatted to him and he was just "come in whenever you want". Then when I finished my NCTJ he offered me a full time job" (M3:3).

One young woman that had no media qualifications managed to find work as a presenter at an ethnic radio station (M8). She simply called the organisation and was subsequently asked for an interview.

Those that were unsuccessful in finding work in either the mainstream or ethnic media opted for voluntary work in hospital radio or charity organisations in order to obtain experience in the field (M7; M11; M22). Those that worked in ethnic media hoped that whatever they achieved from such organisations would increase their chances of seeking work in the mainstream.

The interviewees spoke of numerous advantages to working in ethnic media. Some participants felt that they 'fitted in' better in an ethnic organisation (M3; M8; M14). "There are basic things like languages, you feel more at home because you can use any language with the people you work with, who are the same ethnic group as yourself" (M14).

Ethnic media employees were also grateful that they were able to obtain experience in the industry.

> "I was very fortunate, I was very lucky that they took me on because I wouldn't have had that experience, good or bad, if I wasn't there for three years or so. I was lucky that I was basically able to get a whole range on the presenting side, on the managing side, on the research side" (M15).

A high proportion of South Asian media employees found that they only received responses to their applications from ethnic minority specific organisations and thus felt they had no option but to specialise in these areas. For example, M19 applied to many organisations all over the country but without a work permit, the only organisation that would employ him and sponsor him in obtaining a permit was a Sikh paper:

> "Because I didn't have a work permit, just a tourist visa, I would sit in the library all day and apply for jobs… I applied to all of them, literally thousands…I got some interviews, I got an interview in Ipswich at a radio show but they said 'try next year' … Then I applied to all these at Amazon and they said 'Yours is the most impressive CV I have come across but unfortunately you don't have a work permit.' I applied and applied and thought I would just work in a take away or something although I didn't want to…But still I persisted and I saw an advert in a job centre – a Sikh paper in Birmingham. I applied for that and I think he was desperate for somebody and he said he would sort out the work permit" (M19).

Although this project does not aim to address the specific problems encountered by oversees job seekers, the fact that it was only a Sikh paper that was prepared to help this interviewee to obtain his permit may indicate a discrepancy in the treatment of applications from ethnic minority job seekers by mainstream and minority specific media. Many British Asians reported

similar experiences of only finding work, or even receiving any replies or feedback at all, at Asian specific media outlets:

> "I applied at BBC Radio Lancashire [after completing BBC training] but I didn't get a reply. I thought they must get hundreds of applications from people just like me so I need to start looking elsewhere" (M5).

> "It [finding media work] was easy in an ethnic place, but difficult for the others" (M14).

But as we noted earlier some interviewees and focus group members believe that working only in ethnic minority specific media can in itself be a barrier to career progression. Several criticisms of working in ethnic media were made. Some employees felt that they had been taken advantage of because they had no choice but to work in ethnic media. "I felt that yeah there was an abuse of one's time, there was an abuse of one's naivety as well which is unpleasant…it stays with me as well when I think about it" (M15).

It was also argued that ethnic media managers 'bring people in on the cheap' (M1; M13) and fail to look after their employees because they have no experience; because they have been unsuccessful in the mainstream; or because they have no media qualifications. Six interviewees stated that they initially worked without pay for up to two months as they were told this was 'standard procedure' when beginning work in a small ethnic organisation (M5; M8; M14; M15; M18). The pay at such organisations was described as 'minimal,' 'terrible' and 'much worse' than what was expected. Working conditions were also described as 'far from ideal' (M18) and found to be well below those of mainstream organisations. Individuals complained about having no organised training and little opportunity for promotion. Lack of training meant that ethnic programmes came across as unprofessional. Places of work were described as 'amateurish' and 'demanding' (M8; M14).

> "I feel that compared to other places I have done work experience at, it is not as advanced, not as professional. It sometimes seems a bit amateurish. I feel like there is nobody here to learn from. If there was a head of news, someone to give you guidance…? Its basically you using your own initiative and whatever you know, and getting on with it, and sometimes it is a little bit difficult to talk to management as well and tell them because they don't have specific knowledge of news etc" (M14).

Similarly, a Pakistani female had obtained substantial experience through work placements at the BBC but was unable to find work in the mainstream. She came into ethnic media well-equipped but complained she learnt nothing new and had no-one to look up to or learn from. She described poor pay and long hours (M18).

Another young presenter discussed how working in ethnic media was not what she expected, "the Asian organisation wasn't what I expected it to be, no proper working procedures, no organisation" (M8). However individuals put up with such working conditions because they were grateful for the opportunity and because they had no other option for the time being. They hoped their hard work would eventually pay off.

> "It is a huge step down from working in other organisations to be completely honest. It questions the whole aspect of what Asians are supposed to do. I mean if you are going to enter the media, the only people that are going to give you the chance are Asian people to begin with. Then you have to take what is being given. Partly my fear is that because it is an organisation that are giving you an opportunity they know you are not going to get elsewhere, they are obviously going to exploit that. And I don't want

> people to be exploited. It is not a nice feeling. I would rather people were paid for their skills and their knowledge and what they brought to the organisation. It is a huge step down for me that is why it is making it difficult for me to come to Manchester every week and even decide if I take a full time contract on. Is it going to be affordable to live in Manchester, and to live off that salary and pay for basic things like petrol? There is that aspect and that is the drawback because then you are in a difficult situation. So I look back on my career and I think 'My gosh I am in this organisation and what I get paid is not even a fraction of what I used to get paid'. But yet it is something that I want to do, so I am making that sacrifice now and hoping that sometime in the future very soon, it will pay off" (M5).

A young male Kashmiri journalist with experience of one year was surprised at how low the starting salary was. "For the hours you do it is poor, I am on about 12 grand" (M3:8). However, he also continued with his job as he saw the low pay as temporary. "Within a couple of years I can get another job and it should be about 25 grand which I should be able to do with my experience so that is what I am looking at hopefully" (M3:9). Some employees felt obliged to continue working under such conditions as they felt indebted to their employers for giving them a chance (M5; M17; M18).

It was felt that ethnic media outlets have a high staff turnover because employees end up leaving due to a lack of opportunities to progress and develop new skills. "I left ****, I felt as though it took me as far as I could possibly go… I think that **** didn't really equip me with all the skills that I was looking for" (M2). Many participants would prefer to work in the mainstream but had not been given the opportunity and thus remained in their minority related posts. "Yeah it's just happened to be that way and I've always happened to have been in that field, but I

think it'd be nice to break away I think" (M1; M4). They felt their work was very limited and stated that they would prefer to work on mainstream themes too to keep their career options open.

> "Sometimes you feel out of touch with the rest of the world really, because you are concentrating so much on just ethnic issues that you feel that maybe if you wanted to move on from here you would have to do maybe some more training, you would need something else to get back in touch with everything and start looking at things from a different point of view rather than the narrow view that we have here" (M14).

Others felt ready to apply for mainstream positions and saw their minority specific media experience as 'a stepping stone' towards that (M1; M14; M18; M4; M3). However, working solely on ethnic minority related themes was found to work against some individuals in terms of succeeding in the mainstream.

> "I am actually applying for other jobs at the moment, if an opportunity comes up I go for it. But I haven't been successful so far. And sometimes I do wonder if I am being discriminated against because I work for an Asian organisation but I don't know" (M14).

Minority related media work seemed to have less value than the mainstream. "If you're working in Asian programmes you do get typecasted…even though I have presented on some of the mainstream programmes" (M1). It was suggested that media managers assume that minorities themes are your specialisation and all you know. Therefore, having only ethnic minority specific media experience can be detrimental to a media career. One Asian man with only experience of Asian media described his difficulties,

> "I went for an interview for a television post, it was an arts programme and I had the necessary understanding and experience to be an assistant producer on this programme and had some great ideas but at the moment of the interview the ideas which I did present to them were ethnic related and they said 'have you not thought of anything else mainstream?', and I said I'd presented those ideas to them because that is the background I have, that's my speciality, and hence my producing these ideas. But I'm sure given the opportunity I can think up other ideas. There wasn't something I could think up on the spot. I didn't get the job and I thought to myself that I didn't get the job on the basis of the fact that I didn't have any general mainstream ideas, which I thought was unfair as I was just really dipping into my background storming these ideas to them" (M1).

The experience is of course mixed. Two interviewees had received training in ethnic media but had no success gaining entry to the mainstream. This led them to eventually reject their media careers (M2; S4). However, three individuals managed to secure work in the mainstream after receiving their first break in ethnic media, suggesting that such difficulties can be overcome with 'determination,' 'hard work' and 'persistence' (M1; M10; M13).

Some felt that ethnic media was essential as minorities had no hope of getting very far in the mainstream. For example,

> "The only way you could take this forward… have totally separate media organisations for ethnic minorities from the mainstream, because you can't get very far once you are in there. I felt this was a good idea to be honest, but I felt it was sad at the same time, that you can't work together. But I think to start off

> with, to encourage people to gain that kind of confidence and to establish yourselves I think that is the only way" (M17).

As we can see there is ambivalence in the communities about the value of ethnic media. Many can appreciate its value but others feel that, for a variety of reasons, it is of limited value to those with career aspirations.

Ethnic mix in ethnic media

It may be worthwhile to consider our samples' response to the question of ethnic mix within their own sector.

It should be noted at the outset that Asian media tended to employ all-Asian staff. It is not that such organisations reject white staff but that very few white individuals apply. But although the service produced by these organisations was for an Asian audience, the interviewees felt that white people should not be excluded.

> "I think it should be more balanced really, because I think there should be equal opportunity. We can't complain about Asian people not getting enough opportunity in other media if Asian newspapers themselves won't employ white people" (Pakistani, male, journalist).

The lack of ethnic diversity at work led some to conclude that they would prefer to work in a more mixed environment. A Mirpuri female highlighted the importance of diversity in the workplace,

> "If there were more white people here, they would get more of an understanding of what we do. Probably any bias or anything that might come into the work we

> do, it would probably improve that as well, so it would be better if we got a mixed opinion" (M14).

A Pakistani broadcast journalist had similar concerns,

> "I feel a bit bogged down in the Asian mentality of 'this is the way things are and how they should be'. I think it is difficult because we are all Asian and we are expected to think alike and we don't have any other choices… it is sometimes good to have people from different backgrounds" (M5).

The vast majority of our interviewees preferred to work in a more mixed environment but agreed that irrespective of ethnicity, the most deserving applicants should get jobs in ethnic media (M1; M13; M14; M16). Only one individual argued that ethnic minorities had little, if any chance in the mainstream and thus should have first refusal for minority related work (African-Caribbean, male, freelance writer). Advertisements for such posts are usually in ethnic media or learned of by word of mouth which means that often white individuals do not get the opportunity to apply. It was also suggested that 'White people are not interested in Asian media' (M4) or that they 'probably wouldn't feel welcome' and so don't apply (M14). Interviewees highlighted difficulties that white individuals may incur such as language barriers. "There are some people who don't speak English so if we get people in who don't know Urdu there is bound to be conflict" (M4).

Although some participants felt that a white individual would be able to do their job, they didn't think they would be able to do it *as* well. "They eventually get there, but not as effective as the ones who are from that community (M1). Both managers and ethnic minority employees felt that ethnic minorities were better equipped for representing their own communities in comparison to their white counterparts. This was because, occasionally minorities would have to use their first languages and found that

during interviews respondents felt at ease when they were talking to somebody from a similar background. A young Pakistani male writing for an Asian paper said,

> "It is all right, I mainly interview Asian people. I think it might be different if I was interviewing white people. I think Asian people feel more at home if it is an Asian journalist working for them, they feel I can understand them" (M4).

While interviewees appreciated the value of a mixed environment they also stressed the importance of ethnic media in providing a more balanced view on minority issues and further highlighted the importance of minority journalists (M1; M3; M4; M13).

> "People should think about how there are a lot of Asian issues that are out there that people don't know about. Somebody who is Asian has more access to these things and can explain them properly and get their view across" (M14).

Most participants shared the view that ethnic minority reporters were able to represent their communities better than White journalists (M1; M3; M7; M11; M13).

> "If someone writes an article, like Yasmin Alibhai Brown… I look at her articles and I think they are not mainstream, it is not a mainstream perception it is her perception. Because she is Asian she brings that quite strongly into her articles, and she knows what she is talking about. More ethnic minority journalists would be able to bring so much insight about their community and their culture. It is good to think we know someone is there who understands how we are represented" (M5).

To conclude:

Some individuals thought that ethnic minority journalists were able to make a difference in reporting because they have a better understanding of ethnic people (M11). However, some media employees felt restricted in what they could actually express even when working in ethnic media. “As a Muslim journalist myself, I should be able to say the truth but sometimes what we feel we can’t write in the paper because other people won’t like it… there are restrictions” (M3).

It is clear from our sample that a mixed media environment represents an ideal employers should be striving for.

Chapter Ten: Factors that help further a career in media

Good careers advice and support

Four of the media employees interviewed had been given support, encouragement or good advice very early in their careers which had helped them to gain the confidence to decide to pursue a media career. M1 for example was in the process of studying business, mainly because he did not know what else to do, when a tutor helped him to realise he had creative potential:

> "Well business was one of those things that 'Oh well, there's nothing else,' I couldn't think at that time hence me doing business studies and then breaking off and going abroad. But it was basically some good advice from my tutors when I was studying business studies, and I thought 'I'm not getting a kick out of this, its mundane, it doesn't do anything for me.' And then he talked me through what sort of person I was and he said, 'You sound fairly creative and artistic and maybe you should be looking down those lines'" (M1).

The potential importance of a supportive teacher is also highlighted in M12's experience where the combination of "a very good English teacher who was very supportive" and "parents who once you decided what it was you wanted to do they would back you, even though they didn't know anything themselves that would be of use to you" helped him to pursue his ambition to become a journalist. This was despite the fact that he was not encouraged by his career officer or peers and lacked Black role models in the media. When this is compounded by the fact that he grew up in an inner city area

where it is relatively rare for people to continue in education we can see the challenges some bme individuals have to overcome.

Similarly, M9 found that good careers advice helped him to see the importance of going on to university even though this was not common amongst young Black men in inner city Manchester:

> "I was very good at art at school. I came from a poor inner city Longsight background, had no intention of being a poor, struggling artist. The careers officer said 'you should go to university.' He said, 'Do you know what graphic design is?' I said, 'no.' He said it was what they use to make prints and things. 'Go and be a graphic designer!'" (M9).

M9 went on to complete his graphic design degree and became a free-lance graphic designer and scriptwriter.

Work experience

A previous chapter has already expanded on the significance of work experience. Employers make it clear that a lack of experience can be a barrier to gaining media work. At least five of the students and six of the media employees interviewed for this project had completed some form of work experience placement. Apart from three of the students who had found placements through their university and one media employee who had replied to an advert in an Asian newspaper, all of the interviewees had found their work experience placements by writing speculative letters to organisations and all had worked unpaid for at least the first few weeks of their placement. The work experience placements completed by interviewees included a few days researching "medieval costumes and weapons and stuff" (S3), writing press releases for an Asian newspaper (M3), completing vox pops, telephoning and photocopying and even a seven-month position as a radio

presenter (M8). A number of interviewees had also completed standard BBC four-week placements. Many of those who had completed work experience placements had faced tough competition to gain their places and as discussed in the Inequalities section, some found that they had greater success when they applied to ethnic minority specific organisations.

Some interviewees did feel that they were not given enough responsibility for their placements to be truly worthwhile. S3 for example felt that he did not gain as much as he hoped out of his placement as a researcher for a local production company:

> [When asked what he got out of his placement] "Not much because you are not there for them to train you, you are just there mainly for odd jobs. And like the technical stuff; I was mainly carrying camera equipment if I was filming, and photocopying. So there were one or two things in technical stuff I did learn but other than that I wouldn't say I was any better off knowledge wise, before hand or afterwards" (S3).

Experiences vary. One female interviewee had completed many work experience placements that had not been substantial in terms of both the work involved and the prospects they offered for future employment. But another interviewee found that once she had gained her journalism qualification she was given the same tasks as regular journalists to complete:

> "Before I got my qualification it was mostly just sort of vox pops, phoning people up, getting more information on stories, but once I had got my qualification and once I was on the [journalism] course, I was doing stuff that normal journalists were doing, I would go out to stories, I would do interviews, make packages, do vox pops, I would do all that kind of stuff." (M18)

M3 also found that his work experience placement at an Asian newspaper, although "just writing press releases," gave him the opportunity to experience working in a newsroom: "in the whole environment to see if I could adapt to it."

Another student is finding that the contacts she made whilst completing a work experience placement at the BBC are proving useful for getting help and advice whilst job seeking:

> "I could try people at the BBC [to get more information] which is the contacts that I made, they're a great help as well… I have been to a few people to see them already about the BBC news sponsorship and they're great because they help me out in any way they can. So them three are probably my main sources of information" (S9).

Indeed, so important is work experience for making contacts that M4's work experience placement at an Asian newspaper resulted in him gaining a part-time paid position as a journalist.

M10 is established in his media career and highlights the importance of work experience, even if it is not for a particularly prestigious organisation. He describes how he chooses who to shortlist for interview out of hundreds of applications:

> "It often comes down to experience. We put people in two piles, those with experience and those without. But it is the old chicken and egg situation, how do you get experience if you need it to get it? But you can, in things like hospital and community radio… The more experience you can get the better. If you can get on a BBC work experience placement that would be fantastic, because it is four weeks - a standard system. And because you will know how it works when you

> do an interview here [at the BBC] you will be able to hold your own" (M10).

It is clear that more can be done by employers to help those on work experience placements by thinking carefully about the nature of the work they are offering and providing long term support and advice to job seekers. However, most people felt that their work experience placements were beneficial with a number of interviewees feeling that they learned about the industry and gained useful skills on their placements.

Attitude and Qualifications

When asked what qualifications, skills and training are needed to do their jobs, media employees gave a range of responses. For example, some felt that qualifications were not as important as experience or general willingness to learn on the job:

> "Well the editor said he wasn't interested in qualifications, more interested in the ability to do the job. So I would say qualifications would be a batch of articles that you have written in the past" (M4).

> "I didn't have any qualifications but I was very confident and I was willing to learn. I think you are better off having qualifications but if you don't I think you can get your experience and go into the field if you are given a chance. If you have got experience then I think you can do it without a degree or a qualification" (M11).

It must be noted that those employees who felt it was possible to access media work without qualifications were concentrated mainly in ethnic minority specific media or in part-time unpaid positions. Other media workers felt that a degree, post-graduate diploma or NTCJ was essential to gaining employment in the industry:

> "I think my degree was helpful, I think I did need my degree, because you do need an understanding of the news, and of the law, and you probably wouldn't have if you didn't do a formal qualification in journalism, you know all the libel laws and things so you don't write anything slanderous" (M14).

M6 agrees that qualifications are essential but argues that the NTCJ course is sufficient:

> "A lot of people do degrees in media studies but they are not really very helpful because most of the training they get comes under [the] NTCJ course and most of the reporters who I encounter have a humanities degree, that is degrees with quite a lot of history and a foreign language or whatever… so you need a first degree and then a postgraduate qualification" (M6).

In terms of the personal attributes necessary for a successful media career, almost all respondents were in agreement that communication skills are crucial:

> "I think being an effective communicator [is the main skill necessary for radio work] because obviously you're dealing with PR companies on the telephone, you'd be dealing with different types of clients, you're dealing with a diverse range of people, and obviously you're speaking to people on every level. I think that's the major thing there really, your communication skills" (M2).

The importance of communication skills means that those for whom English is not their first language can struggle:

> "Communication is quite important in the media so it helps to have that I think. Because I have found that

somebody started working here and it didn't work because English wasn't their first language so it was too difficult. It was taking too much time and I think employers look at that" (M14).

As well as the general agreement that good communication skills are essential, a number of interviewees went on to talk about the importance of certain personality traits such as confidence and being talkative. M13 talked about how she had to overcome her shyness in order to perform well in her journalist job:

"I enjoy meeting people but the one huge problem I had that people find difficult to believe now, was that I was very very shy. Really shy. And that was a huge obstacle for me to overcome initially. I was one of those people who would never put their hand up in case I was picked on to answer a question. And I think that was quite difficult for me in the beginning especially if I was to go out to do pieces and talk to people because you do need to build up your confidence" (M13).

"… you need a lot of confidence just to swallow any insults that are thrown at you. People are very blunt and you have to accept that what they're saying may or may not be true but it's part of the learning curve" (M15).

"I think you need a certain degree of toughness because people will always try and knock you and say you don't know what you're talking about. At the beginning I thought, 'Do I really know what I am talking about?' I think you have to really want to do it and if you really want to and you get the opportunity to do it you will enjoy it" (M20).

These comments again highlight the need to support those who are starting out in the industry, particularly if they are experiencing a lot of criticism and negative feedback.

M1 and M5 talked about the importance of not being afraid to celebrate cultural heritage as it can often bring an extra quality to the work produced. M1 for example, stresses that it is not necessary to feel that you must adapt your behaviour to bring it in line with predominantly White cultural practices:

> "Do not be afraid to talk about your background. Don't go in there thinking that you need to think like a White person in order to fit in. No - you should go in there confidently, as you are, and say 'this is me, this is who I am.' And if you have to be sitting in a newsroom full of White people and you're on the phone speaking away in Punjabi then be happy and be confident in doing so, and do not hide who you are. Be happy with you are and be able to reflect that" (M1).

M5 reinforces this sentiment, highlighting that bringing a different cultural knowledge to a mainstream media organisation is something to be valued:

> "I can remember even when I was working on the magazine in the Ribble valley I was an asset as an Asian because I knew about my culture and could inform them, whereas they had to guess sometimes, or go to literature or other sources. That is one reason why I do not want to limit myself to work for just Asians, I can work in a mainstream organisation and be just as valuable to Asian people" (M5).

A number of media employers mentioned the importance of drive or ambition. Indeed, considering the barriers faced by ethnic minorities in entering and succeeding in an already highly

competitive industry, it appears that determination and perseverance are of particular importance. M1 sums this up by appealing to young ethnic minorities not to be deterred from pursuing media careers by the lack of diversity within the industry:

> "I think if you're interested in the media do not be put off by what you see – White middle class people – within the media. It's there for everyone. If you are a creative person and you have an interest in society, you want to report on the people, you want people to have a voice and you feel you are a conduit for them then you must come forward, you must get in there and make those changes. There's no point just shouting about 'oh communities are reflected really negatively in the media,' it's no good 'blah blah blah.' That's no good – you need to get in here to make that change, to make that difference. And if you have the ability and the willpower you can do it. So knock on those doors and don't be disheartened" (M1).

Despite the message that it is important to persevere two media employees did warn that because there are so many barriers for ethnic minorities seeking to work in this field, that it might be advisable to have a fall back plan. M2 for example feels that although it is necessary to be determined and to research your career goals, it is always possible - particularly for Muslim women who often face prejudice, stereotyping and cultural barriers - that your career won't be as successful as you hope:

> "Research. Research the role. Speak to people, also have a backup plan. I've said this, I've given advice to other people who've been, I was speaking to a girl and she goes, 'I want to be a presenter, definitely want to be a presenter and there's nothing else I'd rather do,' and she's working on it, but I said to her 'it's a very difficult industry to break into. Do you know how

> many people are out there and want to do that job?' and she's aware of this but she's determined and I think it's good she has that determination but at the same time I always think from my point of view, 'Always have a backup plan, always have something else that you could possibly fall back on just in case the media career doesn't work out the way that you intended'" (M2).

Engage with minority communities

A young Bangladeshi female never managed to begin her dream of working in the media because she didn't know where to start.

> "But I never really had the guidance; I think that's what it is. No one's really spoken to me or anything, because you can get guidance on lots of things like how to be a teacher, you know those type of things, but when it comes to joining the BBC, where do you start? I wouldn't know where to start" (S12).

The interviews revealed that ethnic minorities working in or aspiring to enter the industry feel the media should take responsibility for devising links with minority communities (M1; M16). This initiative is particularly important if, for example students feel deterred from entering the media due to misrepresentation of their communities. It need hardly be added that if Muslims feel misrepresented in the media they will not want to work there. It would be useful if the media went out into minority communities to inform them of the media as a career option.

> "You need to understand the culture they come from and remove a lot of ignorance that there is about their religion and their culture. Try and encourage them to come and work for you, because right now they are

> under the misconception that they are not wanted, that they are not going to make a difference" (S5).

The media should devise links with ethnic minority communities and inform them of the opportunities that are available (M17; M23; S2; S5).

> "I think the media needs to educate families about the kind of opportunities that are available and they need to actively do something about that and not just expect people to go to them, they need to go into communities and educate them" (M17).

Another Muslim male felt strongly on this matter, and suggested getting in touch with representatives or spokespeople of minority communities,

> "Media corporations need to have their finger on the pulse. They need to understand, 'hey, we have a market out there that we are not really reaching and so we need to go and reach it. How do we do it? Maybe we could talk to some people from the Muslim community who can help us access those communities'" (M16).

Policy reviews

Regular reviews of current diversity policies and initiatives are also a must and it is important to involve ethnic minority communities at every stage (M16; M1).

> "Fundamentally, media institutions need to take a long, hard look at themselves and want to change. It's all very well formulating initiatives; these need to be actively implemented and reviewed with representatives from the community who can give advice and find interested individuals. There is not

only a moral case for diversity but a business one too" (Uchenna Izundu: Aspire, 2005).

Go into schools and colleges

It was also suggested that media organisations need to target younger members of minority communities by going into high schools and colleges and informing students about the media as a possible career option via presentations and workshops in order to give them an insight into what is achievable. Many students felt that there was a lack of information about the media available to them when obtaining careers advice in school.

> "I think send people to schools and colleges and try and encourage the young people there to consider the media as a career option for them, because right now I think a lot of people don't think it is" (S5).

Media employees also agreed that more care needed to be taken of young individuals that expressed an interest in the media.

> "And of course it starts very early on. It starts with accessing children, accessing the youth who are interested in journalism, and making sure that people from disadvantaged ethnic minority backgrounds are able to knock on the right doors and have the right qualifications" (M16).

More information for school leavers is also needed.

> "I think there needs to be a lot more information available for school leavers or people who are at school about the opportunities that are available for working in the media and to open peoples eyes up to the media rather than just the normal traditional professions. I think people should be taught about

> what else is available out there so if they do want to go into the media they know what they can do to get into it" (M18).

Advertise in ethnic press

Local organisations need to be made aware of what their legal obligations are around diversity. It is important to establish which media organisations in the North West monitor diversity and how they do it. Further work is required on how local organisations recruit and where they advertise. Many graduates and jobseekers complained that they do not see job advertisements and wanted more mainstream work to be advertised in ethnic press as well as the mainstream.

Role models go out into the community

Media employees from minority backgrounds should go out into the community to inform individuals of media careers to show that it is a rewarding career with many benefits. Older generations of minority communities were found to perceive media employment as risky, unstable and not very prestigious. This has to be challenged:

> "I think we need to communicate with our own community and give them insight into what benefits there are in the media. What benefits are there to Asian people? How is the media going to help them in the future? It is only then we can get rid of stereotypes and stigma, because misrepresentation comes from misinterpretation. The idea that if you are, not so much in newspapers, but on radio or TV then Asian people have always perceived the media as a job that Muslim boys and girls don't do" (M5).

Mentoring

Provide mentors already in the industry for young people interested in getting in.

> "you need to start young, you need to get the kids enthused at a young age. They have the ability but it is about giving them the tools required. So I suppose there needs to be a degree of mentoring there. Ideally mentoring from somebody within their own community" (M16).

Give feedback

We have already noted the importance of giving feedback particularly to those communities have no links with the media and no contacts to help them understand how the industry operates.

Advice workshops

Employees and interviewees suggested it would be useful to establish advice workshops for those looking to develop a career in the industry in order to provide guidance on how to enter the media, what a media career requires and the completion of job applications (S6; Y5). "I think something should be set up for graduates or people looking to get into the industry. Maybe a big organisation who have a link to the (media) companies as well as to the graduates" (S3). It often seemed that individuals were unclear what media companies wanted from potential staff. Thus, the media need to make this much clearer.

> "So the way you fix that is that you are much more open and transparent about what qualifications are required. Then you help people get those qualifications. That then will have a positive impact

both on the media outlet and the general public" (M16).

Support groups for media professionals

One delicate subject broached in this report is the fact that some of those already in the industry feel uncertain about expressing their own anxieties as bme workers for fear of claiming special treatment. But it is clearly important for both employers and employees to air their experiences in a receptive environment. This would encourage younger ethnic media workers to follow in their footsteps and see the media as a realistic possibility by speaking to others they can relate to. It would be useful to create support groups for such minorities in the North West, a forum where individuals can go if they have any concerns or need advice on how to progress. As a Black media student suggested, "just let them know, whenever they feel like 'I don't know what to do now', there is somewhere they can go for help" (S6).

Recruit more minorities in decision-making positions

Media managers need to work with ethnic minority staff to give guidance on how to enter more senior roles. They need to be given the necessary training and support in order to reach such positions. Once this has been achieved, they need to encourage their minorities to follow suit (M16, M1; M13).

In conclusion it was felt that the media industry needed to demonstrate their appreciation of diversity. The media need to make more of an effort to accept minorities as they are because some minority figures feel otherwise. Many interviewees felt that there was a lack of ethnic minority role models in the media and the few that existed had a very 'Western look' (M15; S12; M1; Y13).

> "I think we need positive role models of young ethnic minority candidates who are quite proud of celebrating their diversity in quite dynamic ways and they shouldn't feel the need to hinder any aspect of what they believe or practice in any shape or form… don't try to change or conform somebody to a middle-class kind of standard or view" (S8).

Concluding remarks.

The misrepresentation of minority communities should not become a reason for bme people to distance themselves from the media. Every effort should be made to voice their concerns by whatever means possible. There are signs that this is beginning to happen but as one Black media student suggested.

> "One thing I find negative about the Black community is we are not organised enough. I feel we work against each other and not for each other. We don't stand as one group saying this is not right here, we have got a voice, we want to be heard and this is what we are going to do about it. I just feel we are not persistent enough and we need to work harder... I think we need not only one spokesperson but we need several and we need to have meetings and I don't know how to say it, we need to get together" (S6).

It was also argued that Asian communities were reluctant to speak up,

> "I think the Asian community can do a lot more by being active and speaking out more. I don't know why but I have always felt that the Asian community has been very passive generally speaking when it comes to speaking out against racism. Parents feel like threatened, don't rock the boat just stay quiet and get on with your education and all this" (M17).

A Pakistani female stated,

> "I always felt that was to do with a lack of understanding and a lack of awareness, both on the part of the mainstream organisations but yet again within the Asian communities as well. Certain perceptions had a certain gap in the middle which didn't allow people to communicate as well as they should have done" (M5).

We have seen that success is possible within this highly competitive field for bme people. For example Two interviewees had no media qualifications and little experience in the industry but this did not stop them from applying and succeeding in highly competitive organisations such as the BBC and Granada. However far too often students and jobseekers become disheartened – not least because they don't understand the reasons for their rejection. "I applied for Granada… I told them I'd just graduated, I applied at the BBC just to let them know that I've graduated… and radio as well, BBC GMR. I didn't actually get a reply" (M15). We hope the report has gone some way towards developing an understanding of the particular factors that can impact on these communities and why they sometimes require a different approach.

It is regrettable that in 2007 despite a variety of schemes and initiatives Black and minority ethnic groups remain under-represented in the media both in terms of being onscreen, and in the production of content. In both cases the media generally fails to accurately reflect the diversity of modern British society. However as we have seen the situation shows some signs of improvement. On occasion, the media have been instrumental in highlighting instances of racism, and this is to be commended. But under, or misrepresentation of ethnic minorities in the media, in terms of output, is almost certainly related to under-representation in terms of the number of ethnic minority

individuals involved in media production. The fact that opportunities in the media for advancement tend to become known through word of mouth may mean that people from outside 'traditional' media networks or those unaware of cultural policies are disadvantaged. Since accurate and fair representation is important for community cohesion, promoting it through understanding, and combating the causes of under-representation, is of great importance.

This report suggests that ethnic minority under-representation is related to a number of factors. There may be a perception amongst some groups that the media is composed of 'white' institutions and cultural norms, and therefore not relevant to them. Specialist media catering for ethnic minority groups exist, partly as a response to this perception; and some of the media employees interviewed for this project worked in ethnic minority oriented media but not all to a great degree of satisfaction and as we have seen there are problems here too. Previous research suggests a complex array of possible barriers to entry into media training and employment, and the respondents here bear this out. Sometimes, as in the case of the need for a degree level education, or housing issues, these factors intersect with wider issues of race and class. It is also possible that discrimination at various points in the life course and career may be a factor. Some of our participants felt that racism was still operating at a low but nevertheless effective level but felt nervous about expressing this. Many respondents had a sense that ethnic stereotyping may work to disadvantage them, although this was not always the case.

We have seen that factors relating to cultural background play a part in ethnic minority exclusion from media employment, although previous research has not proved conclusive. The responses featured in this study vary in regard to the importance and role of cultural factors; something that in itself reflects the extent of diversity in the cultural experiences of Black and ethnic minority people in various communities.

We hope that this project has been able to give voice to those whose lives are actually shaped by the issues outlined above. Allowing black and minority ethnic subjects to speak for themselves about their experiences with the media in the North West, and the cultural and social issues surrounding these experiences, has given us a chance to compare lived experience with theory in a manner as undistorted as possible. It is clear that key actors within the media are increasingly acknowledging the under-representation of black and minority ethnic groups, and having recognised this, we hope this report has suggested ways forward towards a more representative media – one befitting a diverse and dynamic North West, in the context of twenty first century Great Britain.

It seems fitting to end with the words of a media employee who came to England from India to work in the media. He emphasised the importance of ethnic minority journalists maintaining their cultural heritage if their work is to have a positive impact on society:

> "I think the British Asians who want to become journalists have to recognise the truth in themselves and have respect for their faith otherwise they can't become the Nelson Mandelas and Ghandis; the people who have made a difference to the world…" (M19).

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Appendix A

Schemes in the North West

The Cultural Diversity Network was founded in 2000. With membership from many leading broadcasters, the CDN aims to recruit more ethnic minority staff and improve their portrayal on screen. The Cultural Diversity Network (CDN) launched CDN-North, a Northern branch to further its work to improve diversity in British television. The following nine organisations based in the North of England are members:

BBC GMR
ITV Granada
Liverpool Film Studios
Media Training north West
Media Trust North West
12 Yards
North West Vision
North West Regional development Agency
Red Productions

The diversity accomplishments of the CDN during 2004 follow:

BBC

- *22.5% of all applicants for employment were from minority ethnic groups as were 13% of new recruits*
- *BBC set new targets for ethnic minority representation in staff – 12.5% of all staff and 7% of senior management to be achieved by the end of 2007*
- *Launch of review to examine the BBC's approach to diversity from 2001 to 2004*

- *Developed first regional branch of CDN in North West with plans for CDN Midlands and CDN Scotland underway*
- *BBC Drama introduced 10% target for all ethnic minority characters across drama*
- *Launch of Silver Street, the BBC Asian Network's first soap opera*
- *Asian Network introduced a Writer in Residence initiative to begin in January 2005*
- *Mainstreaming of MOBO Awards (Music Of Black Origin) which was aired on BBC for the first time*

ITV

- *Minority ethnic representation in staff is 7% across ITV as a whole and 14% for ITV in London*
- *Continued success of the ITV Yorkshire Foundation Placement Scheme. The scheme introduces ethnic minorities to skills required for a career in media at ITV Yorkshire.*
- *A joint venture between PATH, Screen Yorkshire and the Fair Play Partnership funded by Yorkshire Forward. Twenty trainees are recruited for one year.*
- *To date, the scheme has a 55% employment rate at ITV Yorkshire and 60% in the industry as a whole*
- *Coronation Street wedding of Sunita and Dev was the first Hindu wedding to be featured in a UK drama*
- *My Life As A Puppet was the first children's programme with an Asian main character*

Channel 4

11.4% of all staff and 6% of senior staff are from minority ethnic backgrounds – 13% of all staff and 9% of senior management to be achieved by the end of 2006

- *Each commissioning genre now has a Diversity Representative to promote multicultural content and contributors in programmes*
- *Held networking event with Asians in Media to introduce production talent from ethnic minorities to Commissioning Editors*
- *Held networking event with Aspire, a Black Media Professionals Group*
- *Held a religion half-day event and invited faith-based groups to come together to discuss the channel's religions output*
- *Hosted a debate, Is Multiculturalism Over?, about cultural identity chaired by David Aaronovitch from The Observer and featured panellists including Trevor Philips, Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality, and writer and academic Ziauddin Sardar*
- *Hosted a Briefing Day for Black and Asian owned production companies in the UK. Commissions for companies owned by ethnic minorities had increased by 86% on the previous year and Channel 4 had worked with five new companies during the past year*
- *Broadcast programmes with a multicultural focus such as The Great British Invasion and Hamburg Cell*
- *Broadcast multicultural series such as Bollywood Star; Forbidden Fruit; God Is Black; Sharia TV*

GMTV

- *10% of all staff are from minority ethnic groups*
- *One in three production trainees are from minority ethnic groups*
- *Launch of Race Nation in October to mark Black History Month, looking at topics affecting Blacks and Asians*

ITN

- *Two members of the Senior Management Team are from minority ethnic groups*
- *Technical Trainees – ran a summer placement scheme for four students from Ravensbourne College, two of whom were from minority ethnic backgrounds*
- *Editorial Trainees – link with City University to offer a work experience scheme for students on the postgraduate journalism course. Nine students were recruited over the academic year, four of whom are from minority ethnic backgrounds*
- *Further Education – link with B6, a sixth form college in Hackney, to provide work experience for students on the media studies course and a number of guest lectures by ITN staff*
- *National Mentoring Consortium – continue to provide mentors for students from minority ethnic backgrounds*

five

- *10% of staff on Five News are from minority ethnic backgrounds*
- *Extended Broadcast Management Trainee Placement Scheme which offers recruits the opportunity to gain an understanding of the industry*
- *Centrepoint Runner Scheme – twice a year, five's creative service department recruits a new runner on a six month contract from candidates put forward by Centrepoint, the youth homeless charity. A large proportion of the young people helped by Centrepoint are from minority ethnic backgrounds*

Sky

- *8.2% of Sky's workforce is from minority ethnic backgrounds*
- *9% of Sky's management team is from minority ethnic backgrounds*
- *13% of Sky's programming team is from minority ethnic backgrounds*
- *45% Asian households in the UK have Sky digital*
- *40% of people who participated in Reach For The Sky, which encourages young people to consider a career in media, were from minority ethnic backgrounds*
- *Introduced new prayer facilities across Sky sites and included issues around respect for prayer in its new induction process*
- *In January, Sky opened a news bureau in New Delhi, India*
- *In June, Sky sponsored the Asian Women of Achievement Awards*
- *Launched Sky Talent to all employees to find new presenting talent – one of the three winners is from a minority ethnic background*

Pact

- *Pact producer members provided training placements to minority ethnic trainees on schemes such as FT2 New Entrants Technicians Apprenticeship Scheme and the Independent Companies Researcher Training Scheme*
- *Pact is involved in activity through the London Forum and the T2 Widescreen initiative to target production facilities, finance and distribution members to raise awareness of ethnic minorities studying accountancy and law, and encourage their recruitment to the industry*
- *Reviewed Pact membership forms in order to incorporate questions regarding cultural diversity and disability*

- *Pact Council adopted a Diversity Mission Statement committing the association to continue action to address issues around both cultural diversity and disability*
- *ITV began its chairmanship of the CDN with an event in February 2005 looking at minority ethnic portrayal in news.*