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**The Diversity of Social Inclusion: Trade Unions and Black and Minority Ethnic Workers in the Context of the UK**

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**THE DIVERSITY OF SOCIAL INCLUSION:  
TRADE UNIONS AND BLACK AND MINORITY  
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**ABSTRACT**

*The discussion on how trade unions represent and respond to migrant communities and black and minority ethnic (BME) workers has developed in recent years. The reasons for this development varies: a greater presence of immigrants within the European Union; the changing composition of established immigration and ethnic communities; the emergence of Islamophobia; a crisis in the identity of European nations and regions; and a general, albeit uneven, move to equal rights within the legislative frameworks of EU states. Within the USA, this debate is more advanced given the pivotal role of migration in nation building and the body of employment rights that have emerged, (although in terms of the welfare state, the EU appears to be more advanced). However, in the context of the EU there are limitations in terms of how the debate has emerged. Firstly, the thrust of trade unions' responses until recently are mainly focused in terms of campaigning and recruitment issues: the question of trade union renewal has been linked to the debate of ethnicity in an institutionalist manner. Secondly, the focus is on the trade union as an unproblematic and quantifiable institutional entity that needs to 'readjust' its strategies in the context of change. Thirdly, the changes in terms of labour market dynamics are not linked to the question of trade union responses concerning the perceptions and needs of BME communities. In this respect, there is a very static understanding of the relation between trade unions and ethnic minorities. These issues are addressed in this paper.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Though this is not an empirical paper, the discussions presented derive from interviews with a range of representatives from minority ethnic community groups and trade union officials in the United Kingdom. The paper first aims to establish that trade union strategies vary: there is a range of approaches and models developed in relation to the question of representing ethnic minorities. There is no singular model. Instead, there is a variety of approaches and politics, just as there are with a 'traditionally established workforce'. Secondly, that the understanding of ethnic minority needs varies and that the politics of this must be central to any discussion as one cannot read off assumptions about the issue from formal union strategies, traditional practices and established customs in relation to regulation. In effect, there is a politics of trade union responses and there is diversity in the way the 'problem' is read and understood. Thirdly, the variety of responses needs to be weighed-up and assessed. This must also be done by understanding responses and initiatives in relation to other responses (this raises the question of cohesive and consistent strategies). Fourth, the question of black and minority ethnic workers raises questions of trade union identity and purpose: the former are not a body that require some 'one-off' realignment of union tactics for the achievement of equality, it requires a complex array of strategies and developments. It is about the purpose and politics of the trade union as anything else. This raises much deeper issues related to the role of regulation and strategies of inclusion, i.e. that they may not always cohere. It also raises the issues as to how strategies of social inclusion are configured. The paper focuses on a selection of these - subjects such as relations with the state are not discussed due to the focus on specific targeting strategies within the paper.

## 2. TRADE UNIONS, RACISM AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

The failure of trade unions to represent the broad canvass of groups that constitutes the black and minority ethnic community is a common theme in much of the literature. If anything, key aspects of the literature have emphasised the role of organised labour in processes of exclusion and segregation through a variety of systems (Jenkins *et al*, 2003). Ambivalent and racist attitudes towards ethnic minorities have been a common feature of trade union attitudes and activities (see Bhavnani and Bhavnani, 1985; Mayhew and Addison, 1983; Kirton and Greene, 2002); and ambivalence amongst members and leaders about

race and ethnicity issues - and even racist attitudes - has been a subject of concern and academic study. Trade unions developed during the 20th century a politics of solidarity which was always constrained by established, ethnic understandings of the workforce and by labour market regulatory mechanisms (internal and external) which supported groups of workers vis-à-vis both employers and 'outsiders'. Solidarity and collective mechanisms of regulation are constructed in a variety of ways around different meanings of class (Martinez Lucio, forthcoming 2007). Solidarity has normally been constrained by defending gains and progress amongst workers included within the labour markets of the firm and society. Granted that more recently there has been the development of an approach to industrial relations increasingly premised on notions of rights, the increasing realities and concerns with racism and social inclusion, and the re-orientation of trade union concerns and priorities, which have meant that trade unions have begun to respond to such issues in a more supportive and strategic manner. In fact, support within migrant communities for unions can be high in some cases (Modood, 1997), although the perception of unions and their willingness to act has not always been so visible and transparent (Perrett and Martinez Lucio, 2006), however, one should not confuse the lack of antipathy or antagonism with trade unions as a mode of support (*ibid*). The current vogue for studying the unions in relation to migration issues remains ambivalent and sanguine in its attitudes of trade union progress.

The debate has normally focused on key episodes of trade union intervention such as Grunwick and, presumably, in the future Gate Gourmet. There are many episodes of trade union support for black and minority ethnic workers being mistreated by employers, usually around recognition and restructuring issues. However, this area is studied in terms of concrete episodes such as disputes. It dovetails with the way industrial relations as a discipline has been intellectually focused around the study of conflict without recourse to a broader understanding of spatial factors although recent interventions are trying to counter this 'industrial' approach (Holgate, 2005). The tendency is to see how trade unions can mobilise within migrant communities and connect within them during moments of conflict within the employment relation. There are also debates about how trade union renewal (for a discussion see Frege and Kelly, 2004; Fitzgerald and Stirling, 2004; Milkman, 2006)) has emerged as a strategy based

on re-connecting with labour market constituencies and creating new modes of action, e.g. through community unionism. Yet even then, it is of 'coalition building' (Heery, 1998): of re-launching trade unionism through a new alignment of interests and strategies. This tends to downplay the internal impact of such re-alignments and the relation between them.

We need to begin to focus on the varied arenas around which trade unions begin to engage with migrant communities and their dynamics and needs. The question of ethnicity and race raises an array of issues and questions and not just matters of representation. We need to begin to understand how social actors such as black workers - and community groups for example - create new sets of demands and issues in terms of social inclusion. The experiences of racism, social exclusion, economic disadvantage, and political alienation create a variety of 'needs' which are, in turn, varied according to the migrant community in question. The approach of many academic observers in classifying immigrant communities in singular terms - ignoring issues of heritage, social capital and political organisation - means that the study of industrial relations, trade union strategy and race/ethnicity is reduced to a matter of institutional 'realignment'.

The language within Industrial Relations as a field of enquiry is of 'organising' the 'unorganised', hence assuming a lack of organisational capacity on behalf of ethnic minorities (see Bronfenbrenner *et al*, 1998 as an example). There is a tendency to see the question of race and unions as one of re-alignment of members' needs and union strategies, as the institution acting over the subject of the former: in effect a question of 'intervention'. In fact, one could argue this of community and union links in traditional industries for white British workers in some instances as well (Stirling, 2005). Yet as Alleyne (2002: 608) argues, the 'idea of community, which often connotes some form of small or mid-range collectivity, can come to present an epistemological obstacle for the sociologist in obscuring the social construction which goes into building and sustaining human collectivities'. Such stereotypes and assumptions about interests are abundant in much of the industrial relations debate on BMEs and trade unions. Instead, we should see communities as 'a network of agents with ever-changing projects rather than a tapestry of people with shared roots' (Alleyne, 2002: 622). The idea that there is a standard template of immigrant participatory forms ignores the way these may

emerge and acquire specific characteristics at specific times (Vertovec, 1999).

Within current industrial relations, the discourse of 'other actors' and 'new actors' is a response to the crisis of representativeness of traditional industrial relations actors and the emergence of new players alongside these traditional ones (Frege and Kelly, 2004). In many respects, the sociological study of regulation has increasingly focused on the panoply of social actors that intervene in the process of regulation in a variety of ways and through alliances and linkages between them (MacKenzie and Martínez Lucio, 2005). However, it has been a serious problem in the industrial relations discipline with its focus on trade unions and formal institutions of regulation. The language is of 'organising' the 'unorganised', hence assuming a lack of organisational capacity on behalf of black and ethnic minorities (see Bronfenbrenner *et al*, 1998 as an example). There is a tendency to see the question of race and unions as a re-alignment of members' needs and union strategies, i.e. as the institution acting over the subject of the former. In effect, it is a case of hierarchical 'intervention'. It sees the issue of trade union responses in a vacuum and of a hierarchically led re-alignment when in fact responding to these issues raises major questions related to trade union identity, purpose, and roles.

There has recently been a tendency to develop a more sophisticated analysis of the challenges of organising ethnic minorities by looking at the nature of work organisation and the racial character of trade unions (Healy *et al*, 2004a and 2004b; Holgate, 2004a, 2004b, and 2005; Virdee and Grint, 1994). Debates driven by Healy *et al* (2004) have tried to sensitise readers to the broader question of collectivism and its gender and ethnic character. For example, the work of Healy *et al* (2004a and 2004b) show how black female activists play multiple roles and are in effect complex actors with links and networks they combine in their work and experience. The link between these dimensions are seen as mutually reinforcing in certain cases and that discussions should not start from the institutions only, but from the views of workers as black, or as women, or as both. This de-centering of the actor and their roles allows us to understand the way issues of race and ethnicity lead to distinct linkages and roles within industrial relations: distinct notions of collectivism. This type of analysis builds on the experience of black and women's sections and conferences within specific trade unions. This has been an under-researched

area of the industrial relations discipline. Trade unions since the 1980s have developed internal structures to ensure that a voice is provided to minority and gender based groups, amongst others. UNISON as the leading public services trade union is an example of this development. Black and ethnic minority workers may have a 'repertoire' of strategies they can follow which do not always dovetail with established industrial relations routines (Cornfield, 2006). This builds on Tilly's (1978) notion of labour repertoires and the possibility of alternative developments and choices. The relevance of this is that trade unions face a challenge in representing workers because employment is regulated in a variety of ways. In addition, workers have productive, reproductive and social needs that vary across time and space: even if there are commonalities.

The paper aims to survey a variety of responses and note the way they develop and how they can be problematic if not articulated within a more co-ordinated approach. It shows that regulatory and political interventions create their own tensions and that they are based on particular views of what the 'problem' is. In this respect, the paper argues that there is a fractured view of the BME issue and that trade union responses are likely to be piecemeal. Policy responses in general are linked to particular ways in which problems are understood. Experts linked to policy making are as much involved in framing and interpreting the question and the problem the policies are set to address (Rose, 1993). The literature outlined above has begun to track the move of trade unions towards a more engaging approach towards the question of race and ethnicity. Our research points to the way different routes are taken, and how the BME issue is conceptualised and understood in a variety of ways. Earlier work in trade union responses to organisational change and workplace developments have drawn out some of the differences in these responses in relation to union structures, strategies and politics (Davis *et al*, 2006). The reality is that unions perceive issues in different ways, and they construct solutions in relation to interests, internal politics and organisational capacities. Moreover, the question of racism and exclusion in the labour market and in the workplace - let alone society - gives rise to a range of issues and questions in terms of how inclusion is constructed and by whom.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODS

This is not an empirical paper but the work derives from interviews with a range of industrial

relations and BME voluntary sector bodies. The research incorporated three qualitative streams which ran concurrently over a twelve month period. This incorporated mainly semi-structured interviews which were recorded and subsequently transcribed in full. A small number of group interviews and focus groups were also undertaken, in addition to unstructured observation at voluntary sector infrastructure conferences and regional and branch union meetings. The first area of research involved 25 in-depth interviews with representatives from a wide variety of black and minority ethnic (BME) voluntary sector and support organisations (VSOs). The objectives of such organisations varied considerably, many offering support that might be more traditionally associated with trade unions. The second stream of research incorporated 30 interviews with both national and regional union officials, representing the interests of 14 different trade unions, as well as TUC representatives, in respect of union renewal strategies. The third and final stage incorporated six in-depth case-studies of innovative trade union strategies ranging in the degree of complexity from a traditional workplace based approach adapted for the ethnic composition of the workforce to well developed community inclusion strategies, links to faith based and community groups and networked unions forming the hub of community activity.

### 4. TRADE UNION RESPONSES TO BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC ISSUES IN BRITAIN

We cannot do justice to the long history and legacy of immigration and ethnicity issues in the context of the United Kingdom in such a short space. Britain is a European country with a long history of immigration (Floud and Johnson, 2004; Fryer, 1984). In the 20th Century, immigration has occurred at different points and in relation to different communities. However, trade unions have been slow to respond to these issues until recently: there are knowledge gaps, institutional inertias in terms of regulatory practices, and racist habits (for example see the TUC's Stephen Lawrence Task Group report, 1999). However, in the past twenty years there have been steady changes through the adoption in some trade unions of relevant structures for the organising of BME communities, the development of some bargaining agendas, a broader awareness of such issues, and a shift in some leadership constituencies. Bill Morris was until recently the first black leader of a trade union: the Transport and General Workers Union.

**a) 'Stick it on the agenda as an item': The bargaining approach**

There is no doubt that the development of a new industrial relations based on a variety of gender, race and social issues within the workplace have tested the constraints of bargaining processes and their focus on male, traditional interests around pay. According to Cully *et al* (1999: 24 - 27) some two-thirds of workplaces were covered by formal written equal opportunity policies that dealt with equality of treatment or discrimination.

Furthermore, workplaces covered by equal opportunity policies were three times more likely to keep records than those that did not. The tendency to expand the content of bargaining agendas is variable. The tendency is to begin to address issues related to equal opportunity issues in terms of audits, equal rates of pay, and monitoring procedures. For example, the TUC's (2003) Equal Opportunities Audit illustrates that although improvements have been considerably more developed in terms of gender equality, progress has been made in terms of race equality although this has not been consistent across different unions or with strategies pursued. However, whilst many companies appear to have equal opportunity policies they are not necessarily due to trade union pressures. In some cases they are the outcome of perceived employer good practice and a desire to avoid litigation, amongst others. These policies are not necessarily more developed in workplaces with higher levels of ethnic minority staff (Kersley *et al*, 2005). The driver appears to be more gender related and more complex.

There is a tendency to expand the remit of bargaining relations to these issues however many have been underpinned by legislation and increasing state intervention - which we discuss later. There is no doubt that trade unions, especially in the public sector, have included ethnicity and race related issues in their bargaining agendas. Since the 1980s, there has been much reference to the New Agendas of employment relations as a way of broadening the remit of union influence around new employment issues (Martinez Lucio and Weston, 1992).

Yet progress is uneven. Joint regulation in the form of bargaining is based on habits and the focus is on quantitative and general aspects of the employment relation. Bargaining remains fixed around particular issues that effect most workers but it is not fine-tuned around particular issues in many cases. The problem in the British case is that the new bargaining agendas and the

new employment issues need new bargainers and new skills. There are capacity and knowledge issues in relation to bargainers and activists - let alone a declining pattern of trade union activism. Re-modulating bargaining issues requires new attitudes, sensitivities and skills at the bargaining and implementation level. For example, whilst issues of overwork and stress increasingly form part of union bargaining agendas in respect of health and safety and absence, as are maternity and paternity absence, childcare issues, and family crisis and disability, extended leave for religious purposes or religious holidays are often overlooked.

There is also a much deeper problem in respect to this aspect of trade union response. The role of bargaining is declining in the United Kingdom and the role of unions in consultation remains very low. Kersley *et al* (2005) through large scale survey evidence collated in 2004 have argued that 67% of workplaces in the UK did not negotiate or engage with trade unions on the core employment relations issues. As a lever for regulating race and ethnicity related issues this is therefore a fundamental problem. The reliance on traditional modes of trade union influence is a problem in such a context of change, and even in Europe where bargaining remains high it is increasingly fragmented.

**b) 'Education, education, education': The new mantra of learning strategies**

Within the United Kingdom one of the central features of state and trade union policy in terms of the labour market has been the development of life long learning and training strategies. The development of the Union Learning Fund and of Union Learning Representatives has become a central feature of trade union renewal. The development of such representatives since 1998 has meant that workplaces can have representatives whose objectives are to consult with management on training needs and respond to calls for information from the workforce on related issues. This has been a central feature of government policy and trade union renewal. Unions have been viewed as important as often migrant labour wish to avoid drawing attention to their skills gaps and so do not wish to approach an employer. Recent evidence (see DfES, 2003; Unionlearn strategic plan 2006-2009) suggests that a network of around 90 Union Learning Centres making up the Trade Union learndirect hub have been established, the TUC has developed proposals for a new Union Academy and, at the time of writing, 13,000 Union



Learning Representatives (ULR) had been trained, although the government predicts that this will increase to 22,000 by 2010. The regional level of the Trades Union Congress, the main confederation, has seen a mushrooming of posts and projects based on this dimension of funding. It relates to ethnicity and race issues due to questions such as language needs, racial awareness issues, and general social inclusion through access to training. The authors have studied one case where trade unions in a leather factory drove the learning agenda and developed a learning centre which offered IT and basic skills training. This centre also responded to the language needs of newly arrived migrant workers - Iraqi, Iranian and Polish - who were unable to read health and safety requirements and respond to management requests due to language problems. The development of a learning centre that offered language training and basic IT skills was supported by the company who saw a mutual advantage in such developments. The development of such centres and courses through trade union tutors or programmes organised through trade unions has been common throughout the United Kingdom.

This development relates to the extension of bargaining roles and content. The problem in this case is that whilst trade unions have worked very carefully on this issue - in part due to the funding available from the state - there has been a tendency to view such initiatives in isolation. The learning agenda has been a focus for newly arrived migrant workers in the main and there have been less investment in the needs of established immigrant communities. Moreover, learning projects have been driven directly by social groups and community groups working directly through networks and through the local state. The trade union has not always been central to these (Perrett and Martínez Lucio, 2006). Hence, trade unions have found that their learning strategies impact where there is a union presence in an established workplace. Given the constraints that are increasingly placed on the bargaining role of the union as we outlined above then such strategies have a pattern of implementation that reflect mainly the organised, structured, and medium to large size workplace structure. Hence, social inclusion through such strategies is constrained by the established pattern of exclusion and the pattern of decline. Moreover, the problem remains that such strategies are dependant on the state (Martínez Lucio and Perrett, 2007), and in the UK are fundamentally weak due to the institutional

characteristics of the voluntary British industrial relations system (Stuart, 2001), *and* on political quid pro quos between social democratic circles. The paper will point to the politics of this dimension of inclusion later but due to the lack of transparent and democratic regional structures in the United Kingdom many of the funding bodies are led by employers and are opaque and sometimes poorly accountable structures. To pursue this type of social inclusion trade unionists at regional levels have to enter into arenas where they are isolated and often exposed. This tendency to view the 'problem' of exclusion and to construct forms of 'inclusion' based on learning and education can become elitist, exclusive and dependant on the state - and employers - in terms of form.

This problem is sometimes exacerbated by the tendency to privilege links with employers as a main vehicle for the development of inclusion strategies. Such relations operate at the level of the firm and the region. The problem is twofold. First, in terms of internal partnerships, the aim is to create new agendas around learning, development and corporate based support for equality agendas. Putting the highly contentious debate concerning the 'management of diversity' to one side, there are attempts to create new agendas within employment relations which would benefit workers more broadly which are driven by agreements or understandings where the trade union decides to work with employers on social and business imperatives. However, in relation to such strategies there are concerns as to a range of issues (see Martínez Lucio and Stuart, 2004; Stuart and Martínez Lucio, 2004). Whether employers genuinely buy into such approaches is an issue. The risks unions are exposed to by entering into these without strong regulatory support and in a context of possible de-recognition of their rights (especially in an under-regulated context such as that of the UK - see Perrett 2007 forthcoming) is another. Indeed, the lack of institutional support due to the absence of a supportive state strategy which invests and legally regulates significant aspects of the employment relationship such as training and working conditions (Rainbird, 2004), and the way in which partnership can be reduced to minimalist gestures and employer-oriented policies, is a prevalent problem. In terms of external partnership, there are similar risks facing trade unionists in engaging with employers at the regional level. Firstly, they may be involved in structures with numerical superiority for employers as is the case in the Learning and Skills Councils

that have provided funding at regional and sub-regional levels. Secondly, trade unions may not have the resources or the knowledge assets to fulfil strategic roles at that level. Thirdly, the possibility of clientelistic and elitist developments may occur in the absence of a coherent policy at that level of the state, in the absence of regional political structures. In effect, the problem is seen as one of needing to 'educate' and socialise immigrants and ethnic minorities in a hierarchical manner through discreet courses that are focused on very specific dissected needs. This in turn creates a culture and politics of learning obsessed with bureaucratically ensuring a controlled, regulated community (Carvajal Muñoz: 2002).

### **c) 'Lets go to their leaders': The community dimension in trade union renewal**

There is an argument emerging that considers workplace and bargaining strategies to be part one part of any union renewal strategy and attempt to address BME issues. The failure to recast union renewal in spatial terms through communities of workers be they BME or not is seen as a major contributor to the isolation of the labour movement in social and political terms. Holgate (2005) points to the need to locate the workplace dynamics within the community/spatial dynamics, and to view unions in terms of this panorama. In a study of a recent dispute the role of informal community and ethnicity based links were seen as essential to the way modes of solidarity were constructed (Holgate, 2005). Hence, the tendency to focus on the trade union-worker relations through the prism of the shopfloor within industrial relations studies have begun to be challenged by a concern with the community dimension of industrial relations and the notion of 'other actors'.

Wills and Simms (2004) have seen the community dimension and community actors as a fundamental feature of the employment relation that contextualises the experience and approach to work; it is also suggested that the scope of traditional trade unionism cannot reach beyond the confines of the workplace due to its institutional and strategic focus. Hence, the increasing interest in community unionism within certain unions and academic perspectives: the concept of network unionism build around linkages with social actors (ibid; Evans et al, 2005; Wills, 2002; Wills, 1998). Recent work on community based Worker's Centres in the USA have shown how migrant workers are becoming integral to their development; the argument is that we need to rethink the way we view these

relations in more dynamic ways (Fine, 2006). Black and minority ethnic workers may have a 'repertoire' of strategies they can follow which do not always dovetail with established industrial relations routines (Cornfield, 2006). This builds on Tilly's (1978) notion of labour repertoires and the possibility of alternative developments and choices. Datta *et al* (2006) have argued that one should not ignore the role of Faith Based organisations for example and social networks based around ethnic cleavages in the community organisation of recently arrived migrants in London. Developments in the past five years regarding the living wage campaign in London have been strongly influenced by religious organisations. Heery (1998) therefore outlines the role of coalition building in the logic of trade union renewal in recent years. This dimension has been seen in East London where campaigns amongst, and with, BME communities both socially and collectively have raised the wage levels in such areas as office cleaning (see Evans *et al*, 2005; Wills, 2001).

The belief in such new strategies is growing although many unions are quite reactive and still unconvinced. In fact, research shows that unions have done little in this area and that the hype is often more apparent than the reality. Respondents to a regional survey of BME community groups in the Yorkshire and the Humber region were asked whether a trade union had ever contacted them to 'involve them in any of their campaigns or for advice or consultation' (Perrett and Martinez Lucio, 2006 and 2007). All voluntary sector respondents indicated that they had never been contacted by a trade union for advice, consultation or to be involved in their campaigns, similarly all interviewees claimed this to be the case. Just one in ten voluntary sector organisations stated that they had worked with or involved a trade union in promoting the interests of BME communities. Where this was the case, these were typically short-term arrangements centred on anti-fascist campaigns as opposed to long-term partnerships around employment matters. Although TUC and union anti-fascist campaigns were valued by those who had heard of them within the voluntary sector, and they showed unions to be representing BME interests and extending union influence beyond the workplace, many interviewees claimed that this was often not always visible to the communities themselves.

There are also other issues. Firstly, many of these community initiatives misinterpret the broader



realities and dynamics of communities and are merely nothing more than recruitment drives based on extending bureaucracy and not re-orienting it. Trade unionists are often concerned with extending the logic of organising in ways that remain embedded in established cultural and institutional practices (leaflets, meetings, and officer led initiatives) to BME communities without considering the cultural context of these. Secondly, there is a failure in many cases to go beyond established hierarchies and leadership structures within BME community groups. Holgate (2005) makes it clear that links with informal structures and around union campaigns, and during industrial disputes, as with the airline caterer Gate Gourmet in 2005, are as important and probably more class oriented than formal links with formal structures of the BME communities. This is likely to be true but one can underestimate the extensive presence of formal and established bodies within such communities and the role they play. Even so, linking up can be bureaucratic and elitist in nature. The reality is that community links may even emerge around marketised or more 'professional' links especially when we consider the role of established networks as we outlined above. McCulloch (2004) argued that there was an emergent neo-liberal dimension to local politics and community activities could not be ignored; so assuming that community links lead to certain outcomes is unwise, as political engagement seems to be a major factor. Given the concern with 'bureaucratisation' in the legacy of industrial relations studies, it is remarkable that such concerns are ignored. In addition, it fails to locate the boundaries of employment relations within a broader perspective in terms of the competition for voice and representation (Martinez Lucio and Perrett, 2006). Hence, there is a reliance on closed circuits of social capital (Bourdieu, 1984) and the development of links with established social circuits. This in turn can lead to a reliance on state support as we discussed earlier in relation to learning strategies. Hence, the engagement with community is not the clear alternative one would imagine (see Martinez Lucio and Perrett, 2007 forthcoming).

#### **d) 'Something wrong at home': Rethinking bureaucracy and monitoring change<sup>1</sup>**

The problem with many of the strategies we have reviewed in this paper is that they are

fragmented, uncoordinated and even tokenistic. There is also the problem that they are executed by white, older and mainly male trade unionists. Given this there is an emergent strategy that emphasises the importance of 'like for like' recruitment or recruitment through shared identities. This involves using an organiser with similar characteristics to those he or she is trying to recruit in terms of, for example, ethnicity, languages spoken, religion, social class (or caste), age, gender, or sexual orientation. This is likely to have a positive effect on membership because the union may be perceived as understanding, and better able to represent, their specific interests (see Wrench and Virdee, 1996).

There is an ongoing problem in terms of such strategies after more than a decade, and in some instances two, of trade unions developing conferences, sections and guaranteed executive positions for BME workers. These were seen as a major vehicle for ensuring that the trade union movement listened to and responded to BME issues, i.e. by having trade union representatives drawn from the BME workforces and then organised with their own autonomous structures alongside established ones. In fact, there are trade unions such as the T&GWU who have gone further and developed focused leadership development campaigns with an aim of developing BME trade unionists. These are driven by a strategic use of management learning techniques. These developments are increasingly backed by equal opportunity audits and extensive monitoring programmes, as with the TUC in the past few years who have openly audited themselves in terms of race and ethnicity issues (TUC, 2003 and 2005). This tendency to focus organisationally in terms of representation on broader constituencies is becoming fundamental as a prerequisite to the engaging with BMEs in a manner that allows trade unions to reflect the communities they are addressing. Such developments are meant to bring into the trade union bureaucracy individuals from BME communities and to parallel the development of self-organising structures, and which develop their own voice within the trade unions (see Davis, 2006). These are seen to be a source of useful knowledge assets and cultural congruence that are assisted by BME activists within the union (Healy et al, 2004a and 2004b).

<sup>1</sup> We have not been able to address the broader issue of cultural strategies in this paper. The research does cover such strategies such as the use of theatre, visual forms of communication, and culturally oriented education programmes. However, these have been limited in the main although unions such as the General and Municipal Boiler Makers (GMB) unions have experimented with theatre and plays as a way of communicating to Asian women, questions of work and regulation. However, these are limited due to the absence of a cultural dimension to British trade unions.

However, there is the problem of such techniques assisting the development of and inclusion of such constituencies. Isolated BME representatives can be inculcated within established trade union practices and work within protected and disconnected spaces within the trade union. The fast changing nature of migration can challenge the establishment and role of black groups. For example, there are Pakistani communities in Yorkshire in the north of England who have four generations in Britain and who have lived with their white colleagues the restructuring of local manufacturing industries such as Textiles, whilst there are new communities of Somalis who have been exposed to greater degrees of informality within the economy and inclusion in poorly paid service jobs. Given this, the ability of such sections and cadres of new leaders to reflect this changing panorama of migration is a challenge.

Moreover, not all trade unions have engaged with such managerial or politically oriented re-crafting of its leaders or representatives. The more open and democratic unions have done so as a consequence of being exposed to internal discussions. There has also been more engagement on such issues from trade unions with less closed internal labour markets and regulated systems, unless they are public sector where the regulatory environment is different. Nissen and Grenier (2001) in discussing the USA have argued that trade unions respond differently according to a series of characteristics. First, the more closed the union structure and the more dependant on the hiring hall approach and 'country club' approach the more closed they are to representing migrants in terms of their strategies and form of organisation (*ibid*). The character of public service unions makes them more amenable to such developments as those explained above. There are also questions of union leadership and vision. Where trade unions are anchored to traditional forms of regulation and established relations, be they with employers of closed communities, the ability to address and include is further limited (*ibid*). The problem is that there are still few examples of such internal representation-based changes, and where they do exist they can be disconnected and assimilated within the internal politics and bureaucracy of the union, unable to shift its values and purpose. However, this is a clear precondition for an effective deployment of many of the strategies outlined above.

## 5. CONCLUSION: THE COMPETING MEANINGS OF INCLUSION

Research needs to address the needs and support required by migrant communities. This paper has tried to map some of the institutional question of social inclusion in labour market and employment terms, and what it is trade unions do in relation to such issues. It has noted that such responses are varied and complex. The question of social inclusion is organised around various levels of strategy and various issues. In the UK, it has pointed to the role of bargaining strategies in terms of employer-union relations, the role of learning agendas, the organising of communities and alliances in that domain, the bureaucratic character and the role of direct inclusion in the trade unions themselves, and the political and regulatory dimensions. There is no doubt we have to think more widely in terms of how major social intermediaries such as trade union engage with the question of race and ethnicity. We have to think about discreet strategies, their development, their links, and the overall position within the issue of trade union renewal.

The challenge is the co-ordination and organisation of such approaches. Increasingly there is a need to understand how problems and responses are framed and developed. The responses appear fragmented, with various trade unions following different paths and issues. The crisis of regulation is in fact one of form and not just content. These are not just a reflection of the problem of social inclusion, but of its understanding and of the distinct bureaucratic cultures of trade unions. Inclusion is understood in different ways. There are open and transparent approaches based on a re-assessment of trade union structures, where the aim is to work with BME communities; but then there are others where the established organisational processes act *on behalf* of communities. One has to comprehend the political and ideological differences that frame the issues and the policy paradigms. The solution is part of the problem as well: the institutional dimension is fractured by competing views: and increasingly there is a overarching service driven model in terms of the problem which rests on providing services without effective community input. Even the community dimension of this strategy and the representational re-configurations of this strategy appear to be managerial or hierarchical. The politics of social inclusion are an exercise in technocratic provision or services, legal representation, minimal learning agendas, elite lobbying of the state, and traditional bargaining

cultures. There are many developments and trade unions have reformulated their strategies and sensitivities but ultimately the solution is constructed in a manner that does not always have a democratic inclusive logic. It is a problem because of the way the notion of 'service' is constructed. This raises broader issues that relate to beyond the trade union, it includes the state as well. More seriously, the question is one of social inclusion. The positive features of social inclusion are constructed vis-à-vis a caricature of social exclusion. Yet, as observers, we need to understand what we mean by social inclusion more clearly. We need to appreciate the delicate shifts in its meaning and how it is fundamentally presumes cultural and social readjustment in terms of racial and ethnic communities but not serious readjustment in the body of social and institutional relations that are including the subjects it is acting upon.

These concerns mirror concerns emerging regarding social justice and social inclusion in general. Debates on social justice usually revolve around resourcing, rights and access (see Pearce and Paxton, 2005). The debate is about fine-tuning the state towards innovation and learning strategies, amongst others (Room, 2005). The new economy has new needs and new dualisms, and the state must regulate and concentrate its institutional focus towards a supply side orientation (see Greenwood and Stuart, 2006 for a critique). The concern in such debates is the role of civic engagement and its declining role (Room, 2005: 129) and this mirrors some of the tensions we outlined above. The decline of civic engagement is a general issue (Puttnam, 2000). This also mirrors the way the politics of diversity - in particular the management of diversity - is less about empowerment and more about symbolics (Noon and Ogbonna, 2000; Noon and Blyton, 2006). In effect, it can at times be about hierarchically engineering social rights and not focusing on voice. In relation to social wellbeing Burchardt (2005) that a feeling of control, involvement and participation in social and political terms is a major ingredient of subjective wellbeing. The fetish with public policies and targets on the one hand and policy participation on the other is a major factor in undermining wellbeing and social inclusion (ibid). There is a growing variety of literatures that suggest that the turn to a language of social inclusion, in political and management terms, does not necessarily correlate with a process of empowerment.

In effect, if we are to study the role of unions in relation to race and ethnicity issues then we must be sensitive (a) to the various actors, (b) the varied needs and demands of social groups, and (c) the manner in which responses vary. The British trade union movement is steadily becoming alert to such issues. Davis *et al* (2006) have argued that unions need to address racism in terms of an array of strategies that are not just bargaining oriented but focused on self-organisation and organisational monitoring, amongst others. This study, by London Metropolitan University and the Trades Union Congress, begins to map such approaches. Trade union responses must be seen in terms of a variety of union strategies. This paper agrees with this premise but raises the point that there are tensions between approaches and there are deeper issues of trade union identity that emerge because of some of them. In fact, it argues there are some approaches that create new elites and new forms of exclusion. The politics of inclusion is not always a mutually positive sum game. Strategies of inclusion may contradict each other or be based on views that are nominal or minimal in nature. Ray (2006) has argued in line with the work of Appasamy *et al* (1996) when studying caste and gender in India that types of inclusion may further contribute to modes of exclusion due to their fragmented nature. Any further discussion of immigration and employment regulation requires a broader understanding of the dimensions of regulation and the issues of accountability and representation that interact with them.

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