Why the Difference?
A Closer Look at Higher Education Minority Ethnic Students and Graduates

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Glossary

Below is a list of general terms and acronyms used in this report:

1. The focus is **undergraduate level study** rather than all Higher Education (HE). It covers students and graduates on courses leading to first degrees, as well as a range of other undergraduate qualifications (DipHE, HND, HNC, see paragraph 6 below, and other professional and technical studies above 'A' level/Scottish Higher/ONC/OND levels). These are referred to as Level 4 in the current national qualifications framework (NQF).

2. For brevity, where students on honours first degree courses are referred to in this report, the term **degree students** is used, and those on all other undergraduate programmes are referred to as **sub-degree**. The latter includes students taking undergraduate modules at the Open University which count as credits towards honours degrees, and also includes the new Foundation Degree courses (though few would be included in the statistics shown in report).

3. Full and part-time undergraduate level study, at universities (including the Open University), HE colleges and FE colleges, is covered by the report. However, the main coverage is **universities**. For ease of reading, the word 'university' is used as a substitute for Higher Education Institution or HEI (so intended to cover HE colleges too) unless otherwise stated.

4. The geographical coverage is undergraduate study in **England,** and **UK (*ie* home) domiciled students** (*ie* excludes foreign students from minority ethnic groups, from either the EC or overseas, who are classed as foreign for fee-paying purposes). However, in a few places, UK-wide information is shown and the coverage stated.

5. The study focused on the main visible **minority ethnic groups** in Britain today, sometimes referred to for brevity as **MEGs**. They are the non-White groups in the ethnic origin classification used by the Government in data collection (in Census, Labour Force Survey, and by HESA and UCAS, see below). This is a self-classification system, and since 2001, the following two-stage category system has become standard.

- Black or Black British: Black Caribbean, Black African, Black Other
- Asian or Asian British: Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Asian Other
- Chinese or other: Chinese, Other
- White: White British, Irish, White Other
- Mixed: White/Black Caribbean, White/Black African, White/Asian, Other Mixed.

As this study began prior to 2001, use had to be made in its early stages of an earlier classification, used in the 1991 Census and most official statistical sources prior to 2001. The minority ethnic categories were: Black Caribbean, Black African, Black Other, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese, Asian Other and Other (and one White category).

Where there are small numbers in some minority ethnic categories, we have had to combine them together in the research into five groupings: Black Caribbean+Black Other; Black African; Indian; Pakistani+Bangladeshi and Chinese+ Asian Other+Other. Further discussion of the scope of the research is given in Chapter 1.

6. Finally, a number of acronyms are used in the report, which are associated with higher education:

DipHE: Diploma in Higher Education

FEC: Further education college

FDS: First Destination Survey of graduates

HEFCE: Higher Education Funding Council for England

HEI: Higher Education Institution

HESA: Higher Education Statistics Agency

HNC/HND: Higher National Certificate/Diploma

LEA: Local Education Authority

LSC: Learning and Skills Council

OU: Open University

UCAS: University and Colleges Admissions Service

UUK: Universities UK (formerly CVCP).

Executive Summary

This report is about the influences on participation in higher education (HE) of minority ethnic students, and their achievements and transitions to the labour market. It presents findings from a multi-stranded study undertaken for the Department for Education and Skills (DfES).

The scope of the research was broad, covering flows into, through, and out of undergraduate study in England. Much of the analysis focuses on differences between individual minority ethnic groups (using the Census ethnicity categories in standard use in university, college and employment statistics).

The principal elements of the study were: a review of recent research literature, secondary analysis of national statistics, and new research involving surveys of, and interviews with, a number of target groups — potential, current and past students, parents, employers and others. It was undertaken in 2002-03, by a team based at the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) and included Professor Tariq Modood from Bristol University.

Key messages

A large number of detailed and complex messages emerge which can, in general terms, be summarised by the following:

- **Minority ethnic people are more likely to take HE qualifications than White people.** The higher education initial participation rate (HEIPR) for minority ethnic groups in aggregate is considerably higher than the average, and they represent a higher proportion of the graduate output compared to their share of the working population.

- However, **the minority ethnic population does not participate in HE in a uniform way.** The individual minority ethnic group participation rates vary considerably overall, and their representation varies between universities, subjects, geographic regions, and courses. Also, **the minority ethnic undergraduate student body is highly heterogeneous**. Minority ethnic student groups have distinctly different personal profiles (in terms of gender balance, average age at entry, highest entry qualification, socio-economic class profile and other personal characteristics).

- A range of factors affect HE entry, but **aspirations and expectations of the value of, and benefits from, higher qualifications is a more significant positive 'driver' for minority ethnic than for White students**, especially most Asian groups. This combines with greater **parental and family influence** to play a more significant role in encouraging HE participation among minority ethnic than White young people, and also in choices of what and where to study in HE.

- Though their HE initial participation rates are higher, **all minority ethnic groups do not do as well in degree performance** as White students on average. Even when background and other variables known to affect class of degree are taken account of, they still do less well overall.

- Significantly, **they also do less well in the labour market**, initially at least, than White graduates. They face more problems securing their preferred choice of jobs or careers. They are **more likely to go on from degrees to further study or training**. All minority ethnic groups have higher initial unemployment levels than White graduates. Minority ethnic graduates continue to be underrepresented in the graduate intakes of many large organisations.

Main findings

High participation

Minority ethnic groups comprise a higher share of the undergraduate population in England (16 per cent) than of the working population (nine per cent). Their Higher Education Initial Participation Rates (HEIPRs) vary from 39 to over 70 per cent, and all minority ethnic groups have a higher HEIPR than the White group (38 per cent). But when gender is also taken into account, it is only the female Bangladeshi participation rate that drops below that of both the White male and female groups, though the male Black Caribbean participation rate is only slightly higher than the male White participation rate. These participation rates should be treated with caution, however, as there are some uncertainties with the data used in the calculation that require further investigation (*section 4.1*). It is recommended that the Department undertakes more statistical analysis work here and takes the opportunity to use the newly released Census data to improve the assessment of the relative representation in HE of the various minority ethnic groups.

Very uneven distribution

Minority ethnic students are clustered at certain universities, mostly post-92 universities in London. Their representation is very high at a few, but very low at others (under ten per cent at around half of the total) and mostly low in pre-92 universities

(section 4.2.1). This pattern relates to locality (high representation of minority ethnic population in the London area and many students stay locally) and also the different entry requirements of universities and different types of courses/subjects on offer (and minority ethnic groups have different prior attainment, see below). There is also some evidence of racial bias in admissions processes to degree courses at some universities, which may affect minority ethnic representation levels *(section 4.5)*.

There is a skewed subject distribution also in degree study *(section 4.2.3)*, *eg* twice as high a minority ethnic representation in computer science, law and medicine, and also higher than average in business studies, engineering and mathematical sciences degree courses, but below average representation in education and humanities degrees. There are also differences by ethnicity and gender in subjects studied.

Minority ethnic students have slightly higher representation on full-time sub-degree courses, than full-time or part-time degree or part-time sub-degree courses *(section 4.2.2)*. This pattern is subject related. Gender differences between minority ethnic groups are evident here too *(section 4.3)*, and also age differences *(section 2.6)*.

Different trajectories

Minority ethnic young people are equally as likely as White people to gain entry qualifications to go to university by age 19 (which contrasts with the situation at 16, at GCSE level), but the type of highest qualification held and their schooling post-16 varies significantly *(sections 2.3 to 2.5)*. Overall, minority ethnic degree entrants have lower entry qualifications on average, fewer take the traditional 'A' level route, and are more likely to come into HE from FE colleges, than White entrants. However, these overall results mask divergences between groups of minority ethnic students in their HE entry route and prior qualifications. In summary:

- **Indian and Chinese** groups are the most likely to take the traditional 'A' level highway' to HE and are better qualified as HE entrants; they are also more likely to have been at an independent or grammar school.

- **Pakistani and Bangladeshi** groups do not gain as high 'A' level qualifications as Indian or Chinese, though do better than Black students.

- **Black groups, and Black Caribbean** in particular, are generally older on entry, with a wider range of entry qualifications than the average; more progress to HE via the FE college and work routes, and more are likely to have vocational entry qualifications.

These are generalisations, and there are further variations to be seen in the entry patterns which are shown in more detail in the report. But they serve to illustrate the distinct trajectories prior to HE, which influence HE participation levels and patterns, and can continue to have an effect on subsequent progress in HE and on employment outcomes.

Other factors influencing HE entry

Prior attainment and entry route is not the only determinant of HE entry or choice of study, though it is a significant one. Other key influencing factors are:

- **Influence of parents and families:** a stronger push is given to minority ethnic groups to succeed through gaining higher qualifications, part of a 'drive for qualification' associated with much of the minority ethnic population (*section 3.2*). Parental influence also has a greater effect on minority ethnic young people (*section 4.4*) in steering them towards certain courses, especially the professional/vocational subjects (such as medicine, law, business, IT).

- **Expectations on economic gain/career advantage:** individual minority ethnic potential students hold more positive attitudes about outcomes and benefits of HE than White students on average (linked to above, parental views) (*section 3.3),* and

- **Concerns about student finance:** however, this was not acting as a significantly greater disincentive to go on to HE for minority ethnic than White potential students as a whole (though differences within ethnic groups help shape views on financial issues, *eg* likelihood of living at home, age, socio-economic class, parental support) (*section 3.4).*

The effect of **family social background**, specifically parental socio-economic status and parental experience of HE (*section 3.2)* is also evident.

An important conclusion from the research is that the influence of ethnicity on decisions about HE entry is a powerful one, but not equally so for all minority ethnic groups. Being a member of a particular ethnic group is one of a variety of factors affecting decision-making about going onto HE. Some of the factors interact with each other. In particular, it is likely that the strong positive 'parental support/commitment to education' effect is mitigating some negative effects, such as being in a lower socio-economic class (*section 3.5*). This would explain why, despite having lower socio-economic class profiles on average, minority ethnic groups are more likely to enter full-time degree courses.

Progression

Minority ethnic degree students are more likely to leave early from degree courses than White students, and Black more likely than Asians *(section 5.1)*. But, once allowances are made for the main factors which cause early leaving (in particular entry qualification and entry route), and also controlling for other differences (like subject, gender, age), the apparent ethnic disadvantage reduces considerably, and younger minority students actually do better than their 'benchmark' would suggest (but older still do worse).

While there was no satisfactory reason found for this, other than the likely continuation of the parental/family positive influence factor noted earlier among young people, there were several issues found to be of more concern to some minority ethnic than White students on the whole, which may contribute to early leaving. These related to staff support, feelings of isolation and cultural diversity. Also, different patterns of term-time working and different financial situations of minority ethnic and White students may be affecting their progress in degree study *(section 5.3)*, (and also degree performance, see below). This would benefit from further investigating.

Degree performance

Fewer minority ethnic students gain first or upper second class degrees overall (and also fewer in each minority ethnic group) than White students. In particular, Black students are much more likely to get a third or lower class of degree *(section 6.2)*. However, smaller differences exist between White and some minority ethnic groups (especially Chinese) in first class degree attainment.

The degree performance gap reduces when controls for other background variables are brought in (mainly entry qualification and previous schooling), but does not disappear. There is also a gender gap in degree performance: females do better than males generally, but among minority ethnic degree students the gender gap is smaller.

Feel good factor

A number of aspects of the student experience are also likely to affect degree performance of students (*eg* extent of term time working, financial issues), and also the extent to which students experience difficulties in their degree study, which vary by ethnicity (and also by other variables) *(sections 5.4-5.6)*. But, on the whole, final year students surveyed were highly satisfied with outcomes so far, and there was no evidence of any greater disadvantage felt by minority ethnic students on average at this stage *(section 6.3)*. Few race relations issues at institutions were reported.

However, one year on, some (and particularly Black and Asian graduates) when reflecting back, were less than satisfied with their institutional and course choices. This is likely to relate to the greater difficulties many face moving into the labour market on graduation.

Transitions to the labour market

Minority ethnic degree graduates have higher initial average unemployment rates compared with White graduates, with the highest unemployment among male Pakistani and Chinese (over twice the average). Female unemployment is generally lower than male, and lowest among Chinese, Indian, Asian Other and Black Caribbean than other female groups, though all of these are higher than for female White graduates. The range of employment taken up by degree graduates from different minority ethnic and White groups varies. Although fewer minority ethnic than White graduates are likely to be in jobs initially, the research evidence suggests that they are in 'better' jobs than White graduates (though this is a tentative conclusion as data are limited) (*section 7.6).*

There is a greater tendency for minority ethnic degree graduates to seek further qualifications than White students, in particular Chinese and most of the other Asian groups, rather than Black graduates. There is also a divergence in qualifications being taken, with Black Caribbean/Black Other graduates more likely to pursue career-related study or training, while other minority groups are more likely to be seeking further academic qualifications. Thus, the pattern seen earlier continues — a greater interest by some groups, some Asians in particular, to acquire more qualifications, while others are more vocationally driven in their education aims (*section 7.3).*

Net of any general ethnicity labour market effect which is likely to make a contribution, an individual's background and choice of study (*eg* taking subjects such as IT which has lower employer demand at present), prior education, degree performance, career/job search attitude/behaviour and personal attributes can all contribute to experiencing relative disadvantage in the graduate labour market (*section 7.4).* The increasing diversity of the graduate output, and also the variety of graduate opportunities (along with limited statistical analysis of graduate destinations by ethnic sub-groups), makes it difficult to draw firm conclusions. Ethnicity is certainly making a contribution to many individuals' experiences, but how much being a member of a particular minority ethnic group adversely affects them directly, rather than indirectly (*ie* through the other factors mentioned above), has not been shown conclusively, and needs further investigation.

A number of programmes of positive action at universities are designed to help improve employability of minority ethnic

students. While such activities are generally viewed positively, and appear to be growing in number, there is a lack of evaluative evidence to help employers, institutions, students or others to judge which of them are most effective and for whom.

Under-representation in graduate intakes

A greater commitment to ethnic diversity in the workplace has filtered into graduate recruitment programmes, especially in most public sector organisations and some of the larger private ones (*section 8.1*). Though there are some exceptions, on the whole, minority ethnic graduates continue to be under-represented in graduate intakes of large firms (*section 8.2*). There are a number of explanations for this but the main ones are:

- the policies of some large employers' of targeting their marketing on certain institutions (usually those with high 'A' level intakes, from the pre-92 group and so with lower densities of minority ethnic students)

- the lack of minority ethnic role models, especially at middle/ senior management level

- indirect or (but less likely) direct discriminatory practices in selection methods (*eg* in competency frameworks, testing, use of 'A' level scores, interviewer bias, assessment centre formats)

- work permit issues, and eligibility to work in the UK (students may be classed as UK domiciled by universities, but do not have a UK work permit) (*section 8.3*).

The research has shown that the recruitment process is a key area to be addressed: minority ethnic graduates usually have less chance of getting through each of the stages in the graduate recruitment process of large organisations than White graduates; and Black graduates appear to do the worst on average, while Indians and Chinese fare better.

The more committed employers are actively engaged with universities in a number of ways: improving their image; more pre-recruitment activities with universities, *eg* offering internships/vacation work placements, diversity mentoring for students; and by also undertaking more diversity awareness training of staff (*section 8.4*). However, these represent a very small proportion of the total number of employers, especially in the private sector, recruiting graduates these days.

Implications for policy and further research

This report has shown considerable diversity in the HE participation of minority ethnic students, which means that a detailed understanding of minority ethnic patterns and their various causes is important in developing future policy. Various

recommendations are made (see *Chapter 9*) on the need to be more focused in approaches and in further research, a 'stripping down of the layers' in order to identify issues clearly and also the groups most likely to be helped most by specific policies.

In order to improve access to HE and choice, we highlight in particular that:

- More needs to be done to raise earlier attainment and to close the 'A' level gap, especially for some Black students. This could be done through various current community and school-based initiatives, many involving universities. More evaluation is needed of current access initiatives, about their ethnic dimension and outcomes for minority ethnic groups.

- There is also the need to better understand the influences (both positive and negative) of parents in the decision-making process about HE, their interaction with other interventions (*eg* careers guidance). Any differences in the quality of careers guidance for HE potential students on different entry routes (via college, school, workplace) need to be identified and action taken.

- Although student finance was not any greater deterrent for minority ethnic than White students overall, it is important to keep this under review and to monitor the possible effects of the proposed changes to student finance, in particular likely variable fees on student choice, and also take-up of Student Loans.

- We also recommend that monitoring and evaluation of the new Foundation Degree qualification includes racial equality (along with gender, age and socio-economic class).

In order to improve performance and the student experience:

- Further investigations into retention, through research and analysis, are needed and also into degree performance of minority ethnic student groups on different programmes in HE. Further research is also needed into the significance of the various contributing factors which might explain differences. Problems and issues in academic study which are likely to be more associated with minority ethnic groups also need to be better understood (*eg* through the new National Student Survey, institutional monitoring and reporting systems) and appropriate action taken at institutional and sectoral levels. The role, and extent of family/parental support to students needs investigating more.

And to help labour market transitions:

- Further research on graduate choices especially on why more minority ethnic students choose further study.

- A greater understanding of the effectiveness of different career/employment support programmes in HE and employing organisations (where minority ethnic groups are a main target group) is required, and also of measures designed to improve graduate employability (*eg* in the curriculum, work-based projects). There is a need to ensure there are no indirect causes of racial discrimination in these programmes (*eg* in work placement allocation).

- More private sector employers should undertake ethnic monitoring of all their graduate recruitment, (not just corporate schemes) and make better use of such monitoring statistics. More sharing of good practice and experiences would be beneficial.

And, finally, there is a tendency in this area to focus mostly on the least successful, and on difficulties, rather than on successes. Some minority ethnic students are doing much better than comparative White groups as illustrated in various places in this report. This should be given greater recognition, along with the success 'drivers'.

1. Introduction

The participation and achievement in education and employment, of the minority ethnic population in the UK, is of current policy interest.[1] So too is the need to ensure that everyone who has the potential to benefit from education at higher levels can access it, and that certain groups do not face disproportionate barriers to achievement.[2] This report combines both these policy concerns — it is about research on the factors influencing participation, retention and progression in higher education (HE) of minority ethnic groups, and their transition to the labour market.

1.1 The research

The research was commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) at the end of 2001, and undertaken by a team of researchers based at the Institute for Employment Studies (IES).[3] It set out to update the current state of knowledge in this area to help inform policy development.

1.1.1 Background

Over the last decade and more, the minority ethnic population in the UK has been growing and becoming more diverse. Their experiences and attainment in education, training and the workplace have been changing. At the same time, there have been increased opportunities for people from a wider range of backgrounds to access universities and higher level qualifications Demand for graduates in the UK economy has also been growing,

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[1] *Ethnic Minorities and the Labour Market*, cross-departmental Taskforce arising from Cabinet Office Strategy Unit report (2002), whose aim is to ensure that minority ethnic groups do not face disproportionate barriers to accessing education and employment.

[2] *The future of higher education*, DfES White Paper, January 2003.

[3] The research was a multi-stage project, undertaken and managed by the Institute for Employment Studies; some stages were undertaken in partnership with MORI Social Research, Professor Tariq Modood and research students at Bristol University, and the survey house, Employment Research.

and graduates nowadays enter a much broader range of jobs and careers than in the past.

It has been known for some time that minority ethnic groups are comparatively well-represented in aggregate in HE study,[1] though their representation across the sector is variable. There are also known to be variations in the participation in HE, and in the subsequent achievement in the labour market, of different minority ethnic student groups. These have been shown by earlier research, which has also highlighted factors of influence on HE participation, and achievements relating to institutional and subject choices of study, and social and educational backgrounds of students as well as factors related to ethnicity.[2]

This current research aimed to take a closer look at the differences between ethnic groups, and their causes. It aimed to provide a more up-to-date perspective, taking account of the various wider changes in HE and the graduate labour market in recent years, and also the changing nature of the UK's minority ethnic population.

1.1.2 Objectives

The specific objectives of the research were to:

- identify the various factors which encourage and inhibit the participation, retention and progression in HE of minority ethnic students, and their transition to the labour market

- assess the relative importance of these factors for various sub-groups of minority ethnic students, including sub-groups within, as well as between, minority ethnic groups. The sub-groups of interest included, *eg* gender, age, family background, geographical location, entry qualification, subject and mode of study, type of institution and other personal circumstances

- draw out appropriate policy implications.

1.2 Scope

1.2.1 Defining minority ethnic groups

The study focused on the main *visible* minority ethnic groups in Britain today, that is those mainly from Britain's Black and Asian communities. Students are asked when enrolling at universities

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[1] See Modood and Shiner (1994) on differential rates of entry to HE.

[2] See various research: IES report 309 by Connor *et al.* (1996) on ethnic minority graduate outcomes; CHERI report to HEFCE *Access to What?* (2002); and also papers in Modood and Acland (1998) on various aspects of race and higher education.

and colleges (for their HESA student record) to categorise themselves to an ethnic origin group (using the ethnicity classification based on the Census, which has come into standard use (see further details in Glossary at front of this report) and also see Technical notes (Appendix B).

It was recognised throughout the study, however, that there are complicated issues in defining 'ethnicity' and 'minority ethnic' and also the use of the standard ethnic groups. Ethnicity is a multi-faceted phenomenon, subject to different individual interpretations (*eg* physical appearance, cultural heritage, family origin, *etc.*). British society has become increasingly ethnically diverse, not only in terms of the origins of its minority ethnic population, but also their languages, religions, socio-economic status and lifestyles, which means that the data on the minority ethnic population can be 'cut' in different ways. The ethnic groups in standard use are intended to help in analysis, by distinguishing between communities with common characteristics relating to origin and cultural norms. But as there is generally little direction given to help individuals know what aspects of their ethnicity they should consider when deciding which group they are in, inevitably they have some drawbacks and are subject to some statistical error.[1]

We found significant differences both between, and within, the minority ethnic groups of students and graduates surveyed in the research, where factors such as generation of immigration (*ie* UK born, first or second generation immigrant), country of family origin, religion, socio-economic status, gender and geographical location were important distinguishing variables.

In addition, the boundaries of the minority ethnic population, as defined by the standard ethnic groups, are not static: there are new immigrant groups, including recent asylum seekers and refugees (*eg* from eastern Europe, Kurds, Somalis), some of whom may not be captured by the standard non-White groups. Mainly for this reason, and also because of their relatively small numbers, it was not possible to consider them separately in this research, but we recommend that they are given further research attention, as they are likely to face some particular problems.

A further complication in data collection and analysis of different ethnic groups, has been the change made in the ethnic origin categories 2001 (adopted in the 2001 Census of Population, and also in HESA student data from 2001 onwards, see Glossary). This has meant that some of the earlier years' data on students by ethnic group are not directly comparable with those for 2001 onwards.

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[1] Discussed further in introduction to the fourth national survey of *Ethnic Minorities in Britain: Diversity and Disadvantage*, Modood *et al.*, (1997), and also the Cabinet Office Strategy Unit Report, *op. cit.*).

Though we have recognised the complexities in defining ethnicity in this research study, and the diversity of the minority ethnic groups in Britain today, one of the main given objectives of our research was to identify the differences between the individual minority ethnic groups in undergraduate study, and the reasons for them (using the Census categories of ethnic origin). Where data are felt to be sufficiently reliable, groups have been disaggregated by other variables (*eg* by gender, age) to identify sub-groups of interest, but small numbers in many places has limited this, or made it possible only by combining some groups together (as shown in the Glossary and also in Appendix B).

1.2.2 Higher education

In terms of higher education coverage, the research was confined to home (*ie* UK-domiciled)[1] undergraduate students, and so excludes postgraduate students. Its geographical coverage was England, or English institutions, rather than the whole of the UK. It covers all undergraduates, full- and part-time, on degree and other courses (which we refer to for brevity as sub-degree), at universities and FE colleges, though most of the data relates to universities rather than HE in the FE sector (now known as the Learning and Skills sector). Where there is any divergence from these definitions of scope, it is explained in the text.

1.3 Methods

The research comprised a relatively complex, multi-stage project with linked stages, undertaken over the last two years. It consisted of a literature and data review to assess the existing available evidence, plus surveys and interviews with key targeted groups. These comprised:

- A national survey of just over **1,300 current undergraduate students** in both FE and HE institutions, in Spring 2002. In addition, a small number of survey respondents (30) were interviewed in more depth to explore issues further, and interviews were also undertaken at each of the 29 HE institutions participating in the survey.

- A national survey of **almost 1,000 potential HE entrants**, currently in Year 13 (or equivalent) in schools and colleges, plus in-depth interviews with a subset of 42 of them, between October 2002 and February 2003.

- A survey of **80 parents of current students**, and in-depth interviews with 13 of them including ten from minority ethnic groups, undertaken between December 2002 and February 2003.

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[1] 'UK-domiciled' excludes students coming to study in UK from overseas, who are classified as foreign students for fee-paying purposes.

- A follow-up **survey of 103 graduates,** in July 2003. The sample was generated from final year students participating in the first phase of the research. An additional six qualitative interviews with minority ethnic graduates were undertaken.

- Interviews with **20 graduate recruiting employers**, and also a number of careers advisers and others involved in HE diversity programmes, in Summer 2003. The employers interviewed were mainly large organisations, with graduate intakes of variable sizes.

Each stage is discussed further in the Technical Notes in Appendix B, and is outlined below:

1.3.1 Literature and data review

Initially, the intention was to use the literature and data review to draw out key themes of relevance to the study, and guide its design, but some of the statistical sources were used in a more direct way than had been initially envisaged. In particular, analysis of the HESA data on the undergraduate student population by ethnicity turned out to need more extensive analysis work, as little of the detail required was available from published sources. The HESA student dataset proved to be a better source for examining small ethnic groups than other sample-based data generated, due to its comprehensive coverage of the student population. In addition, other large scale surveys were found to be useful, in particular the First Destinations of Graduates (FDS, also from HESA).

1.3.2 The student survey and interviews

The main purpose of undertaking a student survey was to supplement the existing data available on students (from the national HESA student record system) on motivations for entering HE, factors influencing choices made, experiences within HE to date, and job and career plans, and also to expand the range of personal data available on minority ethnic students. The survey was undertaken by face-to-face interviews by MORI researchers at 33 campuses. The sample included a representative sub-set of White and minority ethnic students (465 and 70 respectively), plus a sub-set of only minority ethnic students (715), needed to 'boost' the survey sample for undertaking analysis by individual minority ethnic group.

1.3.3 The potential entrant survey and interviews

This part of the study investigated intentions regarding HE entry, factors affecting entry decisions, and choices on what and where to study, and experiences of the HE application process. It had a quantitative and a qualitative element.

The quantitative part comprised a self-completion survey of a sample of almost 1,000 Year 13 (or equivalent) students at 18 state schools and colleges in England, all taking courses leading to HE entry (mainly 'A' or 'AS' levels, but also GNVQ and HE Access courses), and so could be considered as 'potential HE students'. All of the schools and colleges selected had above average representations of minority ethnic pupils, and so the sample was able to generate sufficient numbers of potential entrants from different ethnic groups for comparative purposes. (Approximately 70 per cent of the 957 in the achieved sample had a minority ethnic origin.) It should be noted, however, that this was not a representative sample of all minority ethnic potential HE students, and especially not a representative sample of all White potential HE students. But, in many ways, the sample was similar to the undergraduate intake of English universities. It had a bias towards FE colleges in order to capture data specifically from that entry route, and no independent school was included. The survey was administered and analysed by the survey organisation, Employment Research.

In addition, 20 minority ethnic potential students who had completed questionnaires were also interviewed by telephone and a further 22 interviewed face-to-face at their school or college, to explore some of the issues raised in more depth. They were selected to cover a range of ethnic and biographical characteristics.

1.3.4 The parent survey and interviews

This focused on a sample of 80 parents identified from the student survey, who were interviewed by telephone, of which 13 were interviewed a second time in more depth. Its purpose was to explore their influence on decisions made by their offspring to go on to HE study, including the extent to which parental attitudes to education are also influenced by their own experiences of higher education, and the support being given to their student sons and daughters. Thirty per cent of the telephone interview sample were from a minority ethnic background, and the majority of the latter were first generation immigrants to the UK. The majority of both White and minority ethnic parents in the sample had completed a formal period of compulsory education, with around half having been to higher education themselves. The social class profile of the White parents was slightly higher than for minority ethnic parents (just over half were in a professional/managerial occupation, compared with just under half of the minority ethnic parents in the sample).

1.3.5 Graduate survey

The sample of past students, *ie* graduates, was generated from the database held by MORI of final year students, interviewed in May 2002, who had said they were willing to participate in a follow-up

survey. In total, 262 agreed to be contacted and gave details, and telephone interviews were achieved with 103 of them one-year later, an unadjusted response of 39 per cent. Fifty-three of these were of minority ethnic origin. Interviews covered their qualification details, activities since graduation, financial situation, experiences of applying for jobs, reflections on their undergraduate studies, and future plans.

A further six in-depth interviews were also undertaken with recent graduates. In addition, an analysis of 91 minority ethnic graduates in Wave 3, the IES 'Student Choice'[1] survey, was undertaken (with a sample of 1,300 graduates) to generate additional data.

1.3.6 Interviews with graduate recruiters

The employers interviewed included graduate recruitment managers, HR managers and diversity/equality managers in a sample of 20, mainly large, organisations. A great deal more organisations of varying sizes were contacted by telephone, but refused to take part. Those who did gave details of the representation of minority ethnic groups in their graduate intakes, and their policies and practices relating to encouraging ethnic diversity in graduate recruitment. In addition, a seminar was organised by the Association of Graduate Recruiters (AGR) in July 2003 and a number of careers advisers, professional bodies and individuals engaged in related activities were also interviewed.

1.3.7 Interim report

An interim report on the research was published in July 2003.[2] This presented the results of the project at around the halfway stage. It mainly presented an analysis of student data, which showed the participation patterns of minority ethnic students in HE and possible explanations from the existing research evidence, and also the full results of the student survey (see section 1.2.2 above).

In addition, five internal working papers have been produced during the course of the project, presenting initial findings to the DfES from each of the fieldwork stages, and conference papers given to the DfES Research Conference in November 2002, the Society of Research in Higher Education Annual Conference in December 2002 and a CRAC conference in November 2003.

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[1] See Connor *et al.* (2001). In 2003, IES undertook a follow-up to the 'Making the Right Choice' study, which was the third time the original sample of 1998 university applicants had been surveyed; and most had left university/college in 2001/02.

[2] See Connor *et al.* (2003) DfES Research Paper 448.

1.4 This report

This is the main final report on the project. It is a synthesis of all the research findings, from all the stages of the project, and draws conclusions and policy implications.

This main report has nine chapters:

Chapters 2 and 3 explore entry into HE, highlighting the different entry routes taken, and the various factors which can effect entry patterns. Chapter 4 presents a statistical picture of the distribution of different ethnic groups in undergraduate study, and the factors which shape this.

Chapters 5 and 6 focus on the progress and experiences, within HE, of minority ethnic and White students, and discuss the range of factors influencing outcome and attainment.

Chapters 7 and 8 then look at output — at the flows out from HE to the labour market; Chapter 7 presents the transition stage from the student perspective while Chapter 8 gives an employer and employment perspective.

Finally, Chapter 9 presents our conclusions.

Appendix A includes some additional tables and Appendix B provides further details of the research methodology and other technical issues. The set of questionnaires used in the various stages are available electronically, on request to IES.

1.5 Background and context

Before presenting the research findings in more detail, a few introductory points are made here, to help set the research in context and interpret the research results.

1.5.1 Minority ethnic population trends

Although Britain has always been populated with groups which have different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, today's minority ethnic population (as referred to generally) is largely a result of waves of immigration during the 1950s and 1960s, from the 'New Commonwealth' (Indian subcontinent, South East Asia, Caribbean and Africa). In addition, more recent flows of immigrants have continued to come from there and from other parts of the world (but in smaller numbers, mainly Chinese, Black Africans, and Asian Others), as well as, even more recently, asylum seekers and refugees predominantly from the Middle East, Africa and eastern Europe.

Thus, different migrant groups have entered the UK at different periods of time. They settled in different locations, and although

there has been some dispersion over time, today's minority ethnic population distribution in Britain largely reflects earlier settlement concentrations, mainly in London, the Midlands and a number of northern industrial towns and cities. However, as already pointed out above (see section 1.2.1), they have become an increasingly diverse population. Although the main minority ethnic groups, which were the focus of this study, have some distinctive characteristics, in terms of, *eg* their experiences of the migration /assimilation process, family and age structures, religions, languages spoken and employment patterns,[1] the groups themselves also display a degree of heterogeneity. Additionally, there are increased numbers of people who class themselves as in a 'mixed ethnic' group, especially the young population.

By 2001, the latest Census recording of the population, the UK's minority ethnic (*ie* non-White groups combined, including mixed ethnic origin) population had grown to approximately 4.6 million, or just under eight per cent of the total population. This was up from 5.5 per cent in 1991, and represented a growth of 48 per cent. The population figure for England only is approximately 4.5 million, representing a higher figure than for the UK as a whole, at just over nine per cent.

But, unlike the situation a few decades ago, the majority of today's minority ethnic population are British born. Also, it is important to note that they have a comparatively youthful age profile, with over 40 per cent under the age of 25 years (compared with just under 30 per cent of White people). This, combined with comparatively high birth rates and some continuing immigration, is expected to lead to a continued expansion in the UK's minority ethnic population over the next decade.

1.5.2 Attainment of minority ethnic groups

Although considerable progress has been made over the last two decades, the overall attainment of the minority ethnic population overall, in education and the labour market, remains poor in comparison with the White population. As indicated in the recent Cabinet Office Report cited above (pp. 24-34), they still experience a comparative overall disadvantage in several key areas: higher unemployment rates; lower earnings levels and lower proportions in higher level occupations. However, this overall picture masks significant differences between individual minority ethnic groups with, *eg* Indian groups having higher employment rates and occupational achievement than Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups, while Black Caribbean groups are significantly more disadvantaged in many respects compared with Black Africans. There are also differences between first and second generation,

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[1]   For further analysis of the minority ethnic population in Britain, see Interim Report on *Ethnic Minorities and the Labour market,* Strategy Unit of Cabinet Office, 2002.

between men and women, and between geographical locations, for different minority ethnic groups. This can produce a complex situation to analyse, more complex than existed in the 1980s, because of the population changes.

The causes of labour market underachievement are many and varied, but a key determinant is human capital — defined as the sum of the skills, knowledge, experience and educational levels a person possesses. Significantly, human capital levels have been found to vary between ethnic groups.[1] Generation is an important factor in educational attainment of minority ethnic groups: second generation males and females have better educational outcomes than first generation (seen at GCSE level and in terms of having a qualification or not, though often from a fairly low first generation starting point). Other factors, including cultural or religious attributes, and fluency in English, also influence minority ethnic educational attainment and their labour market achievements, but accounting for them is difficult due to a lack of good quantitative measures (see discussion in Cabinet Office report cited above). These issues are discussed further in the report in relation to factors influencing higher education entry and outcomes.

1.5.3 Trends in higher education and graduate employment

Turning to the higher education context, and also graduate employment trends, there have been a number of changes over the last two decades which are likely to have an influence on minority ethnic participation in HE and achievement/transition to the labour market, including:

- considerable expansion in undergraduate places, especially in the early 1990s, and also a broadening of the HE sector (in terms of subjects, type of study, *etc.*) and of the student body (widening access in terms of entry qualifications and personal characteristics)

- various changes to the student financial support system and to the contribution students make to the cost of their courses (and further change proposed in recent legislation). This has led to more concerns about students' expectation of, and management of, debt.[2] There is also a growth in term-time working by students, mainly to supplement their income

- a continuing strong employer demand for graduates, which has kept their initial unemployment relatively low overall, and

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[1] See Interim analysis report on *Ethnic Minorities and the Labour Market*, Cabinet Office Strategy Unit, pp. 71-78.

[2] See recent Callender (2003), *Attitudes to Debt of School Leavers and FE Students.*

average economic returns to HE good (and contributed to the continuing high student demand for HE)

- however, graduate demand varies by subject, university, background, *etc.* and also job/career outcomes. The graduate marketplace has become more differentiated, with some employers seeking particular types of graduates, along fairly traditional lines to graduate schemes (*eg* selecting on the basis of 'A' level grades, by targeting universities),[1] while also taking graduates into a wider-range of jobs, where they may be applying alongside non-graduates.

Change has not happened equally across the sector. In particular, universities have developed in different ways, with different strengths and roles, and appeal to students differently.

Also, there have been a range of policy initiatives to widen access and improve social equality of access to HE, which have been aimed primarily at tackling differences in participation by socio-economic class groups. Some minority ethnic groups have been included in projects under widening access initiatives to raise aspirations and attainment (*eg* Excellence Challenge now renamed Aimhigher), which target particular socio-economic groups or disadvantaged areas, though in general minority ethnic groups are not seen as an 'under-represented' group.[2]

These and other mainstream issues relating to HE and university access are discussed further in the report.

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[1] See various reports, but most recently, Morey *et al.*, *HE Careers Services & Diversity* (2003), report to HECSU and AGCAS.

[2] Stated in National Audit Office report on *Widening Participation in Higher Education in England* (2002).

2. Routes to Higher Education

Educational attainment is generally recognised as being central to the progression to HE for young people.[1] So it is very likely that any differences between minority ethnic and White students in attainment, at school and in post-16 education will be reflected in their likelihood of proceeding to higher education. We start our report, therefore, by focusing on prior attainment and routes into HE study. As will be seen later, these are not only key factors influencing minority ethnic entry to HE but also affect their pattern of participation within HE, their subsequent progress and achievement, and their graduate outcomes too. In this chapter we show how some minority ethnic groups are more associated with particular routes taken post-16 that can lead to HE entry. It also identifies a range of factors in addition to ethnicity, which impact on prior attainment, and may affect HE decision making, which are discussed further in the next chapter.

2.1 GCSE qualifications

Although options about careers, including going on to HE, are often considered before the age of 16, and many policy initiatives to raise aspirations and attainment of potential HE entrants from more socially and economically disadvantaged groups is focused at an earlier age (*eg* Aimhigher, Excellence Challenge, Partnership for Progression), we start our discussion at around the GCSE stage and Year 11 of school. This is because this is where we have the earliest good statistical evidence on attainment, which has a direct link with likelihood of HE participation.

It has been established that, in general, GCSE attainment at the end of Year 11 significantly influences entry to degrees in HE by aged 19. According to analysis of Youth Cohort Survey, Sweep 3,[2] 96 per cent of 18-19 year olds studying for a degree attained five

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[1] See various reports, such as The Dearing Report, NICHE, 1997, NAO report on *Widening Participation in Higher Education in England* (2002) and research studies, such as Hogarth *et al.* (1997); Hodgkinson and Spours (2000).

[2] In Gayle, Berridge and Davies (2003), *Econometric Analysis of the Demand for Higher Education.*

plus GCSEs in Year 11; also the more GCSEs held, the greater likelihood of being in degree level study.

Our survey of potential entrants (*ie* Year 13 students or equivalent, mostly under 21 years of age, see survey discussion in section 1.3.3 and Appendix B, Section. B.5 for more details) supports this. Of all the biographical and educational variables analysed, as likely influences on minority ethnic student intentions, it was the number of GCSEs they had attained so far which had the greatest effect. Both White and minority ethnic students with fewer GCSEs (less than eight) were more likely to have decided not to apply to university in the current year, and this lower attaining group were also more likely to be unsure about doing so, again for both White and minority ethnic students, than the higher attaining students.

Other research has shown variations in attainment between ethnic groups at various stages of schooling. Overall, the disparities increase over the course of schooling: at GCSE, Black Caribbean and Pakistani are the worst performing groups (with below 40 per cent of pupils obtaining five or more GCSEs in grades A*-C, 1999-2002, England and Wales); Bangladeshis do slightly better, but not as well as White pupils (just over 50 per cent); and Indians perform the best (around 60 per cent).[1]

There are a complex set of reasons for the differences between ethnic groups at GCSE level,[2] in particular, the higher performance of Indians, and lower performance of Black Caribbean, and Pakistani pupils. Some of the factors — many relating to socio-economic class — which may hinder educational achievement, apply more to some minority ethnic groups than to others. For example, the effect of relative economic disadvantage is evident in the much lower attainment at GCSE of children eligible for free school meals (FSM), compared with children from same ethnic group who are not. But there are also other socio-economic factors (*eg* local area deprivation) not captured by the FSM index (and not all children from FSM groups have low attainment, *eg* the Chinese group are an exception to the general rule). Gender can also be an important variable (girls generally perform better than boys at GCSE, and this is especially evident in the Black Caribbean group). Another factor, likely to be influencing minority ethnic groups in different ways, is school environment and location: most minority ethnic pupils go to school in the major conurbations, and two in five go to school in

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[1] See Figure 4, p. 9, DfES Research Topic paper RTP01-03, by Bhattachayya *et al.*, (2003). Chinese also perform well but the number is too small to be shown separately from this data source, YCS, 16 year olds.

[2] See DfES report cited above and also the various reasons are discussed in our Interim report, p. 35, drawing on earlier research evidence.

London.[1] Many minority ethnic pupils go to schools where the majority, or even the overwhelming majority of pupils, are White, and such schools may be less well-equipped to meet the needs of some minority ethnic pupils, than those where they form the majority. School experiences (*eg* teachers' low expectations, racial abuse or harassment, lack of role models, peer pressures), parental education, parental occupation levels, parental level of engagement in their children's education, and parental aspirations for their children have all also been shown to influence attainment of minority ethnic pupils.

There is no consensus about the relative significance of the effect of these different factors on attainment. The recent Cabinet Office report (see earlier, section 1.6), showed a complex interaction of relationships between ethnicity and attainment of young people. Actions taken in recent years to raise minority ethnic attainment in schools have been successful in various areas, though the statistics show that there is still room for improvement. Much of this positive action has focused on schools and LEAs (*eg* better LEA monitoring of ethnicity, leading to better targeting of additional resources; additional mentoring support to learners, in particular Black Caribbean boys; and staff development to raise awareness in mainstream teaching). OFSTED reports show that improvements have also been made in combating racism in schools, though not all schools have adequate procedures in place.[2] There are also a number of projects aimed specifically at raising the awareness and aspirations of the more able students from minority ethnic groups (potential HE entrants), especially Black boys, often involving out-of-school activities (*eg* Saturday schools and sports run by LEAs, Windsor Fellowship, universities *etc.*) and so to close the attainment gap and encourage more of them to continue in education beyond compulsory school leaving age.

2.2 Staying on post-16

As well as GCSE attainment, another factor shown to affect HE entry is 'staying-on rates at 16'. Staying-on in full-time education at 16 is higher among minority ethnic groups as a whole than Whites, but lower among Black than Asian groups in aggregate, while higher for Chinese and Indian groups (YCS, 2001). There is also variation by gender within ethnic groups which shows a different pattern: higher staying-on rates for Black and Chinese girls than Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi girls.

But, as shown in the next section, the pattern of staying-on varies: minority ethnic groups as a whole are more likely than White

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[1]   Analysis of the Youth Cohort Study in Gayle *et al.* (2003) *Econometric Analysis of the Demand for Higher Education*, DfES.

[2]   See Bhattachayya *et al.,* 2003 cited above.

Table 2.1: Main reasons students (now in Year 13) gave for staying in education at age 16, by ethnic group (mean scores)[1]

	Black African	Black Caribbean /Black Other	Pakistani/ Bangladeshi	Indian	Chinese/ Asian Other	All minority groups	White
Wanted higher level qualifications	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.5	**4.7**	4.5
To go to university	4.7	4.4	4.6	4.8	4.7	**4.7**	4.1
To get better job or career	4.6	4.7	4.4	4.6	4.6	**4.6**	4.5
To study specific subjects	4.2	4.3	4.2	4.2	3.9	**4.2**	4.1
Base number	86	58	117	160	62	**534**	208

[1] Mean scores range between 1 = 'Not important' and 5 = 'Very important', with 3 being a mid-point score. Other reasons (not shown), such as 'to retake qualifications', 'friends staying-on', 'didn't know what else to do' had much lower average scores (under 3.0). Only those who opted to stay on at age 16 were asked this question.

Source: IES survey of potential entrants to higher education, 2002/3

students to go on to further education or sixth form college at 16, than stay on at school.

Various explanations have been put forward in the research literature for this higher staying on pattern for most minority ethnic groups. They include: higher motivations to continue in education and gain higher qualifications than enter relatively low lower-skilled jobs or work-related training (expressed often as a greater 'drive for qualification'[1] or 'higher aspirations' among the minority ethnic population); taking re-sits to improve performance; and linked to both of these, the expectation that better qualifications will reduce the effect of possible future racial discrimination in the labour market.[2]

Our survey of potential HE students (*ie* with a sample of Year 13 students likely to be qualified to enter HE the following year) puts more emphasis on the positive factors: a stronger drive for qualifications was evident among minority ethnic than White students. When the sample of potential HE students (in Year 13) were asked their reasons for staying in formal education beyond compulsory leaving age (age 16), four reasons were given much greater significance by both minority ethnic and White students: to get higher level qualifications, to go to university, to get a better job/career and to study specific subjects. But minority ethnic students gave more importance to 'to go to university' than White students did. It was seen as slightly more important for Indians than for most other minority ethnic groups, but less important for Black Caribbean/Black Other (Table 2.1).

[1] See Modood *et al.* (1997), *Ethnic Minorities in Britain, Diversity and Disadvantage.*

[2] See further discussion of staying-on at 16 and choices in Payne (2003), *Choice at the end of compulsory schooling: A research review.*

2.3 Different post-16 education choices

Minority ethnic students disproportionately leave school to attend FE colleges, even to study subjects that are available at school. Black Caribbean students, in particular, are more likely to study for their HE entry qualification within a non-school environment and may drop out of school at age 16, picking up study at a later date.[1] A likely related issue is that Black Caribbean pupils, particularly young men, are up to four times more likely to be permanently excluded from school. However, the reasons why individuals opt for school or college study post-16 are varied and complex. For some minority ethnic pupils, it may relate to more difficult relationships with schoolteachers (for instance, some tend to see Black young men as 'less able' and 'more threatening' than Asians).[2] Other issues include the development of a 'street', or anti-school subculture amongst young Black men, in which being popular and academically successful are seen as mutually exclusive.[3] More general issues affecting post-16 education choices relating to attainment, subject preferences in post-16 qualifications, and also geography may come in to play. The profile of courses taken by students in schools and sixth form colleges is largely similar, but FE colleges have a higher proportion of students on vocational courses; and Year 12 students at FE colleges have poorer GCSE results than those in schools and sixth form colleges (Payne J, 2003 *op. cit.*). The pattern of post-16 provision differs across the country, as does the choice of subjects. In some localities, especially in inner London boroughs, there is no school sixth form option available. Overall, FE colleges draw half of their intake at age 16 or 17, from schools without sixth forms.

Choice of post-16 educational route is important in relation to HE entry, for a number of reasons. Firstly, as already highlighted, education provision varies between the school and college sectors. Likely opportunities and educational experiences for young people also vary, in particular those that build personal confidence.[4] Secondly, there is a difference in careers guidance provision available to young people. Thirdly, there are widely differing outcomes of students going into colleges at 16 than staying in the school sector, with much higher drop-out rates in colleges (and wide variations between colleges also). Fourthly, the qualification, age and social class profiles of HE entrants from

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[1] Evidence presented by Modood, 'Ethnic Differentials in Educational Performance' (Chapter 4, Mason, 2003).

[2] Evidence presented in Payne J (2003), *Choice at the end of compulsory schooling: A research review.*

[3] Evidence presented in Aymer and Okitikpi (2001), *Young Black Men and the Connexions Service.*

[4] See NAO (2002*), Widening Participation in Higher Education in England.*

colleges are different from schools: FE colleges provide half of all places for young people in full-time education at 16, but an even larger proportion of those from lower socio-economic class backgrounds (and from minority ethnic groups, as highlighted above); and students at colleges, are more likely to take vocational level qualifications (on their own or with 'A' levels) than 'A' levels only.

2.4 Delaying HE entry

Our survey of potential entrants (Year 13), found that some minority ethnic groups were more likely to be planning to take time out of education (a gap year or two) before entering HE. These were more likely to be Black Africans, and less likely to be Indian or Chinese students. They were also more likely to be older students. As shown below (section 2.6), Black undergraduate students tend to be older on average at entry to HE, and more enter via the Access qualification route from colleges. Our student survey also showed that more older students had already taken 'time out' from full-time post-16 education than younger students (as might be expected), but here it was the Black Caribbean/Black Other group who were more likely to have done so. Along with Black Africans, they were more likely to delay entry to HE in this way than other ethnic groups.[1]

From our survey of current students, the main reason given for delaying HE entry was to work and earn some money first. But White students were much more likely to have taken time out as a more typical 'gap year' (*eg* to travel abroad, do voluntary work), than most minority ethnic groups. The survey also showed that older people were more likely to have applied for their university place from an employment situation rather than from school or college (the traditional way), and so were likely to have got less formal support with their university application.

2.5 Entry qualifications for higher education

Being qualified to enter HE (*ie* gaining the normal minimum level, a level 3 qualification) is clearly central to participation. Minority ethnic people at aged 18 are slightly less likely to hold a level 3 qualification than White people, but by age 19 there is little difference.[2] By 19, Asian groups are far more likely than White groups to hold a level 3 qualification (although there is no separate

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[1] See also discussion in Chapter 4 on young HEIPRs (section 4.1.1), where Black groups have much lower HE participation rates at 17-19 years than Chinese or Asian groups, and the Black Caribbean group has the lowest (only 17 per cent of the 17-19 age group compared to the average of 28 per cent).

[2] See YCS (2001).

data for Black groups shown in the YCS analysis, because of small numbers, nor breakdown of the Asian group; by deduction it would seem that Black groups are less likely than Asian groups to hold a level 3 by 19). However, as highlighted above, Black students tend to be older on average and so these figures are likely to underestimate their likely attainment at level 3.

When looking at qualification data for all people of working age in the UK, the Black group is the least likely group to hold qualifications at level 3, less so than among White or Asian groups.[1] But when disaggregated further, it is Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups who are the least qualified (in particular, a much higher percentage of them hold no qualifications than other groups), followed by Black Caribbean, but Indian, Chinese and Asian Other groups are on a par with Whites.

The type of qualification held at level 3 is important in relation to HE entry. The 'A' level route into HE continues to be the primary entry route taken by young people entering degree courses by age 21, and especially by those going to the more academic, pre-92 universities. Ninety per cent of those with two or more 'A' levels go on to higher education by age 21, compared to around half of those who achieve vocational level 3 qualifications by aged 18.[2]

While the vast majority of level 3 holders are 'A'/'AS' qualified, this is far more likely among White than minority ethnic students, at age 18 or 19 years. However, looking at 19 year olds only, Indians are more likely than other minority ethnic groups (combined) or the White group to hold 'A' levels (no further ethnic disaggregation available).

Reasons for these differences by aged 18 and 19, are likely to relate to the different routes taken post-16, especially the choice of going to college or staying at school; also some minority ethnic groups, in particular Black groups, take longer to achieve the same qualifications.[3] Some care, therefore, has to be taken with these figures on attainment of young people, as qualifications held by age 19 can under-estimate progression to HE for some minority ethnic groups.

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[1] See *Labour Force Survey*, 2002 (and Table 6, p. 26 of Bhattachayya *et al.*, 2003, cited earlier).

[2] See 'Appendix 1' in *Consultation on Key issues relating to fair admissions to HE*, Admissions to HE Group, DfES, ('Schwarz Review'), 2003.

[3] See research by Berthoud (1999), which showed that Pakistani and Bangladeshi men took longer than Indian or Black men to achieve the same qualification, and men generally took longer than women in all minority ethnic groups except the Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups.

2.6 Highest entry qualification of current students

As might be expected from the discussion so far, there are differences between ethnic groups to be found in the highest entry qualification of current undergraduate students, especially young entrants.

Black students are less likely than White or Asian students to enter HE with 'A' level qualifications (or equivalents). In 2001/02, only around one-third of Black undergraduate students (full and part-time) at English universities (including just 29 per cent of Black Africans), compared to 55 per cent of White students and over two-thirds of Asians (and even more Indians, 72 per cent) had GCSE 'A' level, SCE Higher, GNVQ/GSVQ or NVQ/SVQ level 3 as their highest qualification on entry to their course. Black students were more likely to hold Access course qualifications or other types of qualifications (*eg* ONC/OND, other higher level qualifications).

Mature students

Some of this variation in entry qualifications is due to age differences: older students, in general, are likely to have different entry qualifications (fewer with traditional 'A' levels).

The minority ethnic groups in HE, and especially in university full-time degree study, have noticeably different age profiles (see Figure 2.1), Black, especially Black African, undergraduate

Figure 2.1: Minority ethnic and White undergraduate students by age on entry, England, 2001/02 (includes part-time and full-time)
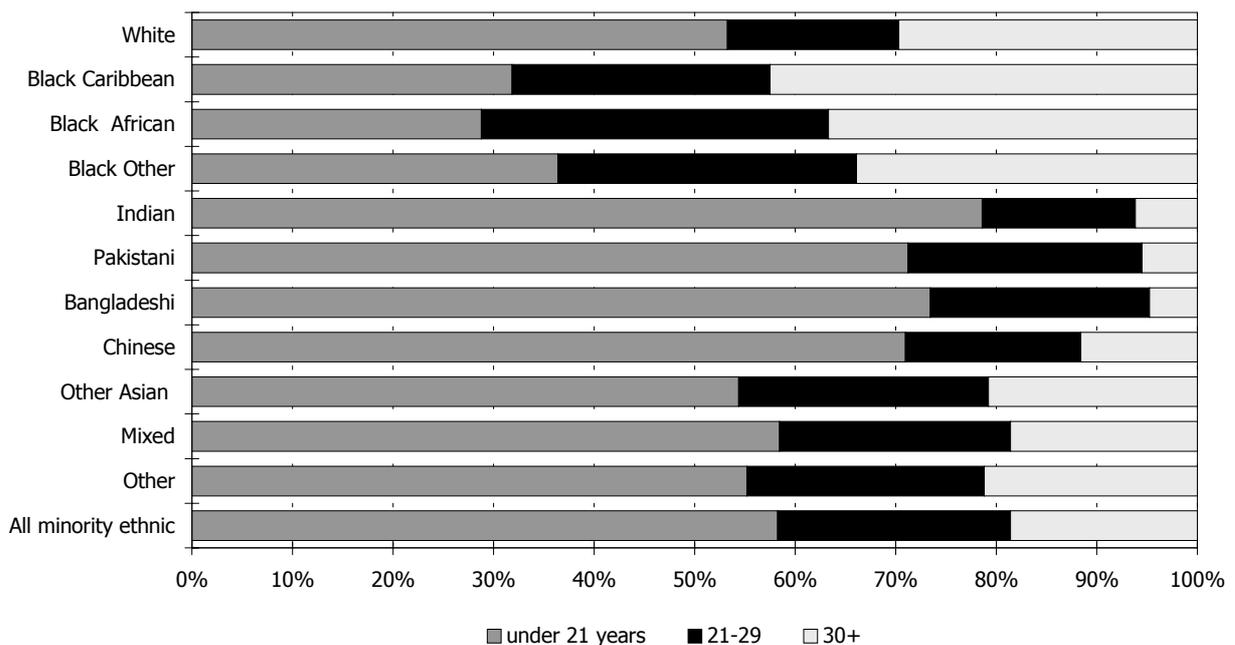
Source: HESA

students are, on average, older than White and Asian students. Mature students (aged 21 plus) are disproportionately more likely to be among Black groups in full-time degree study (half of Black first year students are aged 21 or more, compared with around 20 per cent of White, and even fewer Indian first year students).

Focusing only on younger students (aged under 21 on entry), a much higher proportion of the total, just over 80 per cent, have 'A' level qualifications (or equivalent). But there are relatively small differences between minority ethnic groups, except among Black students, where this proportion drops to a little over 70 per cent.

Entry to degree courses

The above figures combine degree and sub-degree courses. Degree courses tend to have higher entry qualifications than sub-degree (though there are a few exceptions). The different entry profiles of Black students to degree courses (full- and part-time), compared with other ethnic groups, is particularly noticeable: less than one-half hold 'A' level qualifications (or equivalent) compared with around three-quarters of Asian and White students (see Figure 2.2, and Appendix Table A5 for further details).

There are also differences in 'A' level grade scores between ethnic groups, though this information has only been obtained from UCAS admissions statistics and so only for full-time accepted applicants. Of those qualified with two plus 'A' levels, higher grades are obtained by full-time degree accepted applicants from White than from minority ethnic groups on average, but the highest in this respect are Chinese and Asian Other which are on a

Figure 2.2: Percentage of minority ethnic and White degree students with 'A' levels as highest qualification, England, 2001/02
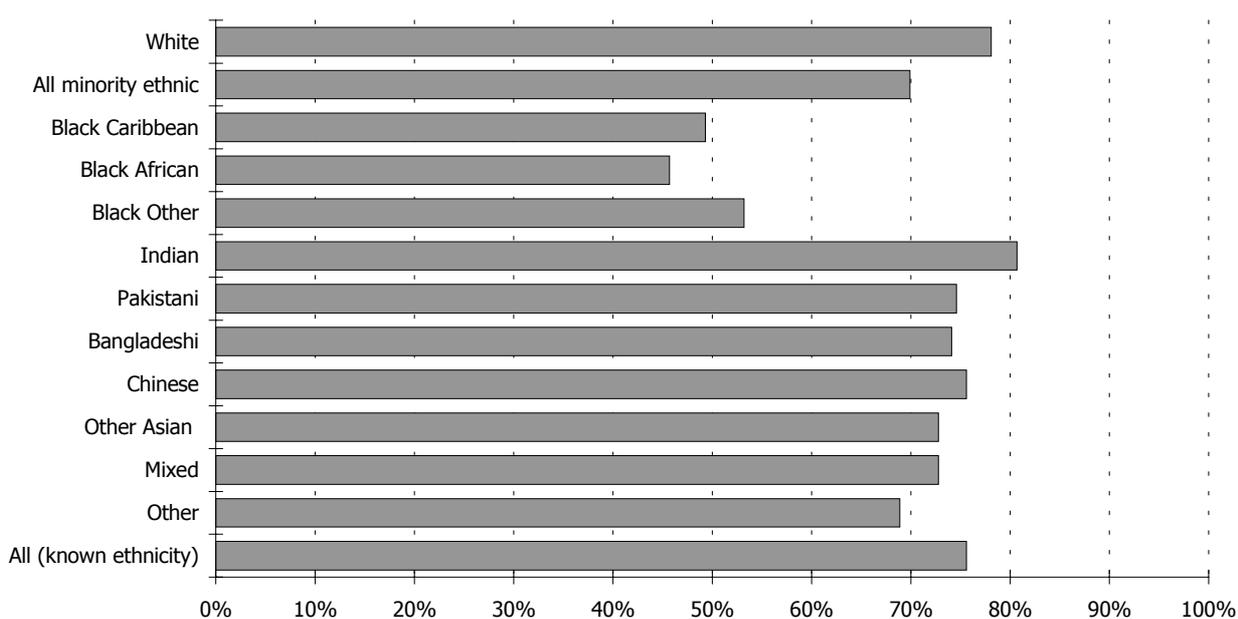
Source: HESA (see Table A4, Appendix, for further data on entry qualifications)

par with White students (similar percentages achieving 21 plus points). Indians are just behind the White group in this respect, but considerably ahead of most other minority groups (further details are given in the Interim report, Table C7, for 2001 entrants).

Since 2002, UCAS has introduced a new Tariff system to enable equivalencies to be made between the various qualifications, especially the new 'AS' qualifications. In the published statistics, the vast majority of accepted applicants have a Tariff 'score', but there is more missing data among some ethnic groups than others (*eg* only half of Black Africans and around 60 per cent of other Black students have Tariff scores). Care, therefore, is needed using these data for comparative purposes, and also it is the first year that they have been published, so they are still at a trial stage. But they support points, made above, that minority groups overall tend to have lower entry qualifications than White students, but that some groups have much higher entry qualifications than others. For example, over half of all minority ethnic groups, except Chinese and the Asian/White mixed ethnic group (at 46 and 41 per cent respectively) fall into the lower Tariff groups (less than 300 points), while the comparative White figure is 49 per cent. Among Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Black African and Black Caribbean groups this applies to over 70 per cent of UCAS acceptances (where a score is given). At the top end of the Tariff (480 points plus), the Chinese outstrip all other groups (16 per cent of them are in this category), which compares with ten per cent of White acceptances, and seven per cent of Indians.

2.7 School or college previously attended

The UCAS admissions data provide evidence on differences in school backgrounds also by ethnic group. More minority ethnic, and especially Black, acceptances to full-time degree courses come via the further education sector, which is what we would expect from the discussion above on post-16 routes (see section 2.3); also, slightly more come from a sixth form college, compared with White entrants. While there are fewer minority ethnic entrants overall from independent schools, certain groups, notably Chinese, and to a lesser extent Indians, Asian Other and mixed ethnic groups, are more likely than White students to follow this route. As shown above, these tend to be groups more likely to take the traditional 'A' level route. Minority ethnic entrants are also less likely to have come from a grammar school than White students on average, with the exception of Chinese and Asian Other groups. Pakistani and Bangladeshi students are the most likely groups to have progressed to HE from a sixth form college. (further details in Table A6).

In general, it has been established, from the recent YCS analysis cited above, that a much higher percentage of young people who attend independent rather than state schools (at year 11) go on to enter higher education (by age 19), and also a higher proportion

who attended 'selective' rather than non-selective' schools. Unfortunately there is no similar information available for later years of schooling, nor any breakdown by ethnicity.

2.8 Summary

This chapter has shown that there are significant differences in routes into HE, and in the prior attainment of minority ethnic and White groups. These are likely to be due to a number of factors, many of which relate to the different economic and social compositions of the different ethnic groups (see Introduction, section 1.6), but also due to a range of other factors relating to school experiences, environment, parental support at school and parental (and individual) aspirations. GCSE attainment, decisions to stay-on at 16 and choice of post-16 education all affect likelihood to progress to HE, and these vary between ethnic group, and also, importantly, by gender. The various factors of influence on entry routes to HE have different significance for different ethnic groups, and they can also interact with ethnicity in different ways. There is also a time factor to take into consideration: some groups, in particular Black groups, are likely to gain entry qualifications (*ie* at level 3) later, at an older age.

Key points of difference by ethnic group which have been highlighted here are:

- **At GCSE level**: Indian groups do better than Whites, and Black Caribbean, Pakistani and Bangladeshi do worse than average. Girls outperform boys overall, but especially among the Black Caribbean group.

- **Staying-on rates at 16**: Highest among Indian and Chinese groups, higher than Whites; lowest among Black Caribbean and Black Other groups.

- **Post-16 education choices**: Minority ethnic are more likely than White pupils go on to college than stay at school in Years 12 and 13. Black students are the most likely to take this route into HE; Indian and Chinese the least likely (similar to Whites).

- **Delaying HE entry**: Black students are more likely and Indians and Chinese student less likely to take a gap year, *ie* time out of education before entering HE study. Black students are more likely to apply from an employment situation, than other groups.

- **Gaining HE entry qualifications**: Although minority ethnic groups are slightly less likely than White people overall to have level 3 (*ie* normally HE entry requirements) at 18 years of age, by 19 years they are almost equally likely. However, the Asian group are more likely to have attained this level than White people by this age.

- **'A' level route**: Fewer minority ethnic groups than White students aged 18/19 are likely to hold 'A'/'AS' qualifications, but Indian students are the most likely to by 19 years, and more likely to than White 19 year olds.

- **Entry qualifications**: Black, and particularly Black African, students are much less likely to enter undergraduate level study, especially degree courses, with 'A' level qualifications than White or Asian groups are on average (who are broadly similar). Black students are more likely to have Access qualifications (reflecting their older age). Minority ethnic entrants have lower 'A' level scores than White, but Chinese and some of the mixed ethnic groups, have higher, and Indians are almost on a par with Whites.

- **School or college previously attended**: More minority ethnic, and especially more of the Black, entrants to full-time degree courses come via the college (FE or sixth form) than school route. There are also fewer minority entrants coming via independent schools, but there are some exceptions (Chinese, Indian, Asian Other and mixed ethnic group).

It is evident from the above that some groups have different trajectories into HE. In summary:

- Indians, Asian Other, and especially Chinese, are more likely to be highly qualified at entry to HE, and they are more likely to take the traditional, 'A' level highway from school to HE' as young people (more similar to the White group in this respect).

- Black student groups are slightly less well-qualified than the average, and more likely to have non-traditional (vocational) entry qualifications and progress to HE via the college route. But their older age is a key characteristic: they are more likely to take longer to gain entry qualifications than other groups, and more likely to gain them at FE colleges and via Access courses.

- Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups are less likely to be as well-qualified as other members of the Asian group, but do better than the Black student group. They are more likely to have vocational qualifications for HE entry than other Asians, and more likely to have gained them at sixth form college.

While this provides a helpful model, it is an over-simplification. There are divergences within the Black group, *eg* between the Black African and Black Caribbean groups, and also between Indians and Chinese, which need to be considered. This is because each ethnic group has distinctive characteristics (as noted earlier) and is making progress in becoming more qualified at different rates and from different starting points (as discussed further in Modood *et al.*, 1997, see Conclusions chapter).

The differences highlighted here between ethnic groups, and sub-groups are significant ones, but there are limitations on the amount of analysis that we have been able to undertake at a disaggregated level (*eg* by age and gender within ethnic group) because of insufficient reliable data on many of the variables of interest (also at this level some of the groups become very small). We recommend that this is kept under discussion, as it may be possible to do more work in the future, as new data emerge or new surveys are undertaken.

It is also important from a policy perspective that the differences between the minority ethnic groups are recognised in actions taken to raise earlier attainment. For example, the research would indicate that more measures would help to close the attainment gap at GCSE and 'A' level, especially to improve the position of Black young men. This could be done through Aimhigher and other widening access projects, where the differences between ethnic groups (and sub-groups) need to be recognised in identifying target groups and in deciding on actions to be taken that are likely to have the greatest impact (*eg* more in FE colleges where Black young people more likely to be, rather than schools). In addition, we recommend that the long-term effectiveness of the various programmes currently in place, designed to improve educational attainment and aspirations of young people, is evaluated in terms of the impact they are having on minority ethnic groups.

3. Influences on Decision Making and Choice of HE

In this chapter, we focus on the main influences, other than prior attainment, which affect decision-making of minority ethnic students to enter HE. It assesses evidence gathered from a number of sources: HESA and UCAS data on the personal and education backgrounds of students, our surveys of current students, parents, of potential entrants still at schools and colleges (Year 13), and other published research evidence.

We can turn to a great number of research studies over the years, to identify possible factors affecting the different rates of access to higher education of various groups. Although these vary considerably in their scope and purposes, there are a few central messages of importance that provide context:

- Firstly, that social inequality in access to HE does exist, *ie* young people from less advantaged backgrounds are less likely to gain entry to higher educational levels and so less likely to close the gap between them and the more advantaged in society. Effects of socio-economic class also shapes choices within HE.[1]

- Secondly, choices about HE are not made in isolation. There is a complex interplay between factors which affect the decision making dynamic (including socio-economic class, ethnicity, and, in particular, gender). These include 'structural' influences *ie* related to the socio-economic/income/ gender/ethnic group that an individual belongs to, which can shape early educational experiences and decisions about HE entry routes. A second kind are external influences, such as labour market opportunities at school leaving age and subsequently, careers guidance at school and college, influence of teachers and parents/community, geography (the need to/wish to leave or stay at home), and changes to student finances and funding (affecting views about being able to afford to go, or the economic returns from investment in HE).

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[1] See Woodrow (2002), *Social class and participation*; and NAO report (2002), *op. cit.*

Little research has focused on ethnic groups in particular, and few have tried to separate the effect of an individual's ethnicity to go on to higher education from other factors of influence. This is mainly because of the complexity of the relationships between the various influences, and also a lack of statistical evidence to use in any modelling. Net of attainment, ethnicity clearly has some effect (as seen in many studies), but it not likely to be the only effect and others may be more significant to particular ethnic groups or sub-groups. This was explored in a recent DfES sponsored research study on demand for higher education, which looked at the relationship between a number of variables that influence young people's entry to degree study.[1] Making use of several YCS cohorts (16-19 year olds) it showed that 'ethnicity' was not a significant variable in explaining why they are likely to be in degree study at 19 years, though its relationship with other variables (*eg* gender, family social class, regional effects) was recognised. 'Ethnicity' meant being White or non-White in this analysis. Interestingly though, it was found that two groups (young people of Indian and Chinese origin) did have increased odds of entering degree level higher education by 19 years, all other things being equal. Care needs to be taken, though, in interpreting this analysis, because some groups, mainly Black, take longer to enter HE, as shown in the previous chapter, and so their entry to HE would not be captured by the YCS. As far as we are aware, no other modelling work of this type has been done.

3.1 Decisions about applying to HE

Minority ethnic respondents in our survey of potential HE students (*ie* the sample of year 13 student at school and colleges who had applied in 2002 or had not yet applied[2]) gave more positive reasons for their decision to apply to HE than White students did, particularly in relation to the impact of a university qualification on their future jobs, career and earnings (see Table 3.1). They also reported greater encouragement from family (though more said they had few family who had been to university) and were more likely to feel that it was 'always assumed I would go', than White students.[3] Financial concerns had less of an influence (relative to these factors), and there was little difference between minority ethnic and White potential HE students, *eg* about debt concerns and uncertainties about cost. Minority ethnic students, though, were more uncertain about

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[1] Gayle *et al.* (2003), *op. cit.* Note that this looked only at entry to degree study by 19 years of age, and not all entry to undergraduate study.

[2] This was not a representative sample of potential entrants but included White and minority ethnic students from a group of schools and colleges, see B.1 (Appendix B).

[3] These findings were all statistically significant or near to significance, at 99 per cent level.

what to expect at HE (and the difference was statistically significant).

On the whole, differences between the individual minority ethnic groups were small (and not significant). All gave more importance to the employment/earnings and family encouragement 'pull' factors than the White group. However, the Black Caribbean group were much less likely to say that there was an assumption that they would go to HE (though this is likely to be age-related, as this group was older than the average).

Family/parental encouragement and expected employment/ career advantages, which also affect earlier decisions, about

Table 3.1: Factors affecting decisions by potential HE entrants to go on to higher education by ethnic group (mean scores[1])

Issues affecting decision	Black African	Black Caribbean/ Other	Pakistani/ Bangladeshi	Indian	Chinese/ Asian Other	All minority groups	White
To gain qualification for career	4.6	4.3	4.4	4.5	4.4	**4.5**	4.2
Improve future earnings potential	4.4	4.3	4.4	4.6	4.4	**4.4**	4.1
Interest in subject area	4.4	4.2	4.3	4.2	4.1	**4.3**	4.2
Difficult to get good job without higher qualifications	4.4	4.0	4.3	4.3	4.2	**4.3**	3.9
Personal development	4.2	3.9	4.0	4.2	4.1	**4.1**	3.9
Encouragement from family	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.8	**4.0**	3.4
Always assumed would go to HE	4.0	3.2	4.0	4.1	3.9	**3.9**	3.1
To help career options	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.7	3.6	**3.6**	3.3
Uncertainty about getting necessary qualifications	2.7	3.0	3.1	3.3	3.0	**3.1**	2.9
Uncertainty about cost	3.0	3.2	2.8	3.1	3.1	**3.0**	2.9
Few family been to university	2.8	2.9	2.8	3.1	3.0	**3.0**	2.5
Concerns about debt	2.9	3.2	2.7	3.0	2.9	**3.0**	3.0
Being able to visit universities	3.0	2.7	3.0	3.2	3.0	**3.0**	2.7
Uncertainty about what to expect	2.7	2.9	2.8	2.9	2.9	**2.9**	2.5
Taking part in access activity	2.7	2.6	2.4	2.6	2.6	**2.5**	2.1
Base number	*94*	*68*	*117*	*166*	*68*	***567***	*217*

[1] In this table, scores again range from one to five, where one represents 'Does not apply/no effect' to five 'Applies strongly/big effect'.

Source: IES survey of potential entrants to higher education, 2002/3, see footnote 2 at previous page

staying-on at 16 and attainment (as highlighted in previous chapter), are discussed further below. Also, although financial issues were less of a concern, these are also discussed further below because of their greater policy interest at the present time.

3.2 Family and parental influence

The extent to which education is valued by family, peers and other *influencers* is an important part of the complex picture of decision making about HE for most students. But in particular, it is valued highly within most minority ethnic groups, so it is likely to play a more important role in HE decisions. Previous research has shown that there is a stronger drive for qualification amongst ethnic minorities, and once individuals begin to acquire qualifications they seek more. In particular, education is seen as having an important role in upwards social mobility.[1] Additionally, succeeding generations have shown a greater tendency to obtain HE qualifications than their parents, resulting in a second generation of minority ethnic groups that are more qualified than the first, for all ethnic groups and both genders.[2]

This 'qualification drive' can be seen in the fact that, despite lower GCSE results at age 16, and much lower for some groups (*eg* Black, see section 2.5), minority ethnic groups are more likely to persevere with their education, some by re-sitting exams for better grades. Evidence specifically suggests that Pakistani and Bangladeshi students are more likely than other groups to be still at school or in a sixth form college in their third post-compulsory year.[3] But, as pointed out in sections 2.1 and 2.2, Black Caribbean groups perform worst at GCSE, and are also less likely to stay on at 16.

Parental influence is extremely important in shaping decisions about HE for many young people. Research has shown that parental encouragement to go to university increases the chances of going.[4] As shown above, individuals from minority ethnic groups are more likely to believe that there is an expectation that they go to university and that their families are encouraging them to do so. There also appears to be more certainty amongst the young minority ethnic population that they are going to go on to HE in the future.[5]

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[1] See Connor *et al.* (2002), and Connor and Dewson (2001) for more discussion of social class and pre-HE attainment.

[2] See Modood Ch3, in Modood *et al.* (1997), *Ethnic Minorities in Britain: Diversity and Disadvantage.*

[3] Evidence presented in Payne J (2003) *Choice at the end of compulsory schooling: A research review.*

[4] See Gilchrist *et al.*, (2003).

[5] MORI (2002), *Schools Omnibus 2001-2002* (Wave 8).

In our discussions with potential entrants, various examples of parental influences were seen:

'I was pushed by my parents to stay in education and get my 'A' levels. They told me, "if you want to do anything with your life then go to college".' (Black African male, aged 19, studying 'A' levels at college)

'My family was very keen for me to return to education. I have older siblings who have all gone to university and been very successful; one is a lawyer, the other a doctor and the third a pharmacist. There is an expectation from my family to be successful and, so there is a pressure for me to do well.' (Asian Other male, aged 19, studying 'A' levels at college)

'My parents were encouraging me to go into HE but I made the decision. They had a small part to play. In Asian culture, studying is really important and can make you more marriageable − you're more respected if you have a degree.' (Indian female, aged 17)

Our HE potential entrant survey also showed that parents are rated as the most influential source of help in making HE decisions by all ethnic groups, but particularly so by Black African, Pakistani/Bangladeshi and Indian students. They were seen as more important for all minority ethnic groups than the White group. Also, Careers teachers, and the Careers Service, were viewed as more influential among all minority ethnic than White students. Previous research has suggested that traditional guidance is unhelpful for some minority ethnic groups,[1] so these findings may provide tentative evidence that the new Connexions arrangements are working better for minority ethnic groups, or possibly that they are getting a better service now in relation to HE advice. Whichever, it is an area that could be examined further, as it has been suggested in the past that the often weaker positions of minority ethnic families in the labour market make formal careers education and guidance more important for young people from minority ethnic communities.[2]

Our survey of parents of minority ethnic students provided further evidence of their influence on young people's career decisions. Interviews were undertaken with parents of current students (see Chapter 1, section 1.3 and B.4 in Appendix B, for further details of the parent survey) and all of them had a clear ambition for their children to stay on and do well at school. They therefore had provided support to them in their schoolwork, and in some cases had paid for extra tuition. There seemed an almost unspoken assumption that their children would progress to a university education (which mirrored the views of many of the students themselves). This assumption was to not only fulfil their academic potential, but also improve their chances of

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[1] MORI (2002).

[2] Presented in Payne (2003).

employment. For a proportion of the interviewees, it represented a desire for their children to take an opportunity which had not been open to themselves — in other words they did not want them to have to struggle in lower-skilled jobs because they lacked qualifications.

Degree of parental influence in the final decision about where and what to study varied, but appeared limited in most cases. However, many were actively involved in the choice process, often accompanying children on visits to universities, and discussing options with them and other relatives (this is discussed further using other evidence, see section 4.7).

Information about parents was also obtained from our student survey, which provided further insight into how parental background might shape views and influences on decisions about HE for particular groups. This showed that:

● The majority of minority ethnic undergraduate students were born in the UK (60 per cent), *ie* were second generation immigrants. However, only a very small proportion of them had both parents who were born here (*ie* third generation), with the majority having at least one born outside the UK (generation 2.5), which is lower than we expected.

● Certain student groups were much more likely to be first generation, *ie* they were born here but neither parents were — Black African and Chinese/Asian Other (each over 50 per cent) — while others were much more likely to be second generation — Indians and Black Caribbean/Black Other (78 and 76 per cent), and Pakistani/Bangladeshi students (almost 70 per cent). Also, it is worth noting that 23 per cent of minority ethnic students entered the UK after age 16, *ie* they got most of their school education abroad (as did their parents also). This figure rose to 43 per cent among the Black African group and 38 per cent for Chinese/Asian Other (Figure 3.1).

● In contrast to White students, most parents of minority ethnic students were not (school) educated in the UK (there was little variation between minority ethnic groups in this though). Those parents born overseas came from a wide-range of countries (too small numbers in each to compare).

● An individual's assessment of their 'family origin' matched their ethnic group in most cases. It was evident that some sub-groups existed, but were relatively small in size, *eg* only around eight per cent of Indian and seven per cent of Chinese/Asian Other students felt that their family origin was African Asian or African.

Figure 3.1: Likelihood of students being born in the UK, by ethnic group
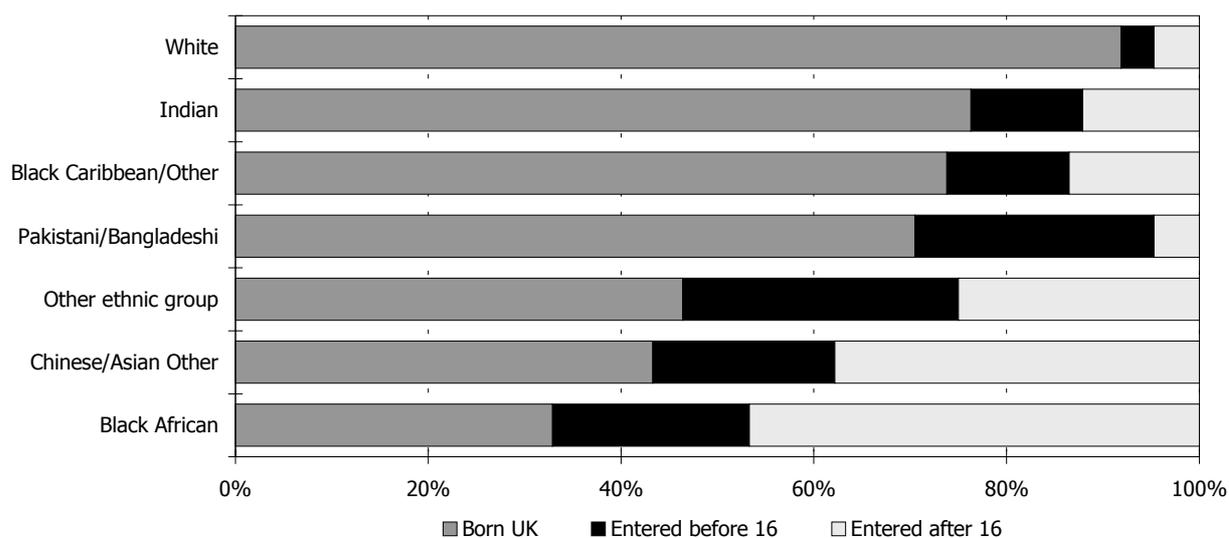
Source: IES/MORI students survey (see section 1.3) 2002

3.3 Expectations of career and financial gain from HE

Although there are a number of reasons usually given by surveys of students about why they have come into HE study, the most frequently mentioned are associated with improving their labour market prospects, be it to follow a specific career or more general improvements — *eg 'a better job, a better kind of job, a better paid job.'*[1] Our survey of potential entrants confirmed this (as shown in Table 3.1), and also showed that minority ethnic students overall were more likely to be influenced by this than White students. The survey did not show much difference between minority ethnic groups, but other research highlights some difference. For example, a survey of undergraduates in 2000[2] showed that Asian students from a range of social backgrounds, and Black students from lower (but not higher) social classes, have been found to put more emphasis than White students (from all social classes) on improved employment outcomes as the main encouraging factor for going on to HE. Other research[3] also suggests that Asian students in particular believe that education will enable them to get a job and there is a related desire to stay within the education system.

Our survey of potential HE entrants also gave evidence about expected financial gain, in particular from pursuing a higher education. More than six out of ten minority ethnic potential HE students thought that they would benefit 'a lot' financially in the

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[1] See Connor (2003), and also Callender (2003) *op. cit.,* also Leslie and Drinkwater (1999) in Payne (2003).

[2] Connor and Dewson (2001).

[3] Described in Payne (2003), *op. cit*.

long term from going on to higher education; and a further one in four thought that they would benefit 'a little', but these results were similar to those of White potential students. Little difference was also evident between individual ethnic group. We also tested for differences by religion, gender and social class, but little difference was found here either. However, it is worth noting that most students had little firm idea of what they could hope to earn as their starting salary following graduation, suggesting that their expectations of financial gain are only based on limited actual labour market information.

Greater importance is given to improving labour market outcomes by minority ethnic groups. This may be due to a combination of more negative impressions of the labour market for minority ethnic young people without qualifications than White young people without higher qualifications, and the more positive views held by minority ethnic than White people of the future benefits of gaining qualifications generally. The suggestion is that non-Whites have a higher endowment of these factors than Whites, influencing their decision to go on to higher education. It is also important to note that the more generally very positive views of higher education amongst minority ethnic groups will be operating alongside views about any costs or financial factors relating to participating, *ie* some may be giving more attention than others to the *ne*t expected financial gain. In the next section we examine the extent to which worry about finances acts as a *disincentive* to participation in higher education.

3.4 Financial barriers

The issue of financial barriers has been studied by several researchers, especially in relation to widening access to HE to encourage more applications from lower income and lower social class groups. They show that young people from lower socio-economic groups are less likely to go to HE in general, and that financial barriers are more likely to act as a deterrent for them, compared with higher groups.[1] However, the evidence on the direct effect of student finance and funding on specific groups is not clear cut. The cost of studying in HE is usually seen together with other concerns, such as having to work while studying, getting into debt and managing on a low income. There is little research on how student finance specifically affects the progression to HE for minority ethnic groups, or those from lower socio-economic and minority ethnic groups in particular. But, in a recent study of school leavers and further education students (who were working towards HE entry qualifications) about their attitudes to debt, it was found that minority ethnic groups were among a number of identified prospective entrant groups

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[1] See Connor and Dewson (2001), and most recently Callender (2003).

identified as being the most debt averse, and also Muslims, especially Pakistanis.[1]

Our survey of potential HE entrants showed that the majority (around 60 per cent in total) were put off attending university in some way, by the costs involved, but that the sample of minority ethnic students were less likely to be put off than White students (57 versus 68 per cent).[2] Cost was even less of a potential deterrent for Pakistani and Indian applicants than others, but this may relate to their age. Older applicants were more likely to feel put off, and Pakistani and Indian students tend to be the younger groups. Additionally, around 40 per cent of individuals felt that they had been put off attending a particular institution because of the costs involved (presumably mainly transport and/or accommodation costs). This figure was more or less the same for all ethnic groups including Whites, but Chinese/Asian Other were the most likely to have their institutional choice influenced by potential costs (see further discussion below in section 4.7, on other factors influencing choices of institutions).

As mentioned above, getting into debt is a major concern about the student experience. A recent small update of the student income and expenditure study (but focused on young students on full-time courses only) shows that in 2002/3, minority ethnic students are a student group least likely to take out a loan (76 per cent compared to 89 per cent amongst the overall population).[3] Other ways in which the patterns of minority ethnic student income and expenditure differ include having a lower overall income than White students, being more likely to live at home and having a greater reliance on paid work as a source of income. They were also shown in that study to be more likely to come from lower socio-economic groups than White students on average. Living with parents affects the amount of student loan which individuals are eligible to take out. The greater availability of work in the London area is an important factor to consider when looking at effects of finance on HE decisions by minority ethnic groups, as a large number of them study in the capital (almost half, over twice as many as White students).

Financial disincentives work alongside other factors, such as attitudes to the labour market, awareness and knowledge of student financial arrangements, and funding and family support. The different financial situation of many individuals from minority ethnic groups compared to White students undoubtedly means that their attitudes towards debt and the costs of studying

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[1] Callender (2003).

[2] This is different from the Callender research (but samples and questions asked in the surveys were different).

[3] Callender and Wilkinson (2003) on *2002/03 Student Income and Expenditure Survey.*

are different. Then there is the aspect of 'social debt' to consider. Although we have no specific evidence from our research to expand upon this, some people have suggested that as minority ethnic students are more likely to be funded through university by parental contributions (from their own savings) than White students (see later discussion on financial support, section 5.4), they may feel they will owe more of 'a social debt' to their parents. They may feel they should pay something back to their parents in kind, rather than financially (*eg* helping younger siblings get to university, looking after older relatives), or feel they have to live up to family expectations.

One can only speculate at this stage about what the effect of the proposed changes to student finance will be on minority ethnic groups in particular, as there is little in the way of good research evidence on which to base a view. Entry to HE, and the costs of studying, are clearly affected by socio-economic class status, and, overall, minority ethnic student groups are more likely to come from lower socio-economic class backgrounds. But it is sometimes hard to separate factors of influence associated with lower class, from those associated with particular ethnic groups and, as shown below, there are problems applying the conventional measures of socio-economic class to the minority ethnic population. All in all, though, it does not appear from the research evidence about student finance available to date, that the likely increased debt students will have in the future will, by itself, have a significantly greater negative effect on decisions to take part in higher education by minority ethnic than White students. However, the role of 'social debt' in this equation needs to be fully considered, and we would recommend that issues around the effect of the changes in student finance are carefully monitored by ethnic group.

3.5 Effect of socio-economic class

At various times, we have touched on the significance of socio-economic class, family or social background in exploring influences on entry to HE for minority ethnic students. In the general research literature, it is recognised that 'social class' (defined in various ways) plays a significant part in educational attainment, and specifically, in accessing higher education. Improving participation from lower socio-economic class groups is seen as a priority area to tackle in widening access, and increasing young people's HE participation rates. Research has shown that its effects are significant in terms of entry to the 'A' level entry route into HE study for young people.[1] Also, those groups who do better at GCSE (*eg* Indian) are more likely to be in higher socio-economic classes. *Vice versa*, some of those who do

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[1] Most recently confirmed in Gayle *et al.,* (2003) as 'the highway to degree level education', p. 77.

less well (Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Black Caribbean) are more likely to be in lower groups (though the patterns are more complex than this).

We do not, as yet, have data relating to the socio-economic class of minority ethnic groups from the 2001 Census, though we understand that data using the National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (the NS-SEC, also used by UCAS from 2002-03) is being derived, so further analysis will be possible in the future. But, from other evidence (*eg* General Household Survey), a pattern of social inequality between minority ethnic groups can be seen. However, this is changing over time, and can be complicated for some groups by other factors, related to migration and culture.[1] Because of this, basing a socio-economic class measure on parental occupation information (which is done by UCAS) may have less meaning for some minority student groups, especially recent immigrant groups where their labour market position is likely to be depressed, or may link more to pre-migration patterns. Care therefore needs to be taken in looking at socio-economic class differences among minority ethnic applicants to HE, see Figure 3.2 (which shows socio-economic class [NS-SEC] as used by UCAS). The main points are:

- Overall, minority ethnic students on full-time degree courses are more likely to be the children of parents from lower socio-economic classes, compared with all students. This would indicate that they are doing better on average in accessing HE than their socio-economic class would suggest.

- Most minority ethnic groups, with the exception of Asian Other, Mixed Ethnic and Other groups have a minority in the top two classes (higher and lower managerial and professional), and some with a small minority (the lowest being Bangladeshi, 22 per cent). This is in contrast to White entrants, where they form the majority (58 per cent).

- Indian full-time degree accepted applicants have a higher socio-economic profile than Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups, but not as high as those of other Asian or Black groups (see Table A7, Appendix).

- It is worth noting that the minority ethnic groups with the highest socio-economic profiles are not all of the groups most likely to enter HE via the 'A' level route (the Black groups are the least likely, see previous chapter). However, the higher socio-economic group/'A' level route link holds to a large extent within the Asian group:

  - Chinese, Asian Other and Indian young students are more likely to come via the 'A' level route than Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, and also are more likely to be higher 'A' level achievers.

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[1] See Modood, in Mason, (2003).

Figure 3.2: Socio-economic profile of minority ethnic and White accepted applicants to degree courses, 2002 year of entry
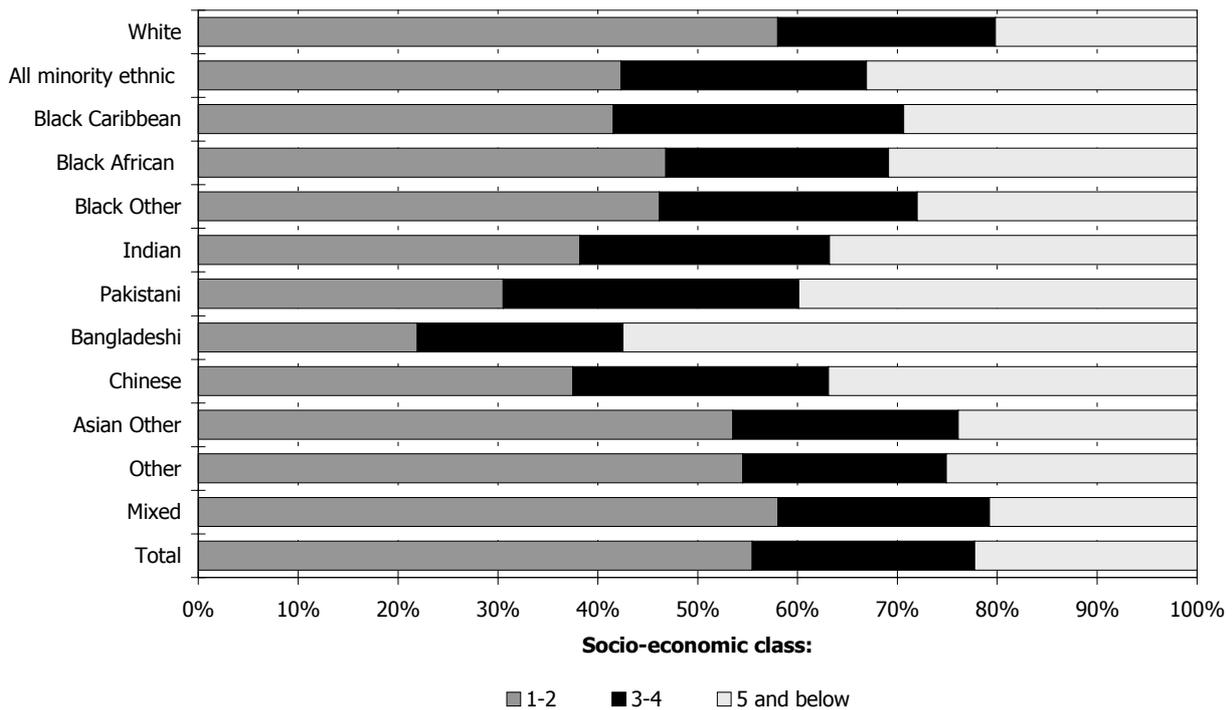
Source: UCAS (see data in Table A7, Appendix)

- The Chinese, who are the most likely to come to HE via independent schools, have a similar socio-economic profile to the Indian group, but lower than the Black student group.

These findings add weight to the view that there are other factors of significance to minority ethnic groups that are interacting with these standard socio-economic measures, and they seem to have a mitigating effect on the 'social class effect' for some minority ethnic groups, in relation to entry to HE. The most likely set of factors, from the evidence presented above, is the 'drive for qualification' (highlighted earlier in section 2.2), arising from the greater economic motivation among recent immigrants and the greater desire to do better, and ensure their offspring do better too.[1] The strong academic orientation of most Asian groups has been seen, in various parts of our research, in different ways. It is recommended that this is an area which should be investigated further.

3.6 Summary

Various factors of influence in decision making about HE have been explored in this chapter. It has shown that there is an interaction between ethnicity and these various factors, but that

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[1] See Modood (2003), and also our research among parents.

this is likely to vary between minority ethnic groups. There is a complex interplay between a number of factors of influence; decisions about HE are not made by individuals in isolation. Ethnicity has been shown not to be significant overall, when analysed with a variety of factors affecting young people's entry to degree study (by 19 years), but being a member of a particular group (Indian or Chinese) was. But there are limitations on this analysis (about young entry to degree study only) and it is recommended that when more data becomes available, especially on progress to undergraduate courses beyond age 19, then further analysis of this kind is undertaken. As in the previous chapter, we recommend that future work is done, where possible, at a disaggregated level, though we recognise the problems with likely small numbers in some groups.

There are a number of reasons why people decide to go on to HE (if likely to be qualified to do so), and why some apply more to minority ethnic groups:

- Minority ethnic potential students are more likely than Whites to be influenced about going to HE for positive reasons, especially expected economic gain/career advantages, but there is little variation here between minority ethnic groups.

- Minority ethnic potential students are, on the whole, more influenced than Whites by the expected better labour market opportunities that HE qualifications would bring, but they are both equally likely to expect it to bring considerable financial benefits.

- Parental, and other family, encouragement plays a greater role for minority ethnic than White potential entrants, and more for Black African, Pakistani and Indian than other minority ethnic students. Significant support and encouragement is given to many individual minority ethnic students from their parents, at various stages in their educational route into HE. There is a greater valuing of education within most minority ethnic groups. Parents are also a key influential source of information about universities, more so than for White potential entrants. This is despite the fact that many parents of minority ethnic students are likely to be first generation immigrants and not educated in the UK, nor have experience of higher education themselves.

- Minority ethnic potential students, with the exception of Black Caribbean, are more likely than White students overall to have always had an expectation about going to HE.

Financial disincentives (cost of studying, getting into debt *etc.*) are an influence on decisions about HE entry, but have less of an effect than other factors, and little separates minority ethnic and White students in this regard. Minority ethnic potential students and Pakistani and Indian students in particular, are less likely than White students, to be discouraged from going to HE by the

cost (which is different from other research). However, it was clear that other factors also had an influence on attitudes to cost of studying and likely student debt — *eg* age, whether going to live at home or not, living in London, social class — and these interacted with ethnicity in different ways. This is an area that needs future monitoring, including the effect of social class and region, as well as ethnic group.

Socio-economic class, in particular, needs to be taken account of in future research on entry to HE of minority ethnic groups.

● There is a lower socio-economic profile overall of minority ethnic than White undergraduate entrants to full-time degrees (no data on part-time entrants).

● The Bangladeshi group has the lowest socio-economic profile, while Indian, Asian Other and Black groups have the highest.

● But all minority ethnic groups are doing better in gaining access to HE than their socio-economic profile suggests, and some are doing much better than others.

It seems likely that other factors are likely to be mitigating the effect of socio-economic status, for minority ethnic groups on HE entry. The most likely of these is the influence of parents and families, and the greater 'drive for qualification' among the minority ethnic population. But the standard socio-economic or social class measures used may be more problematic when applied to ethnic groups, and this needs to be considered when interpreting the results, and when monitoring HE entry trends by social class and ethnicity.

The previous chapter set out a simplified typology of groups relating to attainment and routes into HE. We continue to see a flavour of this divergence here also, when looking at other influences in decisions, though it is generally less pronounced. In summary, distinctive features of each grouping are:

● **Indians and Chinese** — net of attainment**,** being a member of either of these groups is a significant variable in predicting progression to degree study by age 19 years; Indians are less put off HE by the likely costs.

● **Black groups** — Black African is among the groups more likely to have parental encouragement, but less so for Black Caribbean. Also, fewer Black Caribbean's had an expectation about going on to HE.

● **Pakistani and Bangladeshi** — more likely to have parental encouragement than many other groups; Pakistani group is less put off HE by likely costs; Bangladeshi and Pakistani entrants have a lower socio-economic profile.

Several policy implications are evident from the findings in this chapter:

- Understanding better the effect of parental encouragement and 'qualification drive' and how this is working in practice, and ways of harnessing this 'positive force', as effectively as possible, in widening access projects (and also what lessons can be gained for helping other [White] groups).

- In careers service/careers work, understanding how formal versus informal (including parent/family) influences on decisions and choices (especially in non-school environments) operate:

  - what improvements can be made to careers advice/ guidance provision?

  - how can the various 'influencers' work better together? Are there good models of successful practice?

Also, a number of areas of further research and analysis have been highlighted:

- into the progress of older students (19 years plus) to HE and factors influencing their entry

- into the effect of socio-economic class on HE entry of minority ethnic group

- and into the interaction between various factors (socio-economic class, religion, age, living at home, living in London and ethnicity) in any monitoring of the impact of proposed changes in student finance by different minority ethnic groups is undertaken.

4. Patterns of Participation in HE

We now move on to presenting the key features of the participation of minority ethnic groups in HE, and in particular, the ways in which minority ethnic groups have distinct patterns of participation across the HE sector.

The chapter first shows how HE participation rates vary between minority ethnic groups, and then goes on to show the participation in more detail, by institution, type of course and subject. Gender differences are also identified. In the second part of the chapter, the main factors influencing the observed minority ethnic participation patterns are discussed.

The main focus is undergraduate study in England (which is the scope of the research, see section 1.2). Readers who wish a fuller discussion of the participation pattern of different minority ethnic groups in undergraduate study may also be interested in the research's Interim report[1] (but note this report contains some older data than shown here).

4.1 Minority ethnic participation in HE

In total, 182,000 minority ethnic (UK-domiciled) students were enrolled on undergraduate programmes (full- and part-time) in English universities (including the Open University) in 2001/02. This represented 16.4 per cent of the total with known ethnicity (12 per cent of the total did not give their ethnicity and so are excluded from base totals when calculating percentages). In addition, there were some 14,000 minority ethnic students taking level 4+/HE courses in FE colleges (and not included in the HESA return by HE institutions), representing 11.9 per cent of the total with known ethnicity.

Because there is some uncertainty when combining data from FE colleges and HE institutions (data are collected separately in two different systems), care has to be taken in deriving an aggregate undergraduate population figure. Bearing this in mind, the estimate of the minority ethnic undergraduate student population (UK-domiciled studying in institutions in England) was

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[1] See chapter 2 pp. 8-28, and also its Appendix C.

approximately 196,000 in 2001/02, which is 16 per cent of the total. This is nearly twice the minority ethnic proportion in the whole population of England (just over nine per cent). However, students can come from other parts of the UK to attend university in England, and the minority ethnic distribution varies geographically (see section 1.5.1). If the coverage is extended to all undergraduate study in the UK, minority ethnic students account for 14 per cent of the total student population, which compares with a UK population figure of just under eight per cent.

The figure of 14 per cent for 2001/02 is higher than the 12 per cent estimate in 1994/95 (all UK coverage). However, there are problems in looking at trends over time because of changes to the ethnic origin categories in 2001/02, and also changes from year to year in student data collection by HESA. But in broad terms, the trend is likely to be upwards, as the figures suggest.

Looking at individual minority ethnic groups:

- The largest group in undergraduate study is Indian (4.1 per cent, making up just over one-quarter of all minority ethnic undergraduate students at English universities in 2001/02), followed by Black African (2.5 per cent) and Pakistani (2.2 per cent).

- The smallest are the Chinese and Bangladeshi (and some of the Other and mixed ethnic groups), representing one per cent or fewer (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Minority ethnic groups (UK domiciled) in undergraduate study in England (HEIs, Open University and FE colleges combined), 2001/02

Ethnic group	No, of students	% of students
White	1,030,385	84.0
All minority ethnic	196,083	16.0
- Back Caribbean	18,821	1.5
- Black African	30,971	2.5
- Black Other	7,874	0.6
- Indian	50,406	4.1
- Pakistani	26,631	2.2
- Bangladeshi	8,081	0.7
- Chinese	11,775	1.0
- Asian Other	16,322	1.3
- Mixed ethnic	8,848	0.7
- Other	16,354	1.3
Total (known ethnicity)	*1,226,468*	*100*

Source: HESA, 2001/02 and ILR, 2001/02

4.1.1 HE Participation rates

Comparing student and general population figures to indicate relative HE participation of minority ethnic groups (as done above, and also shown in the Interim Report) can produce distortions, as it uses student counts rather than entrants (and students can be on different lengths of courses, retaking courses, *etc.*). Also, there are differences by age and gender which can be masked by the overall figures (in particular the minority ethnic population has a younger age profile, representing a higher proportion, 12 per cent, of the 18-29 age group; and also there are differences in the proportions of males and females in each age group). A better measure is the HE Initial Participation Rate (HEIPR). The HEIPR is a published measure, in general use by the Government.[1] It is calculated by summing the percentages of people domiciled in England at each age (between 17 and 30) who enter HE in the UK (HEIs and FECs) for the first time in any one year.

There are no separately published HEIPRs for minority ethnic groups, mainly because of the difficulties in obtaining accurate estimates of the population groups (only recently has the 2001 Census data been available to help with this though there are still uncertainties in accurately estimating ethnic/gender/age breakdowns, especially for the 18-30 age group). A major issue arises from combining the population estimate (from Census returns) with the student estimate (from HESA and ILR returns), as these sources involve different respondents who may identify the people involved differently (*ie* in the given ethnic classification). Despite these weaknesses, we believe it is an improved way of presenting HE participation for minority ethnic groups, and separate ethnic/gender HEIPRs have been calculated for 2001/02 as part of this research.[2] As shown in Table 4.2, they confirm the higher than average HE participation by minority ethnic groups in aggregate. They also highlight the extent of variation between the broad ethnic/gender groups.

● The highest participation rates are among the female Black or Black British group and male Asian or Asian British group (over 60 per cent).

● These compare with an average for all minority ethnic groups of 56 per cent, an average overall figure (excluding ethnicity unknowns) of 40 per cent,[3] and an average White group figure

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[1] The HEIPR is the redefined IER, and was recently published in Statistical First Release SFR 07/2004, April 2004, DFES, where further details on its calculation are discussed.

[2] We are grateful for assistance provided by HEFCE and DFES statisticians in the calculation of the ethnic/gender specific HEIPRs.

[3] The overall published HEIPR (ie with unknown ethnicity included) is a higher figure, 43.5 per cent for 2001/02, which is due to the higher non-response in the HE figures than the population estimate; see also notes in Appendix Table A1 on the calculation of the ethnic specific HEIPRs.

Table 4.2: Higher Education Initial Participation Rates (HEIPRs) for English domiciled first-time entrants (full- and part-time) to HE courses (in universities and colleges), by broad ethnic/gender group, 2001/02

Ethnic group	Male	Female	All
White	34	41	38
All Minority ethnic	55	58	56
- Asian or Asian British	62	59	60
- Black or Black British	55	66	61
- Chinese or Other Ethnic	47	50	49
- Mixed Ethnic	35	44	40
All (with known ethnicity)	*37*	*43*	*40*

Note: The student coverage here is different from Table 4.1. It is based on number of entrants to HE (not undergraduate study only, though most will be) in 2002/02, domiciled in England but studying anywhere in UK. For further details of how the HEIPR is calculated, see Appendix Table A1 and SFR 07/2004, DfES.

Source: HEFCE and DFES

of 38 per cent (*nb* the White group is, of course, very much larger and diverse in composition).

Disaggregating more, to individual minority ethnic groups, shows greater contrasts (but also probably introduces greater uncertainties with the figures calculated, see discussion below and also in Notes in Table A1 in Appendix A):

● Black African and Indian groups have the highest participation rates (each over 70 per cent).

● Bangladeshi and Black Caribbean have the lowest (39 and 45 per cent respectively).

All minority ethnic groups have a higher HEIPR than the White group (see Appendix Table A1). However, when gender is also considered, for one group only, female Bangladeshi, the participation rate (33 per cent) drops to below that of the female White group (41 per cent). In the male figures, the male Black Caribbean figure (the lowest at 36 per cent) is only slightly higher than the male White figure (34 per cent). These figures are subject to a number of uncertainties, as discussed below, and should be treated as provisional.

Differences between ethnic groups are also evident in the HE participation rates of the young part of the age group (which have been calculated for the 17-19 group separately, and called the Young HEIPR), but numbers are small in places, so even more caution is needed. The overall minority ethnic figure is also higher here than the White figure (39 versus 29 per cent). Interestingly, the relative position of the Chinese improves in the Young HEIPR (37 per cent participation figure) while the Black group's position drops (to 28 per cent) below the White figure (29 per cent) and also below the average (30 per cent). Within the Black group, it is

the Black Caribbean which has the lowest participation in this age group (just 17 per cent). This confirms points made earlier (in Chapter 2) about the 'delayed' participation in HE of Black groups. It also highlights how different conclusions can be drawn from participation data if different age cohorts are looked at.

There are a number of likely effects which produce these different HEIPRs and Young HEIPRs, some of which we cannot currently explain from the analysis undertaken to date. Some may be due to weaknesses in Census estimates which have not yet been fully investigated, some to the problems highlighted above in using two sources to make the calculation and definitional problems (see further explanations in notes to Table A1). That is why the individual ethnic/gender HEIPRs produced here need to be treated with caution and viewed as provisional. We understand that the Department is looking into the feasibility of developing HEIPRs for sub-groups of the population, including minority ethnic groups, which we welcome. We also look forward to obtaining, in the near future, further output from the 2001 Census which will give another measure of HE participation, one which uses Census data alone.

4.2 Diversity across HE

Just looking at the overall figures, though, misses an important feature of minority ethnic participation in HE. This is their very uneven distribution across the HE sector, both in aggregate, and at individual group level. This is seen in institutional and subject distributions, and also, though to a lesser extent, by mode of study and qualification aim.

4.2.1 Institution

It is very evident that minority ethnic students are much more likely to be found at certain universities, and less so at others.

Minority ethnic students are:

● more likely to be studying in a post-92 than a pre-92 university: 22 per cent of the total undergraduates at post-92 universities compared with 15 per cent at pre-92 universities

● less likely to be at an FE colleges (representing almost 12 per cent of total), and even less likely to be at a HE college or the Open University (9.5 per cent and five per cent respectively). At individual ethnic group level, there is also an uneven distribution by type of institution (Further details are shown in Appendix A, Table A2):

  • all (including White) ethnic groups except Chinese, are more likely to be studying at a post-92 than a pre-92 university. Overall, the balance is 54:46 (but for Chinese it is 49:51)

- in terms of the percentage share of students, most minority ethnic groups, except Chinese and Asian Other, account for a higher share of post-92 than of pre-92 university students. The difference between the two university sectors is much greater for Black students:

  - Black or Black British account for 7.2 per cent at post-92 universities compared with just 2.9 per cent at pre-92 universities (and the gap is similarly large for each of the Black groups: Caribbean, African and Other)

  - the representation of Black students is also higher in FE colleges and HE colleges than at pre-92 universities, but not as high as at post-92 universities

  - all minority ethnic groups account for lower percentages in HE colleges than universities, the exceptions being the Other group.

This categorisation, especially the pre-92 and post-92 split is an over-simplification of the institutional distribution. In a small number of universities, minority ethnic students comprise over one-half of the home-domiciled undergraduate population (*ie* excluding foreign students), and at the other end, there is a relatively large number of universities, where it is less than ten per cent. This is illustrated by the shape of the curve in Figure 4.1.

There is a regional dimension to this distribution, as most of the institutions with the highest minority ethnic representation are post-92 universities in Greater London. This is not surprising when one considers that almost one-half of all home-domiciled minority ethnic undergraduate students studying in England are

Figure 4.1: Minority ethnic undergraduate students as a percentage of all students (home domiciled only) at individual universities, 2000/01

individual universities ranked in order*
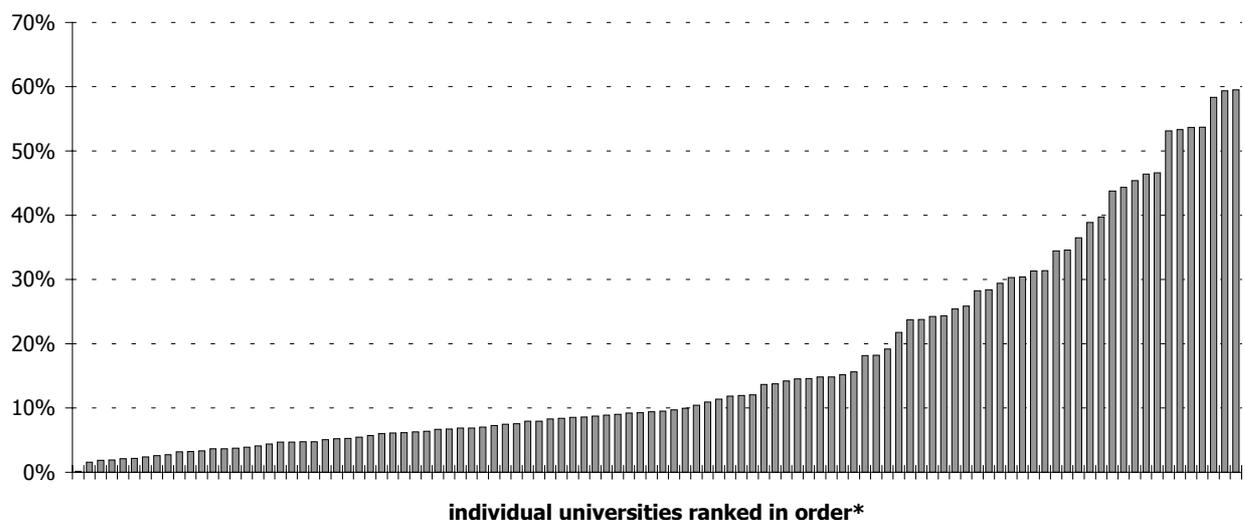
* Excludes around 30 with small numbers (under 1,000 undergraduates in total) and the OU

Source: HESA, 2002

at institutions in Greater London (compared with one-fifth of all undergraduate students). Much higher proportions of all minority ethnic groups are found in London universities, compared with England overall, but especially Black students.

Further discussion of the reasons which lie behind the minority ethnic institutional distribution are given later in section 4.4.

4.2.2 Type of course

Overall, minority ethnic groups are slightly more likely than Whites to take degree than other undergraduate courses (referred to in this report in aggregate as 'sub-degree'), 80 versus 72 per cent. They both mostly study degrees by full than part-time study. At sub-degree level, however, minority ethnic students are much less likely to be taking a part-time sub-degree course. Only 12 per cent of them do so, compared with 21 per cent of the White total (though it is worth noting that the percentage of unknown ethnicity is higher here, which may be lead to some undercounting). This is likely to be one of the main reasons for the lower representation of minority ethnic students studying at HE level in FE colleges, where the majority of HE is delivered at sub-degree and part-time, and also for the lower representation at the Open University (see 4.2.1).

These differences can be expressed another way — in percentage terms:

- the highest representation of minority ethnic undergraduate students is in sub-degree full-time study (22 per cent)

- which compares with 18-19 per cent studying full- and part-time degrees

- and just 11 per cent in part-time sub-degree courses (see Appendix Table A3).

By individual ethnic group, some points of particular note are:

- Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese and Mixed ethnic students are represented better in full-time, rather than part-time, degree courses, when compared with White students (who are fairly equally divided between the two).

- Others, especially Black groups, are better represented in part-time than full-time degree study. The latter is likely to be associated with their much higher representation in post-92 than pre-92 universities, where there is more part-time degree provision.

- Black Africans are much more likely to take full-time sub-degree courses than other modes/qualifications (they represent 6.7 per cent of the total on these types of courses, the highest percentage of any minority ethnic group). This is thought to be

mostly due to the popularity of nursing Higher Diplomas with this ethnic group, which tend to dominate this group.

4.2.3 Subject

When subject of first degree is analysed, there is also a distinctive pattern of participation by minority ethnic students. Considerably higher representations of minority ethnic students at universities are in medicine/dentistry, computer science and law (over 30 per cent in each, double the average). This contrasts with under ten per cent in physical sciences, languages, art and design, humanities, education, veterinary science and agriculture (Figure 4.2). In general, it is Asian students, and especially Indians, who make up the majority of minority ethnic students in those subjects which are the most popular with minority ethnic students. It is also worth noting that some subjects, such as law and medicine, are among the most competitive on entry to universities, and up until recently, medicine/dentistry could only be taken at a small number of pre-92 universities (and is also mainly entered via high 'A' level scores).

Figure 4.2: Minority ethnic students as percentage of total degree students in each subject, England, at universities (excluding OU), 2000/01
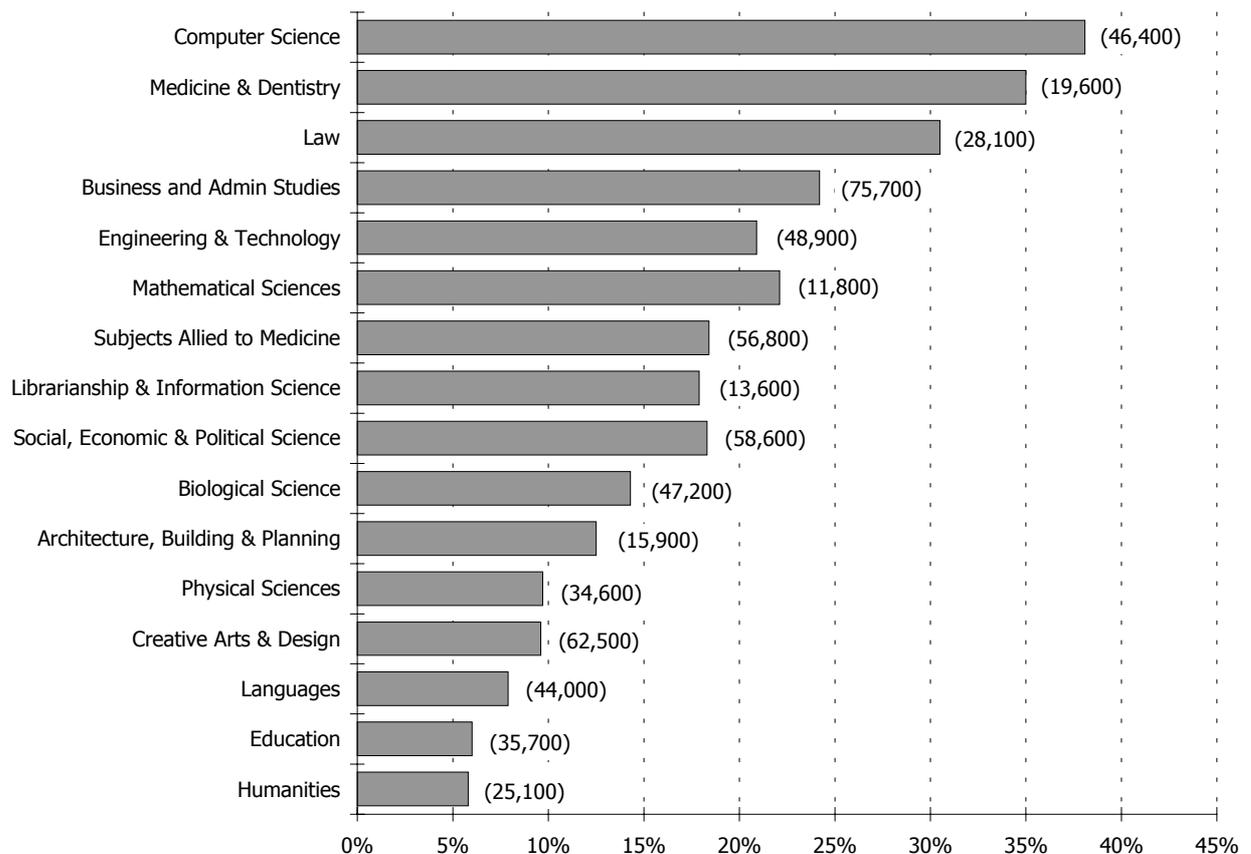
Figures in brackets are total numbers of students of known ethnicity in each subject (small subjects with very low representation are omitted (for further details, see Interim report, Table C1).

Source: HESA

The subject profile at sub-degree level at universities is different (so not included with the degree profile above), with a greater emphasis on more vocationally orientated subjects. Here, the highest percentage of minority ethnic students are in computer science (29 per cent) and business studies (23 per cent). Further details of the subject distribution at degree and sub-degree level at universities can be seen in Tables C1 and C2, in the earlier Interim report.

4.3 Gender differences

Gender differences in achievements of girls and boys, in education prior to HE, have already been highlighted in Chapter 2. There also different cultural/family attitudes in ethnic groups towards women, education and employment, though some appear to be changing over time.[1] It is not surprising, then, to find gender differences in the participation of minority ethnic groups in HE, as shown earlier in section 4.1.1. The student data shows:

- minority ethnic groups, in aggregate, are less well-represented, in percentage terms, among female undergraduate students overall, than among male undergraduate students (15.5 per cent of female versus 18.9 per cent of male totals) see Table A4

- but women outnumber men among minority ethnic under-graduates (54 per cent female versus 46 per cent male), which is also the case in the undergraduate student population as a whole.

As might be expected, this average figure, of 54 per cent, masks wide variations, ranging from:

- around 44-45 per cent among Pakistani and Bangladeshi students to

- a high of 70 per cent among the Black Caribbean group (*ie* over twice the number of women as men in this group).

As section 4.1.1 indicated, there are differences by both gender and ethnicity when participation rates (HEIPRs) are calculated:

- White, mixed ethnic, female Pakistani and especially Bangladeshi groups have the lowest female participation rates of any ethnic group (33-44 per cent range).

- By contrast, female Black African, Asian other and Black other have the highest participation rates (over 70 per cent).

- The lowest male participation rates are among Black Caribbean, White and mixed ethnic groups (34-36 per cent).

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[1] For more detailed discussion of gender differences see Mirza in Mason (2003), Ahmad *et al.* (2003) and also the Cabinet Office final report, cited earlier.

- While the highest male participation rates are among male Black African, Indian and Asian other groups (over 20 per cent) (see Appendix Table A.1).

- Care needs to be taken in interpretation of these results, as some of the groups are relatively small, and as already highlighted there are uncertainties in calculating gender/ethnic HEIPRs (see end of Section 4.1.1).

Why does HE participation vary between men and women in different ethnic groups? There are various likely explanations: some lie in the distinctive demographic characteristics of different minority ethnic groups (*eg* a female gender imbalance in the Bangladeshi young population, and also higher proportions of Pakistani and Bangladeshi women married in early 20s and with children); others relate to gender differences in prior education achievement (especially in the Black Caribbean group) and different ethnic group attitudes towards education and employment for women.

Another explanation may relate to subjects studied. The familiar gender segregation with, *eg* computer science and engineering being more popular with men, while law and 'subjects allied to medicine' are more popular with women, is also evident in the minority ethnic student population. But there are some particular points worth noting:

- Law is more popular with female Pakistani students, and also female Indians and Black Africans, than other groups (though popular among women generally).

- Medicine, a very popular subject with minority ethnic groups, but more so with Asians than Black students (see Figure 4.2), has fewer female than male minority ethnic students, including fewer Indian women than Indian men. This is despite medicine having more female than male students overall.

- Business and admin studies, where the gender balance is fairly equal overall, has higher representations of women among the Indians and Chinese taking it.

4.4 Causes of differences in minority ethnic representation within HE

We now turn to look more closely at likely causes of variations in representation of minority ethnic students, in different parts of the HE sector (highlighted in section 4.2). An important one, yet again, is prior attainment, and in particular entry route and entry qualification. This particularly affects the institutional pattern of minority ethnic groups. As we have seen, Chinese are more likely to be at a pre-92 than a post-92 university, and as shown earlier, are one of the groups more likely to be on the 'A' level entry route

into HE (and also more likely to have high 'A' level points and come via an independent school), and pre-92 universities predominantly select on 'A' levels. By contrast, Black Caribbeans are more likely to be older on entry, much less likely to have 'A' level qualifications, more likely to come to HE via the college route and are more likely to be at post-92 universities, where selection criteria tend to be broader. However, the influence of prior attainment on the institutional pattern seems to vary between ethnic groups, and the picture is more complex than these two examples suggest. A third example is Indians, also more likely to have 'A' level entry qualifications on entry, and relatively high 'A' levels, but are more likely to be found in the post-92 sector.

A number of other factors are likely to be shaping the institutional pattern in addition to entry qualification, and also subject/course choice. These often interact with each other — a student's choice of a particular course is often the main reason why he or she chooses to go to a particular institution. Other factors include attractive location/nearness to home, an institution's reputation, its graduate employment record, and its policies on widening access towards non-traditional students. Subject choices can be influenced by prior qualification (*eg* studying vocational subjects post-16), particular career plans, interest/ability in particular subjects, or influence of family, parents and teachers (*eg* being steered towards certain subjects, like law or medicine).[1]

Once individuals have taken the decision to go on to HE there are various influences on their decisions about what and where to study, and these can often be quite difficult ones to make. We can turn to our surveys of potential and current students to provide insights into these, and other factors, which shape individual choices of minority ethnic groups. These also give further explanation for the much higher and lower representations, of minority ethnic students, in certain institutions and disciplines.

4.4.1 Course and subject choice

Our survey of potential students investigated the course and subject preferences. Firstly, it revealed a number of differences in the ways in which they were considering different types of courses. This was similar in many ways to the pattern of actual student entry:

- The majority of Year 13 students were considering full-time BA/BSc courses at the time of the survey (82 per cent of minority ethnic students), and this figure was even higher for minority ethnic students studying for 'A'/'AS' levels only (88 per cent).

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[1] See general literature on student choice and decision making about HE, such as Connor *et al.* (1998).

- Those currently on courses leading to vocational qualifications were more likely to be considering HND courses (27 per cent compared to six per cent of those studying 'A'/'AS' levels). Pakistani/Bangladeshi students were the group most likely to be considering HND courses (20 per cent, twice the proportion of White respondents). Black Caribbean students were more likely than other groups to be considering full-time non-degree courses (*eg* DipHE).

- Asian students, and in particular, Indian students, were much more likely to be looking at sandwich courses than the Black groups.

The most important influence when it came to choosing subjects for minority ethnic potential students was their prior attainment, and this had a greater effect than any other personal variables.

Gender and age also had substantial effects on some subject choices. This was particularly noticeable in IT, chosen by 30 per cent of males and only five per cent of females, among minority ethnic groups. By contrast, women were almost twice as likely as men to opt for health studies and social sciences, which were also more popular with older students.

We found that the influence of family on subject choice was more marked amongst minority ethnic than White potential students, confirming previous research which suggests that minority ethnic parents often favour traditional professional areas for their children. Our results found that Asian groups were more likely to report that their families had a lot of influence on their choices than other minority ethnic groups (24 per cent compared to only nine per cent of White students and just six per cent of Black Caribbean students). This is a main explanation for why medicine and law are such popular subject choices with Asian students, even though they may expect to get the grades to get into other courses.

The student survey also investigated reasons for choosing particular subjects (though as this was undertaken with the benefit of hindsight, views about subject preferences may be coloured by subsequent experiences). Personal liking or interest tended to be cited more than any other reason as important in subject choice, which is similar to other research generally of this kind. This was followed, in order of importance, by the relevance the subject choice had to a particular career and good employment prospects. Minority ethnic students were less likely than White students to choose subjects for personal interest reasons and more for employment/career-related reasons on the whole.[1] Very little differences could be seen between minority ethnic groups (in support for these two main reasons), the only exception being a higher proportion of Black Africans, than others, choosing subjects with particular career or job outcomes in mind.

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[1]   Statistically significant difference, or near to significance, at 99% level.

Table 4.3: Factors affecting choices of university by ethnic group (mean scores[1]), potential students' views

Issues affecting decision	Black African	Black Caribbean/ Other	Pakistani/ Bangladeshi	Indian	Chinese/ Asian Other	All minority groups	White
Offered subjects wanted	4.6	4.8	4.6	4.6	4.3	**4.6**	4.5
Offered type of course wanted	4.0	4.3	4.0	4.3	4.0	**4.2**	3.9
Good academic reputation	4.4	4.1	4.2	4.2	4.1	**4.2**	3.9
Good employment prospects/good reputation with employers	4.2	3.9	4.1	4.2	3.8	**4.0**	3.7
Good social life	3.3	3.2	3.3	3.7	3.1	**3.4**	3.3
Close to home/not far away	2.9	3.1	3.6	3.3	3.2	**3.2**	3.2
Could keep/easily get part-time job	3.1	3.2	2.9	3.3	3.1	**3.1**	3.0
In ethnically mixed area	3.1	3.1	3.3	3.0	2.7	**3.1**	1.9
Family has studied there	2.3	1.9	2.9	2.8	2.3	**2.5**	2.0
Some students/staff similar ethnic group to me	2.4	2.3	2.5	2.6	2.2	**2.4**	1.5
Base number	*95*	*68*	*111*	*170*	*65*	***567***	*206*

[1] In this table, scores again range from one to five, where one represents 'Does not apply', and five 'Applies strongly/big effect'

Source: IES survey of potential entrants to higher education, 2002/3

4.4.2 Institutional choice

Our surveys also examined the factors influencing student institutional choice. In line with other studies on this issue,[1] the most important factor for potential students was that the institution offers the type of course, and range of subjects, preferred by the student (Table 4.3). This might include one that had a sandwich element, or one that they could take part-time, or offered particular options they liked. White students were much less concerned about choosing an institution in an ethnically mixed area than minority ethnic students. Ethnic minority students were slightly more concerned about the academic and employment reputation of the institution than White students,[2] particularly Black African entrants.

Some influences were more associated with specific religions, genders and age groups. Hindu, Sikh or Buddhist religious groups were all more likely to see ethnic or family ties as applying than other religious groups and/or those without a specified religion. Female Muslim students perceived being in an ethnically

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[1] See Connor *et al.* (1998), and Perryman *et al.* (2003).

[2] Statistically significant difference, or near to significance, at 99% level.

mixed area, and having family experience of studying at an institution, as more important than other groups, as well as being close to home.[1] Overall, minority ethnic groups, however, were actually slightly less likely than Whites to have a first choice institution in their home region. However, the most significant determinant, on whether or not a minority ethnic student selected a home region institution, was their age (ten per cent of students aged 21 and over had their first choice outside their home region, compared to 36 per cent of those aged under 21).

Potential students were asked specifically about the influence of their parents, partner or other members of their family on subject and institution choice. It was over institution that this influence was strongest for minority ethnic students, and more so than among White students.

The way potential students weigh up the various factors in deciding about institutions is illustrated in these three examples:

*'My first choice is Bristol because it's third in the league tables for maths ... its not too far from home and it would be possible to come home at weekends … I think Bristol is vibrant and has a good atmosphere.' (*Black male, aged 19 years, taking 'A' levels at college)

'My first choice is Kingston because the course is linked to St George's hospital and medical school … the medical school has a good reputation, and I have worked in the hospital and would like to work there again.' (Black Caribbean woman, aged 33, taking an Access course at college)

*'De Montfort because it's in Leicester and my parents want me to stay at home, and its well recognised by employers ... Aston because of the course structure and graduate employment rate … Location most important, reputation, graduate employment rate second.' (*Indian female, Hindu, aged 18 years)

Turning to the student survey, preference for the type of course or subject it offered was the main influence on institutional choice (same as in the potential students survey, and also in line with other research on student choice generally). This reason was more evident though among Black than other students, which is likely to link to their greater likelihood of them being on part-time courses. Students at the group of pre-92 universities, both White and minority ethnic, were far more likely to have gone there because of its academic reputation, than students at other universities or colleges. Although 'being able to fit in better' was mentioned more by minority ethnic than White students, it was a second order factor, and there was no evidence that this was more likely to be chosen as a reason for choosing an institution by any particular minority ethnic group.

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[1] Gender and religious breakdowns are based on small numbers and can be seen as indicative only.

Family influence was greater on choice of institution for students interviewed, than for the choice of course. The majority of minority ethnic students (61 per cent) had been influenced in their institution choice by their family in some way (compared to 47 per cent of Whites). This pattern mirrors the potential students' views.

- Asian students were influenced more by their family than other ethnic groups, and particularly Pakistani and Bangladeshi students (70 per cent of them combined reported a family influence on institution).

- Religion and gender also played a role: the influence of families on female Muslim students was greatest of all (44 per cent felt their family influenced their choice of institution 'a lot' compared to just 18 per cent of Muslim males). Figures were also higher for female Hindu/Sikh/Buddhist (combined group) students (42 per cent for females compared to 19 per cent for males.

- Staying at home or with family, the distance from home, and the particular town or city of the institution were all factors of more importance to families of female Pakistani and Bangladeshi potential students (but not families of males).

- Choosing an institution with a high academic reputation was of more importance to families of Indian and Black African potential students, in the way they influenced their choice (and mainly for males, rather than females for Black Africans, but more females than males for Indians).

The in-depth interviews with students and parents suggested that some families prefer their daughters to stay close to home, but there was also contradictory views. There was evidence (also in the work of others[1]) that challenges the stereotypical view of Muslim families being in opposition to the participation of their daughters in education. A recent survey[2] also found that young minority ethnic full-time degree students are more likely to live with their parents than White students are (44 per cent compared to 19 per cent). Although whether this varies by gender *within* ethnicity is not known.

Thus, we can see here too (as noted in the previous chapter) the ethnic minority family 'drive for qualification'. It appears very much rooted in the belief that participation in HE will lead on to greater things for their sons and daughters, particularly if they take certain courses, or attend particular institutions. In the future, the relative costs of higher education for many students (and for many, their parents) will increase. Students are increasingly taking on a 'consumer' culture, in terms of purchasing an HE 'experience' and

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[1] See discussion in Payne (2003), p. 40.

[2] Callender and Wilkinson (2003), *2002/3 Student Income and Expenditure Survey.*

qualification. How they (and their families) expect HE participation to benefit them, both now and in the future, are clearly very important, and this aspect is particularly important to explore and monitor in the future for minority ethnic groups.

4.4.3 Admissions process

Another factor, likely to influence the institutional distribution of minority ethnic students, is racial discrimination in the applications and admissions process. At first sight, the different acceptance rates of minority ethnic students to universities and colleges (via UCAS), which vary from a high of 80 per cent for Chinese, to a low of 64 per cent for Black Africans, with the comparable figure for White applicants at 78 per cent,[1] suggest a bias in admissions. However, much of the reasons for these differences are likely to relate to differences in the qualifications of applicants in relation to the entry requirements of courses. As already pointed out (in Chapters 2 and 3), attainment is a key factor in gaining entry to particular institutions, and there are substantial differences in entry qualifications, school backgrounds, and in particular, 'A' level scores, of applicants from different ethnic groups. Also, admissions rates are not simply the number of accepted applicants to total applications across the sector. Applicants can withdraw from the application process, retake their examinations, and re-apply the following year (and there is some evidence that this differs according to minority ethnic group). Also, not being an 'accepted applicant' at one institution does not mean that an applicant has not taken up a place elsewhere.

It is much better to look at applications, offers and acceptances on an individual basis, and also try to take account of the skewed institutional distribution of minority ethnic students and their varied entry qualifications, and personal backgrounds in investigating admissions bias. This has been done in one important research study.[2] It showed that when entry qualifications and other socio-demographic characteristics were controlled for in analysis of UCAS application and acceptance statistics, minority ethnic candidates had less chance of success in gaining a place at an old (*ie* pre-92 group), but not a post-92, university. In particular, Black Caribbean and Pakistani groups were much less likely than White students to have gained admission to a pre-92 university, but Chinese and other Asian groups were more likely to have done so. Minority ethnic candidates were one and a half to two and a half times more likely than White students to gain admission to university through Clearing.

It seems likely, therefore, that that there exists some ethnic disadvantage built into the process of admitting students, from

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[1]   See Leslie, Abbott and Blackaby, 2003.

[2]   Shiner and Modood (2002).

some minority ethnic groups, at some universities (especially pre-92 ones). This is reinforced by the amount of discretion given to admissions staff in offering places, and also from other studies on student selection criteria.[1]

However, our research with current students failed to provide any direct evidence of this. When first year students were asked their experiences of applying and the admissions process, in a question designed to identify whether or not they had experienced any discrimination of any kind, very few mentioned any (only two said yes, they had experienced some 'racial discrimination', four some religious, and three some age, discrimination). However, it needs to be noted that few will have been interviewed, or had much personal contact in the offer decision making process, and so this is not really a fair indication.

Our interviews did, however, show a range of experiences by individuals of the university and college application and admissions process. Those who applied for a university place from school or college found the process relatively straight-forward on the whole, more so than those who were outside of an educational establishment at the time of applying (*eg* in work, looking after families), who were more likely to find the application process more problematic or more bewildering (though not all of the latter found it difficult). However, this may be more about access to support, rather than any discrimination encountered, as when asked about the support they got, it was teachers, careers tutors and/or family members with experience of the HE system who were mentioned mainly.

There is a need to undertake further research on the offer decision making process, especially by course subject/type at different institutions, to enable firmer conclusions to be drawn here. It is likely that improved monitoring of admissions and student throughput, resulting from the recent race relations legislation, will help in this, especially in assessing the scale of any racial discrimination. Also, the current consultations on key issues, relating to fair admissions to HE (the Schwarz group), will provide a focus for further discussions. It has been suggested, *eg* that withholding names on UCAS forms till after the offer stage may help, but it has not yet been tested out, and may not be practical.

4.5 Summary

Minority ethnic groups have higher participation rates in HE than the White group, but some groups have considerably higher participation than others, in particular Indian and Black African groups. The lowest participation is among female Bangladeshi,

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[1] See *Fair Enough?* study, UUK, 2003.

lower than the White figure (male and female). However, there are some uncertainties lying behind these participation measures. Differences are due to their different prior attainment and pre-HE entry routes and choices and also to a combination of other social, geographical and cultural factors discussed in the previous chapter (see Chapter 3).

The overall HE participation figures mask important differences in the participation pattern of minority ethnic groups in HE study, especially in their relative representation in different institutions, subjects and courses (degree/sub-degree, full-time/part-time). This is not simply an Asian/Black/White split, though certain patterns can be seen that way, but a more complex ethnic group distribution. Some of the patterns of participation are linked to HE entry route, and in particular the attainment levels of different groups, which combine to varying degrees for different minority ethnic groups with other personal factors (*eg* gender, age, geographical location, religion) and also views of other influencers (*eg* views of parents, family, career plans) to produce specific, and somewhat complex, patterns (see Table 4.4 which illustrates this with some contrasting examples combining ethnicity and gender).

There has also been shown to be some disadvantage for minority ethnic groups in the process of admissions at some universities (in the pre-92 sector), which may also affect the institutional distribution of minority ethnic students.

Some of the policy implications arising from the findings in this chapter relate to the work which is currently being done in HE, in relation to the new race relations legislation (*eg* on monitoring admissions) and to HEFCE's Race Equality scheme and

Table 4.4: Selected statistics summarising contrasts between some minority ethnic/gender groups

	Male Indians	Female Black Caribbeans	Male Black Africans	Female Bangladeshis	Male Pakistanis	Female Chinese
Total number of undergraduate students (approx.)	23,000	11,000	12,000	3,000	13,000	5,000
% of total undergraduates	2.2	1.0	1.1	0.3	1.2	0.5
% of total full-time degree students	2.7	0.9	1.2	0.4	1.5	0.6
% of total full-time sub-degree students (mostly HNDs, DipHEs)	2.4	1.6	2.3	0.3	1.8	0.4
% of first degree students taking:						
a) medicine/dentistry	8.4	0.2	0.7	0.7	2.5	1.0
b) business/admin studies	3.6	1.0	0.5	0.5	1.7	1.2
% of each group entering undergraduate courses						
a) aged 21+	20.6	71.3	72.0	23.4	33.3	32.7
b) with 'A' levels	74.0	31.1	32.1	71.5	68.7	62.6

Source: HESA, 2001/2

institutions' own race equality policies. It is important that information on admissions monitoring is made public so that any problems, specifically any of racial bias, are identified, and encourage actions to be taken. We also recommend that further research is undertaken on the offer/acceptance/entry process to explore where opportunities for racial discrimination may occur. Improving processes through more training of admissions and academic staff, and also sharing practice, is also recommended.

The second set of policy implications relate to information and guidance to help make students make good choices. It is important that all students, especially from families without experience of UK HE, are given appropriate help and guidance to make the right choices about which courses to take and which universities and colleges to go to. It is also important that the diversity of the minority ethnic student population, and also the ways they are influenced differently by the factors highlighted in this chapter, is recognised in local projects that aim to help in student decision making.

A third area of policy relates to the new Office for Fair Access (OFFA), which will have a racial equality duty, and therefore needs to include this dimension in its work, for instance when approving access agreements with universities and providing guidance.

A fourth is directed at the Department, and the need to explore further, through statistical analysis work, likely explanations for the different HE participation rates (ethnic/gender HEIPRs). There will be an opportunity to use the soon to be released, more detailed, Census 2001 data to develop an improved estimate of participation rates for different groups, and also undertake some cross-checking of assumptions behind the derived HEIPR figures shown in this report.

5. Student Progress and Experiences

We now move on to the student experience in HE, and the factors which affect the progress of minority ethnic groups of students. We examine the extent to which minority ethnic students have different experiences from White students, and how much these differences can be associated with their ethnicity or other factors. This is made somewhat difficult because, in general, student progress and student perceptions of their time at university have been the subject of less research and analysis than issues of participation (*ie* access and entry) in HE. This is particularly the case for minority ethnic groups, and there is a lack of up-to-date research evidence which differentiates by ethnicity. Much of it is based on small scale qualitative work. However, drawing on that and our own survey of current students, we have aimed to draw out some key points to help establish an evidence base, and inform policy.

5.1 Early leaving and non-completion

Taking a wider context first, the graduation rates of HE students in the UK appear higher than many other countries.[1] Only around one-tenth of full-time first degree students do not continue studying after their first year of study, whilst more than three-quarters are projected to achieve a degree at the institution that they started at.[2]

Most analysis of non-continuation in UK universities shows that the main factor of influence is prior entry qualifications, in particular 'A' level grades. Institutions with greater proportions of students with lower entry qualifications have lower overall retention rates, although the subject and course mix on offer (in addition to other factors such as student age) also contributes (as

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[1] See NAO report, 2002b, based on OECD figures (but caution needed in making comparisons between countries).

[2] These figures are taken from HEFCE PI publications, and relate to students in universities only. It is worth noting that there are a number of difficulties in accurately estimating retention rates. We have not been able to obtain comparable reliable data for other HE students (*ie* at FE colleges, or taking part-time degree or other undergraduate courses).

recognised in calculation of institutions' benchmark PI figures discussed later). Many of the institutions with high early leaving rates are institutions with high representation of minority ethnic students (including many in London).

HEFCE has undertaken systematic analysis of HESA student records, as part of the development of Performance Indicators (PIs). This has considerably improved the statistical evidence on achievement and outcomes, particularly our understanding of the relationships between variables, including ethnicity (though this has been mainly limited to broad, rather than individual, ethnic groups). Some of this work is still in progress and only preliminary results can be presented here.[1] However, this analysis shows that non-continuation figures are higher for Asian and Black than White students, but when allowances are made for differences by subject, entry qualifications, and age (*ie* the usual HEFCE 'benchmark' variables), young minority ethnic students on full-time degree courses appear to do slightly better (continuation-wise) than expected (*ie* have higher benchmark than raw figures), but mature students do less well.

This indicates, therefore, that differences in progress do exist by ethnicity. But it also shows that there are other factors (outside of prior academic attainment), and other variables captured in the HESA student record dataset (both positive and negative), that have an impact on the likelihood of students from different minority ethnic groups completing their degree studies. It is likely that family support and expectations (identified in earlier chapters), have a positive part to play, while negative reasons are those related to academic difficulties, financial pressures or dissatisfaction with choice of course or institution. These were explored in our research.

5.2 Reasons for non-completion of degree study

Wider research on student retention has identified a number of factors that can contribute to non-completion of degree study. The most influential of these are: unmet expectations about the HE experience; making the 'wrong' choice of course; and a lack of commitment to the subject chosen. Other, although apparently lesser, factors include: financial difficulties; poor teaching quality; the feeling of isolation or hostility in academic culture; work demands and personal commitments; and a lack of preparedness for the style of learning in HE.[2] These factors generally work in combination to increase the likelihood of an individual leaving their chosen course. However, this research provides little specific

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[1] HEFCE, Internal paper, (2002).

[2] See Yorke (1999); NAO (2002b); Education and Employment Select Committee Report (2001); and most recently, Davies and Elias, (2003) IER.

information on how these factors affect individuals from different minority ethnic groups, or sub-groups (female/male, mature/ young). What can be seen from it though, is that certain student characteristics are associated with particular reasons for non-completion. Some of these are more significant in some minority ethnic groups than others (see differences in participation patterns, Chapters 2 and 3), and so some implications can be drawn on how they may differentially affect ethnic groups.

- Financial problems are likely to differentially affect older students, and individuals from lower socio-economic class groups, for example.

- Older students, particularly older women, are also more likely to leave due to family commitments or difficulties.

- Younger students more often feel that they have made the wrong choice of course, or that their experience does not live up to expectations, either academically, or in terms of their environment.

- Dissatisfaction with the academic aspects of study (either the standard expected for them, or a lack of study skills) are more likely to be reported by men.[1]

However, these do not provide any real explanation as to why young minority ethnic students do slightly better than expected, and older ones do worse (as indicated above).

Similarly, from the small amount of research literature, which examines the experiences of minority ethnic students separately, a number of points can be taken, but all suggest greater problems for some groups:

- Black students who choose to leave their courses early, appear to experience greater problems in relation to their finances, and in their relationships with both staff and students within HE[2] than other ethnic groups.

- There is a suggestion that the experiences of minority ethnic students can involve more isolation and difficulties in adjusting to life within a group, which has many, considerably different, social backgrounds.

- Another study also found that Black students[3] were more likely to have problems initially in establishing relationships and in getting support from tutors. Also that they were more likely to have confidence issues about coping with their new life within HE, although this was specifically focussed on access students.

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[1] See Yorke (1999); and Davies and Elias, (2003) *(op. cit.)*.

[2] Yorke (1999).

[3] Rosen (1993).

- One small scale study suggests that minority ethnic students are more likely to experience difficulties with the transition between school and HE than White students.[1]

Care needs to be taken in drawing conclusions from these studies, as they are generally based on small samples, or cover only part of the population. Causal relationships between these factors highlighted and non-completion are as yet generally unproven. We believe that there is a likelihood (from the earlier evidence presented) that family expectations and support have a positive effect on minority ethnic students once in HE, especially young students living at home, and we found some evidence to support this in our research, as shown below, though much of the comment was on issues to do with academic support and university life.

5.2.1 Current students: our survey evidence

As part of our research programme, we sought to explore the experiences of first year students (see student survey and interviews, Chapter 1) and some of the difficulties involved in adjusting to university life. A flavour of this is given from these examples:

'I felt a bit alienated by the university, and the course and the teaching were very impersonal.' (Pakistani man, aged 21, first year)

'The first term was below what I expected, you only have time to do one thing at a time, and it all seemed very confusing. It was a bit intimidating to be honest.' (Asian Other man, aged under 21, first year)

'The tutors were quite helpful if you made an appointment with them, but basically there aren't enough tutors to go round all the students.' (Pakistani woman, aged under 21, first year)

However, our research was conducted with current students and therefore does not provide additional evidence of how these problems relate to those who had already left.

But we did explore the extent to which individuals in their second year and above had considered leaving, and the reasons behind this. This showed that there were some, albeit small, differences between ethnic groups, the largest of which was between Indian students (26 per cent of whom had considered leaving early) and Black African students (38 per cent). Overall, Black students were more likely than Asian students to have considered leaving. Further analysis by gender and ethnicity found that male minority ethnic students were more likely than female minority ethnic students to have considered early leaving. Despite this, the groups most likely to have considered leaving were Black African women

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[1]   Adia *et al.*, survey (1996).

(48 per cent), and Black Caribbean men (43 per cent), suggesting that these groups may have experienced particular difficulties. This may be because they were older on average, or may have felt less family/parental pressure or support to stay, than other groups. However, this evidence is based on relatively small numbers and may be a result of some sample bias (the survey data are shown in Appendix Table A8) and we can offer no further explanation for the data. Only tentative conclusions can be drawn. Further research, on a larger sample, would be needed to establish more conclusively if they were particularly disadvantaged, and also the likely reasons behind it.[1]

When all those, who had considered leaving at some stage during their studies, were asked their reasons, these turned out to be varied, and the numbers involved are really too small to analyse sensibly by individual ethnic group. Overall, the main reason given was financial difficulties, followed by academic pressure, and a dislike of the course they were on. Slightly more minority ethnic respondents gave financial reasons and problems with family/childcare.

Our survey evidence, albeit on those who had considered leaving but decided to stay rather than those who left, therefore confirms that a range of factors, both personal and academic-related, usually lie behind decisions to leave courses before completion, many acting in combination, and affecting some minority ethnic groups more than others. It is a multi-faceted decision making process, and as the recent research at IES[2] concluded:

> *'No two situations are the same…Individuals can encounter problems, which makes things difficult for them in their studies, and these lead on to other problems. So for many, a vicious circle develops, and the final decision to leave has been affected by a number of compounding factors.'*

This subject remains one requiring further investigation, and where the evidence base for ethnic groups is inconclusive. In particular, more research is needed on parental positive influences on certain groups of students.

5.3 Difficulties affecting academic performance

The actual achievement of different ethnic groups within HE varies, and this is discussed further in Chapter 6. Here we are focusing on academic performance during studies, particularly in relation to any specific difficulties students encountered during their studies, and whether there are differences by ethnic group.

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[1] Course choices, both level and subject, can be different by gender, and may play a role in addition to personal factors.

[2] Pollard E, Pearson R, Willison R, *Next Choices: Career Choices Beyond University*, IES Report 405.

In our survey, current students were asked to outline any problems or difficulties they had experienced personally, which they felt had affected their performance (*ie* stopped them from doing better than they would have liked or from achieving more in exams/a higher class of degree).[1] Students gave their answers without prompting or the use of a list of pre-coded options, and were free to outline as many difficulties/problems as they felt applied to them. The main ones reported were:

- financial difficulties, again (discussed further in section 5.5)

- problems with balancing part-time working and study (discussed in section 5.5)

- and problems with facilities and getting sufficient support from staff.

Among minority ethnic groups, there were comparatively few incidents of racial discrimination or harassment that came up when this question was asked.

Exploring any differences by ethnic group, more (around three-quarters to more than four-fifths) of each minority ethnic group gave a problem or difficulty of some kind, than White students (just under a quarter). Black Africans were the most likely to have experienced problems, and Indians and Chinese/Asian Other the least likely.

The kinds of problems experienced varied markedly in their relative significance for different groups:

- Fewer Indian students mentioned **part-time working problems** (makes me miss lectures, makes me tired), only six per cent, compared to any other group (mostly 15 per cent or more).

- Indians were also more likely than any other minority ethnic group to find **academic work too hard,** and almost equally likely to report this as to report financial difficulties. This was unlike other groups, where financial difficulties emerged as by far the main type of difficulty reported.

- **Insufficient academic staff support** emerged from the survey as the main problem for Chinese/Asian Other students.

- Pakistani/Bangladeshi students were more likely than other groups to feel that they **did not get enough encouragement from lecturers** (see survey data in Appendix Table A9).

Our qualitative work allowed us to explore further how minority ethnic students felt about their achievements to date. Most of the students were fairly satisfied with the way that they had

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[1] First years were excluded, as they had not yet had their first round of end of year exams.

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performed during their studies, although some felt they could have done a little better. In some cases, students mentioned personal circumstances, such as periods of illness or family problems, as having had a negative influence on their academic performance. Others felt that the disorganised nature of the course (arising from institutional problems) had affected them adversely. A lack of one-to-one support available from personal tutors *etc.* was also highlighted as an issue of concern for some. Complaints included that the lecturers and tutors often seemed to have too many students to deal with, and too little time to give each student adequate time and attention. The extent to which this, and also other negative comments relating to course organisation and quality of teaching, is a particular problem for minority ethnic students is unclear from this data. However, other research (see section 5.2) suggests that some minority groups are less likely to seek support when they experience problems.

A few of the students interviewed also pointed out that there was not always very much mixing between the ethnic groups, people tended to stick with people very similar to themselves. Others said that they themselves found it hard to mix with people from different ethnic or cultural backgrounds. As highlighted above, feelings of isolation in an academic culture is an issue raised in research on retention (see section 5.2):

> *'There is a bit of natural segregation between students by ethnic groups − they all hang out with each other.'* (Pakistani man, aged under 21, first year)

> *'Many of the Asians I come into contact with here are 'down to earth' Asians − more traditional than I am, and they expect me to be as traditional as they are, so that can be difficult.'* (Pakistani woman, aged under 21, first year)

The conclusions we draw from this analysis is that a range of difficulties can form part of a students' experience. Some, such as financial issues, are applicable to all ethnic groups, to a greater or lesser extent, whilst others (*eg* a lack of individuals from the same cultural background) affect minority ethnic groups in particular. However, it would appear that, on the whole, minority ethnic students do experience more difficulties whilst in HE, which can contribute to poorer academic performance, and may affect their degree outcome (as discussed further in Chapter 6) although further work is required to confirm this.

5.4 Student finance

In Chapter 3 we discussed the role of finances in the decision to attend HE. This showed that financial barriers exist, but were not a significantly greater disincentive for minority ethnic than White groups (though the effect of financial factors is likely to vary within groups). The financial situation of being a student has been

given more attention in the light of the changes in student finance, growth in term-time working and concerns about growing student debt. In particular, there are concerns about how finance impacts on the overall student experience. We have already highlighted, above, that financial difficulties were the most frequently mentioned type of problem overall, but that there were differences according to ethnic group. White, Black and Pakistani/Bangladeshi students cited financial difficulties most frequently, more so than Indian or Chinese/Asian Other students. Financial difficulty was particularly a problem area for Black African students, and this group was the most likely to mention this issue as a problem affecting their academic performance.

The ways students finance their studies at university vary by ethnic group. This has been shown by other studies[1] (though the amount of analysis undertaken by ethnicity is limited because of small sample number problems in most cases). Our student survey provided a fuller and more up-to-date perspective. Key points of note are:

- Student loans and other borrowing are less likely to be one of the main sources of income for minority ethnic than White students in aggregate. Minority ethnic students are more likely to get parental contributions, and rely on income from term-time working.

- However, as with much of the analysis in this report, the overall student income pattern is very diverse. It varies between minority ethnic groups — Asian groups in particular are more likely to get parental contributions than White or Black groups, and Black Caribbean groups by far the least likely. This is likely to be partly age-related (younger than the average), and also associated with a greater likelihood of some in Asian groups to be living at home during term-time. There are likely to be differences in the way that individuals get support from their families (*eg* some parents are more committed to supporting their children's education, some may have larger families to support).

- Though the Muslim group of students in our sample were less likely to report a Student Loan being a main source of income than other religious groups, nevertheless almost two-thirds of them did so.

- The extent of being 'in debt' varied also: White students seemed to have accumulated more debt than minority ethnic students as a whole, but the Black Caribbean/Black Other (combined) and White group were the most likely of any individual ethnic group to be in debt. Indians were the least likely. Again, this is likely to be partly age and gender-related (more females than males overall had debt), and is also

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[1] See Callender (2003).

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affected by the different socio-economic profiles of the groups (the Black Caribbean group tends to be older and of a lower socio-economic status), in addition to any direct ethnicity effects.

- Contrary to general expectations, the Muslim group of full-time students were not any less likely to be 'in debt' than other groups, and there was also little difference between first and second generation minority ethnic students.

5.5 Impact of student finance and term time working

In order to improve their financial situation, many students find term-time working an essential part of university life. A link has been shown between those experiencing financial difficulties and term-time working. Women, and particularly minority ethnic women, are more likely to be working during term-time than male students on average are.[1] Several research studies have suggested a negative link between term-time working and academic attainment.[2] On the other hand, studies have shown some positive benefits in students getting work experience and developing work-relevant skills.[3]

The main negative impact of term-time working from other research appears to be on non-specific study time and on time spent doing projects or assignments. Our survey of current students explored this further, by looking at the balance of time between paid work and formal and informal study, offering new analysis by individual ethnic group. This showed that:

- The balance of hours (mean number per week) spent in independent study and paid work varied between minority ethnic groups, more so than the average amount of time in formal study (*ie* lectures/tutorials) per week (Figure 5.1).

- Black full-time students have the longest working week on average (around 45 hours), and spend the most time in paid work (13 hours).

- White and Indian students have the shortest working week (38-39 hours), and spend the least hours in paid work on average (under ten hours).

- Black African students spend the most time in independent study, and Pakistani/Bangladeshi the least.

- However, there are a range of factors which, when analysed alongside ethnicity, appear also to influence the amount of time spent in paid work.

[1] Metcalf (2001).

[2] Van Dyke *et al.* (forthcoming).

[3] Elias *et al.* (1999) *Moving On Survey*.

Figure 5.1: Balance between paid work and study. Mean number of hours per week in each reported activity, by ethnic group
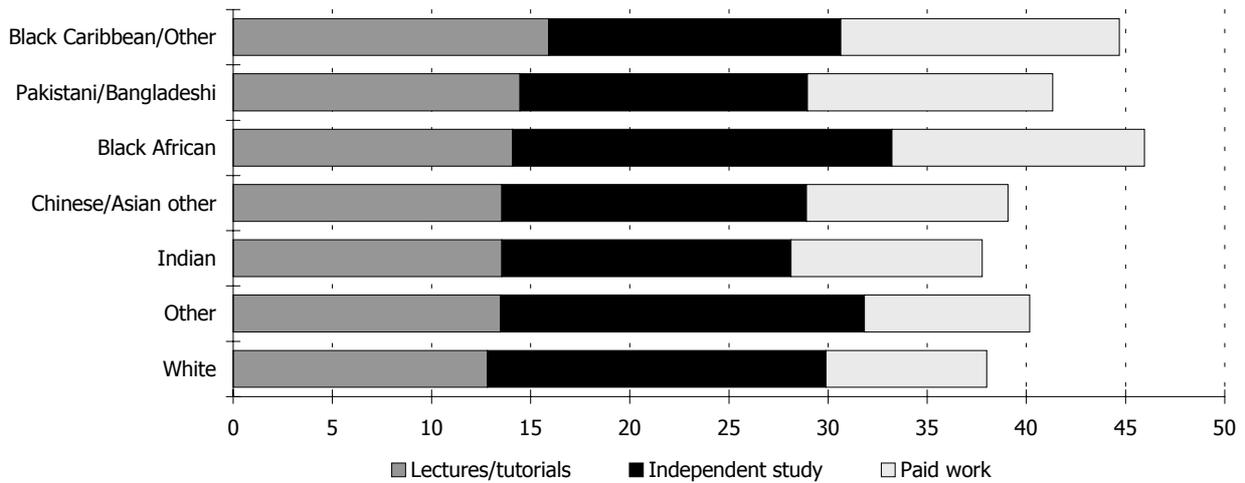
Source: IES/MORI, 2002

Some examples of these variations include:

- **Age**: for most ethnic groups, those in the oldest age group (25 plus) were the least likely to be working, but amongst Indian students this pattern was reversed.

- **Subject**: although the numbers were too small to report, there was considerable variation by subject within minority ethnic groups in how students spend their time. Overall, engineering and technology students had the longest (mean) working week, and, along with business studies students, spent the most time in paid work.

- **Institution type**: students in old universities (pre-92) were much less likely to be working long hours, and there was little difference in the percentages between the White and minority ethnic group working 15 hours or more at these types of institutions (both around 13 per cent). By contrast, the figure was much higher for students at new universities, and a difference opened up between White students (37 per cent working 15 plus hours) and minority ethnic students (55 per cent).

Unfortunately, this analysis is unable to control for differences in socio-economic class of students, which would be expected to be an important explanation. However, despite this, it does show that minority ethnic full-time students in paid work were almost twice as likely to be working for 15 hours or more per week than White students (a level that other studies suggest starts to have a serious effect on academic study).[1] In our case study interviews, part-time working was mentioned as a factor perceived to impact on academic performance, for example.

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[1]   See Dyke *et al.* (forthcoming).

'I probably haven't done that well, I wasn't very motivated in my final year, and this wasn't helped as my employers wouldn't give me time off work in the run up to my exams to revise.' (Black Caribbean/Black other man, aged 21, final year)

Our evidence, therefore, would suggest that if term-time working negatively impacts on academic performance (as the forthcoming research sponsored by UUK and HEFCE indicates overall), some ethnic groups are more likely than others to suffer, due to their greater reliance on this as a source of income. Minority ethnic students are more likely than White students to feel the impact of longer hours in paid work, although it is not clear how much of this could be explained simply by differences in socio-economic profiles.

5.6 Institutional racism

As with entry to HE, it is important to consider the role that institutional attitudes and practices have in the differing experiences of minority ethnic students. A number of studies have highlighted that some ethnic groups can suffer from particular assumptions and behaviour by staff (*eg* stereotypes leading to different treatment, like 'not very bright', 'hardworking' *etc.*[1]). Universities have been given specific responsibilities under the recent Race Relations legislation to develop equality of opportunity policies. It is probably too soon to evaluate how attitudes and practices are changing.

We explored the issue of possible racism or racist attitudes in both the survey of current students and follow-up interview work. Students were more likely to experience discrimination whilst at university than they were at the application stage, although the numbers reporting discrimination of any kind were small. This does not necessarily mean that racial discrimination is less prevalent in the admissions process; the different levels reported may simply be because most students have little personal contact with HE institutions and staff in the admissions process (*eg* few are interviewed). Racial discrimination was more common than other kinds of discrimination (*eg* disability, gender, age) whilst at university or college, but it was still relatively low (seven per cent of the minority ethnic sample reported experiencing any racial discrimination on their course). Black Caribbean/Black Other students (11 per cent) and Indian students (nine per cent) were the most likely to report experience of racial discrimination.

Care needs to be taken in drawing too much from this — ethnic group sample numbers are very small to generalise from. Also we would expect some under-reporting in a survey of this kind, because of the sensitive nature of the issues concerning individuals. Again, as mentioned earlier in Chapter 4, there are

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[1]   See Carter, Fenton and Modood (1999).

likely to be pockets within HE where racial problems are much more of an issue to be tackled, and need to be identified and addressed by the institutions concerned.

When we explored these student experiences in more detail through our in-depth interviewing, experience of direct discrimination by university staff did not emerge as an issue (although these data are based on a relatively small number of interviews). It was more common for experiences to be associated with a lack of cultural diversity amongst the student population and/or racist behaviour amongst students, and amongst people in the towns in which they were situated (all of these instances were outside London). There was also, for some students, a feeling that academic departments could have done more to include everyone (*eg* an example of a cheese and wine party being given was not seen as appropriate for all) and that '*there was no big effort made to get people from different cultural backgrounds to mix*'. Other examples were:

> '*Don't come here – I like multicultural cities and (this location) is White and rich. No one has the same taste as me. I sometimes feel I can't say anything because everyone is laughing at me.*' (Black woman, aged 26, final year)

> '*I'm Muslim – so I don't share in the pubs and clubs culture of a lot of the students – that made it hard. I had to say no to social invitations as I don't drink alcohol… (however, he was able to meet some people with similar religious/cultural beliefs) … we did other things, like playing pool and going to the cinema.*' (Asian Other man, aged under 21, first year)

This raises an important issue about indirect discrimination, particularly within those institutions which lack an obviously culturally diverse population (*ie* many of the pre-92 universities). The low levels of minority ethnic staff in many institutions[1] may contribute to feelings of isolation amongst minority ethnic students. The extent to which cultural diversity is reflected in course syllabuses may also be an issue, and the concept of 'White-centrism' has been identified by researchers[2] as a possible cause of alienation. It has been suggested that minority ethnic students are also less likely to use formal channels of advice if they experience problems.[3] This would suggest that, where they do experience difficulties, with some aspect of their work or social experience, they are less likely to be given impartial advice or to have a clear understanding of the options open to them. This may in turn link back to continuation rates.

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[1] See Carter, Fenton and Modood (1999).

[2] Allen, 1998 (HEIST Survey).

[3] Adia *et al.*, 1996 (HEIST Survey).

5.7 Summary

This chapter has shown that student experiences vary, and that a range of issues can affect them. It is an area where there is relatively little research.

Taking account of a range of personal and background factors which can affect retention in HE, young minority ethnic students do better than expected, and older ones do worse (*ie* more likely to leave before completion). Minority ethnic groups are more likely to be at universities with relatively high dropout rates, but this is because these universities take a wider range of student intakes.

From our survey work, it was evident that minority ethnic students experience a number of difficulties which can have an effect on their progression and performance. However, it was unclear how much they had hindered their progress to date, in comparison to White students in our sample. (In the next chapter we focus more on how they may have affected final degree performance and outcomes). The extent to which minority ethnic students experience specific difficulties can be due to a number of personal factors (especially age, educational background and socio-economic class), in addition to those associated with aspects of their ethnicity. These can have different significances for different ethnic groups. Specific issues identified which concerned minority ethnic students, more than White students, were:

- staff support: lack of, or not as much, as they would like or expected
- isolation/lack of cultural diversity: both lack of staff as role models/mentors and lack of others with similar cultural/economic backgrounds.

There were no negative issues identified in the survey of more significance to White than minority ethnic students. Also no reasons were found to explain satisfactorily why younger minority ethnic students overall appear to do better in terms of progression. The earlier positive influences from their families (seen in earlier chapters) are likely to have continued, especially for those living at home (and more Asian female students live at home), and this may be the explanation. This would need to be confirmed by further research.

Finance is a key variable in the student experience today, and financial difficulties can be a cause of early dropout and poorer than expected performance. We found financial difficulties to be less of a problem for Indian, Chinese and Asian Other groups, but more so for Black Africans.

The ways students finance their studies, and their overall state of financial health, varies by ethnic group. In particular, their reliance on parental contribution, living at home, term-time

working and extent of student debt. Minority ethnic students, and Asian groups especially, are more likely than White students to get parental contributions, have less debt, and be living at home. Female Asian students, in particular, are more likely to live at home while at university. Black students tend to work the longest hours during term-time (in jobs). But, yet again, we see a fairly complex relationship between ethnicity and other variables, especially socio-economic status, which also influence the way students finance their studies. The impact of the proposed new financial support arrangements is likely to vary between ethnic groups, but this will require a relatively large database to explore fully, to take account of all the variables likely to be of significance *eg* by age, socio-economic class, living at home, extent of parental support, and subject (*eg* much higher numbers on long courses like medicine). There is also the attitudes of students towards repaying 'family support' to be considered in future research.

There was some evidence of possible institutional racism encountered by students, where racial awareness and race relations at some universities were poor, though rarely were problems of direct discrimination encountered (*eg* teaching or assessment, as highlighted by other research).

This part of the research has highlighted a number of issues related to student support policies, at sectoral and institutional levels, where ethnicity is likely to be an important dimension (for example in financial support, course completion). It is recommended that further research is undertaken into factors influencing retention for different sub-groups of students, and also on concerns and issues likely to be associated more with minority ethnic students. We also recommend that the impact of changes to student financial support on minority ethnic groups is monitored.

6. Output and Attainment

Here we focus on the output phase of higher education, and discuss the evidence on qualifications gained and the achievements of minority ethnic and White students.

6.1 Qualifications achieved

As shown in the previous chapter, not all who enter HE study, complete and gain their qualification aim (though the vast majority do, only around one in five discontinue studying or switch to another qualification). Of the total of 272,000 qualifiers from English universities with degrees or other undergraduate qualifications in 2001/02, approximately 36,000 were from a minority ethnic group (excluding unknowns), that is a little over 13 per cent.

The minority ethnic qualifiers' data includes just over 28,000 degree students (just over 15 per cent of total) and around 2,000 each of DipHE/CertHE, HND/HNC and other qualifiers (other diplomas and certificates, including professional qualifications). In this sub-degree output, representation of minority ethnic groups was: around 16 per cent among DipHE/CertHE, 21 per cent among HND/HNCs but only nine per cent among other diploma and certificate qualifiers. As Figure 6.1 illustrates:

- Among degree graduates, the 'Asian or Asian British' group account for almost half of the minority ethnic total, with the largest group, Indians, alone accounting for one-third.

- Among HND/HNCs, Asian or Asian British also tend to dominate (53 per cent of the total).

- By contrast, among DipHE/CertHE holders, the Black or Black British group forms the dominant minority ethnic group (almost 58 per cent of the total), and the largest individual group of them is Black African (almost 40 per cent).

- But among other sub-degree qualifications, the minority groups are more evenly represented, though Black or Black British are more numerous than any other group.

To a large extent, these variations are a function of the different subject patterns, and also relationships to particular occupations

Figure 6.1: Main qualifications of qualifiers (undergraduate level) from English universities, 2001/02

Degree N=28,202

HND/HNC N=2,522

DipHE/CertHE N=2,943

other N=2,092

■ Asian/Asian British

■ Black/Black British

□ Chinese or other Asian

▨ mixed/other
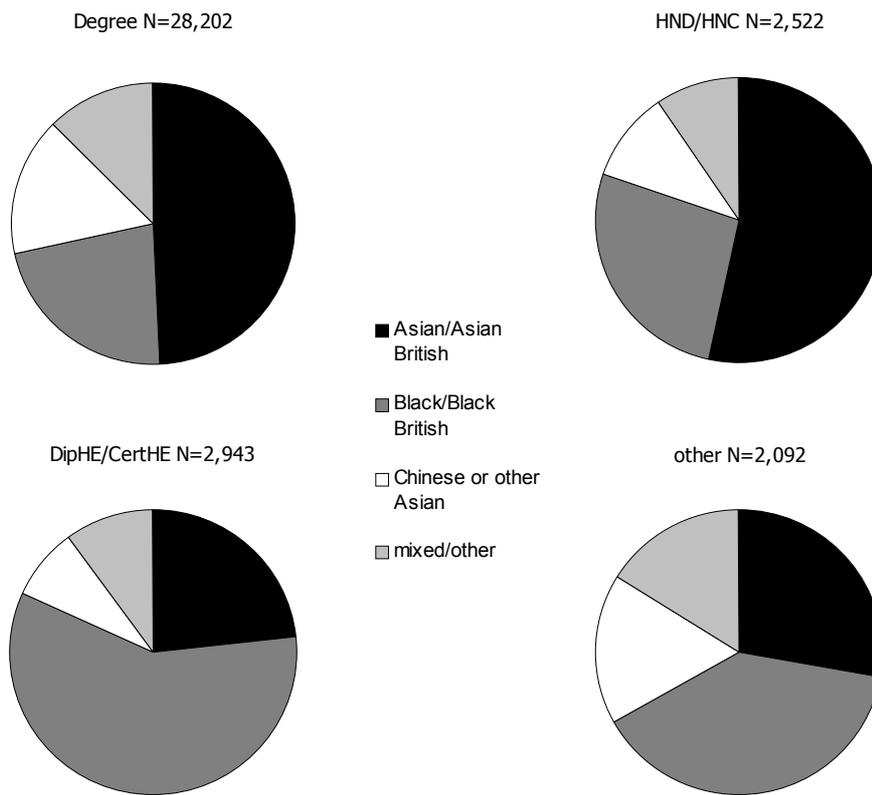
Source: HESA

of the various qualifications (*ie* there is a diversity of purpose in the range of vocational qualifications at undergraduate level.[1] For example, DipHEs are dominated by health-related subjects, especially nursing (which has a high Black African female intake), while in the case of HNDs, the focus is on business studies, IT, engineering and creative art & design (which are more popular with male Asian groups, and especially Indian). These qualifications are mainly taken by full-time study. By contrast, the other diploma and certificate qualifications cover a wide range of professional areas (*eg* management, accountancy, education, social care, hospitality, health occupations), and are mainly taken part-time. As shown earlier (and also in Appendix Table A3), minority ethnic students are much less likely to be taking part-time sub-degree qualifications overall. There is also likely to be gender and age differences, as well as ethnicity, between the various qualifications.

In addition to the output from universities, a total of 67,000 students who were enrolled at level 4/5/HE in FE Colleges 'completed the learning activity according to the qualification aim' in 2001/02 in England. (This is taken from the ILR database and is

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[1]   See Little *et al.*, LSDA, 2004

the nearest we can get to an overall estimate of higher level qualifications awarded at FE colleges, see LSDA report cited above, for further details of data issues across the HEI and FEC sectors). The vast majority were sub-degree qualifiers, taken via a part-time route (only 5,500 degree graduates in this total), but covering a very diverse set of qualifications (HNC, HND, NVQ, professional titles). It is estimated that around 8,000 of these were minority ethnic students, including a very small number (fewer than 1,000) of degree graduates.

6.2 Differences in class of degree

The only statistical indicator of academic achievement available to analyse, other than gaining the qualification itself, is class of degree (nothing further is known about sub-degree qualifiers). This shows that, overall, minority ethnic degree graduates are less likely to gain a first or upper second class of degree than White graduates (Table 6.1). All minority ethnic groups, except the small mixed ethnic group and the Other group, have less than half gaining first or upper second class degree results. Black groups appear to be the least successful in class of degree, with only around a third gaining a first or upper second, compared with 60 per cent of White students and around 45 per cent of Indian and Chinese. The differences are apparent in each class.

This situation has not changed in the last few years (see similar data for 1999/2000 graduates in the Interim report, Table 5.3).

Table 6.1: Class of degree obtained by degree graduates at universities, England, full-time and part-time study, including OU, 2001/02

Ethnic group	First class	Upper second	Lower second, undivided second	Third or lower, unclassified	Total (n)
White	10.7	48.9	31.0	9.4	157,741
All minority ethnic	6.0	36.2	40.1	17.8	28,292
Black Caribbean	2.9	32.0	48.6	16.5	2,016
Black African	3.3	27.5	45.6	23.5	3,275
Black Other	4.7	34.2	43.2	17.9	1,092
Indian	6.6	38.5	38.7	16.2	8,837
Pakistani	4.5	34.5	41.9	19.0	3,813
Bangladeshi	3.7	35.6	42.2	18.5	1,183
Chinese	8.9	37.6	36.1	17.5	2,127
Asian Other	7.2	36.5	34.7	21.5	2,349
Mixed ethnic	9.4	47.0	35.5	8.1	330
Other	8.5	41.5	35.9	14.1	3,270
All (known ethnicity)	10.0	47.0	32.4	10.7	186,033

Source: HESA

However, if only first class degrees are looked at, the achievement gap is smaller: Chinese and the 'mixed ethnic' groups are more likely than other minority ethnic groups to get a first class degree (nine per cent), much closer to the nearly 11 per cent for White students. Indians are also more likely to get a first (nearly seven per cent), compared to the six per cent average.

Overall, female students are more likely to achieve higher classes of degrees, and this also holds true for female minority ethnic students, but the 'achievement' gap for White/minority ethnic students appears wider among female than male graduates: 63 per cent of female White graduates compared to 44 per cent of female minority ethnic graduates achieved firsts or upper seconds, compared with 55 per cent and 40 per cent of White and minority ethnic male graduates respectively. The difference between the male and female sets of figures varies in size between minority ethnic groups, from around three percentage points for Indians to almost eight for Black African and the Asian Other group.

Overall, there are also differences in degree achievement of students by age, which need to be taken into account: younger students are more likely generally to get a higher class of degree. This holds true for both White and minority ethnic groups: 61 per cent of White students aged under 21 years on entry gained a first or upper second class degree, compared with 46 per cent of minority ethnic students, and these figures compare with 54 and 32 per cent respectively for the 21-29 year age group. As those with the lower achievement levels in Table 6.1 (*ie* the Black groups) have an older age profile, and conversely, the Asian groups, have a much younger age profile, then the different ages at entry to HE would seem to help explain some of the ethnic differences. It is also relevant when looking at achievement of first class degrees by younger students in particular ethnic groups, such as Indians and Chinese, who make up a higher proportion of first class graduates in the younger age group, than in all graduates.

Another relevant factor is prior education. The 2002 data on degree outcomes shows that those who entered with traditional qualifications — *ie* 'A' levels or Highers — were more likely to achieve a higher class of degree than those with other qualifications. The way this 'lifts' achievement is more pronounced for minority ethnic than White graduates, and especially the lower achieving Black groups (see Figure 6.2). This relates back to the different entry routes/ qualifications of different groups shown in Chapter 2.

Linked to all these factors are a number of other effects, including choice of subject and course type and institution. We have not been able to undertake analysis by subject and course, as numbers become too small in some subjects, but we have seen differences by university type. Overall, graduates from pre-92 universities are

Figure 6.2: Effect of entry qualifications on class of degree: percentage of degree graduates gaining first or upper second class, 2001/02
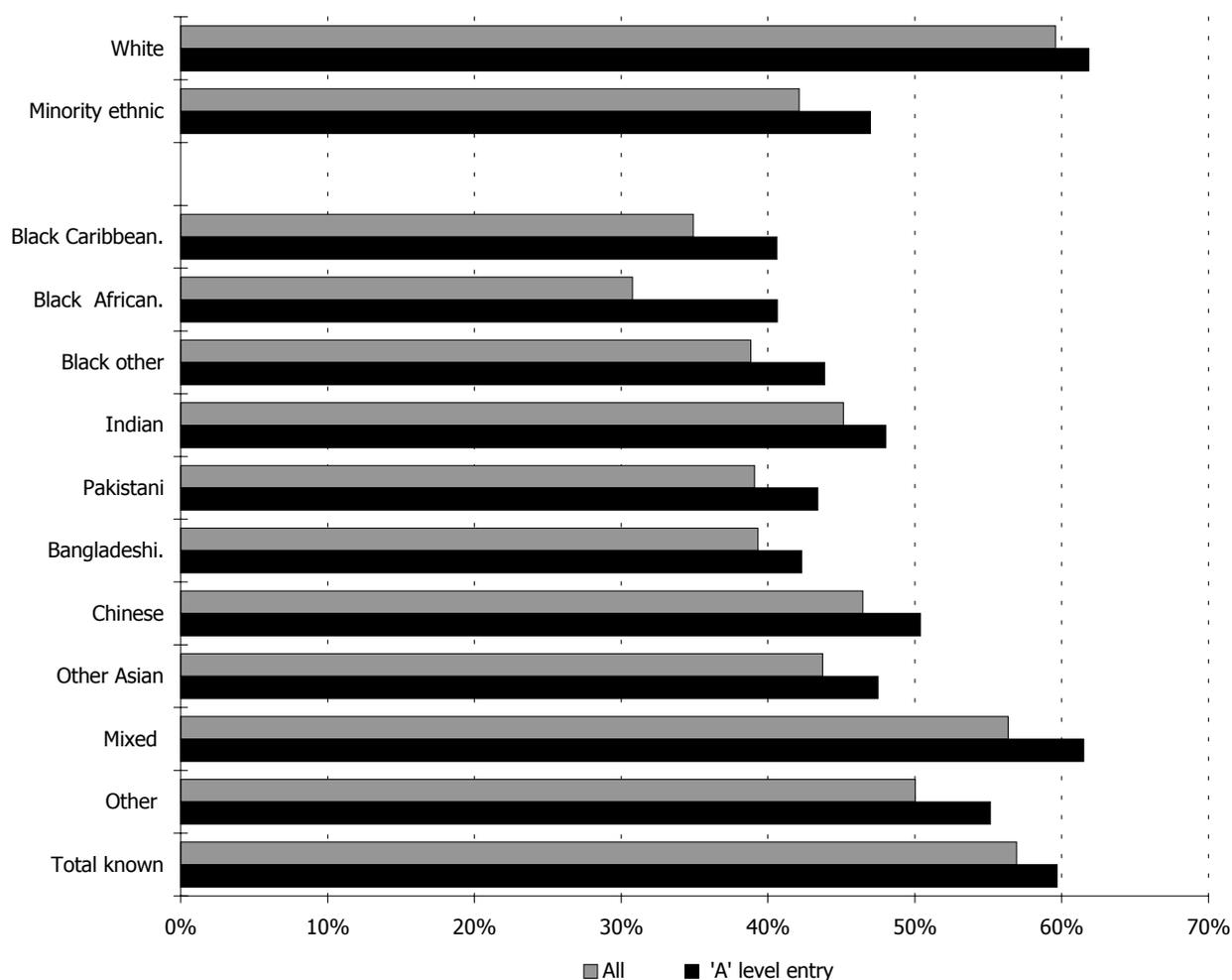
Source: HESA

more likely to gain a first or upper second (67 per cent do) than those at post-92 universities or other colleges of HE (around 50 per cent of graduates). In the pre-92 university total (where a much higher proportion of degree students are young and enter with traditional qualifications, but where minority ethnic groups have below average representation), 69 per cent of White compared to 52 per cent of minority ethnic graduates gained a first or upper second class of degree. But this varied from 44 per cent among Black African and Black Caribbean graduates to 54 and 55 per cent among Indians and Chinese and 61 per cent among the Other group. In the post-92 university group, the difference between White and minority ethnic achievement was 54 per cent and 35 per cent respectively (gaining first or upper seconds).

This analysis has shown, therefore, that much of the apparent relative under-achievement of minority ethnic, compared with White graduates, comes from indirect causes. Many arise from the differences between ethnic groups in their personal characteristics — by age, gender, subject and institutions, and especially, entry

qualifications. It has also shown that some ethnic sub-groups are performing considerably better than others. There are likely to be other explanations of the different degree performance, such as the extent of term-time working, financial and personal circumstances, commitment to their choice of courses and parental support and encouragement. As with the discussion earlier relating to entry to HE, these have multiple effects and interact with each other in different ways for different ethnic groups.

It was not possible, within the remit of this study, to undertake more complex analysis on the data than that shown above (*eg* using multivariate techniques) and it may not be fruitful anyway to do so for some groups because of the small numbers once disaggregated in several dimensions. However, we do recommend that this is looked into further to establish more clearly the effect of ethnicity on achievement and identify which ethnic sub-groups of graduates are performing both or worse than expected.

As far as we are aware no work has been published of this nature, though HEFCE has undertaken some preliminary analysis of degree outcomes by broad ethnic groups (Asians, Black, White, Other). After allowing for age, subject mix, and entry qualifications, it was found that minority ethnic students still significantly under-performed compared to White students. Three possible explanations were put forward for this. Firstly, there could be an effect from other attributes of minority ethnic students (*eg* more likely to re-take 'A' levels); secondly, an effect from attributes of institutions where minority ethnic groups tend to study (*eg* concentrations in institutions with lower than expected good degrees); and thirdly, particular interactions between minority ethnic students and HE (*eg* students choosing particular modules, or systematic discrimination, direct or indirect). HEFCE expect to have a clearer idea when it has developed a model taking into account a wide range of factors.

Earlier research[1] supports the conclusion from our research about differences in prior attainment being a key factor, and also different student experiences, including some institutional racism or lack of racial awareness in some institutions. A number of small studies in the 1990s show up institutional racial issues, such as that focused on medical degrees which found racial bias in assessment[2], and more widely across a London university.[3] It is likely that the situation has improved but we are not aware of any further up-to-date evidence.

Our survey and interviews revealed a small amount of evidence of incidences of racial discrimination or harassment. However, we

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[1]   *Eg* Connor *et al.* (1996).

[2]   McManus *et al.* (1995); Esmail and Dewart (1998).

[3]   Van Dyke (1998).

did not expect much, since there is likely to be a certain amount of under-reporting in a survey of this kind, due to the sensitivity of the subject. Seven per cent of minority ethnic students interviewed felt they had experienced some discrimination or harassment due to their ethnicity during their course, slightly more Indians (nine per cent) and Black Caribbean/Black Other (11 per cent), and this covered students from both universities and colleges. The figure is low, accounting for about one in fourteen of the total, but it is likely to be an underestimate, and seems large enough to warrant concern, especially considering the evidence on under-performance of minority ethnic groups in degrees (shown above).

One aspect of student life, which is suggested as having an increasingly negative effect on academic performance of students, is the extent to which they have term-time jobs. A recent study (but not yet published) sponsored by HEFCE and UUK shows that, overall, students who worked felt pressures on their academic studies, and that minority ethnic students were more likely to work term-time than White students (60 per cent compared to 53 per cent). Among those in our graduate follow-up survey who worked, over half felt it had affected their studies, and Black students, who were the most likely to have worked term-time, were more likely to feel this.

The main ways it had affected their academic studies was on the standard of their course work and feeling too tired to work.

There is not really sufficient evidence from here or other studies to show how much of a negative effect working has on degree class, and for whom in particular (and it also has some positive effects on 'employability' of graduates), but it is an aspect of today's student life which needs to be continued to be monitored and researched.

6.3 Students views on achievements

We have one other indicator of achievement to look at — how students themselves felt about their outcomes. While mostly this relates to the next stage, moving into the labour market and achieving job/career goals (and discussed later in Chapter 7), there are some insights from interviews with students and recent graduates about how they view their achievements.

Students interviewed in their final year were asked about their academic performance and most were satisfied with it, though, as might be expected, there was a feeling from some that they could have done a little better. A range of factors that may have had a negative influence on achievements were mentioned (including some of those discussed above), including personal circumstances (health, family problems), quality of course (disorganised, inconsistent quality of lecturers, not enough personal support

available), study/IT facilities, working part-time and financial problems. For example:

> *'Some of the staff are very good, and you can go and ask for help any time … others have office hours once a week and you need to make an appointment, but they get booked up … have to wait too long, not enough.'* (Black African female, aged under 21)

However, there was no consistent message from our student survey that any group of minority ethnic students felt more disadvantaged than White students, as most of the views expressed were very much part and parcel of university life at many institutions.

The graduates in the follow-up survey were also asked to reflect on their undergraduate education as a whole, and what they valued most from it. The main benefit given was that it helped improve the skills and qualities which employers are seeking (just over one-third of respondents), followed by the social aspects (*eg* meeting new friends, better social network). Again, though, we found very little difference between the main ethnic groups, in the support given to these identified benefits.

Had they achieved what they had hoped for? This is covered more in the next section as the graduates had a firm eye on the labour market by this time, and their experience in finding work tended to affect their views on the benefits of HE study. Interestingly, the extent to which they were satisfied that they made the right choice of HE course and institution in the first place varied between groups. While the majority of White graduates were satisfied with both course and institutions they had chosen to study at (*ie* they would do the same again), this applied to less than one-third of Asian, and less than a quarter of Black, graduates. This suggests greater regret/more wrong choices made, possibly due to greater disillusionment with outcomes to date.

The first follow-up of the 'student choice' study (final year students)[1] also found that ethnicity was a factor in perceptions about 'right/wrong choice', and that Black students were less likely to believe they had made the right choice of institution than White students. And again, two years later, in the second follow-up of this cohort[2], Black students were much less likely than White or other students to feel they had made the right choice of institution or subject.

These different views about outcomes are discussed further in the next chapter.

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[1]   Connor *et al.*, (2001), UUK and IES.

[2]   Pollard *et al.*, (2004), IES Report 405.

6.4 Summary

The graduate output contains a substantial number from the minority ethnic population, almost one in six of the total with degrees from universities (some 28,000 in 2002), plus (8,000) those with DipHE, HND and other qualifications. Representation of minority ethnic groups among HND holders is even higher (one in five, though a much smaller number than degree graduates).

Overall, despite the higher levels of participation in HE compared to White people, minority ethnic students are less likely to achieve as high a class of degree; and Black graduates, and Black Africans in particular, achieve the lowest degree outcomes. This overall situation does not appear to have improved in recent years. However, when various factors, like age and entry qualifications are taken into account, the performance gap reduces. If first class degree achievement only is looked at, the gap between White and minority ethnic students is less than when first and upper second classes are combined, and some — Chinese and 'mixed ethnic' groups in particular — are close to the White graduate position in achieving first class degrees, with Indians and the Asian Other group not far behind.

There is a gender achievement gap (females outperforming males) and this varies between ethnic groups. It appears as a smaller gap for White than minority ethnic graduates as a whole.

A number of other causes of poorer degree performance are likely to be associated with students experiences (discussed in the previous chapter, *eg* term-time working, quality of learning). There is also some race relations issues in institutions (though actually very little evidence found in our student survey, see previous chapter). Family encouragement, and personal commitment to their choice of course, are likely to be influences also. Although most of our students were satisfied with academic outcomes to date, there was a suggestion that some had regretted the choices about HE institution and subject they had made earlier, and these views about 'wrong choice' (though a minority view) were more likely among minority ethnic than White students overall.

The research has indicated a number of areas for further inquiry. Research is needed to provide better evidence of influences on degree performance of particular groups (*eg* young and mature graduates, at different kinds of institutions taking different subjects, with different levels of parental support).

7. Transitions to the Labour Market: Student Perspective

As several research studies have indicated, there are various possible benefits from going on to higher education, but employment and economic benefits tend to be the most important ones to potential HE entrants.[1] In this, and the next chapter, we turn our attention to the final stage of the journey through HE for minority ethnic students — their transition to the labour market — looking at initial employment outcomes and factors of influence. In this chapter, we discuss:

- final year students' attitudes towards jobs and careers, from our student survey and other research

- initial destinations and employment of graduates, drawing mainly off the First Destinations Survey (FDS) of graduates, to give the broad statistical picture

- the factors which influence graduate employability, as shown by our follow-up survey of graduates and interviews (2002 and 2003 output), and other research

- and some views of graduates' future plans (drawing mainly off our graduate survey).

The next chapter provides an employer perspective.

7.1 Context

It is often said that today's graduates are more 'consumerist' towards their university education than earlier generations. Not only are many more likely to go to university for instrumental reasons (*ie* to improve their labour market prospects and/or fulfil career ambitions) but they appear to be less interested in the intellectual content of their course, and more concerned with vocational aspects of studying and their grades, or class of degree and outcomes.[2] Student demand for, and expectation of, higher education are likely to be changing for a number of reasons:

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[1] See for example Connor and Dewson (2001); Callender *et al.*, (2003).

[2] See Rolfe (2001).

- the students themselves are changing (there is a greater participation in HE by people from a wider range of ages and socio-economic backgrounds)

- there is greater emphasis in the curriculum on developing employability and more vocational orientation to some undergraduate study

- there are greater personal costs involved in studying in HE, including higher levels of debt on graduation

- and there are changes in the labour market: continuing high demand for graduates, but jobs taken up by graduates cover a broader range, and earnings and career paths are much more varied than in the past.

As with many aspects of today's HE system, there is considerable diversity in the views and career aspirations of students. Research has found a mixed model of job searching and career aspirations among students. Some have much clearer ideas at the entry stage (*eg* those choosing medicine, engineering or other vocationally-orientated subjects), while others are relatively vague about careers.[1] While at university, students are more likely to work during term-time, but for many this is mainly for economic reasons than to gain specific types of work experience to help with a particular career aim.[2] Also, a significant proportion of final year students delay decisions about job applications until after their final exams or even later, perhaps when degree outcomes are known; while others have made numerous applications by this time. Some engage with employers to help improve their labour market success (*eg* through industrial placements, summer internships, by visiting recruitment fairs); while others pay little attention to improving their employability until the final year or later.[3]

As we have already seen in this report, on the whole minority ethnic students are influenced by 'employment/career' factors more than White students, in decisions to go to HE study in the first place (*eg* getting a qualification for a particular career, helping with career options, see earlier discussion in Chapter 3, and Table 3.1 in particular). Also, traditional professional areas are a more popular subject option for many of them (*eg* law, medicine) (see Figure 4.2). They are more likely to expect economic gains from their HE investment, particularly if from a lower socio-economic group, and these views are shared with their parents in many instances. The perceived employment prospects of certain institutions and courses, while not usually the main reason for minority ethnic students choosing to go to them, tend to be more important as secondary reasons than for White students (as

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[1] See Connor *et al.* (1999).

[2] See Van Dyke, Little and Callender (forthcoming).

[3] See Perryman *et al.* (2003).

confirmed by our potential student survey, see Chapter 4, Table 4.3).[1] However, as has already been pointed out on several occasions, generalisations can be misleading because of the diversity within the minority ethnic student population — diversity between (and within) minority ethnic groups in their subject, institution and course choices, and also diversity in their motivations for taking HE study. It is important to bear in mind in this chapter that, although the expectations of economic gain is strong across all the minority ethnic groups, students of the same ethnic groups often:

- are of different social classes/family economic status
- have different prior attainment
- go to different kinds of universities
- study different subjects
- have different employment destinations on graduation
- have different career goals in mind.

It is also very likely that minority ethnic students' attitudes towards their job search, and making the transition from HE to the labour market, will be influenced by their awareness of the general disadvantage that the minority ethnic population experience in the labour market in comparison with White people (see section 1.5.2). Therefore, there will likely be an expectation of greater difficulties. This was highlighted in a 2001 survey of students and graduates, where one-third of the total sample, but almost twice as many (60 per cent) of the minority ethnic students/graduates, believed that employment prospects for minority ethnic students were less good than for others.[2] Furthermore, ethnicity and educational background were seen as the main contributing factors to barriers to getting a job. Careers advisers at universities also generally acknowledge that minority ethnic students face the hardest time in the job market,[3] though their relative disadvantage is also seen as being connected to class background. As a result, a number of initiatives have been taken at universities, targeted on minority ethnic students, to help improve their prospects (*eg* diversity mentoring, career workshops, work placements, discussed further below).

It is worth noting that disadvantage in the labour market is generally greater for some groups (Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black men and women) than others (*eg* Indian men). It is seen in the much higher unemployment levels[4] among minority ethnic

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[1] Also in earlier research on student choice, see Connor *et al.* (1990).

[2] See Park HR Survey (2001).

[3] See AGCAS/HECSU study (2003).

[4] Summer 2002, *LFS.*

people than White people (12 versus five per cent), and Bangladeshi and Black Africans in particular (21 and 19 per cent respectively). By contrast, Indian men and women have the lowest (six and eight per cent respectively). Also, minority ethnic groups (with the exception of Indian men and Black Caribbean women) tend still to be under-represented among men and women at managerial/professional levels (jobs many graduates will be aiming for). There is a concentration of minority ethnic people working in the services sectors, especially retail and restaurant businesses, rather than industrial firms; and they are also under-represented in large, private sector firms as a whole. There may be a tendency for minority ethnic graduates to focus more on certain sectors because they perceive them to be more ethnically mixed than others.

Having done some general scene setting, we now turn to look at how some of these issues feature in our research findings. We start with final year students, and their job search behaviour and views, and then look at actual graduate employment outcomes.

7.2 Final year students' views

Our survey of final year students lends itself to previous studies, see above, in finding wide variations in the career plans and job search behaviour of final year students. Some of those interviewed were much more ahead (in timing) in their job search activities than others. They were looking for a variety of types of employment, and they were using sources of information about likely jobs/employers/vacancies in a variety of ways. These variations were between, and also within, ethnic groups. In addition, many students were still very undecided about jobs and careers at this stage (just before final exams), and were deferring any decisions until after completion of their degree studies and outcomes known.

The following were particular points arising from the student survey and interviews are that:[1]

● Taking up paid employment was the most popular *intention* of all final year students (in 2002), but it was more likely among most minority ethnic than White students (see Figure 7.1). It was most likely among Chinese/Asian Other groups (almost 80 per cent) and Indian (65 per cent), and least likely among the Pakistani/Bangladeshi group, who, along with the Black African group, were more likely to be planning further study at that stage.

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[1] The survey included face-to-face interviews with 530 final year students, 52 cent of which were from a minority ethnic group, plus some 15 case study interviews, see Chapter 1, section 1.3.2 for more details of survey, and also Appendix B.

Figure 7.1: Student plans after completing course, by ethnicity (full-time final year students)

Legend: ▨ Start/remain in a paid job with an employer ■ Take a year out/travel □ Take a postgraduate course/further study ▨ Other
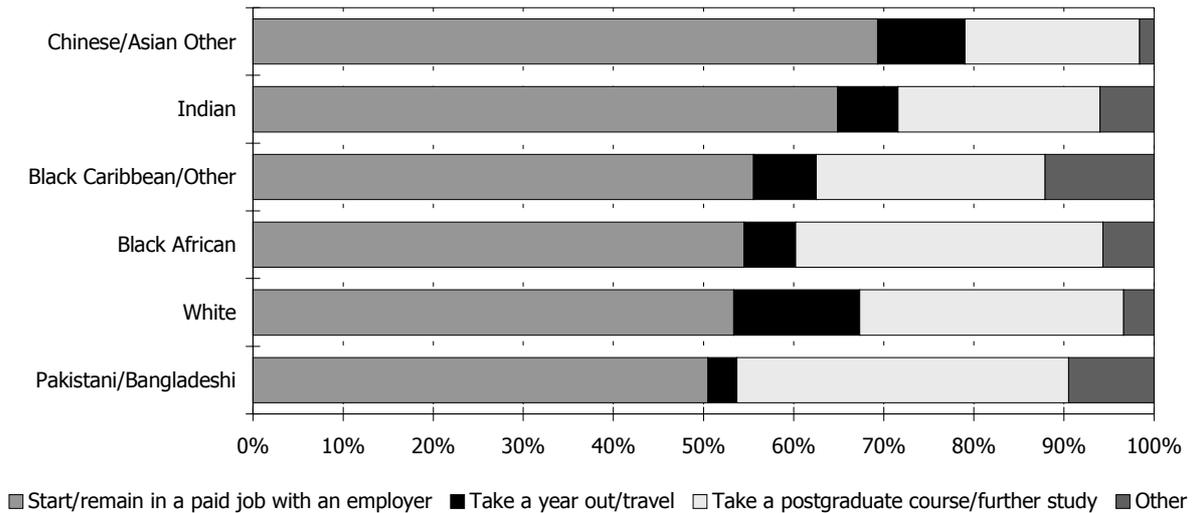
Source: IES/MORI, 2002

- A minority actually had a job offer at this stage (only around one-fifth). Of those who did not, around two-fifths had started seriously looking for a job (*ie* only around one-half of the total sample had either got or sought employment by this stage). Pakistani/Bangladeshi (combined) full-time students were more likely to say that they had secured a job offer by this time than any other group (one-third had, despite them being one of the least likely groups to be intending to take up paid employment). They were more likely than White students or Black Caribbean/Other (just over 20 per cent), or Chinese/Asian Other (13 per cent). But it was the Chinese/Asian Other groups who were more likely to have started looking by then (just over 50 per cent had), followed by the White group (43 per cent). Whereas the Black African, Pakistani/Bangladeshi and Other (non-White) ethnic groups were the least likely (around one-third to one-quarter of each).

This would indicate that even at this early stage, some groups of students were more aware of the need to start their job search before completing their degrees than others, and also of the difficulties they were likely to face in finding a job. The findings also confirm the 'mixed model' of job search behaviour, highlighted above.

Ethnicity is likely to be a factor which impacts on individuals' career intentions and likelihood of engaging in job search activities, there are also relevant other factors which interact with ethnicity in different ways. Subject of degree is likely to be one that causes considerable variation in students' career plans, as other research has indicated. For example, research has shown that a considerably higher proportion of engineering, maths/ computing and business studies (which includes accounting) than other graduates, have intentions in their final year to go directly to jobs on graduation, and are more likely to have a particular job or

Why the Difference?

career in mind[1] (we also found this in our study for maths/IT graduates). Another is gender, which is also subject related; male graduates are more likely to plan to enter jobs than female graduates, who in turn are more likely to choose further study. Type of institution may be a third factor (more large employers have links with certain institutions, mainly the pre-92 group). A fourth is likely to be locality preference, and a London bias in particular; minority ethnic groups in our survey were more likely to be looking locally than nationally for jobs, and Black Africans the most likely (and as seen earlier, see Chapter 4, most likely to be in London area).

Our survey data was not sufficient in size to enable analysis to be undertaken at sub-group level, to help assess the relative significance of these various factors. However, it highlighted the diversity of the final year student population and the way they went about their job search. There are likely to be multiple influences, not operating in isolation from each other (see section 7.4, where we discuss further the influences on employment outcomes).

Another finding of our survey was that most students had already used a variety of information sources to find out about jobs or careers, though again there were considerable variations in which type, and in the number of different sources used. In a multi-response question, the most popular sources overall were IT-based/Internet/webpages (each used by at least half of the final year students). But a majority said they had used a non-IT based source (*eg* friends/family advice, university careers office, careers publications).

Indian students were the most likely ethnic group to have used the Internet to look for company information or organisations' vacancies. While minority ethnic students, as a whole, were equally as likely to have visited the careers office at their university or college, they were less likely to have had an interview with a careers adviser. Again, subject differences between ethnic groups, and also their institutional distributions, are likely to be factors influencing the use of different sources of information.

All in all, the survey evidence indicated that more students these days prefer to take a more independent approach (*eg* using the internet, asking family or friends) than making use of the professional careers advisory facilities provided. However, this varies considerably between students, and some of our interviewees would have welcomed more help from their universities earlier in 'firming up' their career plans, for example:

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[1]   Purcell and Pitcher (1996) study.

'You get to the final year and you don't know what to do – it would have been helpful to get careers information earlier on in our course.'
Black African, male, 25-29 years, final year

Chinese/Asian Other, Black African and Indian students were more likely to prefer to take a more independent approach than other minority ethnic groups. However, it was not certain from the survey evidence whether minority ethnic students in aggregate were more or less likely to prefer this than White students.

There were few examples reported of any direct racial discrimination encountered while job hunting (more by Black Caribbean/Other female students but very small numbers). A small number of students, including more White students, reported some form of age discrimination.

There is some existing research evidence of racial discrimination in the graduate recruitment market, though relatively sparse and not particularly reliable. A survey of students in 2002 (*op. cit.* above) showed that 25 per cent of minority ethnic students felt they had experienced discrimination, compared with 18 per cent overall. Ethnicity and gender were the most common basis for it.[1]

7.3 Initial destinations

Moving on to actual employment outcomes, data from HESA's First Destinations Survey (FDS) of students leaving higher education, shows that initial employment outcomes are poorer overall for minority ethnic (in aggregate) than for White undergraduate students. This applies to each minority ethnic group, but there is variation between minority ethnic groups, and also by gender.[2]

Table 7.1 shows the higher initial unemployment rates for full-time degree students from all minority ethnic groups. The minority ethnic average was just over 11 per cent compared to nearly half of that, just over six per cent, for White graduates.[3]

- Pakistanis had the highest unemployment (almost 14 per cent), but Bangladeshi, Black African and Chinese figures were also high (each 12 per cent)

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[1] This was an online survey and care needs to be taken with results: though large in size, 1,305 sample, it could have attracted a larger number of students to respond who had encountered more employment problems than the average student.

[2] See also Interim report for earlier years data and report by Owen *et al.* (2000).

[3] These figures cover home full-time degree students only, leaving English HEIs, 2001/02.

Why the Difference?

Table 7.1: First destinations of full-time degree (home domiciled) graduates from English universities, 2001/02 (percentages are based on known destinations)

	UK paid work	Overseas work	UK self-employed	Study or training	Unemployed	Other	Not available for employment or training	Total number
White	63.4	2.2	1.6	17.4	6.1	2.8	6.5	118,069
All minority ethnic groups	55.3	1.0	1.1	22.4	11.1	4.2	5.1	19,851
Black Caribbean	63.8	0.4	1.3	14.3	9.8	4.8	5.7	1,200
Black African	54.3	0.4	1.2	21.6	12.2	5.9	4.4	1,950
Black Other	60.1	1.5	1.5	17.4	10.8	3.3	5.4	666
Indian	58.9	0.5	0.7	22.5	10.2	3.3	3.9	6,762
Pakistani	51.5	0.4	1.4	24.0	13.9	3.8	5.1	2,722
Bangladeshi	53.0	0.2	0.6	23.2	12.4	4.4	6.1	862
Chinese	47.7	2.8	1.1	26.7	11.6	5.1	5.1	1,485
Asian Other	52.7	1.2	1.5	23.9	9.7	4.8	6.1	1,631
Mixed ethnic	46.7	2.9	2.9	26.4	8.3	5.4	7.4	242
Other	52.6	2.3	1.7	21.6	10.3	4.4	7.1	2,331
All (known ethnicity)	62.2	2.0	1.5	18.1	6.9	3.0	6.3	137,920

Source: HESA (FDS)

- higher percentages of White than minority ethnic degree graduates in aggregate enter UK paid work (63 versus 55 per cent), but Black Caribbean graduates are the most likely group to do so (64 per cent)

- higher percentages of minority ethnic than White degree graduates go on to further training or study (22 versus 17 per cent), and highest of all is the Chinese (27 per cent) and mixed ethnic groups (26 per cent)

- there are very low percentages of self-employment (under two per cent), but slightly higher percentages for White than minority ethnic degree graduates (which is the opposite of the situation in the general working population).

An alternative way of looking at successful degree outcomes is to calculate a ratio of the total in employment, or further study, to the total of those likely to be seeking employment or training for each ethnic group.[1] This shows that the Black African group have

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[1] There is some debate as to whether 'further study' is a successful outcome of a first degree course but as it is included as one of HEFCE's Performance Indicators for institutions, it is included here.

Figure 7.2: Labour market success indicator: male and female full-time first degree graduates from English universities, by ethnicity, 2001/02
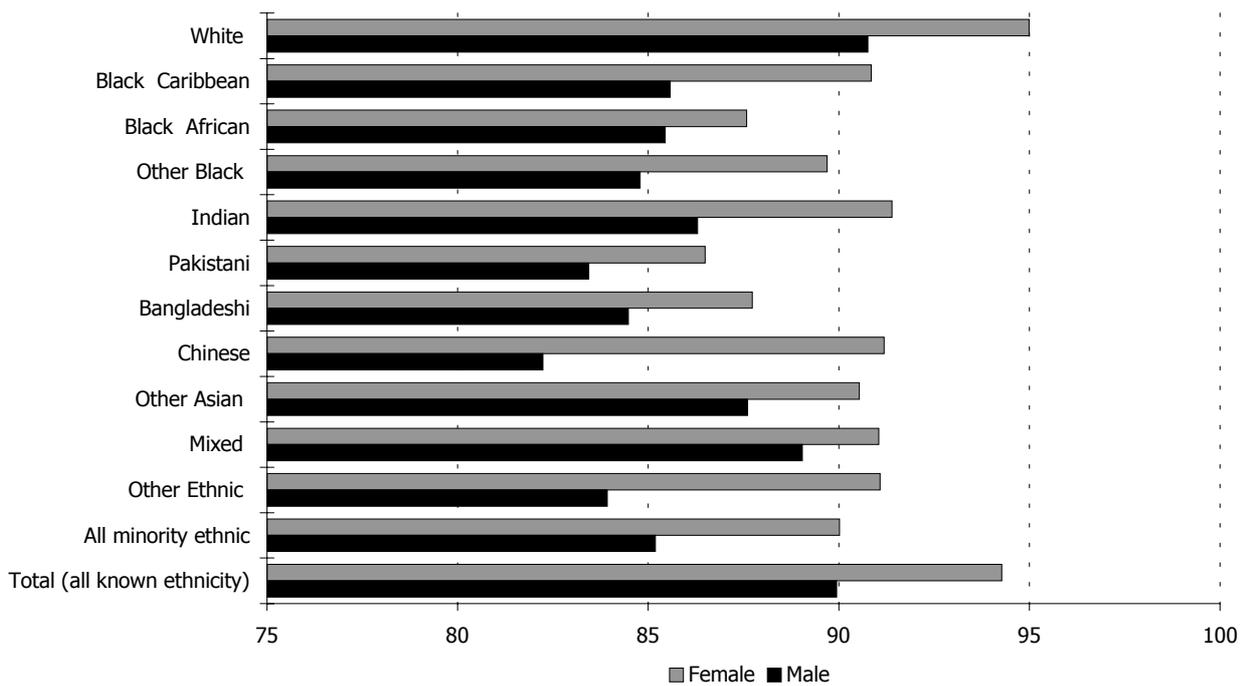
Indicator = 100x (employed + study)/(employed + study + unemployed)

Source: HESA (FDS)

the least success (a 'score' of 84.3) and Indian, Black Caribbean, Black Other and Other ethnic groups the most (90-91 per cent range). These compare with a 94 per cent score for White graduates, and an aggregate minority ethnic score of 88.8.

Female minority ethnic degree graduates have more success than their male counterparts and they score better for all ethnic groups, but not as highly as female White students (see Figure 7.2). Also, looking at the unemployment rates, there are higher unemployment rates for male than female minority ethnic degree graduates (almost 14 per cent versus nine per cent). A similar gap is seen among White degree graduates (eight versus 4.5 per cent). The highest unemployment of all was among male Chinese and Pakistani (each nearly 16 per cent), while the lowest was female White and female Chinese (eight per cent) (see Appendix Table A10 for more details).

Although little gender difference is apparent in the proportions of minority ethnic degree graduates, as a whole, who go on to further study, the pattern is more varied by individual ethnic group. Higher percentages of male than female Chinese, Bangladeshi, Black African and mixed ethnic groups go on to further study or training, but in other minority groups (and White) there are higher percentages of female than male.

The FDS has been used here to highlight ethnic differences because it provides the best source of evidence for our purposes. It

covers a very high proportion of all undergraduate students completing full-time study (over 80 per cent) and has a very low ethnicity non-disclosure (less than five per cent). Thus, it allows more reliable analysis at a disaggregated level (by individual ethnic group and other variables), than our follow-up survey of graduates could do, which is based only on a small sample. Most sample surveys of graduates provide too little data on minority ethnic groups to allow any detailed analysis (such as the *Moving On* research).[1] However, the timing of the FDS is just six months after most students obtain their qualifications (recording date in early January), so it is still only a 'snapshot' of the initial employment situation; many do not start looking for employment until after obtaining their qualification and so take longer than six months to settle into a career of their choice. Therefore, surveys that take a longer-term view, like the *Moving on* studies, are of more value here. Another drawback to the FDS is that it is limited in the amount of information it provides about jobs and only covers graduates from full-time study at HE institutions (though it is being extended this year to include part-time study). There are no available statistics on part-time students' employment outcomes, but anecdotal evidence suggests that many are likely to stay working with their existing employers, while some of those on part-time sub-degree programmes transfer to degree study.

7.4 Factors of influence on degree graduate outcomes

NB The data analysed in this section relate to students obtaining degree qualifications. (For discussion on students obtaining sub-degree qualifications see section 7.5).

It is not possible to make direct comparisons over time for different minority ethnic groups because of changes to the ethnicity classifications in 2002, but the overall pattern indicated above has been around for some time. However, overall graduate prospects have got slightly worse in the last year or two; unemployment is on the increase again, and the percentage in paid UK work has gone down slightly. Also, slightly more degree graduates are going into study or training this year than last year.

There also appears to have been a change in the 'worse off' minority ethnic groups. Previously (*ie* in late 1990s), the unemployment rate for the Black African group was higher than for the Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups, but in 2002, their positions were reversed. This may be simply due to the classification change, or due to a real change in their labour market prospects. If the latter, this may relate to their subject distribution, for it is noticeable that different subject choices for

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[1] Elias P *et al.* (1999) *Moving on: Graduate Careers Three Years after Graduation.* Higher Education Careers Services Unit.

male and female minority ethnic students produce different employment outcomes, for example:

- unemployment is considerably higher overall (at 14.2 per cent) for all degree graduates from computer science, followed by engineering and technology (ten per cent), and lowest (virtually zero) for medicine/dentistry graduates, and subjects allied to medicine (two per cent)

- the unemployment figures in every subject are higher for minority ethnic than White degree graduates, and the gap is wide both in subjects with high unemployment rates overall *eg* engineering and technology (nearly 17 per cent versus eight per cent), computer science (19 versus 12 per cent), as well as those with relatively low unemployment rates *eg* subjects allied to medicine (five versus two per cent) and law (six versus three per cent).

Additionally (see Table A11 for unemployment rates for each subject), the unemployment rates vary considerably between individual minority ethnic groups by subject.[1] Substantially higher unemployment is found among Black African and Asian Other graduates who have taken librarian and information science (which includes media studies). Also, very high unemployment rates are evident for Pakistani graduates from computer science and engineering (both 21 per cent); it is even higher for Black Caribbean engineering graduates (26 per cent), and also high for Bangladeshi engineering graduates (22 per cent), and Black Other computer science graduates (23 per cent), but numbers are much smaller there.

It is possible that these ethnic groups with very high unemployment rates have been affected disproportionately by downturns in demand in the sectors which recruit them — the IT, software and electronics sectors during 2002 is a case in point. Computer science and engineering are popular subjects with male Pakistanis in particular (see earlier, Chapter 4).

It is also noticeable that unemployment generally is lower among graduates with higher classes of degree, and so the lower degree performance of minority ethnic students (highlighted in the previous chapter) may be having an important effect on their labour market success. As shown earlier, all minority ethnic groups have a lower average class of degree than White graduates, and Black groups, especially Black Africans, have the lowest. If outcomes of first or upper second class minority ethnic graduates are looked at separately, the unemployment rate is lower than for all graduates, but still twice as high among the minority ethnic overall, (ten per cent versus five per cent for

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[1] In some cases care needs to be taken with subject comparisons because numbers are relatively small, and it may be that differences are an effect of a particular course or locality.

White graduates) (see Figure 7.3). Class of degree appears to have a mitigating effect on most ethnic groups, with the exception of Bangladeshi and Asian Other groups where it is the other way round, higher unemployment among those with higher than lower classes of degrees. Having a higher class of degree is more beneficial to Black and Pakistani graduates than Indian graduates. Thus, it would seem that having a higher degree class can reduce the likelihood of being unemployed at the sixth month stage, but it makes only a relatively small difference in closing the gap between the White and minority ethnic groups in aggregate.

There are clearly other factors likely to have an influence on degree graduate outcomes generally (but which we have not been able to analyse further in the FDS data for minority ethnic groups in particular). These are type of institution attended, age, entry qualification to degree course, entry route and socio-economic background, which along with subject and class of degree, have been confirmed by HEFCE in its work on developing Performance Measures to be associated with employment outcomes. However, allowing for these effects does not explain fully the difference in employment outcomes of different ethnic groups of graduates, and in some cases the underlying differences are greater than observed when these factors are not taken into account.

Other work, for example by Brennan *et al.*, using an earlier dataset, the 1995 FDS, to match with other survey data, also found that education and social background effects played a major role in explaining ethnic differences in unemployment rates. In that analysis, White and minority ethnic degree graduates with similar educational and socio-demographic characteristics were compared, and the latter were found to be disadvantaged. This relative disadvantage varied between subjects, other things being equal, and there were also gender/ethnic differences within subjects. The Brennan study suggested that other student life factors can also influence degree graduate outcomes generally (*eg* work experience and term-time working, extra-curricular activities, job search activities). However, they had insufficient evidence in their data on ethnic minority groups to test how significant they were for explaining ethnic differences. Recent research commissioned at a multi-ethnic university, London Metropolitan, has been exploring likely barriers to taking up work placements (where optional on courses). Initial findings suggest take up is low among non-traditional students, but that experience and skills gained in periods of work experience are valued generally as an aid to accessing employment on graduation. Another set of factors relates to the employer graduate recruitment policies and their selection processes (see Chapter 8).

Figure 7.3: Unemployment rates (%) for graduates with 1st or 2.1 degree class, compared with all graduates (fulltime first degree graduates from English universities, by ethnicity, 2001/02)
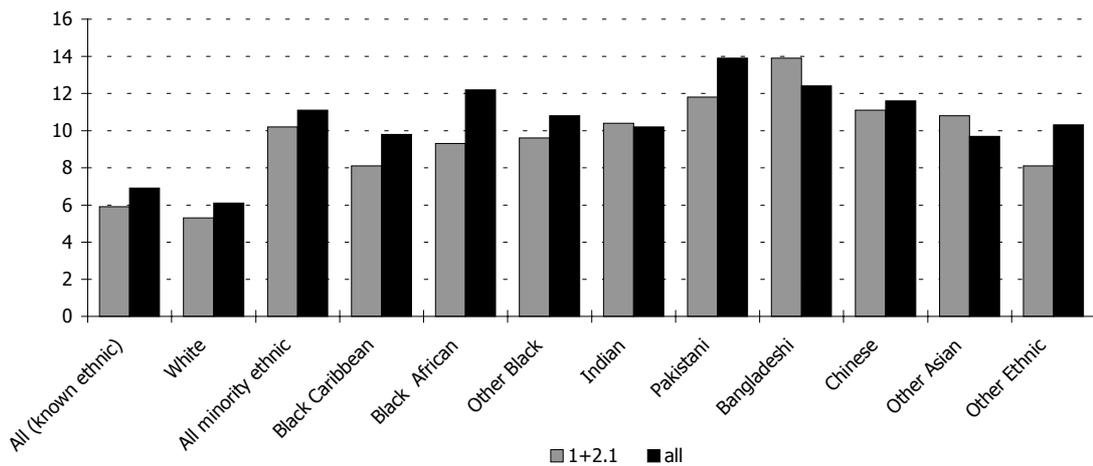
Our follow-up survey of students interviewed earlier during their studies , though relatively small in size (101, half of which were from a minority ethnic background), shed some further light on the varying experiences in finding a suitable job after graduation.[1] It also supported points made earlier on job search activities (relating to final year students). It showed that some minority ethnic graduates were having more difficulties than others in finding employment after graduation, but that a range of factors in addition to ethnicity were likely to be affecting individuals. In particular, work experience emerged as an important factor in getting a job after graduation, as did specific skills learned in higher education, and in both cases especially by Asian rather than Black graduates. It also supported other (including more anecdotal) evidence that Asian graduates find it easier on the whole to find jobs than Black graduates, though less easy than White graduates (the data are not sufficient to enable a more detailed breakdown). Minority ethnic graduates were more likely than White graduates to be unemployed for a longer period during the first year after completion, and Black graduates more so than Asian graduates.

Although respondents in our survey with a job at the three months stage after qualifying were more likely to have been more active in finding work (*eg* more likely to take advice from family/ friends, looked at careers information websites, and used their university careers office), these kinds of activities were more likely to have been undertaken by White than minority ethnic graduates who were in work by the three months stage.

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[1] The vast majority of our sample had obtained a degree (88 per cent), but the 13 students with other qualifications are included in the 'graduate' totals in the survey.

Why the Difference?

Many in our survey got some work experience, though not necessarily relevant work experience, through term-time working. Half of the students we followed up who had experienced term-time working felt that it had adversely affected their studies, and Black students were more likely to feel that it had (and they were more likely to have worked, and worked the longest hours). In most cases this had a negative impact on exam performance, or left them feeling lacking in energy. But the majority of those who had worked during term-time also had felt benefits, in terms of work experience, and this was more likely among the Black group. The main benefits were that they had gained interpersonal skills, self-confidence and specific work experiences.

However, although there were more difficulties overall in finding jobs, minority ethnic graduates in work were more likely to be earning more than White graduates one year on; Asian graduates were more likely than White graduates to be in £15,000 plus bracket, who were more likely to be in this bracket than Black graduates (84, 40 and 32 per cent respectively). This is in contrast to young people generally in the labour market where minority ethnic groups, especially Pakistani and Bangladeshi, and also Black groups are worse off economically.[1] However, these findings from our survey on graduate earnings need to be treated with care as they come from a very small sample, and other research, though also based on small samples, suggest minority ethnic graduates are not paid as much as White graduates. Earnings between ethnic graduate groups are difficult to compare for a number of reasons, but especially because of their concentrations in London where pay rates can differ from the rest of the country.

We do not have a satisfactory explanation from the survey data as to why the minority ethnic graduates were more likely to experience initial difficulties in the labour market and longer unemployment but, one year on, they were more likely to be in jobs with higher salaries. It may be simply a function of the sample composition (*ie* it was not a representative sample). But as shown below (section 7.6) the FDS data also shows that for those who enter paid work, more minority ethnic than White graduates are in the highest level jobs (professional/managerial groups), though there is no salary data available from this source. It could be a feature of them taking longer to make successful transitions and waiting longer to secure a better job, or more a feature of their different subject distributions (*eg* more in high paying jobs as doctors, IT, financial services jobs), or simply because there are a lot more in the London area, whereas earnings on average are higher.

On the whole, the graduates we surveyed were not seriously in debt; only around a third said they were very overdrawn/in debt,

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[1]   See Berthoud (1999).

with most of the rest slightly or rarely in debt, and a quarter not in debt at all. Asians were less likely to have debt, and Black graduates almost equally likely as White graduates. However, the small size of the sample, means that these findings are indicative only, and care needs to be taken in drawing firm conclusions from this data. Some of the points though were also echoed in the interviews, where most had found the job market more competitive than they had expected, and were generally disappointed with their experiences. For example:

> *'There are too few vacancies for graduates of my calibre and far too many graduates trying to fill them … employers think they can offer less 'package' simply because of the greater supply of graduates in the last few years, and they get away with it …'.* (Indian female, 2.1 maths and statistics degree, 2003 graduate)

> *'Early days … keen to hold out for 'right' job but do not want to place too much of a financial burden on my parents … most engineering firms want graduates with some relevant experience.'* (Asian British male, 2.2 MEng, 2003 graduate)

Others felt that employers were not fully aware of the variations in degree content and capability of graduates. Negative comment about selection tests, and the time needed to prepare for them came up (see more discussion on the selection practices of employers in next chapter). Few felt they had been discriminated against because of their race or ethnic group, it was more that they felt they had not been selected because of employers' lack of understanding of the different degree courses and qualifications for entry to university (not 'A' levels), or due to some problems in the selection method (*eg* specific written tests).

From the evidence presented, both from our survey and other research, it is clearly not possible to assess the relative importance of all the various factors compared to any direct effects associated with their ethnicity. It is likely to be a complex interaction between the known variables of influence, relating to student characteristics, degree choices *etc.* (shown by the HEFCE analysis) and job search attitude and experiences, and also external environmental factors (in particular employer attitudes). This would require a much bigger set of data than we had to unravel here. It is unlikely that this can be achieved only from further analysis of the FDS, but in combination with other work. More in-depth focus on particular groups and various sub-sets of them, would be useful to resolve some specific queries in the evidence we have shown. For example, why do the Chinese groups, who seem to do best of all in degree performance, do much less well in the labour market?

7.5 HND and DipHE qualifiers

It is important to look if possible at destinations of degree graduates separately from those of sub-degree qualifiers (*ie* HND

and DipHE holders) because their initial destinations patterns are very different. For some on sub-degrees, it is a training route into a particular career (*eg* nursing). For others it can be a stepping stone to taking a degree (*eg* business studies, IT). Overall, just over one-third (36 per cent) of the 2002 HND/DipHE qualifiers from HE Institutions (with a known destination) went on to further study or training, but this was much higher for minority ethnic students (50 per cent), and highest of all for Indians (70 per cent). By contrast, only a quarter of Black Africans went on to further study, being much more likely than others to enter UK paid work.

The destination pattern of sub-degree qualifiers is more strongly subject driven than for degree graduates. One illustration of this is the high proportion of Black Africans in DipHE study, many on nursing diplomas going straight into nursing jobs on completion; another is the higher likelihood of Asians than other minority ethnic groups taking HNDs in business, IT or other subjects where the dominant pattern is to progress on to a degree course. Further details of the destinations pattern of sub-degree qualifiers are shown in Appendix Table A12.

7.6 Initial jobs of degree graduates

Because of general high demand for graduates these days, it is relatively easy for most graduates to get a job, as seen by the relatively low unemployment rates in general, though as we have seen, this does not apply to some minority ethnic groups as a whole. For many graduates their initial jobs are of a temporary nature (some in jobs where their degree is not particularly relevant) to help get some immediate income to live reasonably well or pay off debts, or to get some work experience. So it is the nature of the actual job and the suitability or appropriateness of the work which is a key issue. The notion of employment success for graduates today can be complex, bringing in aspects of:

● job level (is it a graduate job?)

● salary (is it a well-paid job?)

● satisfaction and expectations (is it what they were seeking?)

● and development and career prospects (where is it leading?).

Also, there are many different types of early career paths taken by graduates, as research surveys of graduates' early career progress have shown,[1] with some graduates spending time in postgraduate study first, while others take a series of short-term fill-in jobs or time off to travel, taking a longer time to make the transition from HE and settle into the labour market. Employers recruit graduates today for different purposes, and only a proportion of the total

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[1]   See Connor and Pollard (1996); Purcell *et al.* (1999); Elias *et al.* (1999).

output are recruited straight away into graduate entry jobs or graduate development programmes.

7.6.1 Types of employment

The FDS, which is the best source of data on current graduate outcomes, shows that:

- The vast majority of degree graduates go into full-time rather than part-time jobs, but minority ethnic graduates in aggregate are slightly more likely to take part-time jobs than White graduates, (13 per cent versus nine per cent of 2001/02 output). However, part-time work is a more likely outcome for employed Black Caribbean and Bangladeshi graduates (18 and 22 per cent), and more likely among women. This may relate to higher early childbirth among these groups, though this would also apply to Pakistani young women. Finding suitable childcare may be a restricting factor on taking full-time work.

- Slightly more minority ethnic (46 per cent) than White graduates (just under 43 per cent) who enter employment take up professional or managerial jobs (*ie* in either SOC I and II). Highest percentages of all in higher level occupations are Pakistani graduates (50 per cent) and Asian Other (52 per cent), while lowest are Black Caribbean and Black Other (both 39 per cent). The Brennan *et al.* study, cited earlier, using 'graduate' versus non-graduate' job categories, also found that minority ethnic graduates were more likely to be in better jobs, and these differences were shown to be significant, when other differences (by age, subjects *etc.*) could be taken account of in the analysis.

- But, going back to the FDS, if the top three SOC groups are taken together (*ie* including Group III, Associate Professional jobs also), little difference between White and minority ethnic graduates overall can be seen (both around 65 per cent in SOC I to III). However, Indians, Asian Other and Chinese are more likely to be in the top three SOC groups, and Bangladeshi graduates the least likely (Figure 7.4).

- Then looking at sector of job, again there is considerable variation. Minority ethnic graduates are less likely than White graduates to be employed in the manufacturing and other industrial, education, or community, social and personal services sectors, but more likely to be in the financial, retail/wholesale trade and health and social work sectors (see Figure 7.5). Asians, and especially Indians, are more likely to be employed in the financial sector than Black groups. Black groups are more likely to be in public admin sectors than Indian or Chinese groups, but are similar in this respect to Bangladeshis.

Figure 7.4: Level of job: percentage of first degree graduates from English universities going into each occupational grouping (SOC), by ethnicity, 2001/02
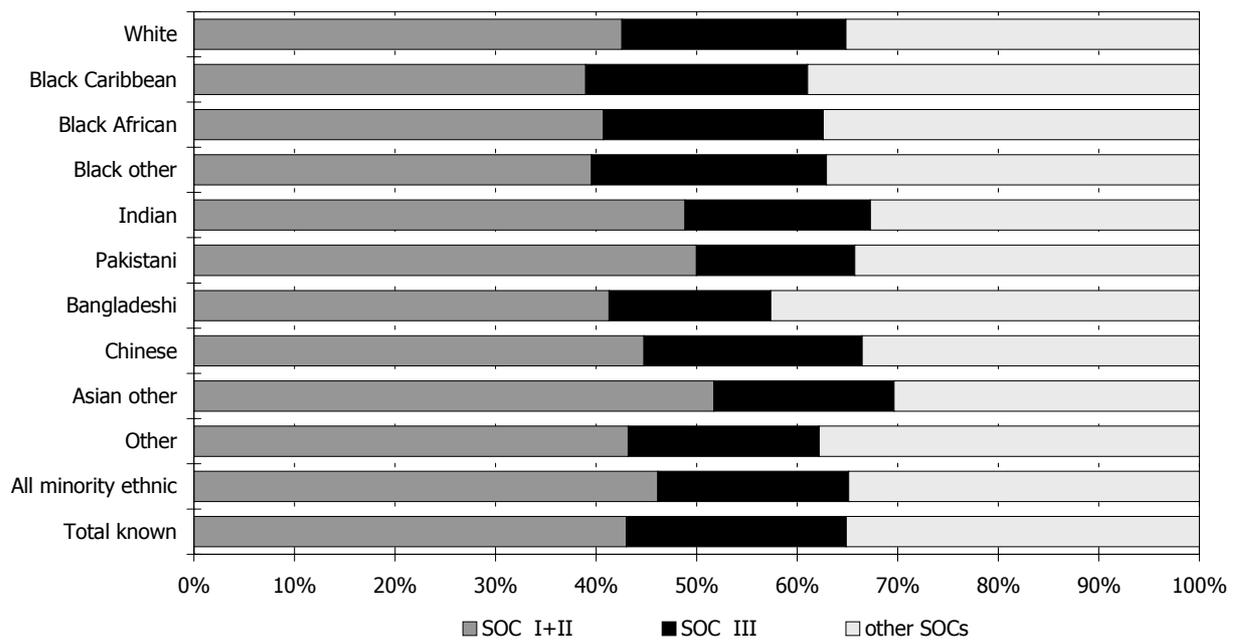
Source: FDS/HESA, 2002

Figure 7.5: Sector of employment: distribution of minority ethnic and White graduates between sectors, (first degree graduates from English universities), 2001/02
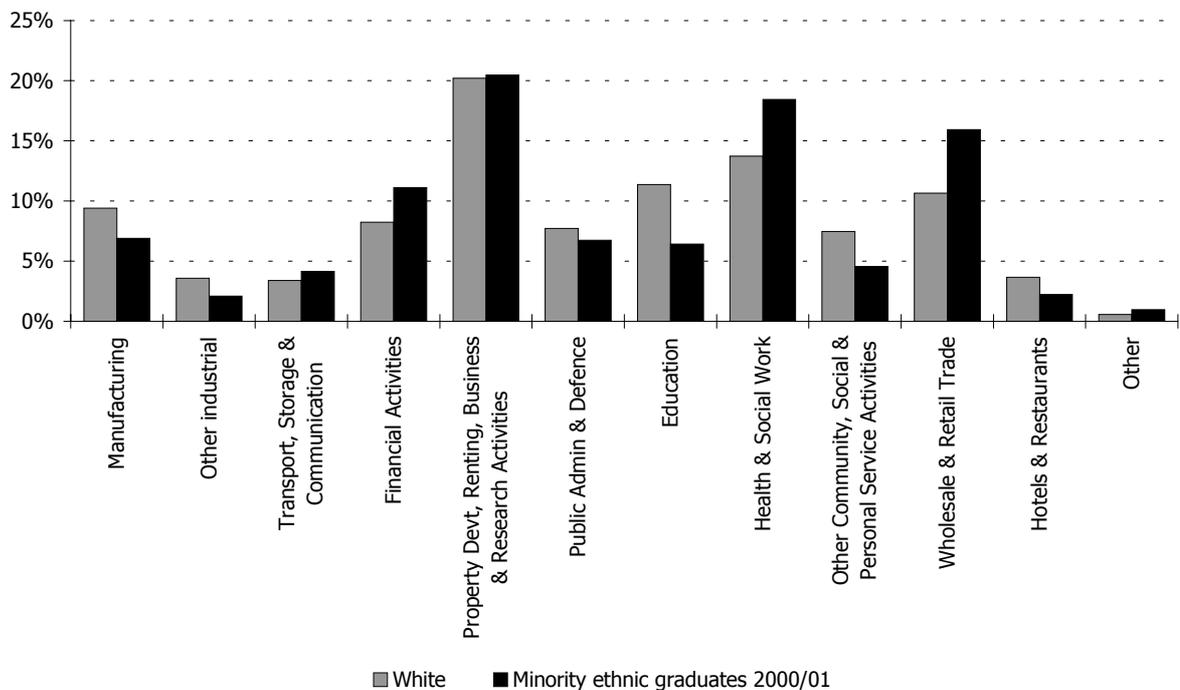
Source: FDS/HESA

7.6.2 Satisfaction with job

The small graduate follow-up survey and interviews with individuals gives some insights into job satisfaction one year on, but did not provide any clear patterns by ethnicity. Overall, just over two-thirds were very or fairly satisfied with their present job, and the differences between the minority ethnic groups were fairly small ones. Those not satisfied tended to feel they were not using their skills or qualifications sufficiently:

> *'Very bad pay, its not my field, my qualifications are wasted.'* Black female, aged 28, 3rd class degree, biological sciences, from a post-92 university

> *'Everything (dissatisfied with) ... its not the job I wanted, I had no choice, I need money to pay rent.'* Black male, aged 24, with a 2:2 degree in Law, from a post-92 university

A range of views was expressed as to whether or not they felt their role was appropriate for their qualifications. Black graduates were slightly more likely to think so (61 per cent) than others (53 per cent); but this also varied considerably according to other factors — gender, type of institution, age in particular.

When asked how confident they were about their career to date, around one-third felt very confident, and half fairly confident. But Black graduates were more confident than Asian or White graduates, even although they appeared to be faring worse than other ethnic groups (in terms of unemployment, levels of job and earnings), though as noted above were more likely to feel they were in jobs appropriate to their qualifications/skills.

Little difference was apparent by ethnic group as to how the current activity of graduates we followed up after one year, matched their expectations; more differences were apparent between men and women, and between graduates with different entry qualifications than by ethnicity. When asked what they were doing compared to what they had expected by this stage, 39 per cent were in a job unrelated to their undergraduate course, 23 per cent expected to be in a better job or better paid, and 11 per cent expected to be studying. It was noticeable that minority ethnic graduates were more likely to say they expected be in a better job, but otherwise no other differences were evident by ethnicity.

Suggestions on what advice or information about graduate employment or careers would have been useful during their studies was mainly specific kinds of information — about companies (Black graduates more than others) and about jobs that they could apply to that related to their course (White graduates more than others). Some of our interviewees also mentioned extra-curricular activities as being important in giving an advantage (students should be told that academic activities are not enough), the need to develop more self-awareness, and knowing the 'rules of the game'.

7.7 Opting for further study

As highlighted above, minority ethnic degree graduates are more likely to take further study or training, and some minority ethnic male and female groups more likely than others. The pattern of further study seems to be a continuation of the 'drive for qualification' highlighted earlier. The further study or training category comprises a range of postgraduate courses and programmes:

- Overall, the most commonly taken postgraduate qualification is taught higher degrees, *ie* mainly masters programmes and various diplomas and certificates, including PGCE and professional training (taken by 37 and 41 per cent respectively). Much smaller numbers go on to higher degrees by research, or take another first degree, or do private study or training.

- Differences in choice of further study are evident between males and females, with a higher proportion of men than women (42 compared with 33 per cent) taking taught higher degrees, and the reverse for other diplomas or certificates (29 per cent of men versus 49 per cent of women). This reflects general differences in careers of men and women, and also subject differences, *eg* there is a higher proportion of women in PGCE, social work training *etc.*

Minority ethnic students are more likely to be taking taught higher degrees than other kinds of postgraduate study. In numerical terms, they represent almost one-quarter of all degree

Table 7.2: Types of further study or training undertaken by first degree full-time graduates (2001/02 from English HEIs (percentages in each ethnic group), 2001/02

	Higher degree — taught	Diploma, certificate (inc PGCE) or prof training	Higher degree — research	Other (inc first degree)	Number
White	35.2	42.6	13.6	8.6	20,543
All Minority ethnic	46.9	34.2	6.6	12.1	4,437
Black Caribbean/ Black Other	40.2	43.7	5.6	10.4	288
Black African	50.7	30.5	4.5	14.2	422
Indian	48.2	33.9	5.4	12.5	1,522
Pakistani/Bangladeshi	42.0	38.9	6.7	12.3	852
Chinese	57.8	24.2	8.0	9.8	396
Asian Other	43.6	35.1	9.2	12.1	390
Other/mixed	46.4	32.3	9.0	12.3	567
All (known)	37.3	41.1	12.4	9.2	24,980

Note: some groups have had to be combined because of small numbers

Source: HESA/FDS, 2003

graduates opting to take these courses in any one year. They are also more likely to take another first degree or private study than White graduates (but here the total numbers are very small).

A smaller proportion of those going on to other postgraduate diplomas or certificate courses (including PGCE) are from minority ethnic backgrounds (15 per cent) and an even smaller proportion are among those on research higher degrees (just under ten per cent). The small proportion of minority ethnic graduates going on to take research higher degrees at this stage is a concern because it means a small pool from which to recruit future HE staff.

The FDS data do not distinguish separately those going on to PGCE from other postgraduate diploma courses. But it is likely to be a small proportion, as figures from the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) show that only eight per cent of teacher trainees recruited in primary and secondary work were from a minority ethnic background in 2001/02. This figure has been gradually increasing, and the TTA has various initiatives to encourage growth so as to increase the ethnic diversity in the teaching workforce.

- Black African and Chinese degree graduates who go on to further study or training are the most likely to be taking taught higher degree courses (over 50 per cent of them do). Black Caribbean/Black Other groups are the most likely to take a diploma, certificate or professional training course (44 per cent).

- All of the minority ethnic groups, except Chinese, are more likely than White graduates to take another first degree. The most likely of which are Black Caribbean/Black Other and Pakistani (each eight per cent), though, as said above, actual numbers doing so are comparatively small.

Gender differences commented on previously are seen here also. There are higher proportions of male than female graduates overall taking taught higher degrees and this is also time for most minority ethnic groups: the highest are male Black Africans and male Indians (each 56 per cent), but this drops to 35 per cent of female Pakistani/Bangladeshi (and 31 per cent of female White) graduates taking further study or training. Conversely, there are much higher percentages of these two latter groups taking diploma, certificate or professional training courses (over 50 per cent), and much lower percentages of male Black African and most of the male Asian groups (around 23-27 per cent), see Appendix Table A13.

It is noticeable that research higher degrees are generally less popular with both male and female minority ethnic than White graduates, but they are much more popular with Black Caribbean/ Black other males than females (14 versus three per cent).

7.8 Summary

Minority ethnic young people are well-represented in higher education in England, relative to their share of the population, and are more motivated to go to higher education for reasons associated with improving their career/employment prospects (see earlier chapters). However, they appear, on the face of it, to have worse initial labour market outcomes than White degree graduates overall. The extent of disadvantage varies between minority ethnic groups, and also by gender, subject, class of degree and other variables within groups.

It is evident though that some of the pattern of labour market disadvantage, seen generally in the minority ethnic working population, is also reflected here. Those groups with the higher unemployment in the working population (Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black men and women) are mostly the same groups with the higher graduate initial unemployment figures (*ie* at the six month stage, Pakistani, Black African and Bangladeshi). However, there are also differences, *eg* the Black Caribbean group has one of the lowest initial graduate unemployment rate of all the minority ethnic groups, though it is still higher than that of the White group. This needs to be set against evidence in much of this report which shows that Black Caribbean students are doing less well than others in gaining access to HE at a young age and in their degree performance, and also are likely to face more difficulties in their studies (though this applies more to older ones). It also contrasts with the Indian and Chinese groups, which are more likely to enter HE with higher qualifications, but do not appear to be doing as well as might be expected in employment outcomes.

Another important feature of the graduate outcome pattern by ethnic group is that more minority ethnic than White degree graduates go on to further training or study both from degree and sub-degree; and it is the Chinese, and also most of the other Asian groups, who are more likely to do so than the Black groups. In particular, they are more likely to seek further academic qualifications rather than professional/vocational qualifications or training (which are more popular than the Black Caribbean and Black Other graduates who continue in study following degree study). This would seem to be a continuation of a drive to gain (even) higher qualifications, associated more with Asian groups at an earlier age, something we have commented on in earlier chapters. It would be useful to find out more about why some minority ethnic students are more likely to want to take higher qualifications than others.

It is also noticeable that the ability to secure paid employment varies considerably between minority ethnic groups by gender and by subject in particular. The 'quality' of the jobs taken by graduates in different ethnic groups also varies. Overall, minority ethnic graduates appear to get 'better' jobs on average than White

graduates. This may be mainly subject-driven (*ie* the concentrations in medicine, law, IT and business studies) or reflect different attitudes to getting what constitutes a 'good' job. Also, the job-seeking approaches taken at university vary between individuals, and some groups are likely to start much earlier, possibly because they expect to face more difficulties or have clearer career aims at an earlier stage. This is also an area which needs further exploration.

A number of evidence sources have been used here to try to explore how much of the differences in graduate outcomes between minority ethnic and White graduates is due to ethnicity and how much to other factors. But the sheer diversity of the graduate population (and the minority ethnic graduate groups), and the number of likely intervening factors and variables makes that task very difficult. Clearly, some of the explanation for the poorer graduate outcomes lies in the differences in gender, age and socio-economic profiles, entry routes and entry qualifications, subjects chosen and institutions attended, and also degree outcomes, between ethnic groups. Furthermore, these variables can have different effects on different groups. Other explanations lie in attitudes to finding employment and career expectations, the extent to which they have some work experience, and also employer behaviour. The main conclusion that we can draw is that ethnicity is almost certainly making a contribution to the relative labour market disadvantage some individuals experience, but the causes are more complex than ethnicity alone. It is the way the various factors interact with ethnicity that are of interest (which has been shown in earlier chapters to vary between ethnic groups), and can create distinct patterns of greater disadvantage for certain groups of students in their transitions to the labour market. It is a combination of a number of indirect effects, rather that direct ethnic effects that have the greater significance, though in different ways for different ethnic groups.

The balance of opinion among staff in HE involved with graduate employment and careers is that students from ethnic minority backgrounds face greater problems in the graduate marketplace in securing their careers of choice. This is the basis for positive action work in universities, and for employers to help give students and graduates better skills and work experiences. However as far as we can ascertain, little systematic evaluation has taken place of these initiatives. We recommend that this is done, and also that other employability measures in HE are given an ethnic dimension in their evaluations.

In the next chapter, we look at the graduate recruitment market from the employer perspective and the contribution which employer policies and practices make to the difficulties which minority ethnic graduates face; and also where they are helping to overcome these.

8. Employer Perspective

In this final chapter on the research findings, we provide an employer perspective on minority ethnic graduate recruitment. Up to now, we have been mainly concerned with graduates' attainment (and prior attainment), choices of HE study, their views, and behaviour as factors effecting their outcomes. But this is only one side of the equation. We also need to see what factors in employer demand and their graduate recruitment strategies can affect the outcomes of minority ethnic graduates. The chapter draws off a number of sources:

- case study interviews with 20 employers (mainly large ones with graduate recruitment programmes)

- careers advisers and various other people and organisations involved with positive action programmes in HE

- in addition to other relevant research studies.

8.1 Context

8.1.1 Graduate marketplace

There are several general trends and issues in graduate demand, and the graduate marketplace, which have an effect on minority ethnic graduate recruitment, and provide a context.

Although subject to some fluctuations, the graduate marketplace has remained fairly steady in the last few years. There is no major graduate shortage problem at present in the UK, except possibly in some specialist IT or engineering areas. However, competition for graduate recruits continues to be high, especially at the top end ('high potential') or in very specialist areas. As a consequence, many employers invest heavily in graduate recruitment — in marketing and selling their 'brand' to universities and students to encourage more applications of the kind they want; and in their selection processes, which can be fairly extensive in many of the large organisations. One of the main concerns expressed by employers today is about the variable quality of applicants they see, especially their lack of preparedness for the workplace and of relevant skills. This variable quality is frequently put down to the

expanded graduate supply and growth of new courses at universities.

Demand for graduates has broadened, to include a wider range of jobs and types of employers than in the past, and also more multiple entry routes into companies for graduate recruits. This, together with the more diverse HE sector and graduate supply, has led to a more segmented graduate marketplace. Many employers focus their recruitment activities more on certain kinds of graduates, and certain types of universities, often for fairly pragmatic reasons (*eg* as a way of coping with the vastly expanded supply and high volume of applications). Not all graduates therefore have equal access to all of the graduate jobs available, nor as much opportunity to make direct contact with graduate recruiters. Targeting is commonplace in most graduate strategies, especially by large national private sector recruiters. The main focus of targeting is on pre-92 universities, and young graduates with traditional entry qualifications (18 plus or even 24 plus 'A' level points). One consequence is a tendency for many organisations to be 'fishing in the same pool' (all seeking the more traditional type of student from similar backgrounds with similar personality/skill specs), thus giving an impression of high competition from the major large employers in certain universities, and their virtual absence in others. The latter are frequently the new (post-92 group of) universities and colleges. As highlighted in earlier chapters of this report, these have higher representations of non-traditional students, including minority ethnic groups.

The greatly increased use of the Internet and IT in the graduate recruitment process — in employer marketing, information about jobs, applying online, in selection, *etc.* — is a significant recent change in graduate recruitment methods. The vast majority of recruiters are using the Internet to post vacancies, taking applications online from graduates and increasingly undertaking initial selection also. It has potential to mitigate effects of institutional targeting (which can disadvantage minority ethnic and other groups who are not well-represented at many of the targeted universities), through improving student access to information about jobs and potential employers. It can also help put more realism into the employment proposition, and can speed up the selection process, (via online testing and other automatic 'filtering' of applications). However, the full implications of e-recruitment have yet to be worked through.

Another area of change is the increased interest in international recruitment, with employers seeking applicants from overseas, or looking for graduates with international experience. This is another area where the greater use of the Internet has had an impact, by increasing applications to UK employers from foreign students. It is not clear whether employers are seeking international students because of shortage problems at home, or

because they want some specific international experience (can be a bit of both).

8.1.2   Diversity in graduate recruitment

A second area of context for our research is the greater importance given to diversity and equality agenda in the workplace. A greater commitment to ethnic diversity in the workplace has filtered through into graduate recruitment in many organisations, though mainly the larger private and public sector ones, and its significance in practice varies also. Ethnic diversity in the workplace is being driven by a combination of factors: economic and social change, legislation on race relations, and a greater awareness of the business case — *ie* the benefits from accessing the widest pool of talent available, or the need to serve an increasingly diverse customer base (*eg* in retail, banking, health services).

We found that graduate recruiters can have mixed feelings about how much diversity can be achieved in graduate intakes. On the one hand, they all want to be seen to be fair, and give access to everyone with the right abilities and skills. In several places we found a strong commitment from the senior management team to support ethnic diversity initiatives in HE (*eg* internship schemes, diversity mentoring, careers workshops). These initiatives help improve ethnic representation in their graduate intakes, and thus help change the ethnic profile of senior management, or specific functions. On the other hand, the need to match graduates to particular skills/person needs of jobs, means that it is more likely that traditional types of graduates (*eg* young, with high 'A' levels, middle class) continue to be recruited, often because it is easier to achieve within limited recruitment budgets, and also when there are pressures to achieve annual intake targets. Also, the central graduate recruitment person, with more commitment to achieving ethnic diversity, may have limited influence over local business managers where graduate recruitment is a very decentralised function. Various examples were given by our interviewees on how their workplace diversity policies interacted with their graduate recruitment policies, in particular the importance of involving senior and middle management, for example:

● in one organisation, a large transport group, the support from the top — *ie* a 'champion' — was important in making cultural change; but a change at the top had meant a shift in business priorities, leading them to place less emphasis on diversity in their graduate recruitment strategy

● in another, a financial services organisation, a lack of role models and 'invisibility' of minority ethnic groups, especially Black people, at senior levels had been identified by the graduate recruiter herself as she moved up the management ladder.

A recent BIC survey was generally positive about progress in ethnic diversity in UK businesses, but also reported much room for improvement '… especially across middle management strata, in getting ownership of the issues'. The lack of progress, especially in getting strategies in place to tackle ethnic issues in the workplace, was also commented on in a recent report by the Industrial Society.[1]

Most large employing organisations in the private sectors, and all public sector bodies (are now required to), have a diversity policy or action plan of some kind, which includes ethnic diversity. In practical terms, this has led to diversity units being set up at a corporate level, or the appointment of a diversity manager in many instances. We found various ways in which these units/people impacted on graduate recruitment. For example, in one large public sector organisation, the effect of some high profile tribunal cases (when the Campaign for Racial Equality [CRE] had been involved) had brought a dramatic cultural shift with the setting up of a new diversity unit. This had led to:

- increased activity in schools and universities that had high proportions of minority ethnic students

- such universities being targeted in marketing and publicity

- all staff involved in graduate interviewing receiving diversity training

- and specific ethnic graduate recruitment targets set and being met.

But in some others, we found relatively little contact between graduate recruitment managers and specialist 'diversity' or diversity managers. The latter having just a passive role, to be consulted if felt needed, *eg* on publicity or advice about their graduate monitoring statistics.

Organisations with more minimal approaches to ethnic diversity included most of the recruiters of technical graduates that we interviewed. Here, ethnic diversity often had a lower priority because their main interest was tackling specific skill shortages. In several, there was also a more pressing need to increase the proportion of female graduates (which was very low) than ethnic minorities. For example, in one large IT company, gender had been monitored for several years but not yet ethnicity, as it was more difficult to 'make the business case':

> *'Women make up 50 per cent of our market, so easy to convince Chief Exec. … don't have same info. on buying power for ethnic minorities …'*

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[1] As cited in Kandola (2002).

While in another:

' … ethnic diversity is a cause of concern, we are being asked by clients in public and private sectors what our ethnic profile in the workforce is, and we do no monitoring as yet ... when push comes to shove they just want the work done … little impetus to do anything … have few tribunals which are race related … most of our ethnic employees are 2nd or 3rd generation and so there is little difference from you and me.'

One organisation which admitted to us that it did not have a corporate diversity policy, a young international telecomms business, cited the reason as:

'It goes against the cultural norms of the company to set targets for White and non-White, women, disabled etc. – emphasis is on competencies to do the job … we have a culture of equality here (jobs open to all who apply, once in and through the graduate scheme, don't even know who has a degree)'.

but also added later in the interview that they had very few non-White graduates applying (mainly looking for engineers and expected to find few there).

Many of our interviewees had introduced diversity policies only recently, often to replace an older equal opportunity (EO) policy. This shift represented a move away from an approach driven by legislation, to one which incorporates the business case and corporate social responsibility. Growth of global businesses, and cultural alignments of UK organisations with organisations in other countries (including mergers with US businesses), has increased the internationalisation of organisations' workforces, including their multi-ethnic mix, which is also acting as a stimulus.

8.2 Under-representation of minority ethnic graduate recruits

Despite this increased attention being given to diversity in the workplace, and the more diverse and broader graduate labour market, the extent to which organisations are actually recruiting a more ethnically diverse graduate workforce varies significantly. This was evident in our case study interviews, which tended to be with more progressive employers.[1] All had recruited graduates recently, mostly through corporate graduate schemes, and most had systems in place for collecting information about ethnicity in the recruitment process. Although they also recruited graduates outside of this, to other jobs in their organisation, this was done at a local level and little information was kept corporately on the ethnic make-up of this wider graduate intake. The statistics we

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[1] We attempted to recruit a broader sample of employers but most of those contacted preferred not to take part in the interviews.

obtained from them, therefore, referred only to graduate intakes for designated graduate entry jobs or schemes. They varied from management trainee programmes through to technical/ engineering jobs. Some had set targets for the proportion of minority ethnic groups they wanted in applications and acceptances, and were satisfied that they were making steady improvements year on year. Others had fluctuating annual trends, often due to consistency or reliability problems with monitoring caused by, *eg* image problems in the marketplace, problems with their graduate website, or business re-organisation/merger. Yet others had hardly seen much change at all in their proportion of minority ethnic graduate recruits. Only one actually showed a decline, but it recruited very large numbers (into pharmacy) so was not typical, and had been affected by market competition.

The monitoring statistics employers shared with us (some were not prepared to do so for confidentiality reasons) varied in format and detail. However, we have been able to put some of them (nine organisations) into a comparative format for the most recent year (mostly 2002). These give an indication of how minority ethnic representation varies through the stages of the recruitment process, (see Table 8.1). It shows wide variations in minority ethnic graduate recruitment intakes by organisations, from zero to over 50 per cent of the total, with most in the five to 20 per cent range, and generally declining proportions of minority ethnic candidates getting through each successive stage.

Most organisations we interviewed received large numbers of applications, including large numbers from minority ethnic groups, and were not too concerned about the volume of applications from minority ethnic students in aggregate, either absolutely or as a proportion of the total; though they would be happy to see more, especially of some groups (*eg* Black graduates, see below). As can be seen above, some dealt with very large numbers — for example, a financial services group attracted 17,000 applications, of which around 34 per cent, that is over 5,000, came from graduates from minority ethnic backgrounds (this actually represents about one in six of the total minority ethnic graduate supply from English universities in one year). Another example is from a public sector organisation with 25,000 applications in total to two schemes, included around 4,000 graduates from minority ethnic backgrounds (16 per cent). Most of the minority ethnic percentage figures, in the 'applying' column in Table 8.1, are above the average for minority ethnic representation in graduate output at English HEIs (around 15 per cent). The highest we came across were in subject areas of relatively high minority ethnic participation or career interest (*eg* accountancy, pharmacy, IT). However, including overseas students in their monitoring figures, which we found most organisations did, may be inflating the numbers (and so may make the application figures from UK domiciled graduates look

Table 8.1: Company graduate recruitment profiles and minority ethnic graduate 'success' rates (mostly for 2002 graduate entry)

| Business activity | Type of graduates/ intake | All | | | Minority ethnic graduates | | |
		No. of vacancies	No. applying	% of all applicants who are successful	% in total applications	% in total interviewed*	% in total job offers/ recruited
A. Financial	Varied: retail, IT, marketing	50 c.	3,500	1.4	15	n/a	8
B. Public sector	Business	10	180	5.5	7	7.5	20
C. Business consultancy	Varied (mainly numerate)	300 c.	5,000	6.0	27	26	17
D. Legal services	Lawyers	100	2,000	5.0	n/a	n/a	24
E. Healthcare	Pharmacy	330	1,100	33	45	n/a	55
F. Financial	Varied: retail banking, IT, operations	200	17,000	1.2	34	n/a	15
G. IT/comms	Electronic/ electrical engineers (I)	6	600	1.0	55	40	20
	Electronic/ electrical engineers (II)	3	160	1.9	63	54	0
H. Transport	Management scheme	20	1,500	1.3	35	31	6
I. Public sector	General (I) General (II)	500 250	14,000 11,000	2.9 2.3	17 15.7	n/a n/a	10 7.4

* where application got through to at least 1st interview

Source: IES (Employer organisations records)

better than they actually are).[1] Though some could at least separate out the numbers of applicants from UK universities from those from overseas universities, none were able to accurately assess how many from UK universities were UK domiciled students only (as in HESA statistics). It is very likely that some were not (certainly many did not have UK employment rights/work permits, see section 8.3).

More concern was expressed by our interviewees about converting applications to job offers, as the general downward trend of the monitoring data in Table 8.1 illustrates. In some cases, the proportion of minority ethnic applicants getting through each stage declines markedly. The exception, a public sector organisation (C in the figure) has a very small intake and the 20 per cent shown represents just two minority ethnic graduates; the other exception (Organisation E) has a very large intake, and a very well known profile among the minority ethnic (and predominantly Indian) community.

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[1]   This is most likely to be the reason for the high figure in Organisation G in the table for electrical engineering applicants, 63 per cent, as it is a well-known international group.

It is also important to note, as outlined at the beginning of the chapter, that there is high competition for many graduate jobs on offer and this was also the case in many of these organisations. But it was not those with the highest competition (*ie* lowest percentage of successful applications overall) that had necessarily lower minority ethnic recruitment, or *vice versa*. The three organisations where competition was highest (where only around one per cent of applicants overall got through to taking up a job) had an overall minority ethnic percentage intake of 15 per cent in one financial services organisation, six per cent in another financial services organisation, and six per cent in a third (a transport organisation's management scheme). But the one where competition seemed lowest actually had the highest minority ethnic recruitment. In this case, the organisation targets its marketing on a number of Schools of Pharmacy, and only expects those qualified to apply to do so (also it is an area suffering generally from shortages worldwide).

Only a small minority of organisations monitor ethnicity in any more detail (*ie* by individual groups) in their graduate recruitment statistics. In some though, the numbers recruited would be too small to make much sense of such disaggregation. Among the larger ones we interviewed, where useful comparisons could be made between minority groups, the main features were:

- Asian groups, especially Indians, were usually the dominant groups in minority ethnic intakes (and also confirmed in perceptions of those who did not have the data).

- Black groups were less well-represented than Asian groups, especially Indians and Chinese at each stage.

- The numbers of some Black groups, especially Black Caribbeans, applying was very small in some (*eg* in one, the pharmacy scheme above (E), there were just three Black Caribbean applicants among 1,100 in total, and in another, the large business consultancy, just 38 out of 4,000).

- Indians and Chinese were more likely to outperform the other minority groups in getting through each of the various stages of selection (*eg* application form accepted, online test, first interview, assessment centre).

8.3 Factors affecting under-representation

Overt racial discrimination in graduate recruitment is very unlikely to exist nowadays, mainly due to legislation and equal opportunities policies of employers. But, as highlighted in the recent Cabinet Office report (2002), problems of indirect discrimination are likely to remain, particularly in organisations which have not developed EO policies or professional approaches to HR management. These are likely to include what seems to be 'race-neutral' or colour blind approaches.

These were seen in a number of different ways, in pre-recruitment, application processing, and selection activities.

Setting targets/priorities

All of our interviewees had relatively sophisticated human resource (HR) policies, which included EO, but we did find some examples where no special provision to recruit minority ethnic graduates was evident. These tended to have low minority ethnic representation in graduate intakes (though often no statistical monitoring took place, so hard to be sure). For example, one (a telecom group), felt that setting targets for particular groups went against the culture of the organisation; while another, a large IT company, did not feel a need to offer anything special for minority ethnic groups within its diversity strategy (which covers age, gender, work-life balance and sexuality as well as ethnicity); and in a third an electronics group with a very decentralised organisational structure where EO policies had been in place for some time, there was no 'power' at the centre to push ethnic diversity issues out to the businesses and so encourage recruiters to place greater priority on them.

University targeting

A cause of possible disadvantage is from the policies of mainly large employers which focus marketing and other recruitment activities on certain universities, frequently those where minority ethnic groups are less well-represented (*ie* red-brick traditional universities and Oxbridge in particular).[1] We did find that these types of universities were the ones mainly found on 'target' lists of the employers we interviewed, and relatively few post-92 universities and colleges featured (where much larger numbers of minority ethnic graduates are found). Careers advisers also confirmed this practice, generally among large corporate recruiters. It is done usually because employers perceive there to be a higher 'quality' of students at certain types of universities. Focusing activities on a select number of universities has become a necessary practice in graduate recruitment given the sheer size and diversity of the HE system nowadays, and limitations on recruitment budgets.

A few organisations we visited felt that too much targeting of certain institutions might work against their diversity policies, and had ensured that their activities with universities included links with a larger number/wider group, including some post-92 universities. Some companies which did target a select few in

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[1] See Chapter 4, also especially section 4.4.3 which discusses admissions bias against some minority ethnic groups at some pre-92 universities (Shiner and Modood, 2002) as a factor in under-representation at some of these universities.

marketing/publicity said they gave no preferential treatment to applicants from them (because to do so would give bias against minority ethnic groups). However, a large City law firm recruited graduates almost exclusively from a small number of leading law schools, all in the pre-92 university group. Only a few organisations chose not to target at all, mainly because they were seeking a broad-based intake (and were prepared to handle the large number of applications which no-targeting produces). One of them stressed their *'culture of equality'*, which targeting would go against. Generally, public sector organisations did not target universities as much, some not at all.

We found one large, private sector organisation, with a very committed ethnic diversity employment policy, using targeting in a different and more sophisticated, positive way, to help increase the number of applications from certain minority groups. Information about minority ethnic representation at universities was used to set diversity targets for each university being targeted, which then helped decide which kinds of activities would take place at each (*eg* sponsoring societies), according to the target set. However, this tended to be an exception to general practice.

Many organisations are very concerned about distinguishing themselves to students in the diverse and large graduate market, and so participate in various HE initiatives (*eg* diversity mentoring, recruitment workshops, recruitment fairs) in order to help raise their profile with non-traditional students. This can give positive benefits to individual graduates (through gaining skills and experience), but can also help the company to 'differentiate its brand' from others by often promoting different things — being a 'cool' place to work, having different values, or state-of-the-art technology. This has been found to be successful in attracting more applicants, from groups they have found hard to reach in the past, and groups that have had very low representation, such as some Black groups.

The increased use of the Internet to advertise vacancies was felt by interviewees as likely have a mitigating effect overall on the ethnic bias produced by traditional institutional targeting (though this had not been evaluated by them). Also, employers' involvement in specific diversity activities, such as ethnic graduate fairs, was aimed at helping to provide a better balance of applications. There were a few where a bias was more obvious, *eg* the law firm referred to above, where 80 per cent of offered candidates come from targeted universities, Oxbridge, and a few other 'elite' universities. Many others were not as open about this.

Graduates (regardless of ethnicity) also believe that bias exists in employer practices, towards Oxbridge and more traditional universities[1] (also some of our interviewees), and the perception

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[1]   See Park HR Research (2002).

of bias has been shown to be especially strong among minority ethnic groups.

'A' level thresholds

The second aspect of employer targeting in graduate recruitment is to set requirements in vacancy advertising on a specific educational level or age group — often young, high 'A' level candidates. The aim is to screen out others from applying (as a form of self-selection). As we have seen already (Chapter 2), those not in this young/high 'A' level category are more likely to be Black students than White or Asian, especially Indian or Chinese, students.

Most of our interviewees had desired 'A' levels as a published selection criteria. However, in some, if an applicant failed to meet the 'A' level points threshold they could 'make it up' in other areas (*eg* other qualifications, work experience, evidence of desired attributes from other questions). This process has been facilitated by IT and online application screening processes, which has made the process of making equivalences more systematic, and so reduces the potential for bias. There were a few examples of organisations deliberately keeping their 'A' level threshold fairly low, *eg* a financial services organisation had set it at 14 points, specifically to ensure they did not bias against minority ethnic students. Only one of our interviewees explicitly stated no preferred 'A' level scores. However, we also found examples of organisations planning to increase 'A' level thresholds, primarily to reduce the increased volume of applications they receive online, although they were aware that this action would make it more difficult for them to meet their diversity targets. One public sector organisation with two streams of intakes, where one of the initial sifting criterion was on ability (and 'A' level scores featured), but not the other, saw this as one of the main barriers to getting more minority ethnic applicants to the former (which was their upper career stream).

Lack of role models

Another discouraging factor for minority ethnic graduates is the lack of role models, especially Black people in senior positions in most large organisations. One of our interviewees, in financial services, commented that:

> *'Although the number of minority ethnic employees in senior management has grown from 18 to 45 in the last six years, it still only represents three per cent of senior management … an improvement at every level is needed.'*

Organisations try to address this in their marketing materials, and by taking ethnically mixed teams to campus presentations, to help counter a 'White, male middle class' image which they recognise that students have of them, especially Black students. However,

presenting an image of an organisation as ethnically diverse, especially at more senior levels, can possibly lead to false impressions being created. As one interviewee in a large business consultancy framed it:

> *'We have a good proportion of graduates who are from a minority ethnic group so we can portray this in our brochure, but I would not feel comfortable presenting our partners as diverse, as this is not the case.'*

Besides internal organisational role models many interviewees were of the opinion that minority ethnic students did not have role models in their own communities in the form of relatives, or friends, to help them in their choice of university and career. As one interviewee put it:

> *'I was always expected to do a profession, such as be a lawyer or doctor. I had never considered accountancy as I has not come into contact with accountants and it was not regarded as a suitable profession.'*

Another interviewee spoke about obstacles to overcome in changing the image of some industries and occupations with ethnic groups, *eg* the perception that banking was merely about branch banking (which it is not these days), and so not held high enough in status for some ethnic groups.

Selection

While there are barriers at the 'front-end' of graduate recruitment (image, attraction processes), employers generally felt that it was in their selection process where more of the main barriers to improving minority ethnic representation lay. This is supported by university careers advisers we spoke with, and by graduates. In a recent survey,[1] 46 per cent of minority ethnic respondents had applied to firms advertising vacancies, but only 15 per cent had made it to the final interview (sample of 134 minority ethnic graduates).

Several of our interviewees were concerned about their monitoring statistics, which showed declining percentages of minority ethnic graduates at each of the stages of selection (*eg* application form screening, first interview, assessment centre). This suggested to them that their selection practices were likely to be 'discriminatory' in some ways, but they were often unsure about the cause. Some believed it was in the psychometric testing administered to graduate applicants where the problem mainly lay, and were working with the test publishers to improve the 'norms' they used, while others had dropped some tests altogether. For example, one organisation had found that minority ethnic applicants (not just graduates) were persistently failing a certain psychometric test, but their job performance was not worse than those who had passed the test, so they removed the

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[1]   Undertaken by AGCAS/AGR in 2003.

test from the selection process. Several others felt the problem lay with interviewers, and so were giving attention to the training of managers on assessment panels, mainly to raise awareness of diversity issues there.

A survey in 2002[1] gave evidence of minority ethnic students feeling more disadvantaged in employer testing than other students/graduates. Surprisingly, there was little difference when asked if they found assessment centres problematic (an issue identified by some of our interviewees, see below), though more ethnic minorities said that they found it *'hard to identify with interviewers'*. This reflects the earlier point made about the lack of good role models.

As mentioned above, the greater use of the Internet in recruitment has had the effect of increasing the number of applications many employers receive, and as a consequence, some organisations have turned to simple methods to screen more out. Some employers are going back to their past practice of upping their 'A' level thresholds, which as pointed out above, can risk bringing in an element of indirect racial discrimination. One organisation though, a large law firm, had found a strong correlation between academic and job performance and was not prepared to reduce its very high academic standards (28 plus 'A' level points).

Others use screening tests (*eg* verbal reasoning, literacy), online or via telephone interview which should be 'colour blind', but can discriminate against those who do not have good language skills, or are less confident. There were also examples of companies using other criteria, *eg* the use of vacation work or pre-employment experiences (internships), to help assess candidates better (this also helps to promote their employer 'brand' to the student community, see above). An increasing number of organisations recruit their graduate intakes via employment with them (*eg* one supermarket chain recruits almost half of their graduate intake this way).

Several of our interviewees were particularly concerned about what they saw as under-performance of some well-qualified minority ethnic applicants at their final stage assessment centres, and Black Africans were mentioned more often in this respect. The small group activities, designed to demonstrate desired attributes such as leadership, communication, team work *etc.*, appeared to set them at a disadvantage, especially those who were less familiar with 'operating' in this way. It had been noticed that they tended to talk less quickly or make points more quietly, less questioning, less assertive — *'less likely to blow their own trumpet'* as one recruiter put it — and also lacked some social and presentational skills. Some of this is rooted in cultural difference, in terms of collectivism and individualism, between ethnic

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[1] See Park HR, *op. cit.*

groups. One interviewee suggested that as work experience is more likely to be got by Asian students from their own families, they were less likely to have had to take their own initiative to find it, and so had not honed up their presentational skills (though this is perhaps rather a generalisation, it is part of the stereotypical image many recruiters hold).

It is difficult for some organisations who are seeking specific attributes, which they have derived from competency frameworks (*eg* the need for high level of presentation skills) to take these differences into account and alter their procedures, especially if they do not have a shortage of other apparently good candidates. However, one organisation, albeit with a relatively small graduate intake (10-20 per year), and where competition was not particularly high, had opted to have one-to-one interviews instead of small group activities to help avoid any possible disadvantage from this source for those applicants less used to operating well in a group environment. Others were moving to more role-playing in assessment centres, so that behaviours were identified more in selection, and this was thought to be an advantage for minority ethnic groups. Another recruiter felt all graduates were not sufficiently prepared and was trying to 'demystify' the selection process by taking part in workshops held by universities.

There is a danger that employers use competencies in selection systems derived some years ago, and not regularly updated, to reflect not only business changes but also changes in the type of graduates more recently recruited. This has the potential to be anti-diversity.

Eligibility to work in UK

There are also some external factors affecting minority ethnic recruitment. One is eligibility to work in the UK. This is a basic employment criteria of most graduate recruiters in the UK, and most of our interviewees were unable to accept applications from graduates who had some work restrictions caused by their nationality, residency or citizenship. This helps to explain the significant reduction in the number of minority ethnic candidates from application to first interview stage in some organisations (shown in Table 8.1). Organisations reported receiving increased numbers of applications from international students (often via website) including foreign students at UK universities (but their monitoring systems usually did not distinguish between UK-domiciled and foreign students at UK universities as in HESA statistics so this is rather a 'grey' area).

Although this eligibility criteria is stated on job information/ vacancy websites, many organisations still get large numbers of ineligible candidates applying. In one IT firm, for example, it was the main reason why applications from minority ethnic groups were rejected (some from overseas, but some also from UK

universities), and Chinese were mentioned as being a particular group more noticeably affected by this. We found only a few organisations prepared to help suitable applicants with work permits, mainly because they saw it as beneficial in attracting more applicants from minority ethnic groups (one also, an engineering company, did it because it experienced shortages of good applicants generally).

Geographical mobility

A second factor, but mentioned less frequently, was geographical mobility constraints of some minority ethnic groups. This applied where some graduates were expected to be fully mobile across the UK in their jobs (*eg* in retail banking) and employers had found some, in particular female Asian, graduates less willing to take this on. It applied also to a health care organisation recruiting high numbers of Asian women a number of locations, where they tended to get a number of refusals after offers had been made. On the other hand, an engineering company with some far-flung sites across the UK had not experienced any mobility issues, rather the reverse with several recent minority ethnic recruits commenting that they wanted to get away from home or to be more independent from home (but they recruited mainly male rather female minority ethnic graduates).

Being unprepared

> *'There is a huge chasm between graduate expectations and what companies are offering/graduates can expect to get.'*

Several organisations had concerns that graduates were not prepared sufficiently for difficulties in job finding and selection. One example was:

> *'Minority ethnic students are not switched on to the fact that they need to have extra curricular activities in support of their applications.'*

However, although the remarks were made about minority ethnic graduates, this could apply equally to White graduates, and may be more of a lower social class issue, especially if they are the first generation to go to university. A number of initiatives are being taken by universities and colleges to help students get a better awareness of the world of work, and also develop more self-awareness of their skills and attributes several are focused specifically on Black and other minority ethnic groups (*eg* Impact scheme, Diversity Mentoring UK, Windsor Fellowship).

8.4 Improving representation

Employers can take several steps to counter bias in recruitment and selection processes, and also help to improve graduate employability. We found a number of examples of this.

Positive images and marketing

There is more attention being given to marketing and 'selling the employer brand' in graduate recruitment generally, through various media but, in particular, websites. Employers we interviewed almost all considered it very important to get over a positive diversity image in their marketing, to aid the recruitment of minority ethnic graduates. Showing pictures of people from different minority ethnic groups in the workforce is standard procedure, as is making a strong statement of their EO policy. Company research has indicated that students find such a statement reassuring, and do have the effect of encouraging applications from minority ethnic graduates. One employer said that they used the logo of 'Race equality for all' to help emphasise their commitment to diversity.

Putting out positive messages in this way is intended to focus employer branding on encouraging positive choices, and, so 'attracting' certain types of graduates. Some of our interviewees made use of a number of specialist agencies to improve their 'message' to minority ethnic students, and also advertised in specialist media, but most found that the mainstream graduate publications gave them the best results. One public sector recruiter felt that presenting an image of 'respectability and well-treated staff' was particularly attractive to minority ethnic groups, and gave them an 'edge' on competitors. The offer of structured training and an opportunity to gain a professional business qualification was also an attractive selling point for them.

Many of our interviewees were involved in the various publications, websites, recruitment fairs and other initiatives which specifically target minority ethnic students and aim to assist them in the labour market (see below). There is a burgeoning range of different kinds of such initiatives, as more funding becomes available from within universities (some via access funds), and from regional and local agencies, as well as employers. While employers with a diversity commitment were keen to be seen to be involved in them, or more often the reverse (not wanting to be seen to be not involved), they did question some of their effectiveness. We found little evaluative evidence available to help make judgements about which worked best and for whom (except some of their own, which was not often shared).

Workforce diversity policies

'Getting senior managers on side, some of whom have now become the biggest champions of diversity.' (Large finance group)

This organisation saw the diversity agenda moving more to senior management (who were mainly White), to get them more exposed to minority ethnic graduates, and use then as mentors. Several others mentioned the need for good mentors for minority ethnic

recruits in particular. Others were finding their diversity training being driven by external supply chains, as well as internal pressures from having a diversity policy.

The importance of setting and monitoring targets was mentioned by several organisations, and the greater use of the Internet in the graduate recruitment process helped to provide better tracking statistics.

Being flexible about religious holidays, and recognising special requirements, *eg* food, religious facilities were seen as good aims to have, but often it was organised in *ad hoc* ways. One of our interviewees though (a law firm) had included a prayer room in their new suite of offices.

Pre-recruitment

As mentioned above, many of the organisations we interviewed had policies to positively get involved in campus activities to help promote their 'brand' among minority ethnic undergraduates, and some of these included students in earlier years. This might be sponsorship of student societies and speaking at events (organised by SIS/CRAC for example).

There has been an increase in employers offering work experience placements to students specifically as an aid to their graduate recruitment and some placement or internship schemes have targets for minority ethnic students. These are often 'blue chip' recruiters and focused at traditional universities. Not only are these intended to help the individual student gain experience and skills, but they can give the organisation a better basis for selection. They also hope that the students go back and act as 'ambassadors' for the organisation at their university.

Some of our interviewees were getting more involved in special initiatives or projects in HE, aimed specifically at helping minority ethnic groups succeed better in securing their career choices (such as the national Diversity Mentoring scheme, employer-led job workshops and programmes run by the Windsor Fellowship).

A focus of some of the work of large organisations is also pre-university — in schools access programmes. These are intended to raise aspirations and confidence levels of students from lower socio-economic groups, including some minority ethnic students to encourage them to consider applying to universities with a higher reputation but further away from home (*eg* the Oxford Access scheme). Some schools based activities supported by employers also target parents in order to help influence their children in making appropriate choices (outside of the more traditional careers of medicine and law).

Evaluation

While initiatives to widen access and help individuals gain better skills and confidence for successful transition to the labour market are of course welcomed, there is some doubt about how much real added value is coming from some of the work that is going on. Are some of the initiatives targeted at HE getting to those in most need of job seeking skills training, confidence building, help with career choices? Or are they attracting more of the same kind who would be more likely to succeed anyway. As recent research (for example by CHERI on employment/careers initiatives for disadvantaged student groups) has indicated, many depend on voluntarism. To come forward the students need to have recognised that a programme is aimed at them and that they need help, and are comfortable to take part in positive action type activities. How students perceive themselves is an important issue — as a member of a minority ethnic group, or as a student with similar needs as others with their social lifestyles? We feel the current evidence base is weak and further research needed on measuring successful outcomes, not just on inputs as at present (*ie* numbers taking part in schemes).

8.5 Summary

This chapter has focused on employers' perspectives of minority ethnic graduate recruitment and employment related issues for minority ethnic graduates.

Though many organisations, especially the larger ones, are developing greater commitment to diversity and diversity policies that impact on graduate recruitment, much progress still needs to be made, and more reliable data systems developed also. Several of our interviewees had very well-developed diversity strategies, but there were also some with very little, and some where policies existed but were not as effective in practice as they could be.

Most large graduate recruiting organisations monitor ethnicity in their graduate recruitment process, though in a variety of ways, but it is usually only the designated graduate programmes/ corporate intakes which get such treatment. Very little monitoring takes place of the ethnic make-up of graduates recruited to other jobs outside of these (which tends to be the majority in some). We recommend that ethnic minority of **all** graduate recruitment is undertaken more and in systematic ways.

The data available within organisations on graduate recruitment showed a range of representation levels of minority ethnic graduates in applications and job offers. But in only a few did the evidence show that minority ethnic groups had as good, or better, chance of getting a job offer as White applicants. However, some care needs to be taken in drawing firm conclusions from this kind of data because of quality and reliability issues.

Three key issues were identified:

- a mostly declining trend of minority ethnic representation through the recruitment process, from application stage to job offer/acceptance

- a distinct lack of Black graduates in job offers, and also among applicants in places. Asian, and mostly Indian, were usually the dominant minority ethnic group

- Indian and Chinese groups were more likely to outperform others in getting through each of the selection stages.

But there were some noticeable exceptions to these general themes.

It was clear that a number of organisational-related factors affect the low representation of minority ethnic groups, or certain sub-groups:

- indirect discriminatory practices in their selection methods (*eg* use of 'A' level scores, testing, assessment centre formats/ group exercises, attitudes of interviewees)

- targeting specific institutions in marketing (the more prestigious, academic ones), though the increased use of the Internet in job applications was felt to be mitigating the likely negative effects on minority ethnic groups a little

- lack of role models (especially at senior levels within organisations, but also in some ethnic communities)

- issues on eligibility to work in the UK (needing a work permit if not UK/EU).

And also, but less significant:

- geographical mobility — affecting some Asian women in particular

- being unprepared for work — lack of awareness of the difficulties they are likely to experience, and/or what employers are seeking (also applies to some White graduates).

Actions taken by employers to increase their recruitment of minority ethnic graduates included:

- improvements to marketing (positive images)

- diversity training of all employees (especially managers on interview panels)

- improving selection practices, and competency frameworks

- recognising particular needs of individuals in the workplace (*eg* religious needs)

- positive use of web and other marketing publications/careers fairs to target minority ethnic groups

- pre-recruitment activities in HE — getting involved in students mentoring programmes and job workshops, offering work experience placements, and positive action schemes

- wider access work — in schools and colleges.

The number of successful businesses who are committed to increasing ethnic diversity in their graduate recruitment is growing, albeit slowly. In some, getting involved in the various activities at universities is an 'act of faith', as there is little evaluative research evidence to show what adds most value for what kinds of graduates. There is a need for more work to be done here, especially in measuring 'added value' of different types of initiatives. But these more committed organisations are still comparatively small in number and form a small proportion of the very large number of employers recruiting graduates these days, including more small firms. The challenge is how to engage a lot more of them in issues of ethnic diversity in graduate recruitment.

The research points to several areas for further action:

- by employers, to disseminate good practice and share lessons learned amongst the business community, in development of policy and practice and the impact of positive measures taken to improve minority ethnic graduate intakes (*eg* such as in the use and identification of role models, selection practices, or work placements). Also, more, and for some better, systematic ethnic monitoring of all their graduate recruitment (both via schemes and other jobs) is needed

- by universities, to be more pro-active in helping students be better prepared for the realities of job search and employers' expectations of them, especially students from non-traditional groups

- by government, to help employers understand the changing nature of the student population and appreciate better the value of graduates who have followed different pathways into and through HE (less traditional routes and institutions); and also to help universities accommodate the increasingly diverse needs of students, seeking to make successful transitions to the labour market.

9. Summary and Conclusions

Much progress has been made in expanding opportunities to participate in higher education (HE) study, especially to less advantaged groups. However, not everyone has equal access to HE, or to certain parts of it. There is much greater diversity across HE today and also in outcomes and the graduate labour market. This study has focused on one group of students in particular, minority ethnic students (UK domiciled) at universities and colleges in England. Its focus has been on how and why their participation in, and progress through and from, HE, are different from the majority White group. In particular, it has examined important differences between the various minority ethnic groups. Unlike previous research, it has benefited from taking a whole-process perspective, by looking at the various phases in one study — pre-entry, entry, progress, qualification and transition to the labour market.

In this final chapter we draw together the main conclusions from the research and policy implications.

9.1 Diversity and complexity

This report has presented a complex pattern of minority ethnic participation in undergraduate study and the transitions of minority ethnic graduates to the labour market, more diverse than probably previously realised. A key theme throughout has been diversity and complexity, and many of the messages in the research are not simple ones to communicate. The complexity arises because of the variety of influencing factors, and their effects, which need to be taken into consideration, many of them inter-acting with each other. Data limitations then add to difficulties in analysing their relative importance.

The mechanisms involved in getting to higher education, getting on once there, and then getting a preferred job are not likely to be to be the same for all students. They have varied backgrounds (a broader HE intake nowadays) and different motivations. There are also considerable differences between institutions and courses (in entry requirements, attitudes to widening access and 'non-traditional' students, graduate labour markets *etc.*) and 'life as a student' can vary enormously. But when looking at minority

ethnic students, there are some specific issues to consider also. The increasing diversity within the minority ethnic population is important to recognise, in particular the divergences evident between the main minority ethnic groups, *eg* differences in their gender, age and socio-economic profiles, their geographical distribution, their 'generation' profiles (migration to the UK, length of time here), and qualification levels and views on education. Direct and indirect effects of racial discrimination also need to be considered.

We have tried to simplify matters by highlighting three contrasting groupings of minority ethnic students who appear to be on different trajectories into HE — Indian and Chinese, Pakistani and Bangladeshi, and Black students. This finding, in particular that Black students have a common trajectory, is important because it helps us see more clearly the link between HE entry route/attainment and participation patterns, subsequent progress and attainment, and also employment outcomes. Care needs to be taken though in searching for too simplistic approaches in analysis and interpretation. Ethnicity (as defined by the Census ethnic groups as we have used in this study) is not the only component of an individual's identity and, as we have found here, it is not always the more significant one when analysing relative advantage or disadvantage in higher education or the graduate labour market, and causes. One of the difficulties, which has been highlighted numerous times in the report, has been our inability to disaggregate the minority ethnic groups, *ie* to 'drill down' and use more complex analysis techniques to assess the significance of various effects for different groups, or on sub-groups, *eg* younger/mature, gender, vocational/academic entry route, London effect *etc.* Often we have been limited by having too few cases in our sample surveys to look at, or problems with representativeness.

Though problems of small numbers can be got over to some extent by combining years of data, changes to the data collection systems in HE from year to year (of UCAS and HESA) and especially the change in ethnicity classification arising from the Census 2001, can present problems with reliability. Over-sampling minority ethnic groups in representative sample surveys is a recommended approach, but the costs of doing so can be very great and need justification. However, if further progress is to be made in establishing some of the patterns and combinations of influencing factors on minority ethnic groups identified in this research, then greater consideration needs to be given to being able to disaggregate adequately. Certainly, a minority ethnic/White split should be avoided, but what the most appropriate breakdown is to make in different circumstances needs to be decided with care, and it may cut across the minority ethnic groups in standard use (*eg* length of stay in UK, or religion might be more of an issue to explore). There may be some value in breaking down the very large 'White' group in different ways

(especially as it is likely to include in the future more from Eastern European countries). On occasions, it may be more useful to make more use of individual HESA Student Records than duplicate some of the information there in new surveys, or to link the HESA data better with sample survey data (though there are a number of major issues of confidentiality of information in doing so, with costs involved).

> Thus, when planning future research and formulating policy on HE, it is recommended that the minority ethnic population is not treated as a homogenous group, nor even seen in terms of only the individual (standard) minority ethnic groups. It may be more useful to consider the larger groupings we have done here at one level of analysis. But disaggregation into sub-groupings would also provide greater understanding of specific issues for different student groups and address specific pockets of possible disadvantage. There is a need also to disaggregate the White category. However, we do recognise limitations in data relating to ethnicity, especially when looking at relatively small groups. More should be done with the new Census 2001 data, some of which has only recently become available. Any new surveys planned, especially on progress of young people to and through HE, should have an ethnicity dimension to them which enables analysis to be undertaken at an appropriate level of disaggregation of the minority ethnic population.

9.2 Entry to HE

Prior attainment and choices at 16

Staying on in formal education at 16 and following the 'A' level or vocational qualification route post-16, as well as experiences in earlier education stages and at GCSE, have been shown to be important in explaining differences in HE entry by young people generally, and between minority ethnic groups in particular. In aggregate, minority ethnic students are less likely than the White group to take the 'A' level route to degree study, but Indian and Chinese groups are more likely to (similar to the White group) and Black, and Black Caribbean in particular, less likely. Indian and Chinese groups are also more likely to gain a higher score at 'A' level on average than other minority ethnic students, almost on a par with White students (though some, such as Chinese, gain higher 'A' levels than Whites on average). Another distinctive feature is the greater likelihood of minority ethnic students to stay on in education post 16, but go to FE colleges rather than stay on at school, the latter again a particular feature of Black groups. Entry to degree study via selective schools (independent or grammar schools) is more associated with White, Mixed ethnic groups, Chinese and Indian, and also other Asians (less so Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black groups). Gender differences are also evident in these patterns.

There is also an age factor to consider, as Black students are more likely to enter HE at an older age, while Asians are more likely to

do so at the traditional 18/19 age, and have achieved a level 3 qualification (*ie* normally the minimum entry requirements to HE) by age 19, the latter more so than White young people. The Indian group, in particular, are more likely to enter HE by the age of 19 years.

In summary, there are clear divergences between the groups at the HE entry stage:

- **Indians, Asian Other, and especially Chinese**, are more likely to be highly academically qualified at entry to HE (more similar to the White group).

- **Pakistani and Bangladeshi** students are less likely to be as well-qualified as other Asian groups. They are more likely to have vocational qualifications for HE entry than other Asian groups, and also more likely to have gained them at sixth form college than any other ethnic group.

- **Black** student groups, and Black African in particular, have lower entry qualifications, and they are more likely to be older, and have vocational or Access qualifications, taken at FE college.

These differences relate to the various, relatively well-known influences on education paths and attainment seen generally for young people (relative economic advantage, social circumstances, level of parental education, geography *etc.*). But, specifically for minority ethnic students, some of these variables work more powerfully for some minority ethnic groups, thus helping to create these different patterns seen in the HE route and entry qualifications data.

Other factors in HE decision-making

In addition to prior attainment, which is clearly a central influence on decisions about going on to HE, a number of other factors affect HE decision-making. These include individual, school, family and other influences which impact on career choices made by young people. The influences and influencers vary according to attainment group and other variables.

Key encouraging factors for minority ethnic groups are:

- **Parents and families**: ambition for, and support and encouragement to, young people from their parents and families has a stronger influence among minority ethnic than White students, and some Asian groups in particular (continuing a pattern seen in earlier education). Minority ethnic people generally hold more positive views on the value of education than White people. With the exception of Black Caribbean students, minority ethnic potential students in our research were more likely than White potential students to

have always held an expectation that they would go to HE. Furthermore, they were also all more likely to be helped in decisions about HE by their parents than White potential students. This is despite the fact that, in many cases, their parents were first generation immigrants (especially Black African and Chinese/Asian Other groups, and many lacked experience of higher education themselves).

- **Expectations about economic gain/career advantages:** minority ethnic students were more likely to go to HE for instrumental reasons than White students (and there is little difference between minority ethnic groups). This is associated with the stronger aspirations and 'drive for qualification' to improve social mobility.

The main discouraging factor is:

- **The financial disincentives:** (costs of studying, likely debt *etc.*), and this applied almost regardless of ethnicity. But we did not find minority ethnic students, or particular minority ethnic groups, to be significantly more put off HE by possible debt than others (as other research has suggested). It is likely that the greater tendency for young people to stay at home among some Asian groups, and greater likelihood of getting parental financial support and doing paid work while studying, affect views about student finance.

Socio-economic class effect

Minority ethnic students to full-time degree courses are more likely to enter HE than their socio-economic class profile suggests. Bangladeshis have the lowest socio-economic class profile, followed by Pakistanis and Indians, and then Chinese and Black groups, but all have lower proportions in the top two socio-economic classes (parents in professional and managerial occupations) than White degree entrants. Furthermore, minority ethnic groups with the highest socio-economic class profiles are not those most likely to enter HE on the 'A' level track (which is the traditional HE entry route and dominated by the higher socio-economic class groups generally). This would imply that there are factors mitigating the effects of low socio-economic class, seen generally as a focus of most recent access to HE development work. The most likely of these factors relates to aspirations and commitment, including the positive influence of parents. The effect of this here is stronger among the Indian and Chinese, than the Pakistani and Bangladeshi grouping, and least strong for Black young people.

Policy implications

There are a number of implications from these results.

There is a need to work more to close the 'A' level attainment gap between groups, especially for Black boys, which would help considerably in achieving equal access to HE for members of different minority ethnic groups.

> Action is currently taking place at earlier education stages,(from Year 9) in schools, to raise aspirations and attainment at GCSE. This needs to continue and efforts increased. Such work by schools, LEAS and others (local community based programmes, or part of wider programmes such as Aimhigher) should include projects which help minority ethnic pupils both pre-16 (and earlier at end of primary/start of secondary) and post-16 (in schools and colleges). Many initiatives are long-term in expecting positive outcomes on HE entry, but it is important that they are evaluated, and those which are proving successful supported and information disseminated relating to successful outcomes, to see where further support could be given to them, or directed differently.
>
> There may be a need to look more at the targeting of many existing 'access to HE' programmes and also new ones as the Aimhigher programme moves into new areas, to see how effective they are at helping young Black men in particular. Minority ethnic people may not necessarily fall into existing target groups, which focus mainly on lower social class groups and schools, where much of traditional universities' reach-out/widening access work is. More attention should be given to FE colleges where minority ethnic young people are more concentrated.
>
> Universities, under their race equality duties, need to consider if race equality objectives and outcomes are sufficiently written into their access policies and agreements, especially pre-92 universities where access work is focused mainly on potentially high 'A' level achievers (discussed more, later in section 9.3 under diversity of participation).

A second important area of policy is careers advice and guidance, and HE information. As young people from minority ethnic groups are taking HE entry qualifications in a variety of educational settings, the range of formal careers advice and information and guidance they receive about HE is likely to vary also, especially between those at schools, colleges, and in the workplace. The provision of high quality careers education and guidance is arguably more important for young people from some minority ethnic/social backgrounds because of the possible effect of a weaker position in the labour market of their parents; less parental experience of HE in the UK; and more reliance by young people from minority ethnic backgrounds on parental advice.

> We recommend that any differences in careers advice and guidance and access to information on HE (from careers specialist or personal tutors/teachers), designed to help minority ethnic groups on different HE entry routes make choices, is identified, and action taken to ensure that no-one suffers any disadvantage in this way. It would be useful to

> identify models of good practice (especially in FE colleges) and disseminate them.
>
> It is also recommended that further research is undertaken on what kinds of differences parental support and encouragement can make, and where and for whom in particular. This would require a focused qualitative research approach, over a period of time. It is also important to explore how parents have been involved in widening access and careers initiatives, and where lessons could be learned and applied more widely (White and non-White groups).

A third area is in the progression from vocational routes and vocational post-16 qualifications to HE, and the lack of a general valuing of vocational qualifications as entry to higher level study. This is a general issue in the current educational debate but has particular significance for minority ethnic students, some of whom tend to favour more vocational options.

> We expect the development of the new Foundation degrees to provide a new pathway to HE for entry with vocational level 3 and work-based qualifications. We recommend that monitoring and evaluation of this new qualification includes racial equality (along with gender age and socio-economic class). The research has shown that some HNDs (in particular in computer science and business) and DipHE courses (*eg* nursing studies) are more popular with certain groups of minority ethnic than White students, and so the pattern of take-up of FDs, especially any impact they have on HND/DipHE or other sub-degree courses, needs monitoring.

The research did not indicate that student finance was likely to be any more of a deterrent to participation in HE by minority ethnic students than White students, or to particular groups, though the net effects might be different as minority ethnic groups tended to value the investment in HE more than White students. It is likely to be more of a socio-economic class issue, and it is known from other research that the prospect of student debt can have a particularly discouraging effect on lower class groups, which will include minority ethnic groups. The current changes to student finance may have a differential effect on minority ethnic group entry to HE (especially if most universities increase their fee contributions, and have differential fees for courses), but it is too uncertain to predict at present.

> We recommend that the impact of the proposed changes to student finance on participation (both on entry and retention) by minority ethnic students be monitored carefully for any serious impact on minority ethnic students. This also should include the monitoring of applications and admissions to particular types of universities and particular subjects (*eg* longer courses like medicine which are currently more popular with Asian students than others), and the take-up of Student Loans (also see later section 9.3 re effects on admissions, and also recommendations in 9.4 on student support).

9.3 HE Participation and choices

Minority ethnic groups in aggregate are more successful in gaining places on undergraduate study in England than are White people. This is despite their lower success in earlier stages of education and their different pattern of post-16 choices, compared with White young people as a whole. All minority ethnic groups have a higher HE initial participation rate (HEIPR) than the White group in the population, and Indian and Black African have the highest (at over 70 per cent, their HEIPRs well above the 40 per cent average, and already exceed the Government's 50 per cent target figure). Black Caribbean men and Bangladeshi women have the lowest HEIPRs, but the latter is the only minority ethnic gender group which falls below that of the White male or female figure. But there are a number of issues involved in calculating ethnic specific HEIPRs and so these figures, though shown to illustrate clearly the diversity within the minority ethnic population, should be treated as provisional.

> We recommend that the Department continues to work on developing measures of HE participation for groups of the population, and in particular undertakes further investigations of the issues surrounding the calculation of participation rates (HEIPRs) for individual ethnic groups. The reliability of the figures produced here needs further investigation through statistical analysis, in particular, issues in the Census data. This may help to explain some of the large differences between some of the ethnic group figures. We also recommend that the large White group should be disaggregated further. The Department should also take the opportunity that the soon to be available more detailed Census 2001 provides to look into calculating a new HE participation measure based on it alone, rather than combining Census and HESA data.

Qualification levels at age 19 are similar between minority ethnic overall and White groups (though some groups, Black in particular, gain qualifications for HE entry at an older age, and Asians are more likely than Whites to have higher qualifications by age 19). Other factors which explain the higher HE participation of the minority ethnic population include: their younger age; higher levels of commitment to education post-16, and especially greater levels of parental encouragement; and greater expectations of economic benefits from HE. Unlike in some other areas of education and employment, there is little in the way of direct discrimination on ethnic grounds in admissions overall, but (as shown below), some bias exists in certain parts of the sector affecting admissions to particular institutions. There are also gender differences by ethnic group in overall HE participation rates.

Diversity of participation

These overall participation rates for the minority ethnic population mask considerable variations in the type of HE study

taken: there are variation in minority ethnic representation by institution, type of courses (full-time/part-time, degree/sub-degree) and subject, and also by geographical region. Of particular significance is that minority ethnic groups are:

- **More likely to be attending a post-92 than pre-92 institution**, and Black groups more so than others, but Chinese less so (the most likely minority ethnic group to be at a pre-92 university). There is a very clustered distribution of universities with higher than average minority ethnic representation, the highest found in mostly post-92 universities in the London area.

- **More likely to be studying full-time sub-degree**, than degree or part-time sub-degree courses (mode/qualification), and Black Africans are much more likely to be than others.

- **More likely to be studying computer science, medicine/ dentistry and law degree**s (over 30 per cent representation on each), almost twice the average.

- **But less likely to be studying in some of the sciences and education.**

Factors shaping HE choices

A variety of explanations for these different participation patterns exists, including differences between groups in their demographic characteristics, in attitudes towards education and employment for women and men, the aspirations and influence of their parents and, importantly, prior attainment levels and HE entry route.

Prior attainment (and expectations of 'A' level attainment) is a key influencing factor on participation overall, but especially in choosing and securing a place at the more competitive universities and courses. It is significant to note though that Black African groups are one of the high participating groups, but in contrast to Indian groups (also high), they are more likely to come into HE on the vocational/college pathway (similar to Black Caribbean who are a lower HE participation group). We found that prior attainment had a greater effect on choice of what course to study at university for our potential students surveyed than any other background factor. As already highlighted, more minority ethnic students have qualifications other than 'A' levels, and lower 'A' level grades, and so this is clearly a main reason why they are more likely to be found in the post-92 university groups, and on certain courses with lower requirements (such as the sub-degree group).

But there are also other influencing factors:

- **Geography**, particularly for mature students or those from lower socio-economic classes, who are more likely to stay close to home. It explains the higher concentrations of minority ethnic groups (and Black students in particular) at institutions

with higher concentrations of minority ethnic groups in their vicinities (London and other cities).

- Another influence is **family and parents**, especially on subject choice. This can have a greater effect on minority ethnic potential students in biasing them towards the traditional professional/vocational subjects, some of which (*eg* medicine) are mainly in pre-92 universities. It had a greater institutional choice influence on female Asian students (to stay at, close to, home) than on others.

- Other influences, of more importance to minority ethnic than White students generally, were 'being able to fit in better', social circumstances and employment prospects.

It needs recognising, though, that there is considerable variation in the way individual applicants weigh up factors in coming to decisions, and there is a variable effect of these identified factors on choices for different groups. The following illustrates this:

- While **Indian and Chinese** groups are the most likely to follow the 'A' level track to degree study, and also more likely to have been at a 'selective' school, it is only the Chinese (not Indian) who have a higher representation in the generally more selective universities *ie* pre-92, rather than post-92. Indian groups are the most likely though to be on medicine degrees.

- **Pakistani and Bangladeshi** are less likely to be on the 'A' level track, which ties in with their higher representation in post-92 than pre-92 universities. But they are equally likely to choose a full-time degree than a sub-degree on average, suggesting that other factors, possibly parental influence, have a role.

- **Black** groups are older on entry and more likely to come via the vocational/access course, and so much more likely to be at a post-92 university. A particular feature is the greater participation of Black Africans on full-time sub-degree courses, which is likely to be linked to subject interests (*eg* nursing studies).

Admissions

Another key factor which helps explain the different pattern of participation, especially by institution, is racial bias in the admissions process. The UCAS data show that minority ethnic students are more likely to apply for a place on undergraduate courses than White students overall, but as applicants they are less likely to be accepted on average. However, once a number of personal characteristics are controlled for, especially qualification, they are actually more successful in getting a place than White students overall (as the participation figures above indicate). However, when type of institution is taken into account, minority ethnic students (and particularly Black Caribbean, Indian,

Pakistani and Bangladeshi) are less likely than White students to be accepted (other things being equal) to an old (*ie* pre-92) university than one in the post-92 group (where they are more successful). Minority ethnic students are also more likely than Whites to be accepted through Clearing, and institutions/courses participate in Clearing to varying degrees. The conclusions from this are that some racial discrimination may be taking place in the admissions process in some places, in the different ways institutions and/or courses make offers to applicants.

It needs to be recognised though that the process of admitting students, through a centralised system (*ie* UCAS) which seems straightforward, can be a relatively difficult process for some students, especially those coming through the non-traditional routes. Also, the published data from UCAS is on (final) acceptances and although data can be got from UCAS on offers at different institutions (with permission from institutions), relatively little is known about the offer decision making process itself at institutions, nor how individuals decide about offers made. Some universities are in a situation of excess demand for places, while others are not; also some get far greater numbers of applications from minority ethnic students than others. The opportunity for discrimination against minority ethnic applicants is greater in some places than others, though we found little direct evidence of students experiencing discrimination on ethnic grounds in admissions from our surveys (though survey respondents were unlikely to have been interviewed or had much personal contact with university admissions staff).

Policy implications

There are a number of policy implications identified from the research, relating to the uneven distribution of minority ethnic students across HE, and ensuring equality of access to different parts of the HE sector.

> We recommend further research on the offer/acceptance/entry process is undertaken as a whole and by individual universities in the HE sector, at institution and subject level, to ensure that the process is fair. Further research could be on the effect of withholding names from UCAS forms at initial sifts. Also, admissions staff training is currently being developed further and race needs to be included in equal opportunity issues covered. Good practice within and between universities should be shared more.
>
> Universities need to monitor ethnicity in the admissions process as part of their specific duties under the recent race relations legislation. Also, we understand that HEFCE intends to develop means of monitoring admissions in the future, by using UCAS data. This should help in identifying better where any serious problems exist in the sector. Institutions also have a duty to monitor and publish data, and take appropriate action.

A further recommendation relates to the new Office for Fair Access (OFFA). Before they are able to charge higher variable fees from 2006, institutions will need to have an access agreement approved by OFFA, which will set out, amongst other things, planned measures to be taken by the institution to attract under-represented groups. It is expected that these access agreements will help to address some of the problems faced by some ethnic minorities, which may include specific measures to encourage applications from ethnic minorities in institutional widening access plans, or provision of specific support (will vary between institutions). It is expected that OFFA, when it is established, will have a duty to promote racial equality under the Race Relations Act.

Highlighted above, in the previous section, were recommendations relating to careers advice on choices of post-16 education, which can have an effect on HE participation levels by different groups. These apply here too. It is important that potential students make informed decisions about institutions and courses, from reliable sources. Universities have a role to play here, as well as careers specialists and personal tutors/teachers, and they (and also local access projects) should be aware of the differences between groups highlighted in this research, and also how the various factors shape individual choices of different students. Also, the Department's new review of gateways to the professions should take note of the variation currently in subject choices by minority ethnic groups, especially those with a professional focus and the concern about lower take-up by some groups in some of them (*eg* education).

9.4 Student progress and experiences in HE

Students' experiences of HE study vary greatly, according to their background and prior educational experiences, their choice of course and institution, whether they live at home or not and their financial circumstances.

Discontinuing study

Universities with the highest early leaving figures for degree students are mainly ones with lower entry qualifications, and it is generally recognised that it is 'marginal' entrants to HE where the risk of discontinuing courses, mostly in the first year, is highest. Many of the institutions with the highest early leaving rates (*eg* in London) have the highest densities of minority ethnic, particularly Black, students. It is not surprising, therefore, to find higher early leaving among minority ethnic than White students in aggregate, and more so among Black degree students than Asians. But when allowances are made for differences between students, (on entry qualification, age and subject), this gap virtually disappears, and younger students actually do slightly better than expected. This again shows the significance of background and entry route factors.

Other factors can cause early leaving generally (such as choosing the 'wrong' course, financial or domestic pressures), and affect

both minority ethnic and White students. In our research among students, a range of difficulties were felt by students to have had an effect on their progress in HE and made them consider dropping out (though none had done so). Black students were identified as likely to be at higher risk of leaving than Asian students, but this was mainly explained by their older age, and also (likely) by their different social class and entry profiles. Black African female and Black Caribbean male students were identified as being at most risk of leaving, but this is likely to be age-related, and also due to having less support/encouragement from parents to stay than younger students.

We found no satisfactory explanation in the research with students to explain the better retention figures shown by the overall statistics for young minority ethnic degree students. However, evidence from other parts of the research suggest positive parental influence may be having an effect.

> Fairly tentative conclusions have been drawn from the research evidence, and more research is needed to fully explain the differences in retention by ethnicity, and what specific factors may be having a particular influence, positive and negative, on some groups (*eg* staying at home, or possibly a London effect).

Particular issues which concerned minority ethnic students more than White students (and likely to have an effect on their studies) were staff support issues (not enough, or not as much as expected), and feelings of isolation or lack of cultural diversity. There was some evidence of poor racial awareness among staff and poor race relations in places, but rarely any direct racial discrimination experienced by students.

Minority ethnic students, and Asian groups especially, are more likely than White students to get parental contributions, have less debt and to be living at home. Black students tend to work the longest hours during term-time.

While financial issues are of concern to all students, this varied by ethnicity. Black Africans were more concerned and Indians and Chinese and Asian Other less concerned. Again this is likely to be related to their different ages and socio-economic status, and also different living and financial arrangements, as well as ethnicity. Sources of student income were affected here too, by other personal variables in addition to ethnicity (especially socio-economic status and also family factors). Further research is needed, with larger datasets, to investigate this aspect and draw firmer conclusions.

> The proposed review of costs of support to non-traditional students (in White paper) should give attention to needs of those minority ethnic students, in particular the older groups identified in the research, who face greater problems, which can then affect their progress in HE.

Issues of race relations and equal opportunity relating to the student experience are for universities, both with high and low numbers of minority ethnic students, to address in order to see what action might be needed. They relate directly to race equality duties of universities under the recent race legislation. We recommend that further research is undertaken on minority ethnic students' concerns and issues, to see how they differ from those of White students, in particular to examine issues of isolation, cultural diversity, staff attitudes and racial harassment. It is likely that the new National Student Survey on Quality will be helpful in showing differences in student feedback by minority ethnic groups (and sub-groups). It is important that the survey's design has an appropriate ethnic dimension so that institutions and the government can identify trends and issues affecting minority ethnic groups. The need to look at universities' strategies for promoting good race relations, including staffing and senior management support and commitment (not covered by this research), should be considered, also.

Degree performance

Although more minority ethnic people are participating in degree study, overall they appear not to achieve as well in terms of class of degree as White students. Black students are the least successful, in particular the Black African group, who are most likely to gain a third or lower class of degree. There seems to have been little improvement over the last few years in this pattern.

But if the attainment of first class degrees is looked at (rather than the average class or 1st and 2.1 combined), there are some different results. The gap between minority ethnic and White students narrows, and some groups (Chinese, mixed ethnic) are almost on a par with Whites, while others (Indians, Asian Other) are not far behind. Considering that the participation in HE among young people from these groups is considerably higher than for Whites, it means that there are likely to be more Chinese, Asian Other and Indian than White young graduates with first class degrees in the young population, a fact which may not be recognised by employers.

Female minority ethnic students perform better than male minority ethnic students in aggregate, and this gender difference is greater than for male and female White students, though it varies by individual minority ethnic group. Age, subject and type of institution all make a difference to attainment generally, but the greatest effect comes from entry qualification and type of school. 'A' level entrants are likely to do better than others, and this improvement can be seen more for minority ethnic than White groups, and Black groups in particular (who are less likely anyway to enter with 'A' levels). But even allowing for this, the performance gap does not disappear. Other research has shown effects of racial bias in assessment in some places, and also different experiences within HE having an effect on degree performance (*eg* extent of term-time working, commitment to academic study, 'quality' of learning) which we also found in our

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research). As with the discussion earlier on non-completion, these effects are likely to vary between students and courses, and also interact with ethnicity in various ways, which needs much larger scale research to explore further.

> We recommend that further research and analysis is undertaken to provide a better explanation of why some minority ethnic groups achieve a lower average class of degree than expected (given their entry qualifications, age, subject, institutional distribution), and also why their achievement at the very top (of first class degrees) gives a better picture. The new Student Survey, mentioned above, should help to give a better understanding of issues related to quality of teaching which may be relevant. The proposed review of the honours classification system should help to open up this area more, and provide evidence of where there is the potential for racial discrimination around degree classification, if any exists.

Satisfaction with outcomes

Our research also showed that, although experiences within HE study varied, most of the final year students were satisfied with their performance to date. Reasons given for doing less well ranged widely, covering a range of personal and academic issues, but there was no consistent message that minority ethnic students felt more dissatisfied than White students overall. But graduates, one year later, seemed more disillusioned about their HE experience. Fewer Black and Asian students felt, with hindsight, that they had made the right choice about course or institution, compared to White students. Other research also suggests Black graduates, with hindsight, are less happy about decisions made earlier about their HE course.

> The research implied a greater sense of disillusionment among some groups of minority ethnic graduates, once out in the labour market, which would merit further exploration. The new Student Survey will provide feedback on levels of satisfaction at the end of their final year (which will be a useful mechanism for identifying problem areas, as discussed above). But we recommend that further research is also undertaken on 'satisfaction' some time after graduation. In particular, it would be useful to explore how expectations of 'economic benefits/career gain' have actually worked out. This is relevant for future HE students, as this aspect is a strong 'push' factor for minority ethnic young people.

9.5 Graduate transitions

Various sources — the statistics on the First Destination Survey of graduates, the balance of opinion among HE careers advisers, and our follow-up survey of students after qualifying — all point to students from minority ethnic backgrounds facing greater problems in the graduate labour marketplace in securing their career choices than White students. The statistical evidence on initial employment success indicators (at the six month stage), in all cases are lower for

minority ethnic groups than White graduates. In particular, all minority ethnic groups have higher unemployment rates than White degree graduates. Highest unemployment is among male Pakistani and Chinese (over twice the average), while lowest is female White and Chinese. Higher percentages of minority ethnic degree graduates, particularly Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Chinese, go on to further study or training, partly to gain further qualifications for a particular chosen career, and partly to gain further academic qualifications.

We suggest that more exploration of the 'further study' option is undertaken, and also more generally the participation of minority ethnic students in different kinds of postgraduate education, and the impact of areas of their low participation.

Factors influencing graduate transitions

These greater difficulties in making graduate transitions arise for a number of reasons, but we have identified four key ones here, which can act in combination to produce particular disadvantage for some groups:

- the background characteristics of the individuals and their choice of study (subject and institution) and also location (concentration in London area)

- their performance in their degree (*ie* class of degree)

- their job search behaviour/job relevant skills (work experiences)

- and effects of general ethnic disadvantage in the labour market.

As can be seen, these are mainly indirect effects, and we found little substantial evidence of direct racial discrimination experiences by graduates. The research was not able to separate the different effects (it would need considerably more data to do so), but some points are worth highlighting by looking at the two ends of the employment range:

- Unemployment among Black Caribbean students was among the lowest for minority ethnic graduates overall. This may be a London effect (more choice of jobs available and higher proportions of Black Caribbean students at London universities), or it may be subject driven (higher percentages take vocational subjects like business or health-related studies), or because considerably more of them are female (who have more successful outcomes overall than men).

- By contrast, the Pakistani group had the highest unemployment overall. This is most likely to be a result of subject choice (higher percentages take IT and engineering) where unemployment overall is highest, but it may also be affected

by their geographical distribution (less likely in London, and preference to stay more locally), or less active/ later job-seeking behaviour in final year.

Nor could we look longer term, to see if the greater initial labour market disadvantage is short-term, but evidence from other surveys does suggest that differences reduce over time. Another positive finding is that minority ethnic graduates are not less likely to get lower level jobs than White graduates overall. But notably Black Caribbeans (who were more likely to be in paid employment) have the lowest likelihood of being in higher level jobs (professional/managerial), lower than other minority ethnic or White graduates. There is some evidence to suggest that minority ethnic graduates are also in better paid jobs (a function almost certainly of those who are in jobs are more likely to be in professions (see subject distribution) or in financial services, also generally well-paid). But this needs further research.

It was noticeable that job-seeking behaviour and attitudes to applying for jobs in their final year varied between minority ethnic groups. Some of the individual graduates were aware of particular difficulties they and other minority graduates faced, and some 'interventions' in HE were suggested. These included gaining a period of work experience, developing extra-curricular activities, better self-promotion and 'knowing the rules of the game' (*ie* what employers were looking for, being prepared for interviews, assessment centres *etc.*). Several initiatives at universities have been developed specifically to help minority ethnic undergraduates improve their labour market prospects. We found, however, little evidence that the outcomes of them were being evaluated systematically, or information was available to help employers decide which kinds of initiatives they should try to get involved in.

> We recommend that the various measures to improve graduate employability be systematically evaluated, to quantify their additional effect on improving labour market entry for minority ethnic students.

Employer perspective

The employers, and university career advisers, interviewed provided some insights into employment prospects for minority ethnic graduates. They showed that while many employers, especially larger ones and in the public sector, are developing greater commitment to ethnic diversity policies, which impact on graduate recruitment, much progress still needs to be made among the wide-range of graduate recruiters, large and small.

Minority ethnic graduates continue to be under-represented in most corporate graduate recruitment schemes. In only a few did we find evidence to show that minority ethnic graduates had as good, or better, chance of getting a job offer as Whites. However,

there are some data reliability issues. Ethnic monitoring of the graduate recruitment process is not kept systematically and, where it is kept, it is usually only for the designated graduate programmes/corporate intakes. Rarely is any ethnic monitoring done on recruitment of graduates to other jobs in various parts of organisations.

Three key issues were identified in graduate recruitment processes:

- minority ethnic representation reduces through the stages of the recruitment process, from application to job offer/ acceptance (mostly, some exceptions)

- a distinct lack of Black graduates in job offers, and also among applicants in many places. Asians, and mostly Indian, were usually the dominant minority ethnic group

- Indians and Chinese were more likely to outperform other minority ethnic groups in getting through each of the selection stages (once they have met the initial UK work eligibility criteria).

Reasons for the low representation of minority ethnic groups, or certain sub-groups, varied between employers, but the main ones were:

- indirect discriminatory practices in their selection methods (*eg* use of 'A' level scores, testing, assessment centre formats/ group exercises, competence frameworks, attitudes of interviewees)

- targeting strategies in recruitment and marketing — on specific institutions (the more prestigious, academic ones) and traditionally qualified students

- lack of role models — especially at senior levels within organisations, but also in some ethnic communities

- (in)eligibility to work in the UK (needing a work permit).

Geographical mobility, mainly affecting some Asian women, and being unprepared for what employers are seeking (but this also applies to some White graduates) were other reasons.

The more committed employers to ethnic diversity in graduate recruitment were taking a range of actions to increase their recruitment of minority ethnic graduates, including improvements to marketing (positive image, including specific publications/ recruitment fairs); more diversity training for employees (especially managers who were on assessment panels); improving selection methods, and use of competency frameworks; and pre-recruitment activities in HE (student mentoring programmes and job workshops, offering work experience placements). But these 'involved' employers are still fairly small in number, and many more need to be convinced of the value of engaging in this way

with universities and colleges, to see any substantial change taking place.

> We recommend that further research is undertaken to evaluate pre-recruitment activities and other HE-business link initiatives (in addition to those at universities highlighted above), which have minority ethnic students as part of their objectives. Work experience (*eg* placements, internships) in particular could be investigated further, as there may be differences in the quality provided, and in minority ethnic students' attitudes towards them.
>
> We recommend that more employers in the private sector undertake ethnic monitoring of all their graduate recruitment (corporate graduate schemes and recruitment direct to jobs) and produce regular statistics, which will help them to better understand where problems lie and also assess the impact of any measures taken. We recommend more sharing of data and good practice, and raising awareness among the large number of graduate recruiters, both large and small.
>
> A further recommendation here is to government to help employers understand better the changing nature of the student population and to help employers appreciate the value of the different pathways into and through HE which now exist.
>
> We also encourage more universities to be more proactive in helping their students be better prepared for the realities of jobsearch and employers expectations.

9.6 And finally …

The majority of attention in the research literature is given to problems and disadvantages in minority ethnic participation in education and employment, which we have tended to also do in much of this report. But we have also identified some positive trends, where minority ethnic groups are doing much better than the comparative White population (for example, in HE entry). It is important that these successes are given wider recognition, and the 'drivers' which lead to greater success understood better, for the benefit of everyone.

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Appendix A: Additional Tables

Table A1: Higher Education Initial Participation Rates (HEIPRs) for English domiciled first-time entrants (full- and part-time) to HE courses (in universities and colleges), by individual ethnic/gender group, 2001/02

Ethnic group	Female			Male			All		
	Est. pop.	HE entrants	HEIPR %	Est. pop.	HE entrants	HEIPR %	Est. pop.	HE entrants	HEIPR %
White	3,838,120	105,470	41	3,898,230	90,410	34	7,736,360	195,880	38
All minority ethnic groups	541,350	22,230	58	524,580	21,120	55	1,065,930	43,360	56
Black Caribbean	52,330	1,870	52	45,210	1,160	36	97,540	3,100	45
Black African	64,020	3,100	75	56,650	2,660	71	120,670	5,800	73
Black Other	11,480	610	72	10,320	440	56	21,800	1,050	64
Indian	131,670	6,470	72	129,630	6,390	70	261,310	12,900	71
Pakistani	102,460	3,330	44	102,020	4,090	54	204,480	7,420	49
Bangladeshi	44,300	1,030	33	39,000	1,220	43	83,300	2,310	39
Chinese	35,700	1,370	50	36,940	1,420	47	72,640	2,840	49
Asian Other	26,710	1,600	94	35,140	1,630	74	60,850	3,230	83
Mixed ethnic	73,700	2,580	44	69,680	2,040	35	143,350	4,610	40
All (known ethnicity)	4,379,470	127,700	43	4,422,810	111,530	37	8,802,290	239,240	40

Notes:

1) The 'estimated population' and 'HE entrants' columns show the total numbers in the relevant populations. The HEIPR is calculated as a sum of percentages participating in each age group year (17-30).

2) For further discussion of the calculation of the HEIPR see SFR 07/2004 from DFES.

3) The overall HEIPR shown has been adjusted to exclude ethnicity unknowns, so is lower (at 40 per cent) than the published overall HEIPR (43.5 per cent) for 2001/02.

4) Totals may not add up exactly due to rounding errors.

5) The HEIPR figures for all ethnic groups are shown in Table A1 for completeness but should be treated with caution, for a number of reasons:

   i) they are calculated using more than one data source (Census 2001 for population estimates, and HESA and ILR 2001/02 for HE entrants). The respondents in each may identify the people being covered by the ethnic groups differently. This may be more of an issue for some groups, *eg* mixed ethnic and 'other' categories, than others, but this is not certain.

   ii) Some groups are small in number and, generally, the smaller the number, the less robust the HEIPRs.

   iii) The number of unknowns in the HE population is higher than in the overall population (in Census), so the ethnic specific HEIPRs calculated are likely to be lower than the actual figures. The adjusted overall HEIPR is likely to be around 92 per cent of its true size. We have had to assume that the distribution of unknowns across ethnic groups is similar in both population and HE figures but this may not be true (the incidence of refusing to provide information in the HE data collection may vary by ethnic group).

   iv) There may be some under-enumeration in the Census of some age/gender/ethnic groups (more likely in young (in 20s) and male minority ethnic groups, and inner cities). Though the published Census data has adjusted for this, it still may have an effect on some groups, and inflate the figures.

   v) Another complication is that the Census figures relate to April 2001 and the HE student figures to academic year 2001/02, which does not include April 2001. But 2001/02 academic year has to be used here because it is the first to give comparable ethnicity classification data. There may be some changes between years in age structures of some ethnic groups (which vary markedly by age anyway) which affect the figures.

   vi) The Census figures cover everyone who is 'usually resident' in the population on Census night (in April 2001) so would include some foreign students; the HE figures include UK domiciled students only (*ie* domiciled in UK for previous three years) and excludes foreign nationals coming to the UK to study. This is likely to have a greater effect on some groups.

Source: Census April 2001, HESA and ILR records 2001/02

Table A2: Undergraduate White and minority ethnic students by type of institution, in England, 2001/02 (percentages)

Ethnic group	The Open University	Pre-92 Universities	Post-92 Universities	HE Colleges	FE Colleges
White	94.7	85.2	78.0	90.5	88.1
All minority ethnic	5.3	14.8	22.0	9.5	11.9
Black Caribbean	0.6	0.8	2.3	1.3	1.8
Black African	0.7	1.7	4.1	1.5	1.8
Black Other	1.0	0.4	0.8	0.5	0.5
Indian	0.4	4.4	5.6	1.9	2.6
Pakistani	0.3	2.0	3.1	1.0	2.0
Bangladeshi	0.1	0.6	1.0	0.3	0.5
Chinese	0.2	1.2	1.0	0.5	0.9
Asian Other	1.2	1.6	1.4	0.7	1.0
Mixed ethnic	0.4	0.7	0.8	0.7	0.8
Other	0.5	1.5	1.8	1.1	n/a
N (known ethnicity)	*98,700*	*406,000*	*476,700*	*123,500*	*121,500*

Source: HESA, ILR

Table A3: Undergraduate White and minority ethnic students by qualification aim and mode, in England, 2001/02, HE institutions only, excluding Open University (percentages)

| Ethnic group | First degree | | Sub-degree | |
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time
White	81.9	81.4	78.0	89.2
All minority ethnic groups	18.9	18.6	22.0	10.8
Black Caribbean	1.3	3.0	2.4	1.7
Black African	2.3	4.4	6.7	2.3
Black Other	0.6	1.0	0.9	0.5
Indian	5.8	3.2	4.4	1.6
Pakistani	2.8	1.9	2.8	0.9
Bangladeshi	0.9	0.7	0.8	0.2
Chinese	1.3	0.6	0.8	0.6
Asian Other	1.5	1.4	1.0	1.2
Mixed ethnic	0.9	0.5	0.9	0.5
Other	1.7	1.8	1.3	1.3
N (known ethnicity)	*650,278*	*75,612*	*84,305*	*195,949*
% of total with known ethnicity	*95.3*	*90.4*	*92.2*	*83.6*

Note: Open University students on degree modules are omitted from this table as all are classified as part-time, and so appear as sub-degree students in HESA dataset

Source: HESA

Table A4: Distribution in undergraduate study of male and female minority ethnic and White groups, in England, (percentages), and comparative population distribution

Ethnic group	All undergraduates		Population of 18-29 year olds	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
White	81.9	84.5	88.0	87.4
All minority ethnic	18.1	15.5	12.0	12.6
Black Caribbean	1.1	1.8	0.9	1.1
Black African	2.7	2.6	1.2	1.4
Black Other	0.6	0.7	0.2	0.2
Indian	5.1	3.8	2.8	2.9
Pakistani	2.9	1.7	2.2	2.3
Bangladeshi	0.9	0.5	0.8	1.0
Chinese	1.1	0.9	0.8	0.8
Asian Other	1.6	1.3	0.8	0.6
Mixed ethnic	0.7	0.7	1.5	1.6
Other	1.5	1.5	0.6	0.8
(N) known ethnicity	*440,100*	*599,500*	*3,870,400*	*3,935,900*

Note: 1) Universities only included in undergraduate population, not FE colleges
2) Population figures are for England and Wales, as England only figures not available at time of writing

Source: HESA, 2001/02; Census, 2001

Table A5: White and minority ethnic full-time and part-time degree students by highest entry qualification, in England, 2001/02 (percentages)

Ethnic group	'A' levels*	ONC/OND incl. BTEC/SCOTVEV	HND/HNC	Access
White	78.1	3.1	2.6	2.8
All minority ethnic	69.9	4.0	4.1	4.2
Black Caribbean	49.3	7.6	5.5	13.4
Black African	45.7	6.4	5.7	10.9
Black Other	53.2	6.3	5.8	10.6
Indian	80.7	2.7	3.7	1.0
Pakistani	74.6	3.7	4.3	2.0
Bangladeshi	74.1	4.9	3.9	2.7
Chinese	75.6	2.3	3.2	1.5
Asian Other	72.8	2.8	2.9	3.2
Mixed ethnic	72.8	3.8	2.7	4.3
Other	68.9	3.6	3.7	4.5
All (with known ethnicity)	*75.6*	*3.3*	*2.9*	*3.1*

Note: A range of other qualifications are held but each by very by small numbers (*eg* other higher level qualifications, Foundation courses, GCSEs).

*Includes GCSE 'A' Level, SCE Higher, GNVQ/GSVQ, NVQ/VQ level 3, but, the vast majority are 'A' level qualified

Source: HESA

Table A6: Previous educational establishment of minority ethnic and White accepted home applicants to full-time degree courses, in England, 2002 year of entry (percentages)

Ethnic group	Indep't school	Grammar school	Comp school	Further education	Sixth form college/ Centre	Accepted Applicants
White	11.4	4.6	26.6	21.8	13.3	191,069
All minority ethnic	9.6	3.4	18.0	28.0	14.8	44,468
Black Caribbean	2.8	1.8	11.6	40.5	14.0	3,114
Black African	4.2	1.0	11.2	36.5	11.3	5,819
Black Other	4.3	1.1	9.8	42.3	14.0	723
Chinese	21.1	5.9	18.7	23.2	12.9	2,677
Indian	12.2	4.3	21.8	22.1	15.7	12,558
Pakistani	5.5	2.1	20.6	27.8	19.8	6,799
Bangladeshi	3.9	2.1	20.4	31.5	23.6	2,162
Asian Other	13.9	5.8	14.8	25.3	11.4	3,327
Mixed ethnic	13.9	4.4	18.7	24.6	12.0	5,420
Other	8.7	2.8	18.1	31.7	10.2	1,869
All (known ethnicity)	*11.2*	*4.4*	*25.0*	*23.0*	*13.6*	*235,537*

Note: A small number came from other types of establishments not shown (*eg* other maintained schools). Overall, the previous education establishment was unknown for 16 per cent, but this increased to 32 per cent for Black African, 24 per cent for Black Caribbean.

Source: UCAS

Table A7: Socio-economic class (NS-SEC) of minority ethnic and White accepted home applicants to full-time degree courses, in England, 2002 year of entry (percentages)

| Ethnic group | Socio-economic class (NS-SEC) | | | |
	1-2	3-4	5 and below	*N (known NS-SEC)*
White	58.0	21.8	20.2	*172,020*
All minority ethnic	42.3	24.6	33.1	*33,687*
Black Caribbean	41.6	29.1	29.4	*2,415*
Black African	46.8	22.3	30.9	*3,871*
Black Other	46.1	25.8	28.0	*492*
Indian	38.2	25.0	36.8	*10,213*
Pakistani	30.5	29.6	39.9	*4,593*
Bangladeshi	21.9	20.6	57.4	*1,440*
Chinese	37.5	25.6	36.9	*2,135*
Asian Other	53.5	22.6	23.9	*2,544*
Mixed ethnic	58.1	21.2	20.8	*4,623*
Other	54.5	20.4	25.1	*1,361*
N (known ethnicity)	*55.5*	*22.3*	*22.3*	*205,707*

Note: Since 2002, data on socio-economic status has been coded by UCAS using the National Statistics Socio-economic classifications (NS-SEC), which makes use of information on parental occupations. The codes used are: class 1 = higher managerial and professional, 2 = lower managerial and professional 3 = intermediate occupations, and so on down to lower skilled groups, Group 7 = routine occupations

Source: UCAS

Table A8: Students who had, or had not seriously considered, dropping out by men and women in each ethnic group (percentages)

	A: Representative sample		B: Minority ethnic sample				
	White	**Minority ethnic**	**Black Caribbean/ Other**	**Black African**	**Pakistani/ Bangladeshi**	**Indian**	**Chinese/ Asian Other**
Male							
Yes	21	36	43	30	33	31	36
No	79	64	57	70	67	69	64
Base	*155*	*22**	*37*	*66*	*43*	*58*	*39*
Female							
Yes	36	29	30	48	20	23	21
No	64	71	71	52	80	78	79
Base	*135*	*17**	*44*	*50*	*30*	*46*	*28**
All							
Yes	28	33	36	38	27	26	24
No	72	67	64	62	73	74	76
Base	*290*	*39*	*81*	*116*	*73*	*104*	*67*

Note: Here and Table A9, two sub-sets of sample shown separately, because derived in different ways, and so cannot be combined (see Appendix B, section B.2).

* = small base (this applies especially to the minority ethnic group in the representative sample)

Source: IES/MORI survey of students 2002

Table A9: Main problems or difficulties students reported by ethnic group (which they felt had affected their performance), 2nd and later years, unprompted question (percentages)

Difficulty	A: Representative sample		B: Minority ethnic sample				
	White	Minority ethnic	Black Caribbean /Other	Black African	Pakistani/ Bangladeshi	Indian	Chinese /Asian Other
I experienced no problems	27	40	21	17	25	24	25
Financial difficulties	23	14	29	39	25	15	18
Part-time job makes me tired or miss lectures	15	16	18	19	16	6	17
Problems accessing study facilities	13	1	11	10	7	14	14
Academic work too hard	10	15	11	12	10	17	10
Not enough academic support from staff	10	7	6	8	12	14	21
Not enough encouragement from lecturers	5	11	11	3	13	18	9
Base	*290*	*38*	*80*	*118*	*73*	*103*	*68*

See note in Table A8

Source: IES/MORI survey of students, 2002

Table A10: First destinations of full-time first degree (home domiciled) male and female graduates (with known destination) from English universities, by ethnicity, 2001/02 (percentages)

	UK Paid work		Unemployed		Study or training		*N*	
	Male	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**	*Male*	*Female*
White	60.5	65.6	8.2	4.5	16.8	17.9	*51,344*	*66,725*
All minority ethnic	52.4	57.4	13.6	9.1	22.3	22.4	*8,605*	*11,246*
Black Caribbean	62.0	64.6	13.3	8.3	12.1	15.2	*347*	*853*
Black African	50.2	57.1	13.3	11.4	24.4	19.7	*802*	*1,148*
Black Other	55.4	62.1	13.9	9.5	16.3	17.9	*202*	*464*
Indian	56.6	60.7	12.8	8.1	21.2	23.6	*3,034*	*3,728*
Pakistani	51.2	51.8	15.5	12.3	22.7	25.2	*1,337*	*1,385*
Bangladeshi	49.5	55.9	14.0	11.1	24.4	22.3	*386*	*476*
Chinese	43.5	51.7	15.8	7.8	28.2	25.3	*713*	*772*
Asian Other	54.2	51.4	11.3	8.4	22.2	25.5	*771*	*860*
Mixed ethnic	35.6	52.9	9.2	7.6	34.5	21.9	*87*	*155*
Other	46.4	56.6	14.0	7.9	22.4	21.1	*926*	*1,405*
Total with known ethnicity	*59.3*	*64.5*	*9.0*	*5.2*	*17.6*	*18.5*	*59,949*	*77,971*

Source: HESA (FDS)

Table A11: Unemployment rates for full-time first degree home graduates (with known destination) from different subjects, from English universities, by ethnicity, 2001/02 (percentages)

Ethnic group	All	Allied to med	Biol sci	Phys sci	Comp sci	Eng+ techn	Soc sci	Law	Bus/ admin	Lib/ info	Lang	Art/ Design	Combined
White	6.1	1.9	5.4	7.4	11.9	8.3	6.2	3.3	5.5	8.9	6.4	8.6	6.5
All minority ethnic	11.1	5.1	10.0	11.4	18.8	16.9	10.6	6.0	10.9	12.6	10.6	13.1	11.9
Black Caribbean	9.8	3.8	6.8	10.0	12.3	25.5	8.1	8.8	9.5	10.2	6.7	14.7	10.1
Black African	12.2	7.4	9.4	8.3	19.7	13.0	9.7	7.5	12.9	23.2	15.6	14.0	10.4
Black Other	10.8	6.3	6.8	8.7	23.4	12.9	12.3	10.8	5.7	6.3	0	10.0	19.1
Indian	10.2	2.8	9.3	13.5	16.9	16.9	11.3	5.2	10.3	7.8	10.7	15.4	11.1
Pakistani	13.9	7.8	16.4	12.6	21.4	20.7	14.0	8.1	13.5	15.4	13.2	14.0	15.3
Bangladeshi	12.4	6.0	12.3	11.4	19.5	22.2	13.7	6.2	7.3	9.1	11.5	22.6	15.6
Chinese	11.6	5.1	11.6	8.6	18.5	14.2	6.8	0	14.2	0	13.8	16.1	13.6
Asian Other	9.7	5.4	5.7	14.1	18.3	15.6	8.3	1.1	10.5	26.5	11.1	9.3	10.7
Other	10.3	4.9	9.5	9.0	24.7	17.0	8.8	5.8	9.0	12.5	11.6	11.0	9.1
All (known ethnicity)	*6.9*	*2.5*	*5.9*	*7.7*	*14.2*	*9.8*	*6.9*	*3.9*	*6.6*	*9.4*	*6.7*	*9.1*	*7.2*

Note: medicine has not been included as unemployment is very low across all ethnic groups (1 per cent or less), and other subjects with relatively small numbers are excluded from the table because of space. Also, the mixed ethnic group not shown as very small numbers

Source: HESA(FDS)

Table A12: First destinations of HND and DipHE (home) qualifiers (with known destination) from English university, 2001/02 (percentages)

	UK paid work	Study or training	Unemployed	*(N)*
White	59.4	32.1	2.4	*13,312*
All minority ethnic groups	39.2	50.1	3.0	*3,398*
Black Caribbean	48.2	40.6	4.4	*342*
Black African	62.3	26.5	3.8	*962*
Black Other	44.9	41.2	2.2	*136*
Indian	22.1	70.2	3.9	*796*
Pakistani	18.7	69.5	5.3	*449*
Bangladeshi	34.2	58.3	5.0	*120*
Chinese	23.6	64.6	3.1	*127*
Asian Other	38.9	49.1	4.8	*167*
Other/mixed	38.0	47.7	6.1	*299*
All (known ethnicity)	*55.3*	*35.8*	*2.5*	*16,710*

Note: row percentages; not shown are a small percentage with other destinations

Source: HESA (FDS)

Table A13: Further study or training undertaken by first degree full-time graduates from English universities, by gender, 2001/02 (percentages of male and female graduates taking each type of study, *ie* row percentages)

	Higher degree — taught		Higher degree — research		Dipl, Cert, prof trg		Other study/trg	
	Female	**Male**	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**	**Male**
White	31	41	9	20	51	31	8	9
All Minority ethnic	43	53	5	8	41	26	11	13
- Black Caribbean/ Black Other	41	39	3	14	47	36	10	12
- Black African	46	56	4	5	35	25	14	15
- Indian	41	56	5	7	41	24	12	13
- Pakistani/Bangladeshi	35	50	6	8	50	27	10	15
- Chinese	57	59	7	9	25	23	11	9
- Asian Other	41	47	9	9	38	31	11	13
- Other/mixed ethnic	44	50	6	13	39	23	11	14
All (known ethnicity)	*33*	*43*	*9*	*18*	*49*	*30*	*9*	*10*

Source: HESA/FDS

Appendix B: Technical Notes

These are technical notes to accompany the main report. They provide further details of the research and methodologies used.

B.1 Research design and management

The research comprised a number of elements, of both a quantitative and qualitative nature, focusing on different areas of the given research objectives and the different target groups. The research specification required quantitative results to be produced as much as possible, though the value of qualitative output was also recognised in providing illustrative case study material. To facilitate the efficient conduct of the research activity and its project management, the various research elements were organised into a number of work packages (WPs). These were managed separately and reports delivered on each of them during the course of the project to the DFES. They were:

- a literature and statistical review

- a survey of current students (in a sample of HE and FE institutions)

- a survey of graduates (follow-up of final year students surveyed earlier)

- a survey of parents of students (who had been interviewed earlier)

- a survey of potential students (drawn from schools and colleges linked to institutions in the student survey)

- case study interviews with employers of graduates.

A number of these work packages were linked.

This overall organisation of the work worked well. It meant that different elements could run concurrently, helped keep the project to time, and enabled findings to be delivered to the DfES during the project. We had initially planned to also post these early findings on the research project's website at IES, and thus disseminate externally and get feedback from other researchers during the course of the work. However, the time and cost involved in meeting DfES requirements for publicising research results in this way were far beyond our agreed budget, and so this

did not happen. In future, we recommend that the use of the Internet for dissemination during long projects like this is given more consideration at the outset.

Further details of each of the survey stages are given in the following sections of this appendix. But before turning to them, a number of general points are worth making about the research focus and data on ethnicity, which had a bearing on the way the research was conducted and also on the analysis and interpretation of findings.

- **Broad scope**: This research was asked to take a very broad scope, covering flows into, through and out of HE. Each of these phases could have been research studies in their own right. Various issues along the 'journey' into, through and out of HE were identified, and important linkages made between the various stages, which had not been done previously on this scale. But many issues relating to each stage were not investigated as fully as we would have liked because of limitations of the overall size of the project and the amount of detailed information on ethnicity that could be generated.

- **Disaggregating data**: By agreement with DfES, the scope was limited to undergraduate study only (which helped to focus resources better), but we were requested to ensure that the full range of undergraduate study was covered, that is: all types of HE and FE institutions, modes (full-time and part-time) and levels (degree and other undergraduate study, the latter referred to in aggregate for brevity as 'sub-degree'). Factors affecting different groups of students taking different types of undergraduate study were important to investigate, but contrasts between many of these groups could not be explored as thoroughly as we would have liked because of constraints imposed by 'small numbers' issues. This was a particular problem when looking outside of the traditional core of undergraduate study, *ie* full-time, degree study (which makes up almost two-thirds of the total) to part-time and sub-degree study. If each mode/level group is explored separately by ethnic group, and also say by age and gender, numbers in most cells become very small, and make conclusions unreliable. The small size of some minority ethnic groups (*eg* Chinese, Bangladeshi) can be particularly problematic. Resource limitations on sample sizes in several stages of the research often prohibited investigation of variations at a detailed level.

- **Ethnic Diversity**: A related issue is the increasingly diverse minority ethnic population, in particular by age and gender profile, education background, social status and culture. This means that analyses can become very complex. An aggregate White/non-White breakdown is of much less value nowadays, and we aimed where we could to use an individual ethnic group breakdown (but some very small groups needed to be

aggregated in places). A three-way gender/ethnic/social class breakdown can provide greater insights but generally was not feasible because of insufficient data.

- **Defining ethnicity**: The research focused on the standard ethnic groups — *ie* those used in the Census questions on ethnicity (see Glossary at front of main report and also section 1.2.1). This was decided upon because of the need for compatibility with other data sources (*eg* national student datasets, produced by HESA and UCAS, on which we based our student survey sample design). It meant though, that we had to give less attention to other aspects of ethnicity or to specific ethnic groups who are not defined by these groupings, *eg* refugee groups, asylum seekers, or those from countries of more recent immigration (*eg* in Eastern Europe, Middle East). However, we did include questions on religion and country of birth in our student survey (see section 3.2). A point worth noting is that changes made to the standard ethnic groups in the 2001 Census, and adopted by HESA and UCAS from 2001/02, make comparisons over time problematic, and so any trend data (using old [1991 Census] and new [2001 Census] categories) should be treated with caution. The main change in 2001 was the introduction of a new category of mixed ethnic groups (*eg* Asian/White, Black/White), and recognition of people of Irish descent within the White category.

- **Self-identification**: A final point to note is that the method of reporting ethnic group in the Census, UCAS and HESA records (and in our surveys) is by self-identification, *ie* individuals choosing a group with which they identify the most from a given list. Self-identification or self-classification did not appear to be a problem in any of our surveys and non-reporting in the HESA and UCAS home student data is fairly low overall (though higher in some parts of HE, such as part-time sub-degree study, and higher overall than in the Census 2001). However, problems can arise when combining data from more than one source, even those that use the same ethnicity classification system. There are likely to be some differences in the way the same question is answered, coded, or presented in analysis, leading to uncertainties with data validity. In particular, we have highlighted in the text the difficulties with the calculation of Higher Education Initial Participation Rates (HEIPRs) for individual ethnic groups, which combines HESA and Census data (see section 4.1.1). The respondents in the two surveys are likely to be different and may identify themselves (and others at their address in the case of the Census) with the ethnic groups differently.

B.2 The student survey

This was undertaken in partnership with MORI Social Research.

B.2.1 Survey approach

A quantitative semi-structured approach, based on a face-to-face interview survey on campus, was chosen as the most appropriate methodology for this part of the study. From our experience of undertaking large scale student surveys, we believed it had many advantages over other methodologies (such as postal surveys, telephone interviews, or Internet-based surveys). In particular, it avoided the need to gain co-operation from institutions to select samples of students from their records, and the confidentiality issues involved there. This can seriously delay the start of survey fieldwork, as well as taking up considerable resources. It can also lead to bias in results if significant numbers of selected institutions refuse to take part. Instead, we decided to use a short set of screening questions to individuals selected at random on campuses (after first seeking permission from institutions to take part, only two refused), and set quota controls (by ethnic group, age, *etc.* see below) to select students for interview. Use of face-to-face interviews allowed us to incorporate questions in the interview where respondents could provide verbatim responses, and interviewers could probe where relevant. We also believed it would be able to handle sensitive issues better, in particular any associated with ethnicity that students had encountered.

However, the main disadvantage of a face-to-face interview method is its much higher cost per interview, which inevitably puts limitations on the size of the target sample. But, through restricting the length of the interview to 15-20 minutes, using trained interviewers in MORI's fieldforce, and biasing the sample selection towards minority ethnic groups, we believed that a target of 1,250 interviews was achievable within the budget available, and would provide a sufficient amount of high quality data for our purposes.

B.2.2 Sample design

The specification for the survey design was that it should produce robust findings that would be generalisable to the population. It needed to be representative of its target population — full- and part-time HE students in institutions within England who are UK domiciled — and also provide sufficiently robust data about the different minority ethnic groups to enable comparisons to be made between them, and also compare sub-groups (*eg* gender within ethnic group).

This was not a straightforward task because of the relatively small proportion of minority ethnic undergraduates overall (only around 16 per cent) and their very uneven distribution across the HE sector, especially by institution and geographical location (see section 4.2 of main report). We had to ensure also that there were sufficient numbers of final year students in the sample to provide

a follow-up graduate sample to 'track' once they graduated and started looking for work (see Chapter 7).

To achieve these objectives, there were three elements to the survey design, a main sample and two booster samples:

- the main sample, designed to be a representative sample of students in undergraduate study in England, with a target of 500 students. Ethnicity quotas for these interviews were set on the basis of broad White/non-White categories

- a booster target of 500 minority ethnic students, with ethnicity quotas set by detailed ethnic categories in order to permit sub-group analysis

- a booster target of 250 final year students, selected along the same lines.

The sampling strategy consisted of a three-fold process: sampling institutions, recruiting institutions, and sampling students.

B.2.3 Sampling institutions

First, a random sample of HE institutions (excluding the Open University) was selected, with probability of selection proportionate to size (number of students), and stratified by region and institution type (pre-1992 university, post-1992 university, and 'other'). The sampling frame comprised all HEIs in England, including universities and HE colleges (133). We calculated that a sample of 23 HE institutions, providing 20 interviews at each, was needed to form most of the 'representative sample' of undergraduate students (460). The distribution of students within the sampled HE institutions was compared to the national profile by region and type, to ensure that it was representative.

DfES requested that HE students in FE colleges should be included as part of the sample. But there are no comparable data for the FE sector at an institutional level (as there is for HEIs) which we could obtain for sampling purposes, so instead we chose four FE colleges, two in the north and two in the south of England, each with large numbers of HE students (for pragmatic reasons, so as to make quota selection and interviewing as cost effective as possible). They each contributed ten (total 40) interviews, mainly to the 'representative' sample.

For the booster of minority ethnic students, an additional six HE institutions were selected on the basis of their high representation of minority ethnic students (ie to allow the collection of sufficient data from minority ethnic students). Institutions with more than 25 per cent minority ethnic representation (not already selected for inclusion in the 'representative' sample) were sampled on a random basis to provide much of this booster. The minority ethnic

booster sample also included the 'representative' sample institutions.

The final year booster covered all of the 33 institutions in total selected for the representative and minority ethnic booster samples.

B.2.4 Recruiting institutions

Once the sample of 33 institutions was selected, the process of obtaining permission to conduct on-campus interviewing began. Letters signed by the Project Manager at IES, explaining the aims of the research, were sent to institution vice-chancellors or principals. Fax-back forms were included with these letters, to enable institutions to 'opt-in' and nominate a named contact person, with whom the research team could liase about institution-specific issues such as dates to avoid interviewing (*eg* exam periods), the best places to stand in order to recruit students, and the distribution of students doing different degree subjects around the university. Only two of the selected institutions refused to participate in the research, and were replaced by similar institutions, in terms of region, size and institution type.

Table B1 shows the breakdown of the type of institutions participating in the study by broad region. As can be seen, there was a higher proportion of new (*ie* post-92) than old (pre-92) universities in the sample compared to the population, which is due to the uneven ethnic student distribution (and a deliberate part of the sampling strategy). The sample comprised a lower proportion of HE/FE colleges because the average numbers of undergraduates there are smaller. The overall regional distribution of institutions in the sample is similar to the population, but there is a bias in the sample towards post-92 institutions in London (because of their generally higher minority ethnic representation).

Table B1: Sample of institutions

Govt region	pre-92 university	post-92 university	HE/FE colleges	Total	% in pop. (N=133)
London	4	5	1	10	29
Rest of South	3	2	2	7	22
Midlands	2	4	1	7	14
North	3	3	3	9	35
Total	*12*	*14*	*7*	*33*	100
% of HEIs in population (N=133)	*38*	*27*	*34*	*100*	

Source: IES/MORI, 2002

Why the Difference?

B.2.5 Student sample design

MORI devised a sample design for the number of students to be interviewed at each institution, and also for the representative and booster samples:

- Firstly, for the main (*ie* representative) sample, a minimum of 20 interviews needed to be carried out at each HE institution.

- Next, for the minority ethnic booster, institutions in the main sample were given additional ethnic booster targets. Around 200 of the overall 500 in the booster came from the institutions in the representative survey. The remainder came from the additional institutions (approximately 50 at each). This method helped to ensure that the booster sample included minority ethnic students in institutions with both high and low minority ethnic representations.

- The final year booster sample was made up of students from all sampled institutions.

Sample targets ranged from 27 to 83 at individual HE institutions.

Quotas were set for interviewers at each institution. The method of face-to-face interviewing allowed for quotas to be set on a range of key characteristics, in order to generate a sample of students that was representative of the institutions participating in the research. Quotas were set based on *institutional* profile data supplied by HESA and covered the following characteristics: ethnicity, sex, subject of study (broad categories), type of student (full-time/part-time), year of study (first year/final year/other), and age on entry to current course (under 21 years, and 21 or over).

In places, not all the quotas could be met within the time allocated for fieldwork at each institution, and so some had to be dropped (dropping down in reverse order of the above).

B.2.6 Achieved sample and weighting

Our target of 1,250 was exceeded and 1,319 interviews were carried out. For analysis purposes and presentation of results we had to divide the sample into two main groups, because of the way it had been designed by MORI and weighted by them:

- **Subset A, the representative sample**: 535 undergraduate students (all years), comprising 465 White students and 70 minority ethnic students, drawn from the 23 sampled HE institutions plus the four colleges. This was checked for representativeness against the population (but only on HE Institutions in England, as all that was available, *ie* not FE colleges) for a number of variables (gender, age, on entry, mode of study, year of study, subject and qualification aim). It

was generally well matched except for age on entry, where it underrepresented older students (only 34 per cent of the sample were 21 or older, whereas 57 per cent of the total population are of this age). Weights (*ie* multipliers) were given to individual records to adjust the sample to 'match' it to the population for this variable. There were also slight underrepresentations of part-time study and other sub-degree students and final years, where a similar procedure was carried out. The resulting 'weighted' sample is shown in Tables B2 to B4.

- **Subset B, the minority ethnic sample**: This comprised a total of 715 students, drawn from across all 33 institutions. It combined the minority ethnic booster with the minority ethnic students in the final year booster to reach this total. We followed a similar procedure as above for comparing the sample with the population, in this case the minority ethnic student population in the HE sector. We also found a similar under-representation of younger students, and also part-time and sub-degree students (*nb* this is not unexpected from quota sampling methods, because part-time students are less likely to be found on campuses and more part-time students are older, also more are studying on sub-degree programmes). Again, a 'weighting' process was undertaken to address this. The resulting 'weighted' sample is shown in Tables B5 and B6.

  Of the 715 students in the minority ethnic sample, the largest groups were Indian (24 per cent of total) and Black African (23 per cent). Black Caribbean students made up 14 per cent, and they have been combined in the analysis with the much smaller group of Black Other (four per cent). Pakistani made up 14 per cent and they have been combined in the analysis in the report with the small group of Bangladeshi students (under four per cent). Chinese students (four per cent) were combined with those from other Asian backgrounds, *eg* Malaysian (8.5 per cent). A further four per cent were grouped as 'Other' (including a range, *eg* American, Middle Eastern, Africans and mixed ethnic origins) — *nb* these groupings were constructed after taking expert advice, and based on similarities evident between some groups in the data on educational participation. Although we aimed to standardise the research study on the 2001 Census ethnic groups (see Chapter 1 and Figure 1.1), the student survey sample had to be based on the earlier 1991 census ethnic classification because the sample selection had to be based on HESA data for 2000/01 (the latest available at the time of the survey),which used the 1991 ethnic classification.

Some of the questions were asked only of final year students (on job/career plans). We had 530 final year students in total, drawn from across the total sample (*ie* from main sample and boosters). Though it is not representative on ethnicity (54 per cent minority ethnic students) it was checked for representativeness on other characteristics, and similar small adjustments needed to be made

Table B2: Representative sample: ethnic breakdown

Ethnic group	%	N
White	87	465
All minority ethnic students	13	70
- Black Caribbean/Black Other	2	11
- Black African	2	12
- Pakistani/Bangladeshi	3	17
- Indian	3	16
- Chinese/Asian Other	2	12
- Other	1	3
Total	*100*	*535*

Note: Here and in other tables, percentages may not add to 100

Source: IES/MORI, 2002

as above, by age, mode of study, and qualification aim. Also, some questions were asked only of first year students, to capture their initial impressions of adjusting to life within HE.

Table B3: Representative sample: personal characteristics of White and minority ethnic groups

Characteristic	White		All minority ethnic		Total sample	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
Gender						
Male	48	224	53	37	49	261
Female	52	241	47	33	51	274
Age on entry						
Under 21 yrs	44	203	41	29	44	232
21 to 24 yrs	20	91	29	20	21	111
25 yrs or older	37	171	30	21	36	192
Activity prior to HE entry						
School	16	73	10	7	15	80
Sixth form college	19	85	20	14	19	99
FE/tertiary/other college	15	67	20	14	15	81
Working	35	159	37	26	34	185
Gap year/travel	6	26	4	3	6	29
Unemployed	3	15	6	4	4	19
Caring for child/relative	4	17	—	—	3	17
Other	*3*	15	*3*	2	*3*	17
Year of study (within HE)						
First year	37	171	46	32	38	203
Final year	33	153	33	23	33	176
Other years	30	141	21	15	29	155

Note: Here, and in other tables, on some variables there are missing codes, where respondents refused to give a response, and these are not shown

Source: IES/MORI, 2002

Table B4: Representative sample: educational characteristics of White and minority ethnic groups

Characteristic	White %	White N	All minority ethnic %	All minority ethnic N	Total sample %	Total sample N
Highest qualification						
Academic	53	*157*	46	*17*	52	*174*
Vocational/access/other	48	*142*	54	*20*	48	*162*
'A' level points ('A' level holders)						
15 or less	35	*107*	38	*13*	36	*120*
16 to 25	42	*126*	44	*15*	42	*141*
26 or more	23	*70*	18	*6*	22	*76*
Place gained highest qualification						
Comprehensive school	18	*81*	6	*4*	17	*85*
FE/tertiary/other college	26	*113*	42	*28*	28	*141*
Grammar school	8	*35*	3	*2*	7	*37*
Private/independent school	8	*34*	13	*9*	8	*43*
Sixth form college	23	*102*	22	*15*	23	*117*
Other	18	*78*	14	*9*	17	*87*
Type of HE institution						
Pre 92 university	33	*153*	17	*12*	31	*165*
Post 92 university/HE college	52	*243*	63	*44*	53	*290*
HE in FE college	15	*68*	20	*14*	15	*82*
Qualification studying for						
Degree	78	*363*	73	51	77	*414*
Sub-degree	22	*102*	27	19	23	*121*

Source IES/MORI, 2002

Table B5: Minority ethnic sample: Personal characteristics of each minority ethnic group

Characteristic	Black Caribbean/ Black Other		Black African		Pakistani/Bangladeshi		Indian		Chinese/Asian Other		Other	
	%	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**
Gender												
Male	45	57	56	93	64	82	53	92	58	52	30	8
Female	55	70	44	74	36	47	47	82	42	38	70	19
Age on entry												
Under 21 yrs	21	27	24	40	53	69	57	98	47	42	43	12
21 to 24 yrs	21	27	40	60	29	38	25	43	28	25	11	3
25 yrs or older	58	74	40	67	18	23	18	31	26	23	46	13
Activity prior to HE entry												
School	1	1	6	9	11	13	10	17	9	8	7	2
Sixth form college	13	16	20	31	37	45	34	57	23	20	33	9
FE/tertiary/other college	22	27	23	36	23	28	19	32	20	17	26	7
Working	55	69	39	62	21	25	27	46	30	26	22	6
Gap year/travel	1	1	2	3	3	4	2	4	14	12	7	2
Unemployed	2	3	2	3	—	—	1	2	—	—	—	—
Caring for child/relative	6	7	5	8	—	—	2	4	2	2	4	1
Other	1	1	4	6	5	6	4	6	1	1	—	—
Year of study (within HE)												
First year	36	46	29	48	43	55	38	66	23	21	25	7
Final year	32	41	44	74	34	44	36	62	49	44	50	14
Other years	*32*	*41*	*27*	*45*	*23*	*30*	*26*	*45*	*28*	*25*	*25*	*7*

Source: IES/MORI, 2002

Table B6: Educational characteristics of minority ethnic sample

Characteristic	Black Caribbean/ Black Other		Black African		Pakistani/Bangladeshi		Indian		Chinese/Asian Other		Other	
	%	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**
Highest qualification												
Academic	35	24	41	39	53	40	54	53	56	34	71	10
Vocational/access/other	65	44	60	57	47	35	47	46	44	27	29	4
'A' level points												
15 or less	49	21	26	18	54	37	39	42	33	19	61	11
16 to 25	44	19	63	44	34	23	47	51	51	29	28	5
26 or more	7	3	11	8	12	8	14	15	16	9	11	2
Place gained highest qualification												
Comprehensive school	7	8	3	4	10	13	9	15	7	6	3	1
FE/tertiary/other college	47	57	47	77	35	44	37	61	24	21	41	12
Grammar school	1	1	3	5	2	2	6	10	2	2	—	—
Private/independent school	1	1	3	4	7	9	5	9	12	10	14	4
Sixth form college	26	32	26	43	37	46	34	57	30	26	38	11
Other	19	23	19	30	10	12	9	15	25	21	3	1
Type of HE institution												
Pre-92 university	9	11	13	21	16	21	21	37	24	22	15	4
Post-92 university/college	86	11	86	145	62	81	61	106	69	62	82	22
HE in FE college	5	6	1	2	20	27	17	30	8	7	3	1
Qualification studying for												
Degree	80	102	83	139	71	92	72	125	79	70	82	23
Sub-degree	20	25	17	29	29	37	28	48	21	19	18	5

Source: IES/MORI, 2002

B.2.7 Interviews

The student survey took place between March and May 2002. Interviews with students were conducted by trained MORI interviewers on campus.

In addition, 30 in-depth interviews were undertaken by IES staff as case studies, by telephone, during summer 2002. They were all with minority ethnic students interviewed earlier, chosen to represent the broad range of such students in undergraduate study:

- 16 were men, 14 were women
- 15 were aged under 21 at the start of their higher education course, six were aged 21-24, five were aged 25-29, and four were 30 years of age or more at that time
- most (28) were studying on a full-time courses, two were part-time
- 18 attended a post-92 university, ten attended a pre-92 university, a further two attended a college of HE
- 26 were on degree courses, one was an HND student, one an HNC student and two were studying for 'other' qualifications, *eg* DipHE.

Half of the interviews (15) were with students who had recently completed their first year of study, and the other half were with final year students.

Copies of the CAPI transcript questionnaire and follow-up interview schedule have not been reproduced here, mainly because of their length, but are available on request from IES.

B.3 The graduate survey

This was a follow-up survey of students interviewed in their final year in 2002. This phase of the project aimed to investigate the labour market experiences of new graduates, looking at activities since graduation, their financial situation, experiences of applying for jobs or further study, work experience whilst studying, and looking back, their views on the value of higher education.

B.3.1 The sample

The sample was generated from the first phase of the research, see above, section B.1. Among the students interviewed by MORI on campus were 560 final year students. At that time, 284 (51 per cent) of them agreed that we could contact them for follow-up research and provided us with a permanent address and telephone number which we could use to get in touch with them.

Two intra-survey mailings were undertaken in order to keep addresses and telephone numbers as up-to-date as possible. In the course of these, a further 22 final year students either opted out of being re-contacted *or* we were otherwise informed (by parents) that they had gone travelling or moved away, with no forwarding address provided.

This meant that at the time of the follow-up survey, our sample comprised 262 graduates.

B.3.2 Telephone interviews

Interviews were conducted by (Computer Aided Telephone Interviewing), CATI and lasted for 20 minutes each on average. In the original design, quotas were to be set on broad ethnicity (white and non-white) but in the event, because of the low number of contacts available, all were contacted and interviews sought.

The questionnaire was designed by IES in consultation with the MORI. It comprised seven sections:

● Course details

● Activities since graduation

● Financial situation

● Experiences of applying for jobs/study

● Work experience whilst studying

● Looking back (views on the value of higher education)

● Additional details (ethnicity, age check, social class).

Copies of the CATI transcript are available on request from IES.

B.3.3 Response rate

One hundred and three graduates participated in the third phase of the research, representing an unadjusted response rate of 39 per cent. Fifty-three of these graduates were white and 50 were non-white.

The main reasons for non-contact with students were: out-of-date address and/or telephone details (where the student had moved and not provided new details); and not being available during the research, *eg* because they were travelling abroad. The table below, Table B7, breaks down the sample outcome in more detail and indicates an adjusted response rate of 74 per cent.

It can be difficult to follow-up graduates after they have left university, as they are a very mobile population, particularly during their first year in the labour market. This is further

Table B7: Graduate survey response

Issued sample	262
Achieved interviews	103
Unadjusted response rate	*39%*
Invalid sample (wrong numbers, unobtainable)	101
Not available during fieldwork	22
Adjusted response rate	*74%*
Refused	23
No contact	13

Source: MORI, 2003

complicated by the increased use of mobile phones amongst this group, where personal telephone numbers can change frequently.

The number of achieved interviews, and therefore size of graduate sample, was lower than originally anticipated. The main implication of this smaller sample was that it was not possible to undertake the breakdowns by individual minority group that had been planned at the outset. Also, the sample can in no way be seen as representative of the graduate population as a whole, or of particular minority ethnic groups within it. However, the study still provides a very useful up-to-date insight into the experiences of a range of ethnic minority groups and allows us to compare and contrast them. As a result, we could look for any patterns in the data which could usefully be explored in the future, in research on a larger scale.

The main ethnic groups used in the analysis of this survey were the four broad categories: 'Asian' (covering Asian/Asian British), 'Black' (covering Black/Black British), 'White' and 'Chinese/mixed/other' (to include all other ethnic groups).

The main details of the sample are presented in Tables B8 and B9.

- half the sample classified themselves as White, around one-fifth were either Asian or Black and only a small number were Chinese/mixed/other (around six per cent)

- there was a fairly even gender split within the sample, 51 per cent of each of the White and minority ethnic non-White groups were female; around three-quarters were under 25 when they started their undergraduate course, slightly higher among the minority ethnic group; and the majority of the sample (just over 70 per cent) used an academic rather than a vocational or access qualification to gain entry to HE, also higher among the minority ethnic group

- most of our sample were attending or had attended a post-92 institution or college (just under three-quarters). (This would be expected from the sampling methods employed in the first

Table B8: Graduate sample by main ethnic group

	Number	%
White	53	52
All minority ethnic groups	49	48
Asian or Asian British	22	21
Black or Black British	21	20
Chinese/Mixed/other	6	6
Overall sample (one refused)	102	100

Source: IES/MORI, 2003

survey, over-sampling at institutions with a high ethnic minority representation

- of those who had gained a degree, just over half had obtained a 2:1 classification or higher, the remainder gaining a 2:2 or below.

These very broad ethnic groupings mask, of course, some individual group differences. The most important of these are:

- Asian graduates were more likely to be under 25 years on entry to HE than others, especially the Black group. This is consistent with HESA student data presented in the main report which shows that Black students are much more likely to be older on average.

- In relation to degree attainment, Asian graduates were the group most likely to have achieved a 2:1 or first class honours. Asian students generally have a higher attainment profile than their Black counterparts (see main report), but not as high as White graduates. In our sample, minority ethnic graduates overall, but particularly Asian students, attained higher degree classifications on average than indicated by data for the population.

Table B9: Graduate sample by personal characteristics and broad ethnic group

Broad ethnic group	Gender		Age on entry		Highest entry qualification		Institution Type		Class of Degree	
	Male %	Female %	<25 %	>25 %	Academic %	Vocational %	Pre-92 %	Post-92 %	1st or 2:1 %	2:2 or below %
White (N=53)	51	49	76	24	68	32	32	68	52	48
All Minority ethnic groups (N=49)	51	49	78	22	75	25	22	78	50	50

Source: IES/MORI 2003

B.4 Parents of students

The main aim of this stage of the research was to obtain views of the parents of minority ethnic and white students and assess their influence on decisions by their sons and daughters to participate in higher education.

B.4.1 Approach

The parents were consulted through a combination of telephone and face-to-face interviews. It had been planned initially that a sample of 100 minority ethnic parents of minority ethnic students and a comparable 100 parents of White students would be interviewed by telephone. The sample was to be identified from the interviews with current students (in our student survey undertaken in Spring 2002, see section B.1 above). However, the number of students who agreed that their parents could be contacted was smaller than expected, approximately 200 in total. A third of them (67 student respondents) were from minority ethnic groups, and so the vast majority were White. This meant that we had an effective population of around half the size that had been originally expected, just 200, from which to draw a sample for the survey of parents of students.

There was no clear explanation for the lower response than expected. Informal feedback from the MORI research team (which interviewed the students) appeared to indicate that some students were reluctant to agree to their parents being contacted because of the possibility of linking the family details to the students' record. The concern expressed by them led to us changing the wording of the question eliciting family participation during the interviewing stage, which improved response a little.

Because of the smaller number of potential parent respondents, the design of the parents' survey was changed, in agreement with DfES, to bring in a greater qualitative dimension. It was decided to go ahead with a telephone survey, but using a shortened questionnaire and supplement this with more in-depth face-to-face interviews with a subset of respondents in their homes on particular issues.

Initially, we had considered including family members but decided to restrict it to parents, because of the smaller numbers and thus avoid introducing another variable.

Table B10: Ethnic origin of parents

	No.	%
White	57	71.2
Black Caribbean	4	5.0
Black African	5	6.2
Indian	7	8.8
Pakistani	5	6.2
Bangladeshi	—	—
Other Asian	2	2.5
Other	—	—
Total	*80*	*100.0*

Source: IES/MORI, 2002

B.4.2 Telephone survey

A total of 80 parents were interviewed by telephone by MORI Social Research in November 2002.[1] Around one-quarter of the parents (20 out of the 80 from the telephone survey) agreed to be contacted again for a face-to-face interview. Seven of these parents subsequently declined to participate further for a variety of reasons; and 13 parents were interviewed by a team of researchers from Bristol University.

B.4.3 Parents' sample characteristics

The ethnic origin of the 80 parents participating in the telephone survey is shown in Table B10. Just under three-quarters of the parents were White. The remainder (23 of the 80 parents) said they belonged to a minority ethnic group.

The 13 parents who participated also in the face-to-face interviews comprised: three White, three Pakistani, three Indian, three Black Caribbean and one Black African (their given ethnicity). Seven of the respondents were mothers and two were fathers; and two interviews were with both parents.

Parental education and country of birth

In the telephone survey sample, almost all the respondent minority ethnic parents (19 out of 23) were born outside the UK. A similar number also said they had completed a formal (compulsory) education, with only a few (four) with no formal education. Seven of these 19 minority ethnic parents completed all of their formal education in another country of origin, *ie* outside of the UK, a

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[1] We do not know how many students these parents represent. But from the follow-up interviews, we know that some of the parents had more than one child at university at the time of the survey.

similar number did so in the UK, and the remainder started their formal education in their country of birth, and completed it in the UK. Almost all the minority ethnic parents (18 out of 19 who had completed formal education) attended school to at least 14 years of age. This was similar to the White parents, with 56 out of the 57 attending school until 14 years of age. However, a higher proportion of minority ethnic parents continued in school for longer, compared with the White parents: whilst around half of the White parents (29 of the 57 respondents) left school at 16 years, only five of the 19 minority ethnic parents left school at that age. Another way of looking at this is that the minority ethnic parents were more likely than the White parents to have finished their compulsory schooling at an older age; 13 out of the 19 finished school aged 17 years or older, compared with under half (27 out of 57) of the White parents. This may be explained partly by differences in school-starting age in the country of origin of the minority ethnic parents, compared with the UK; and partly by the fact that it was possible at the time of their compulsory education for pupils in England and Wales to leave school at the age of 14.

Most of the minority ethnic parents in the telephone survey (17 out of 23) continued in education after their formal, compulsory education. However, compared with the White parents who participated in the survey, the minority ethnic parents were more likely to have attended a higher or further education college than a university. Around one in six minority ethnic parents attended university, compared with one in three White parents (Table B11).

Taken together, the information from the survey about their formal schooling and higher education, as well as other evidence from the follow-up interviews, suggest that the minority ethnic parents are more likely to be first than later generation immigrants. Indeed, they were more likely to describe themselves as such, by strong reference to their ethnic origin and country of birth, irrespective of whether they came to the UK as children themselves or as adults.

Table B11: Higher education experience of parents, by ethnicity

	White N=57	Minority Ethnic N=19	Total (%)
Attended university	18	4	27
Attended HE college	9	9	22
Attended Teacher Training	6	–	8
Attended FE college	9	4	16
Did not attend HE/FE education	15	6	26

Source: IES/MORI Survey, 2002

Table B12: Occupation of parents, by ethnicity

	White N=45	Minority Ethnic N=17	Total (%)
Managers and administrators or more senior staff	10	4	23
Professional/technical staff	14	2	26
Associate professional/technical	5	2	11
Clerical/secretarial staff	6	2	13
Craft and other skilled manual workers	2	1	5
Personal and protective services staff	1	–	2
Sales staff	5	1	10
Other unskilled jobs	–	1	2
Other	*2*	*4*	*10*

Source: IES/MORI Survey, 2002

Occupational distribution

Looking at the occupational distribution (Table B12), the minority ethnic parents in the telephone survey were slightly less likely than White parents to be in a higher occupational class. Just under half of minority ethnic parents (eight out of 17) who were working in paid employment or as self-employed, described their occupation as managers and other senior staff, or in a professional or technical capacity, *eg* professional engineers and scientists. By comparison, more than half of the White parents (29 out of 45) worked in such capacity. As occupation is taken generally as a measure of socio-economic or social class status, this implies that parents of minority ethnic students were in lower social strata (consistent with UCAS student entry data, as shown in Chapter 3, section 3.5).

B.4.4 Characteristics of the student sons/daughters of parents

The characteristics of the students (*ie* sons and daughters) of the parents who responded in the survey are shown in Table B13. Just over one-quarter of the students classified themselves in a minority ethnic group (similar proportion to the parent survey, see Table B10). They were studying predominantly at post-92 universities, and studying a relatively narrow range of subjects, mostly in professional/vocational areas — medicine, biological sciences, law, engineering/IT, business studies, social sciences (each with three or four students). This reflects much of the pattern of choices made by minority ethnic groups (as shown in the main report, see Chapter 4).

Table B13: Characteristics of the students whose parents were interviewed (20 minority ethnic and 52 White current students)

	Type of Institution			Gender		Year of Study		
	Pre-92	**Post-92**	**HE/FE College**	**Female**	**Male**	**Final**	**First**	**Other**
Minority ethnic	5	13	2	12	8	10	8	2
White	23	17	12	29	23	24	13	14
Total	*28*	*30*	*14*	*41*	*31*	*34*	*21*	*16*

Source: IES/MORI Survey, 2002

B.5 Potential student survey

Work began on this phase of the research in September 2002, in partnership with the survey organisation, Employment Research. Its purpose was to investigate the intentions of potential HE students, factors affecting their decisions about choice of institution and course, and experiences to date of applying to HE.

B.5.1 Approach

It was agreed at the outset with the DfES that the most cost-effective methodology for this stage would be to use mainly self-completion questionnaires. This took into account the sample size needed, question areas and budget. A target survey sample of approximately 1,000 students from Year 13 (or equivalent) in schools, sixth forms and further education colleges would be sought, of whom the majority would be from minority ethnic backgrounds. This sample size was felt to be the minimum needed to enable analysis by individual minority ethnic groups to be undertaken. In addition, a number of interviews and focus groups would be undertaken to explore issues in more depth. This design focused on the vast majority of likely entrants to HE in that year, but, of course, did not include all potential HE students, *eg* those in work at that time and not participating in education.

B.5.2 Survey sample design

As minority ethnic students make up a small minority of the total undergraduate (home-domiciled) intake in England, it was decided to use a purposeful rather than a truly representative sample design. This would help achieve a sample comprising sufficient numbers of minority ethnic groups, within the limitations of the available resources for this stage. The method used was to focus the sample on schools and colleges in England likely to have relatively high proportions of minority ethnic students on their rolls. Schools and colleges, and contacts for each, were identified with the assistance of the HE institutions taking part in earlier phases of the overall study (interviews with staff in our sampled HEIs). Not only did this help meet our objective of

having good coverage of all minority ethnic groups, it also helped integrate this stage of the study with the other stages (as these colleges and schools were 'feeders' into HE institutions in the sample for the student survey).

It is important to emphasise that the sample was not designed to be representative of all minority ethnic students who apply to HE. But it was focused on a proportion of those who do — students from maintained schools, sixth form colleges and colleges of FE, from mainly urban areas, and with relatively high proportions of minority ethnic student populations. Minority ethnic students from independent schools were excluded, as were schools with a relatively low representation of minority ethnic groups (and also potential HE entrants not in education at that time, as highlighted above).

B.5.3 Sample

An initial sample of approximately 40 schools and colleges was contacted in October 2002 and invited to participate in the research (double the number we felt needed to provide sample size and also spread of students, *eg* by localities, ethnic group, social class). These were mostly in urban areas, with relatively high minority ethnic communities. IES researchers explained that the school/college role would be used to identify between 50 and 150 students who were in their second year (Year 13 or equivalent) of post-16 education and who may realistically be considering pursuing a higher education.

The sample of 40 was narrowed down from the initial contacts to a working sample of 20 (ten schools with sixth forms and sixth form colleges, and ten FE colleges). There was a bias towards colleges rather than schools, to reflect the post-16 participation pattern of minority ethnic groups. The group of 20 chosen was on the basis of a variety of factors including: a desire to include schools and colleges in several different urban areas, the need to ensure coverage of all of the main minority ethnic groups, and of course, an agreement from the school/college to participate in the research. Once agreement had been reached with relevant personnel, questionnaires were mailed in mid-November, sufficient to be completed by all of their Year 13 students (or equivalent in colleges). Approximately 1,200 questionnaires were sent to the schools and sixth form colleges, and 1,200 to the FE colleges by the survey house, Employment Research in November 2002. Representatives from the schools and colleges were given written guidance as to how the survey should be administered. Ideally we hoped that questionnaires would be completed in class time but in order to minimise the burden on schools, they were allowed to distribute the forms to students to complete in their own time if this was more convenient.

B.5.4 Response

After several follow ups and mailing additional forms (more than anticipated from the initial positive response from schools/ colleges were needed), 957 completed questionnaires were returned by end February 2003 (314 from the schools and sixth form colleges and 643 from the FE colleges, a better response from FE colleges than schools). Non-response was partly due to schools (more so than colleges) failing to administer the forms at all, or students in receipt of forms not completing them. It was clear, however, that in some cases schools felt very burdened with the research requirements and although they had been willing in principle to help at the outset, could not administer the questionnaire in the available timescale. In two cases (a school and a sixth form college) no forms were distributed. The survey was held open for several weeks longer than was originally planned to maximise the end response.

It is difficult to estimate an overall response rate because we do not know precisely how many questionnaires were actually distributed to students. However, taking out the two institutions that did not distribute any questionnaires, and assuming the others handed out all of them (which is optimistic as some will not have distributed them all), this meant a response rate of at least 47 per cent. It succeeded in almost meeting our initial target of 1,000 completed questionnaires.

B.5.5 Response profile

The resulting 957 completed questionnaires provided substantial numbers of respondents within all of the main minority ethnic groups (Table B14), allowing analysis at this level, which was consistent with the overall aims of the study.

There are no directly comparable population statistics for the sample to enable an assessment of its representativeness by ethnic group. The sample coverage is likely to be more broadly based in some respects than the UCAS applicant population in any one year *ie* those who make a UCAS application to HE. The latter only covers full-time undergraduate courses, and also, not all who apply via UCAS actually take up a place in HE. A comparison with the first year undergraduate population (home domiciled) in England showed the sample to be broadly similar in terms of ethnic profile, though slightly overrepresentative of Pakistani and Bangladeshi and slightly underrepresentative of Chinese/Asian Other groups. These differences are likely to be a reflection mainly of the institutional profile of the sample, in particular:

a) the exclusion of independent schools from the sample (*nb* Chinese and Asian Other groups are the most likely groups to apply to UCAS from independent schools [see main report, section 2.7]), and

Table B14: Sample profile by ethnic group

Ethnic group	Number	% of total sample (known ethnicity)	% of minority ethnic sample
Black African	109	12.0	17.1
Black Caribbean/other	80	8.8	12.5
Pakistani/Bangladeshi	136	14.9	21.2
Indian	184	20.2	28.8
Chinese/Asian other	71	7.8	11.1
Other	59	6.5	9.2
All minority ethnic	**639**	**70.1**	**100**
White	272	29.9	–
Ethnicity not given	46	–	–
All respondents	*957*	*911*	*639*

Source: IES Survey of potential entrants to higher education, 2002/3

b) the bias in sample selection towards, and higher survey response from, FE colleges (*nb* Pakistani and Bangladeshi students, along with Black students, are more likely than other groups to enter HE via the FE college route).

An important point to note is that using this sample design meant that the sample was not representative of all White potential applicants either, and it may be that White students at other schools/colleges are not included (with low representation of minority ethnic groups) have different attitudes to HE than those we included here.

Key features to note about the make-up of the sample, and differences between minority ethnic groups and the White group are:

● **Educational institution**: Overall, two out of three students in the achieved sample were at a FE college, even more of White (77 per cent) than minority ethnic students in aggregate (62 per cent), but this varied considerably between ethnic group. The lowest proportion, 25 per cent, at a FE college, was among the Indian group, see Table B15.

● **Gender**: Almost two-thirds of the sample was female, with higher female representation among White students compared with the minority ethnic group in aggregate, see Table B15. Within the minority ethnic part of the sample, the highest male representation was among Indians and the lowest among Black Caribbean/Black Other. The latter is consistent with the pattern in the undergraduate student population.

● **Age**: The vast majority of the sample, 86 per cent, were young people (under age 21 years). The proportion of older potential HE students (aged 21 year or more) is lower for minority ethnic groups in aggregate than White students; but it is

Table B15: Potential HE student sample profile: Total number of respondents by ethnic group, and each ethnic group analysed by gender, age, father's occupation and type of institution

Ethnic group	N	% female	% aged 21 plus	% with parent in higher occupation*	% at a FE college
Black African	109	62	21	64	93
Black Caribbean/other	80	72	27	22	81
Pakistani/Bangladeshi	136	62	7	19	71
Indian	184	55	2	37	25
Chinese/Asian other	71	65	12	48	75
Other	59	78	17	46	66
All minority ethnic groups	**639**	**63**	**12**	**39**	**62**
White	272	71	18	44	77
Ethnicity not given	46				
All	957	65	14	40	67
(N)	*(957)*	*(908)*	*(834)*	*(575)*	*(911)*

*As indicated by father's occupation (or mother's if not father), in top three SOC groups: managerial professional or associate professional. But, almost 40 per cent of sample did not give their father's occupation and more still did not give mother's occupation, so reliability in these data is not high.

Source: IES survey of potential entrants to higher education, 2002/3

higher for Black students and highest of all for Black Caribbean/Black Other (27 per cent), while very low among Indian and Pakistani/Bangladeshi groups. These variations by age are also consistent with the pattern in the undergraduate student population.

● **Socio-economic class:** The data on socio-economic class from the survey has reliability problems because a sizeable minority of the sample (almost 40 per cent) did not provide information on parental occupation (*nb* non-response to a question about parental occupation, which is one of the traditional ways that socio-economic class is measured, was also a problem in our undergraduate student survey). Of those that did provide details, the proportion whose fathers' (or mothers', if no father) occupation was in a managerial, professional, or associate professional occupation, *ie* the top three SOC (Standard Occupational Codes), was slightly lower among minority ethnic compared with White respondents, and lowest of all among Black Caribbean/Black Other and Pakistani/ Bangladeshi groups. By contrast, Black Africans recorded the highest percentage, see Table B15. The only source of population data we have for comparative purposes is on UCAS applicants, which shows a much higher socio-economic class profile among White compared with minority ethnic groups as a whole than found in this survey, but it also shows variations between minority ethnic group. It is likely that our sample of potential students (even with the higher non-response) did in fact have a lower socio-economic class profile

than the UCAS accepted applicant population, mainly a result of the way the sample of institutions was selected (*ie* bias towards colleges, urban areas, no independent schools included, see above).

- **Main religion:** Around one-third of the minority ethnic part of the sample said their main religion was Islam and a further third said either Hinduism, Buddhism or Sikhism. Only nine per cent of the minority ethnic sample indicated 'no religion', which compares with 35 per cent of the White part of the sample. Our undergraduate survey (in 2002, see above) had slightly higher proportions of Muslim students than shown here for minority ethnic students, but just under ten per cent indicated 'no religion', compared to over 40 per cent of White students, which is a similar pattern to here (no other comparable statistics on religion are available as far as we know). However, as can be seen in Table B16, the religious composition of individual minority ethnic groups in the potential student sample varied considerably.

- **Family education background:** a higher proportion of Black African students (72 per cent), than other minority ethnic groups (59 per cent overall) had a parent or sibling who was educated to higher education level (*ie* been to university, polytechnic, HE college or teacher training college). This is consistent with the higher socio-economic class profile of Black African students in our sample. There was little other variation between minority ethnic groups, and the minority ethnic figure overall was only slightly higher than for White students (53 per cent). (*Nb* in our undergraduate student survey, slightly more White than minority ethnic students had family experience of HE [74 versus 66 per cent], but we found that most Black Africans did, 87 per cent).

- **GCSE qualifications:** half of all the survey respondents (White and minority ethnic) who gave information about GCSEs (the vast majority did) had at least eight GCSEs, grades A to C. There was little or no difference between the main minority ethnic groups: Black African students were slightly more likely than other groups to hold eight or more GCSEs grades A to C (55 per cent). The mean number of GCSEs for minority ethnic students responding to the survey was 7.0, compared with 7.2 for White students (Table B17). As would be expected, older students (aged 21 and over) had lower prior attainment levels, averaging just over four GCSEs. Looking at other qualifications held (other than GCSE), GNVQs and 'AS' levels were most often mentioned, and this was more likely among the older students.

Comparing our results with national statistics suggests that we surveyed students in post-16 education with above average attainment, which is what would be expected when focusing on likely HE entrants. Other research on educational attainment

Table B16: Ethnicity and religion percentages by ethnicity

Ethnic group	Islam	Hinduism/ Buddhism/Sikhism	Christian/ Judaism	No religion/ don't know/other	Base N=100%
Black African	15	1	79	5	109
Black Caribbean/other	2	1	79	18	79
Pakistani/Bangladeshi	93	3	3	1	136
Indian	12	84	1	3	184
Chinese/Asian other	23	32	22	24	70
Other	25	12	36	27	59
White	1	3	61	35	271
All minority ethnic groups	**31**	**30**	**30**	**9**	**637**
All respondents	*22*	*22*	*39*	*17*	*908*

Source: IES Survey of potential entrants to higher education, 2002/3

points to much greater variation in GCSE performance among minority ethnic groups than seen here.

- '**A' levels**: Over half of the respondents were currently taking 'A' and/or 'AS' levels only, and a further seven per cent were studying a mix of 'A'/'AS' levels and GNVQs, making almost two-thirds likely to be gaining 'A' level qualifications. The remainder (35 per cent) were studying for GNVQs and a range of other qualifications (including GNVQ at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels, ACVEs, NVQs and Access qualifications). Sixty per cent of minority ethnic students in aggregate were studying 'A'/'AS' levels only, and this varied little by minority ethnic group, except for Black Caribbean/ Black other group who were less likely to be (Table B17).

B.5.6 The questionnaire and analysis

An eight page form was designed following consultation between IES and the DfES, to glean information from students on a range of issues pertaining to their career and education decision-making. This is available from IES on request.

The questionnaire data was analysed using SPSS. Mainly cross tabulations were used, and where differences in tables were found

Table B17: GCSE attainment and whether or not studying for 'A' levels

	Black African	Black Caribbean /other	Pakistani/ Bangladeshi	Indian	Chinese/ Asian other	All minority groups	White
Mean no. GCSEs	7.5	7.1	6.9	6.8	6.9	**7.0**	7.2
More than 8 GCSEs (%)	55	48	50	47	48	**50**	54
Doing 'A'/'AS' levels only (%)	63	53	61	61	59	**60**	54
Base N=100%	*84*	*69*	*125*	*172*	*60*	***562***	*245*

Source: IES survey of potential entrants to higher education, 2002/3

they were tested for statistical significance (at the 99 per cent level). Most findings highlighted in the main report are statistically significant ones, or close to being so, but the clustered nature of the sample meant that it was not always appropriate to only focus on those that are the most significant, as this may be misleading. We also worked on factor analysis techniques (*eg* to reduce the number of influences on decisions taken) but we did not find the results to be robust or informative enough to warrant including in the report. Similarly, we looked into applying multivariate analysis, but also found this did not add greatly to the analysis presented.

B.5.7 Interview based research

To complement the survey, qualitative interviews were undertaken with 42 minority ethnic students. They took part in two main ways:

- telephone interviews with those who had completed questionnaires (20)

- face-to-face interviews arranged directly through the schools/ colleges (22).

At the end of the survey questionnaire, respondents were asked to indicate if they would be prepared to participate in a follow-up telephone interview. Of the total 957 respondents, 212 gave their agreement and contact details for this purpose. From these, 20 students were interviewed — ten from the schools and ten from the FE colleges, ensuring a range of ethnic, cultural and biographical backgrounds. In addition, 22 face-to-face interviews were carried out with individuals studying at two of the schools and two of the FE colleges, 11 in each. These were arranged with the help of the contacts at these institutions with whom we are grateful for their assistance in our work.

The interview schedule is also available on request from IES.

B.6 Employer interviews

This work package involved interviews with a cross section of recruiters of minority ethnic graduates, plus interviews with a range of other people and organisations (including chair of AGR/AGCAS Task Group for Racial Equality in Graduate Recruitment, the AGR Chief Executive, professional bodies [*eg* in teaching, pharmacy, law], the National Mentoring Consortium, Impact scheme, HE careers advisers). A lunchtime seminar with a number of AGR members with an interest in diversity issues was also held. The fieldwork was undertaken from May to September 2003.

B.6.1 The sample of employers

In total, interviews were undertaken in 20 employing organisations. These were with graduate recruitment managers, equality/diversity managers and HR managers (at least two people in each organisation). They were mainly large recruiters, which had some experience of recruiting graduates from minority ethnic backgrounds and an interest in ethnic diversity issues, though policies and practices in this regard varied. The sample was largely self-selective, which is virtually unavoidable in this kind of work. A great many more were contacted but refused to take part. Usually the reason was being too busy, which also included many who did not see the relevance of the research to their business, *eg 'we're not bothered about class, ethnicity or background… people all treated the same here'*. A few clearly felt that their diversity practices were not good enough to discuss and be open about with us (though we did assure them of anonymity). A great deal of time and effort was spent on the telephone encouraging employers in particular sectors to take part, especially smaller ones as we wanted to include some in our sample, and it was a more protracted business than anticipated.

The majority of the interviews were undertaken in large organisations with graduate entry programmes. The size of graduate intakes varied considerably, from ten to over 300 per year. Most of them also recruited graduates to other kinds of jobs (outside corporate graduate programmes), though they had very little knowledge about the ethnic representation there or recruitment issues specifically related to graduates recruited. Six of them were public sector organisations. Our initial plan had been to focus the majority of our sample on three subject areas where minority ethnic graduates are more numerous — IT, law and health/biological sciences — where we anticipated finding employers who were receiving many applications from minority ethnic graduates. Within the 18, we interviewed in three IT/communications companies plus three others with IT graduate entry, two law firms plus a third in the public sector which recruited law graduates; and one public and one private health care organisation; the remainder were organisations with graduate recruitment programmes designed to meet needs of a number of professional and business areas (*eg* retail banking, marketing, commercial functions, general management, financial services) and where specific degree subjects were less relevant. All of the organisations, including those outside of our targeted subjects, reported receiving applications from minority ethnic graduates (the issue being more to do with their selection than application, as discussed in Chapter 8).

The focus of the interviews was on minority ethnic graduate recruitment: how representative minority ethnic groups are in graduate intakes, employers' policies and practices to encourage ethnic diversity in graduate recruitment, and their views on key

'enablers' and 'inhibitors' which affect the successful transition of minority ethnic students into employment.

B.7 Questionnaires and discussion guides

These are available electronically only as they take up considerable space on paper, and can be obtained on request from IES (please contact emma.hart@employment-studies.co.uk or go to the IES website www.employment-studies.co.uk). The set comprises:

1. MORI student survey interview schedule (face-to-face interview)

2. Student follow-up discussion guide (telephone)

3. MORI graduate survey questionnaire (telephone)

4. Graduate follow-up discussion guide (telephone)

5. MORI parent survey questionnaire (telephone)

6. Parent interview schedule (face-to-face)

7. Potential HE student survey questionnaire (self-completion)

8. Potential HE student interview schedule (telephone and face-to-face)

9. Employer discussion guide (case studies).