



Black and Minority Ethnic Groups and Public Open Space

Literature Review

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Index

- [1](#) Scope of the literature review**
- [2](#) Ethnicity and exclusion**
- [3](#) Barriers to participation**
 - [3.1](#) Inability to shape strategies for the delivery of rural services
 - [3.2](#) Lack of (appropriate) interpretative information
 - [3.3](#) Lack of appropriate activities
 - [3.4](#) Lack of awareness
 - [3.5.](#) Lack of confidence and negative perceptions of the environment
 - [3.6.](#) Negative feelings associated with previous experience of the countryside
 - [3.7.](#) Financial costs incurred and lack of time
- [4](#) Strategies for increasing participation by black and minority ethnic groups**
 - [4.1.](#) Countryside staff training
 - [4.2.](#) Consultation with potential users
 - [4.3.](#) Design and management guidance
 - [4.4.](#) Partnership approaches
 - [4.5.](#) Evaluation
 - [4.6.](#) Managing environments and access to them
 - [4.7.](#) Multiculturalism
- [5](#) Summary**
- [6](#) References**

1. Scope of the literature review

The first section of the literature review addresses the contested nature of the terms ethnicity and exclusion. The second section examines the barriers to participation in public open space faced by black and minority ethnic groups. The final section reviews ways of combating under-representation through strategies for increasing participation, as suggested by the literature.

The review has covered as diverse a literature as possible, ranging from promotional leaflets to academic papers, and deriving from international, English-language and

European sources. In the review the terms 'countryside' and 'greenspace' are deemed to include urban fringe woodlands, inland waterways and urban parks. There is no consistent, universal terminology which adequately defines the composite characteristics of specific minority ethnic groups; the literature pointed up variations in definitions which are discussed briefly in section 2.

Techniques used to uncover literature for the review included a wide-ranging, key-word search of library catalogues, including universities, the National Library of Scotland and the British Library, and databases including the NISS (National Information Services System) Information Gateway, COPAC (Co-operative Academic Information Retrieval Network for Scotland), SALSER (Scottish Academic Library Serials), the Index to Theses, IBSS ONLINE (BIDS), the Social Sciences Citation Index, the Arts and Humanities Citation Index and the Guardian and Observer Electronic Database. An international internet search was also undertaken using the same search terms.

[Index](#)

2 Ethnicity and exclusion

There are many inconsistencies in the use of terminology within policy documents and across academic research (Samers, 1998; Teague and Wilson, 1995; for an in-depth discussion see Samers, 1998). In their *Audit of Research on Minority Ethnic Issues in Scotland*, Netto *et al* (2001) acknowledge that terms such as 'ethnicity', 'race', and 'racism' are contested and problematic in the way they are conceptualised and used in public discourses. According to Rishbeth (2002) the term 'ethnic minority groups' excludes people born in the United Kingdom, but not those with parental roots in another country, people with parents of different ethnic backgrounds or first generation immigrants. In the Commission for Racial Equality's publication *Then and Now: Change for the Better?*, Clarke and Speeden (2001:17) state that the term 'minority ethnic group' has been increasingly used to 'encapsulate both similarities in and the increasing diversity of experience of migrants and their children and grandchildren'. The term 'minority ethnic group' shifts emphasis towards identities produced by group members themselves and away from a focus on skin colour, suggesting long term settlement; specific needs and interests and an organised or institutional presence (*ibid.*).

Samers (1998) highlights that the use of terms such as 'ethnicity' and 'ethnic minority' can be colonialist, victimising and patronising. What is required is a more positive, celebratory conception of 'marginality', 'peripherality', or diaspora (Samers, 1998; Samers cites Hall, 1992; Gilroy, 1993; Spivak, 1988; Yuval-Davis, 1992). Samers (1998) stresses that ethnicity is not fixed or essential, it excludes multiple identities shaped by age, gender, sexuality, class, and divisions of labour (Samers cites Brah, 1992; Hall, 1992).

Despite widespread use and numerous attempts at definition, the precise meanings of inclusion and exclusion also remain elusive (Slee, 2002; Samers, 1998). The British government has tended to conceptualise social exclusion quantitatively in terms of poverty, deprivation and lack of employment opportunities. However, it is becoming widely recognised that there is a need to look beyond the measurable, quantifiable, statistical indicators of experience and exclusion that the government and its agencies prefer (Hague *et al*, 2000). The publication of *Arts and Sport: A Report to the Social Exclusion Unit* (Department of Culture, Media and Sport, 1999) offers some recognition that leisure can play “an important role in meeting many of the wider social objectives that contribute to social inclusion, community development and neighbourhood renewal” (Local Government Association, 1999 cited in Aitchinson *et al*, 2000:25). Hague *et al* argue that the impact of social exclusion on leisure has been largely overlooked and that leisure is a good area in which to expose the broader and often more opaque incidences of exclusion. There is a range of evidence from the literature that black and minority ethnic communities in Britain do not participate in the countryside and other natural open spaces, and related activities proportionate to their numbers in society (British Waterways, 2002, 1995; Slee, 2002; Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council, 2001; Groundwork Blackburn and Manchester Metropolitan University, 1999; Chesters, 1997).

3 Exclusion and barriers to participation

Netto *et al* (2001) and Dhalech (1999) reveal that across a wide spectrum of policy areas, minority ethnic people are invisible in official statistical data sets related to the use of services (Ling Wong, 2001 b.). The Scottish Executive Central Research Unit (SECRU) publication *Researching Ethnic Minorities in Scotland* (2001) concurs with this view stating that, in Scotland, it is increasingly evident that government-funded, policy-related and academic social research has remained largely 'colour-blind', that is, it has not been inclusive of racial diversity. SECRU suggest a number of reasons for this, however, they acknowledge that there are a number of pervasive myths which influence decision making

at all levels. These include, for example, the belief that there 'aren't many black people living in Scotland', the assumption that 'the Scots can't be racist because they've been oppressed by the English', and the understanding that minority ethnic groups 'stick to themselves' and 'look after their own' (SECRU, 2001). The Rural Race Equality Project in Cornwall, Devon and Somerset, 1996 - 1998, noted similar findings; the assumption that there was 'no problem here' was widespread amongst voluntary and statutory organisations, and local authorities (Dhalech, 1999).

Other theorists promote the idea of exclusion as a set of 'processes' (Kilmurray, 1995; Teague and Wilson, 1995). This approach encompasses not only material deprivation but more broadly the denial of opportunities to participate fully in social life. However, in conceiving exclusion as both a process and a condition, particular groups (or individuals) must be actively exercising their power to exclude, whilst others are receiving the consequences of these actions, namely they are being excluded (Rose, 1997 in Hague *et al*, 2000). Power relations therefore affect the experiences of exclusion as they are lived within people's everyday lives and are associated with stigmatisation and stereotyping.

Floyd (2001) and Goldsmith (1994) acknowledge that there have been few empirical studies of racial and ethnic variation in (National) park use in America. However, in recent years a number of programmes have addressed the issues of barriers to use of the countryside and of environmental activities in the UK (Rishbeth, 2002). Yet, anecdotal evidence seems to be variable regarding the use of urban parks by ethnic minority groups, and there has been no comprehensive study to help identify key issues (Rishbeth, 2002). In 1998 The Countryside Agency published a report which identified a number of key practical, organisational and psychological barriers that affect public attitudes and behaviour towards the countryside.

The literature on social exclusion, inclusion and environmental participation indicates that there are 7 key barriers to access and participation:

- [Inability to shape strategies for the delivery of rural services](#) (Henderson and Kaur, 1997; Dhalech, 1999; Shucksmith and Phillip, 2000; Netto *et al*, 2001; Askins, 2001, SECRU, 2001)

- [Lack of \(appropriate\) interpretative information](#) at sites, inadequate signage, and lack of publicity (Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council, 2001; McMillan, 2001; Woroncow, 2001; Davis and Adomako, 2000 a.; Agyeman, 1995).
- [Lack of appropriate activities](#) to attract minority ethnic and black communities and provide a positive experience (British Waterways, 2002; Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council, 2001; Floyd, 2001; Church *et al*, 2001; Agyeman, 1995).
- [Lack of awareness](#) of local initiatives and lack of perceived relevance (Woroncow, 2001; Pratt, 2001; Davis and Adomako, 2000 a.; Dhalech, 1999; Countryside Agency, 1998; Brown *et al*, 1998).
- [Lack of confidence and negative perceptions of the environment](#) - including fears of getting lost, not knowing where to go, lack of support, feelings of vulnerability, fears for personal security, and negative perceptions of regular users and groups (Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council, 2001; Church *et al*, c.2001; Woroncow, 2001; Ling Wong, 2001 b.; Rishbeth, 2001; Davis and Adomako, 2000 a.; Macnaghten and Urry, 2000; Dhalech, 1999; Brown *et al*, 1998; Millward and Mostyn, 1997; Agyeman, 1995).
- [Negative feelings associated with previous experience of the countryside](#) (Davis and Adomako, 2000 a.; Millward and Mostyn, 1997).
- [Financial costs incurred](#) / [lack of time](#) and other commitments (Floyd, 2001; Church *et al*, c.2001; Collins, 2001; Woroncow, 2001; Agyeman and Spooner, 1997; Agyeman, 1990).

3.1 Inability to shape strategies for the delivery of rural services

Both Dhalech (1999) and Henderson and Kaur (1997) assert that rural racism is a real and present problem throughout the UK. Most black and minority ethnic communities in Britain live in urban areas, yet their perceptions, experiences and thoughts about the British countryside and rural services are rarely addressed or considered (Agyeman and Spooner, 1997; Dhalech, 1999). Netto *et al* (2001:9.10) state that, “an examination of more recent documents on rural Scotland, including literature on social inclusion and service provision in rural areas, suggests that the presence and the voices of minority

ethnic groups in rural communities continue to be neglected and ignored” (see also Shucksmith and Phillip, 2000; Hope *et al*, 2000; Shucksmith, 2000). They remark that, apart from a brief mention in Shucksmith and Phillip's (2000) *Social Exclusion in Rural Areas: A Literature Review and Conceptual Framework*, which acknowledges that some groups are more likely to face exclusion than others because they suffer from 'powerlessness' and 'inequality of opportunity', for example, women, elderly people, and ethnic minorities (Netto *et al*, 2001; Askins, 2001), there is very little else in the document that acknowledges the specific experiences of minority ethnic groups in rural areas. As a result, insufficient attention has been paid to including the experiences and views of minority ethnic groups in rural research and policy-making and in shaping strategies for the delivery of services in rural areas. Anecdotal evidence from the SECRU, (2001) shows that users are often required to fit within what is available, without due consideration regarding its appropriateness for the user. This can also include a lack of signs and direction and a lack of maintenance. Paradoxically, some of those who experience exclusion develop survival strategies which are premised upon its continuance (SECRU, 2001).

[Barriers to participation](#)

3.2 Lack of (appropriate) interpretative information

It is undoubted that black and minority ethnic groups resident in rural areas experience disadvantage and exclusion. A key reason why their interests are so often overlooked is because of inequalities in provision which are further obscured by an uncritical notion of consensual, idyllic rural communities in popular culture (Shucksmith, 2000; Davis and Adomako, 2000 a.; Askins, 2001). Geographers have shown that place is often conflated with ideas of ethnicity and that the boundaries between ethnicities have come to offer conducive conditions for the construction of distorted cultural representations (Agyeman and Spooner, 1997; Anderson, 1988; Sibley, 1995; Duncan and Ley, 1993). A number of authors have further demonstrated that the cultural politics of identity are linked to place, and that the concept of English national identity has had long established links with ideas of rurality, ethnicity and ethnic purity (see Matless, 1998; Agyeman and Spooner, 1997; Netto *et al*, 2001; Davis and Adomako, 2000 a.; Askins, 2001).

Traditionally, the countryside and rural way of life has been at the core of British national identity, and has effectively become the 'essence of England' (Agyeman and Spooner, 1997; Taylor, 1991, Askins, 2001, Lowe *et al*, 1995). The purity of rural areas is often

juxtaposed with the pollution of urban areas and cities have been aligned with 'racial degeneration'. Through an examination of the 'spatialisation of race' and the activities of young people from different ethnic backgrounds in South East England, Watt (1998) discusses the ways in which the term 'inner city' has become effectively coterminous with 'black'. The countryside is popularly perceived as a 'white landscape', predominantly inhabited by white people (Davis and Adomako, 2000 a.; Agyeman and Spooner, 1997; Agyeman, 1995, 1990; Netto *et al*, 2001). Very few people from black and minority ethnic groups are members of organisations such as the National Trust, Ramblers' Association or the Youth Hostel Association (Rose, 1995). Discussions at the BEN Networking Conference (Davis and Adomako, 2000a) highlighted that the immediate image of Environmental/National Park structures are white and difficult to perceive as relevant or desirable to ethnic communities; the power for change is seen to be held in white, male, middle-class hands in all areas of the countryside. Thus in the language of 'white' England, ethnicity is rarely an issue associated with the countryside (Derbyshire, 1994; Jay, 1992; Bonnett, 1993).

Powerful images of the rural as homogenous are embedded in popular culture and evidence suggests that this ideology continues to endure, and has a powerful influence on the way in which rural life is perceived and, at times, experienced (Netto *et al*, 2001; Davis and Adomako, 2000 a.). The environmental movement has played a key part in propagating the myth of the countryside as a repository of the 'true' national spirit to the extent that black people in the countryside are perceived as 'out of place', as human aliens (Agyeman, 1990, Aitchison *et al*, 2000). The term 'black' is particularly relevant here as 'visible minorities', or those born in the Asian and African continents and their descendants - those who are most easily and immediately distinguished as different by physical traits such as skin colour, facial appearance or hair type - are likely to be particularly susceptible and vulnerable to racial discrimination and disadvantage in the countryside (Netto *et al*, 2001). Although it must be acknowledged that other minority groups such as Jewish, Irish and Polish people, refugees, asylum seekers and travellers also experience racial discrimination and disadvantage.

[Barriers to participation](#)

3.3. Lack of appropriate activities

Cultural disposition and behavioural codes are also key factors which discourage minority ethnic communities from using natural open spaces. To acknowledge that cultural

expectations of natural open spaces can influence both the value people place on different environmental attributes and patterns of preferred use is of vital importance to landscape architects (Rishbeth, 2002). For example, the traditional folklore or mythology of a certain group may revere and respect the countryside but may not regard it as a leisure resource (Agyeman and Spooner, 1997; Agyeman, 1990). In some instances the countryside may carry undesirable associations from a person's country of origin and they may consider activities such as walking to be a 'necessity' rather than a leisure activity. Other factors such as strict dress codes (particularly for females) and a lack of single gender activities will also affect the participation of certain groups (Slee *et al*, 2001).

[Barriers to participation](#)

3.4 Lack of awareness

Another set of barriers affecting participation is the distinct lack of awareness about information and services available to black and minority ethnic groups (Rishbeth, 2002; Davis and Adomako, 2000 a.). SECRU (2001) remark that traditional forms of publicity material such as leaflets, posters and adverts in the local newspaper have a limited impact on the general community and even less on black and minority ethnic communities. Leaflets and brochures promoting the countryside and other natural open spaces rarely feature non-white faces, a fact which contributes to the sense of being in the wrong place (Ling Wong, 2001a; Aitchison *et al*, 2000). Information is often inadequate, suffers from a lack of effective interpretation, and is rarely geared towards, or interesting for, ethnic minorities (Slee *et al*, 2001). Black and minority ethnic groups also have little information about project examples involving ethnic communities and countryside/environmental organisations (whether successful or not), a situation which contributes to the image of National Parks and other greenspaces as unknown territory (Davis and Adomako, 2000 a.). For a significant percentage of black and minority ethnic communities, communicating in English is problematic. Where agencies have translated leaflets the relative merits of the translation and actual distribution of the material is sometimes questionable. Difficulties in communication also render professionals unable to fully appreciate the circumstances of black and minority ethnic people and may result in a tendency to draw on stereotypical assumptions (Netto *et al*, 2001).

[Barriers to participation](#)

3.5. Lack of confidence and negative perceptions of the environment

Although 'enclosure' and the sense of being surrounded by dense foliage plays a key part in many people's appreciation of woodlands and other natural spaces, it is also often a key to the level and intensity of fears a person may have about their surroundings (Burgess, 1995). One of the biggest problems for the tentative black visitor to the countryside and other natural open spaces is that there are not many black people there (Coster, 1991). In *Pastoral Interludes* Ingrid Pollard confronts idealised representations of British rurality with the 'reality of Black experience' (Agyeman and Spooner, 1997; Pollard, 1989; on the work of Ingrid Pollard see Taylor, 1995, Kinsman, 1995; Rose, 1995). For Pollard, visits to the countryside were always accompanied by a feeling of unease or dread and the sense that she was the only black face in a 'sea of white' (Agyeman, 1990; Pollard, 1989; Kinsman, 1995). Burgess (1995) discovered that 'anxiety' can seriously affect people's use of woodland and other natural spaces. For example, all the women featured in Burgess' study feared being in woodland alone and women from ethnic communities needed to be in large parties before they felt safe. The women from minority ethnic groups experienced exclusion in multiple ways; they were not only afraid of sexual attack but also racial attack (Kilmurray, 1995; Agyeman and Spooner, 1997; Agyeman, 1990). The real or perceived risk of encountering animals and the wild fauna associated with natural open spaces is another major factor which dissuades minority ethnic groups from visiting the countryside (Rishbeth, 2002; Slee *et al*, 2001). A study by Madge (1997) showed that the fear of coming into contact with animals, and in particular dangerous dogs, was much higher for African-Caribbean and Asian groups than white groups. Fears surrounding use of natural open space were often reinforced by negative media coverage. Although their focus is on housing and minority ethnic groups, Netto *et al* (2001) state that a particular facet of the experience of these groups is a lack of trust in the ability and willingness of public authorities to take appropriate and effective action against perpetrators and to fully approach them.

[Barriers to participation](#)

3.6 Negative feelings associated with previous experience of the countryside

The Countryside Agency (1998) and Ward-Thompson *et al* (2002) have both highlighted the importance of feelings associated with previous experiences of the countryside. This could include negative childhood memories of family visits to the countryside, but for many black and minority ethnic groups the sense of alienation experienced when visiting natural open spaces is also a prohibitive factor. As noted above, a key aspect of English national identity is constructed largely around an image of the rural idyll and representations of the

countryside as a predominantly white landscape (Slee *et al*, 2001). For example, visits to the countryside often emphasise the absences of members of one's community and activity is limited by real or perceived experiences of racism (Slee *et al*, 2001; Davis and Adomako, 2000; Aitchison *et al*, 2000; Rayner, 2001).

[Barriers to participation](#)

3.7. Financial costs incurred and lack of time

Some of the main factors which influence behaviour and attitudes towards participation in natural open space are socio-economic, such as the need to work long hours and low car ownership (Rishbeth, 2002). The free time of black and minority ethnic groups is often devoted to 'intra-community' activities, family life, and 'personal development' activities such as further and higher education. Slee (2002) mentions the 'disturbing' decline in the recreational infrastructure of towns and the fact that 'getting out' of town is often difficult and costly. However, whilst monetary constraints are a significant contributing factor to the under-participation of minority ethnic groups in natural open spaces, it is unwise to assume a simplistic correlation between discrimination and poverty (Netto *et al*, 2001). A more sympathetic picture would present a wide diversity of experiences of social exclusion and demand a greater sensitivity to the variety of mechanisms at work (Kilmurray, 1995). While poverty, and the limits imposed by inadequate income, are a thread running through these issues, one must also take into account the isolation, sense of powerlessness and even the stigma of discrimination to which the excluded may be subject (*ibid.*).

There is unambiguous evidence to show that low-income earners, young people, older people, ethnic minorities, disabled people, those without access to a private car and the very affluent under-participate in countryside recreation (Slee, 2002; The Countryside Agency, 1998). However, debate surrounds the question as to whether these groups are 'excluded' or if they simply choose not to use the countryside. For example, Harrison (1991) argues that leisure opportunities have been constrained by the adoption of an 'aesthetic imperative'. In countryside recreation there is a dual problem of 'socially constructed supply' that creates particular types of opportunity, and 'socially constructed demand' which leads certain groups out of choice to ignore some of the goods and services on offer. As a result, it is often difficult to define exclusion simply on the basis of the evidence of limited demand for countryside leisure (Slee, 2002:2). Crouch and Tomlinson (1994), Rojek (1995) and Hague *et al*, (2000) all believe that it is impossible to consider leisure as separate from other areas of experience in which exclusion may be

investigated. Further, because leisure practices involve people making decisions about whether to participate and where, there is a need to clarify the relationships between exclusion, non-participation and notions of choice (Hague *et al*, 2000). In most situations, the choices people make regarding leisure are mediated by constraints (*ibid.*). Exclusions based around, for example, age, social class, ethnicity, employment, disability and gender, are all widely recognised as influential and significant determinants of leisure patterns that should not be neglected. For some people, exclusion may take place routinely and can often occur without them noticing (Sibley 1995, 1998; Hague *et al*, 2000).

The key findings from this section can be summarised as follows:

- Not all people from black and minority ethnic communities live in the inner-city and issues of exclusion and integration are as real in the suburbs and rural areas.
- The presence of black and minority ethnic groups in rural communities is often ignored.
- Insufficient attention has been paid to including the experiences and views of minority ethnic groups in rural research and policy-making, and in shaping strategies.
- The countryside is often conflated with ideas of national identity and ethnicity, and the boundaries between ethnicities offer conducive conditions for the construction of distorted cultural representations.
- Lack of information, effective interpretation, and appropriate activities contribute to feelings of alienation.
- Fears of racial and/or sexual attack, of being alone in an unfamiliar environment and worries regarding dangerous flora and fauna, all contribute to a sense of unease in countryside and other natural open spaces.
- Monetary constraints are a significant contributing factor to the under-participation of minority ethnic groups in natural open spaces, however, it is unwise to assume a simplistic correlation between discrimination and poverty
- Leisure practices involve people making decisions about participation and there is a need therefore, to clarify the relationships between exclusion, non-participation and notions of choice.

[Barriers to participation](#)

[Index](#)

4 Strategies for increasing participation by black and minority ethnic groups

The literature suggested a number of potential strategies to increase participation by black and minority ethnic communities in enjoyment of the countryside, and other natural open spaces, and to tackle social exclusion. Gomez (1999) believes that if a person does not feel accepted within society they are not likely to participate in public recreation, regardless of sub-cultural ethnic identity. This implies that public use areas should foster a sense of belonging through the creation of recreation programmes that are inclusive of ethnic cultural diversity (Dunn, 2002). Several studies stress the importance of positive imagery and multiculturalism to environmental participation strategy and heritage interpretation (Dunn, 2002; Ling Wong, 2001 a; Davis and Adomako, 2000 a.; Agyeman and Spooner, 1997). It is imperative that representational imagery and discourse moves away from a static view of countryside as unchanging and attempts to reclaim the marginalised contribution of other groups to the British past (Davis and Adomako, 2000 a.; Agyeman and Spooner, 1997; Agyeman, 1990; Ling Wong, 1998, undated, a.). For example the bastions of British heritage, National Parks, have a particular history of inviting only the 'right type of visitor' (Breakell, 2002; Askins, 2002; Davis and Adomako, 2000 a.). Pratt (2001) discusses the way in which recreation in National Parks could include people from minority ethnic backgrounds, arguing that there is a need to widen participation in and awareness of National Parks and to target Black and minority ethnic communities directly (see also Llewelyn, 2002). Modood (1998) adds a cautionary note, however, stating that it is also important to be careful not to present minority groups as discrete, impervious to external influences, homogeneous and without internal dissent (Hutchinson, 1987 cited in Modood, 1998).

4.1 Countryside staff training

The literature suggests that the issue of 'raised awareness' can be approached in a number of different ways. A cultural shift is required amongst site providers, policy makers and potential users (Lancashire County Council, 2002; Rishbeth, 2001; Davis and Adomako, 2000 a.; Macnaghten *et al*, 1998; Ling Wong, 1998; Countryside Agency, 1998). Tackling social exclusion requires changes in attitudes and policies at a wider level than appears to be happening at present and the development of long-term strategies (Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council, 2001). A key factor in this will be the willingness of organisations and agencies to move beyond the gestural (Ling Wong, 2001). The Scottish Parliament defines equal opportunities broadly as the "prevention, elimination or regulation of discrimination between persons on grounds of sex or marital status, on racial grounds, or on grounds of disability, age, sexual orientation, language or social origin, or of other

personal attributes, including beliefs or opinions, such as religious beliefs or political ones” (Scottish Parliament, 2000:1 - 2). However, the institution of an Equal Opportunities policy is not always enough to establish an inclusive atmosphere. It is also necessary to build confidence through consultation, universal design, effective management and appropriate media strategies (Burgess, 1995).

Several authors highlight the lack of representation of key under-represented groups amongst staff and volunteers as a significant issue (McMillan, 2001; Bickerton, 2001; Davis and Adomako, 2000 a.; Dhalech, 1999; Agyeman and Spooner, 1997). Those responsible for the management and maintenance of countryside and greenspace may not even notice the absence of certain users. Dhalech (1999) stresses the need to develop a racial equality strategy and for organisations to incorporate this into their corporate plans. In their *Review of Social Exclusion Activity in the Countryside Agency*, DTZ Pineda (2001) conclude that most of the teams in the Agency could do more to address social exclusion. This could be achieved in several ways including (i) heightening the awareness and understanding of social exclusion amongst staff; (ii) developing 'social exclusion proofing tools' (modifying forms, changing business plans, etc.); (iii) setting up a project information system which would retain information and experience from previous projects to inform current and future work; (iv) providing guidance on how to develop contacts and partnerships; and, (v) developing briefing material for staff, explaining the issues and how they are relevant (DTZ Pineda, 2001).

[Strategies for increasing participation](#)

4.2. Consultation with potential users

The opportunity to let people define, develop and manage public areas is an opportunity to encourage new kinds of participation and more radical notions of what decision-making might involve (Greenhalgh and Warpole, 1995). Strategy objectives should include a more pro-active approach to encouraging the use of open spaces by local communities and to the involvement of local people in the development and management of the countryside and greenspaces (*ibid.*). Consultation should be increased between users and potential users, local communities, land managers, planners and access officers (Alison Chapman Consultancy, 2001; Bickerton, 2001; Davis and Adomako, 2000 a.). This relates to the DETR's (2000) vision in which people shape the future of their own community and all people have access to good quality services (including leisure and sport). For example, in *Towards an Urban Renaissance*, the Urban Task Force (1999, chaired by Richard Rogers)

articulated the value of the public realm as a place where individuals get a sense of taking part, of communality and of citizenship. Community initiatives are distinguishable from others because of their sensitivity to local circumstances and emphasis on community participation within the regeneration process (Morrison, 2000). Awareness-raising seminars can identify problems in accessing the countryside and also bring together organisations and people that can provide solutions (Fife, 2001). However, it must also be acknowledged that developing confidence in communities that have continually experienced disadvantage and discrimination is a lengthy process (Dhalech, 1999; Davis and Adomako, 2000 a.).

The Commission for Racial Equality's (CRE) (in association with Sport England) (undated b.) factsheet, *Working with Ethnic Minority Communities*, stresses the importance of 'asking the right questions' during consultation exercises. For instance, black and minority ethnic communities are not homogenous, individuals may identify with more than one community, and community leaders may not speak on behalf of the whole community (see also Afshar, *et al*, 2002 b.). In order to promote the involvement of black and minority ethnic communities it is essential to work in partnership with communities, to be flexible and realistic about when and where activities might take place. Organisations must not assume that cultural values about the role of natural open spaces and their benefits are universal or treat 'different' communities as intrinsically alien. Butt *et al* (2002) welcome the increase in literature on how to engage members of black and minority ethnic communities in research which has accompanied the growing body of research into these communities. They highlight the challenges posed to researchers to recognise that research interviews take place in a context in which social and material differences exist, including racism. They believe that 'matching' interviewers and interviewees (e.g. through language and culture) has significant benefits in terms of enhanced rapport, trust and confidence amongst respondents.

[Strategies for increasing participation](#)

4.3. Design and management guidance

Integrated and inclusive, or 'universal design', should include a high quality visitor experience, be flexible, accessible to all (Stoneham, 2001). However, an approach that emphasises only practical concerns will fall short in addressing the emotional and psychological impact that landscapes can have on people (Price and Stoneham, 2001). The Rural Race Equality Project in the South West (1996-1998) was the first local initiative

to follow Jay's (1992) *Keep them in Birmingham*, which highlighted the extent of racial prejudice and discrimination experienced by black and minority ethnic residents in rural areas (Dhalech, 1999). One of the initiative's key successes was the wealth of accurate, detailed and regularly updated information it produced. This included a directory of useful contacts, an information card, a 'racist incidents' evidence form, a website, a newsletter, posters and leaflets. The initiative recognised that any decision to 'go outside' made by under-represented groups is often made 'inside' (Price and Stoneham, 2001; Henderson *et al*, 1995; Stoneham and Thoday, 1994). It is therefore necessary to give visitors enough information for them to make an informed choice about accessibility (Alison Chapman Consultancy, 2001; FieldFare Trust, 1999; Burgess, 1995). In *People and Places: Social Inclusion Policy for the Built and Historic Environment*, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2002) highlight the potential of information and communications technology as a tool for communication and information which might usefully be applied to countryside and other greenspace.

In Burgess' (1995) report to the Countryside Agency, *Growing in Confidence: Understanding People's Perceptions of Urban Fringe Woodlands*, it is implicit that information regarding direction, distance between sites and location is not helpful if it is unclear and in English only. Again, the effective design and management of signs and other information has the potential to provide people with a feeling of control and gives them the opportunity to make their own decisions regarding accessibility and desirability (Davis and Adomako, 2000 a.). Using different media, techniques, symbols and pictures it is possible to overcome communication problems without necessarily reducing the natural qualities of the environment itself (Burgess, 1995; Fife, 2001).

[Strategies for increasing participation](#)

4.4. Partnership approaches

Research has highlighted the need for effective partnerships and a 'joined-up' approach to planning (Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council, 2001). People can be excluded in a variety of different ways and the factors giving rise to social exclusion are frequently interrelated (DTZ Piedad, 2001). The Social Exclusion Unit (2001) states that the joined-up nature of social problems is a key factor underlying social exclusion but often the joined-up nature of social problems does not receive a joined-up response. The best results are achieved only when all the different sectors and interests work together (Greenhalgh and Warpole, 1995; Afshar *et al*, 2002). This includes the development of Local Strategic

Partnerships involving the community, the public, private, voluntary sectors and everybody with an interest at stake, to allow the voices of local Black and minority ethnic communities to be heard and to foster a sense of shared objectives (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2002; Lipman, 2001; Shucksmith, 2000; Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, 2000). In addition, it is necessary to create a dialogue between users and transport providers and to make the most of opportunities such as the Countryside Agency's Rural Transport Partnership and Rural Development Fund (Alison Chapman Consultancy, 2001).

Local Strategic Partnerships will have a key role in developing, co-ordinating and delivering inclusion strategies on the ground, bringing people together, pooling resources, maximising potential funding sources, rationalising existing initiatives and uncovering the gaps in current activity (Wallace, undated; Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council, 2001). However, it is important to remember that the process of forming new partnerships becomes complex when attempting to involve the community and voluntary sectors as equal partners (Lipman, 2001). Examples of good practice are rare, since most partnerships are in their developmental stages, and, due to the Government's recent desire for local flexibility, no single model is likely to emerge (Lipman, 2001).

The literature also shows that there is a need to develop a more pro-active approach when reaching out to local black and minority ethnic communities, including initiatives to tackle fears for personal security and concerns for children (Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council, 2001). For example, Church *et al* (c.2001) state that water-based sport and recreation activities are apparently undertaken by only a small minority of the population, yet have the potential to be highly socially inclusive with the provision of more accessible information and a more "comprehensive and inclusive approach [to] facility development and management". Offering activities to provide a positive experience of the countryside for black and minority ethnic communities, such as escorted visits, led walks, mentoring schemes, inclusive planting schemes, educational visits, and personal contact with under-represented groups, all help to increase participation (Dunn, 2002; Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council, 2001; Fife, 2001; Health Walks Research and Development Unit, 2000; Davis and Adomako, 2000 a.; Burgess, 1995; Ling Wong, undated, b). For example, a study by the Yorkshire Museums Council which involved consultation with young Asian women, on-site and via postal questionnaires, discovered a range of attitudes and assumptions about museums and heritage sites (Woroncow, 2001). In particular,

those with little or no experience of visiting such sites were more likely to express negative attitudes and to have a dated and inaccurate view of them.

People must be able to see and understand the benefits of schemes for them to become more inclusive (Cooke, 1999; Ling Wong, 2002 b.). There are a number of ways in which policy makers and site managers can facilitate participation (Slee *et al*, 2001). These include, for example, the development of strategic planning with long term, medium term and short term objectives, and increased opportunities for sustained funding and resourcing (Davis and Adomako, 2000). Active research into innovative and effective methods for consulting with, and mainstreaming the views of, minority ethnic people living in rural areas is, therefore, a priority (Netto *et al*, 2001). There is also a need to move away from frameworks in which success is assessed solely by quantitative indicators (Shucksmith, 2000). A number of benefits stem from access to natural open spaces and the countryside many of which are not easily quantifiable, but are nevertheless just as important. Many black and minority ethnic individuals feel that increased access to open spaces is a reclamation of their rights and experience a renewed sense of ownership (Ling Wong, 1996). For many people an intimate connection with nature can restore health and well-being and in some cases engender a feeling of refreshment. For the children of ethnic minority communities which once lived in a rural environment, a visit can also bring a greater understanding and appreciation of the closeness to nature which was once their parents' and grandparents' experience (Ling Wong, 2002a). Participation can be encouraged through the promotion of good (i.e. culturally sensitive and anti-racist) practice amongst site managers to meet the needs of all potential user groups. A well-intentioned 'colour-blindness' is not an adequate response if designed landscapes are to be inclusive (Rishbeth, 2002; McMillan, 2001). However, it is acknowledged that consultation is difficult with groups that are unused to being consulted.

[Strategies for increasing participation](#)

4.5. Evaluation

The importance of on-going and post-project evaluation in order to gauge the extent of social inclusion has been highlighted most starkly by the Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council (2001). In their report, *The Inland Waterways: Towards Greater Social Inclusion*, the consortium pointed to the lack of evaluation of the effectiveness, benefits and value-for-money of past initiatives and remarked that, for the voluntary sector in particular, this is a significant constraint on securing continuing or additional funding. The

group was 'concerned' to discover how little information is available to put figures on, or even make a qualitative assessment of, the value of benefits arising from more socially inclusive open spaces (Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council, 2001). This lack of evaluation and assessment was echoed in the Local Government Association (2001) study, *The Value of Parks and Open Spaces: Social Inclusion and Community Regeneration*, which documented the lack of systematic empirical data regarding these areas and the resultant inability to measure their benefits. The Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council (2001) state that further research in this area would clearly be of benefit to all authorities, agencies and voluntary sector organisations when seeking partnership support and when making applications to grant-making bodies. The lack of evaluation is further compounded by a lack of baseline information on target populations, minority ethnic groups in particular (Netto *et al*, 2001).

Taylor and Coalter (2001) similarly point to the lack of research on the nature and extent of broader outcomes (i.e. the impact on users of these resources and the value they place on them). They believe that much of the evidence concerning social impacts consequently permits only conditional statements.

The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) (in Association with Sport England) (undated a.) stress the importance of monitoring evaluation policies and plans regularly in order to ensure that racism and other forms of discrimination is actually being tackled, and that equality and diversity are promoted throughout organisations (see also Davis and Adomako, 2000 a.). They recommend that the levels in awareness of equality should be monitored alongside the extent to which positive action is being taken, and the proportion of budgets allocated to improving equality (Commission for Racial Equality, undated a.). They also state the need to consult black and minority ethnic communities when trying to gauge the success of work undertaken, and the extent to which individuals and groups see commitments and effort as making a difference. The CRE (undated a.) suggest the use of 'equality groups' consisting of key staff and volunteers, identified individuals who are willing and able to represent the interests of black and ethnic minority communities, and dedicated 'equality officers' who are responsible for ensuring that racial equality are taken seriously. However, Afshar *et al* (2002 a.) note that some minority ethnic groups feel 'over-researched' and that they give information but see no tangible results (Scharf, 2002).

[Strategies for increasing participation](#)

4.6. *Managing environments and access to them*

A general strategy to ensure that environments are, and remain, attractive, accessible and well-maintained is important. Although access to open space and the countryside is something many may take for granted, it requires careful planning, good design and effective management and maintenance (Kit Campbell Associates, 2001; Rishbeth, 2001; Bell, 1997). The extent to which a site is physically accessible has a significant impact on the participation of under represented groups (Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council, 2001; Crow and Bowen, 1997). Yet, as this review demonstrates, access is a broad concept that involves more than just the physical aspects of getting to, into and around, for example, woodland sites (Fife, 1999). Access includes opportunities for people to take an active part in woodland conservation and management, in decision-making, training, woodland crafts, access to and participation in interpretation and all aspects of social, environmental and cultural development (Fife, 1999). The perceived quality of the countryside also has an influence on how far people are prepared to make use of it (Leisure Industries Research Centre, 2001). In her paper '*But is it worth taking the risk?*' Burgess (1998) states that the existence of 'environmental incivilities' (litter, graffiti, vandalism, etc.) can create a sense of un-safety and danger.

In the findings of a report for the Forestry Commission, Ward Thompson *et al* (2002) state that the proximity of woodlands and ease of access was more important to the research participants than what the woodland looked like. However, vandalism and litter were likely to be more significant for infrequent users and attention to these issues could be an important factor in increasing use by those who rarely, if ever, visit woodland areas.

Public statements of positive cultural identity

The most obvious way in which landscape architects and site managers can attempt to engender a 'multicultural' atmosphere is by using symbols in the landscape, for example, 'Chinese pagodas' and mosaics (Rishbeth, 2002). However, the use of symbols and the construction of visual 'identities' is potentially problematic because of the literal nature of the cultural interpretation. Whilst landscape designers often design geographically specific landscapes they regularly fail to acknowledge other, less easy to define, aspects of distinctiveness (Rishbeth, 2002). Symbolism can reinforce stereotypes and there is a danger of simply providing a caricature of a complex identity (Rishbeth, 2002). There are more subtle approaches that can be effectively used in landscape design and

management, for example, through planting. The cultural ecological garden is a good example of a practical project which creates a multicultural resource (Ling Wong, n.d.a.2).

Plants can capture the character, scent and touch of another land, they can tune into nostalgia and recognition as well as being enjoyable irrespective of these things. The Chumleigh Multicultural Garden in Burgess Park, Southwark and the Pringle Chinese Collection at the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh are considered to be particularly good examples of 'good practice' in this area. Slee *et al* (2001) conclude that such an exploration of best practice can be seen as a platform on which to build new strategies to increase inclusiveness. Yet, McMillan (2001) notes that, in Britain, garden visiting is a predominantly white, middle-aged and middle-class pastime. Suggesting ways in which managers can draw black and minority ethnic groups to natural open space, McMillan highlights that lack of representation among staff and volunteers poses a particular problem. Rishbeth (2002) believes that there are valid reasons why the ethnic influences that have started to enrich our media, our fashion, our food, our music, are not often found expressed in our public spaces. Concentrating on the urban form Rishbeth (*ibid.*) states that we value our built heritage as something special and threatened by fashionable whims. The relative permanence of city form tends to impose a requirement for longevity, a less immediate and accessible creativity than one in which products are quickly consumed and re-created. A similar assumption can be made regarding the natural environment and its role in the creation of 'white' English national identity. As the embodiment of true 'Englishness', the countryside is potentially threatened by external influences and 'foreign bodies'. Future studies of ethnicity in the countryside should turn towards constructions of whiteness, and how it is related to questions of power and exclusion as well as exposing its white-washing as simplistic and false (Agyeman and Spooner, 1997).

Provide relevant interpretation

Another way in which participation can be encouraged is through inclusive access and interpretation. Organisations can work towards projecting a philosophy of inclusion by featuring ethnic and other disadvantaged groups in all their publications and outreach material (Ling Wong, 1998). This may include providing key information in several languages, or using pictures and posters on the walls to illustrate black and minority ethnic presence or participation. Although it is highly recommended that this approach is backed-up with direct contact with target groups with the aim of building up an ongoing relationship

(Davis and Adomako, 2000). Ling Wong (1994) asserts that often, for a community to be motivated to participate, they need to feel that environmental concerns are relevant to them (see also Arp, 1996; Taylor, 1989). Through multi-ethnic activities, opportunities to share different cultures can be created and understanding built through contact. Groups and organisations could then network and share experience and information (Ling Wong, 2002a).

A sense of ownership and belonging to the countryside, and the nation itself, is often constructed through an appeal to heritage. The discriminatory nature of some versions of history and interpretation are being challenged by an increasing number of histories of Britain which are reclaiming the marginalised contribution of 'Other' to the British past (Agyeman and Spooner, 1997). Theorists such as Hall (1990), Gilroy (1993) and Agyeman and Spooner (1997) view history as a process, a constant blending and redefinition of cultural practices. Ling Wong (1999) states that the multicultural interpretation of heritage will provide for revelatory experiences, discovery and personal transformation, moving away from a defensive superior mono-cultural stance that is competitive and divisive rather than integrational. Multicultural interpretation contributes towards the recognition of the role of other cultures and what cultures owe to each other; situates members of the community in a shared history and highlights how ethnic cultures and communities have contributed to British heritage (Ling Wong, 1999; Davis and Adomako, 2000).

Attention should not just be concentrated on the typical countryside enthusiast but also on those who rarely or seldom visit but might. Through the creation of opportunities to be in touch with different aspects of the countryside and pro-active support such as the use of mentoring schemes and countryside visits, minority ethnic groups, women and youth, in particular, can be encouraged to see what's out there (Davis and Adomako, 2000 a., b.). Beauford and Walker (1987) state that there has been little empirical research investigating the relationship between feelings of powerlessness and level of social participation among blacks.

Offering visitors an informed choice underlies all steps towards making natural open spaces feel more welcoming to more people (Burgess, 1995). Information can be provided about where people can go and what there is to see and do. Signs and maps give people control without reducing the natural qualities of the woods too much, maps can

show the area of open space in relation to the surrounding area although they are not useful if they are unclear and in English only. Offer visitors an informed choice also includes taking care to ensure that information reaches its target audience and in an appropriate format. Other aspects of provision might include the maintenance of 'safe' routes and open spaces with increased sightlines, giving thought to appropriate lighting, and improving the appearance of natural open spaces (*ibid.*). People need people and the presence of rangers and a good mix of users helps build confidence and interest. Conservation groups, 'Friends' groups, voluntary wardening all help to foster a sense of ownership for a site or project. Children's activities, nightlife walks, and action for disadvantaged groups such as tree-planting, single gender group activities, culturally appropriate events, and tree dressing days all foster a spirit of participation and inclusiveness (Burgess, 1995).

[Strategies for increasing participation](#)

4.7. Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism has been widely debated as a potential response to questions of how to develop an inclusive citizenship which is more able to incorporate diversity (Bowes *et al*, 2000; Ling Wong, n.d.a. 1). On one hand, multiculturalists in favour of political multiculturalism argue against essentialist definitions of nationality. They emphasise internal differentiation and fluidity, and point out that definitions of national belonging are 'historical constructs' which change over time. On the other hand, academics have begun to critique multiculturalism in the same way that they attacked nationalism or 'monoculturalism'. For instance, Bowes *et al* (2000) claim that the promotion of multicultural citizenship currently does little to advance thinking about the social inclusion of minority ethnic groups in Britain. They assert that by perpetuating rigid and artificial cultural boundaries between different groups with apparent disregard for internal differentiation, and the fluidity and dynamism of cultural boundaries, multiculturalism can be itself discriminatory (*ibid.*).

It is suggested that multiculturalism is in danger of simply being a 'token' recognition of cultural difference within which black and minority ethnic groups are presented as 'static', atemporal, discrete, impervious to external influences, homogenous and without internal dissent (*ibid.*; Modood, 1998). In their study of older women in minority ethnic communities Afshar *et al* (2002 b.) found it necessary to deconstruct their original categories in order to highlight 'difference' and diversity amongst their research

participants. Afshar *et al* (2002 a.) note that within multicultural society, services need to be sensitive to different minority groups within the wider minority ethnic community; provision for those whose background is not that of the majority grouping is often severely under-funded.

Finally, one must also be aware that discussions of citizenship in multicultural societies traditionally conceptualise citizenship as a top down process, ignoring active citizenship and 'grass-roots' activity (Bowes *et al*, 2000). Whilst there may be a role for multiculturalism in an inclusive society, it is therefore, necessary to recognise (i) the risk that the recognition of differences may also reify them, and (ii) that the potential for multicultural citizenship alone to promote social inclusion is limited because of the intimate links between citizenship and wider patterns of differentiation notably class and gender (*ibid.*). This builds upon Modood's (1998) call for a multicultural Britishness that is sensitive to ethnic difference and incorporates a respect for persons as individuals and for the collectivities to which people have a sense of belonging.

[Strategies for increasing participation](#)

The key findings from this section can be summarised as follows:

- Public use areas should foster a sense of belonging through the creation of recreation programmes that are inclusive of ethnic diversity.
- The institution of an Equal Opportunities policy is not always enough to establish an inclusive atmosphere.
- In consultation exercises it must be recognised that black and minority ethnic groups are not homogenous, individuals may identify with more than one community, and community leaders may not speak on behalf of the whole community.
- Using innovative media techniques, symbols and pictures it is possible to overcome communication problems without necessarily reducing the natural qualities of the environment itself.
- Offering activities to provide a positive experience of the countryside, such as escorted visits, led walks, mentoring schemes, inclusive planting schemes, educational visits, and personal contact, all help to increase participation.
- Evaluation policies and plans should be monitored regularly in order to ensure that racism and other forms of discrimination is actually being tackled, and that equality and diversity are promoted throughout organisations.

- Organisations can work towards projecting a philosophy of inclusion by featuring ethnic and other disadvantaged groups in all their publications and outreach material.
- Multiculturalism is sometimes in danger of simply being a 'token' recognition of cultural difference within which minority groups are presented as 'static', atemporal, discrete, impervious to external influences, homogenous and without internal dissent.

[Index](#)

5 Summary

The key findings of the literature review can be summarised as follows:

- Not all people from black and minority ethnic communities live in the inner-city and issues of exclusion and integration are as real in the suburbs and rural areas.
- Insufficient attention has been paid to including the experiences and views of minority ethnic groups in rural research and policy-making, and in shaping strategies.
- Lack of information, effective interpretation, and appropriate activities contribute to feelings of alienation.
- Fears of racial and/or sexual attack, of being alone in an unfamiliar environment and worries regarding dangerous flora and fauna, all contribute to a sense of unease in countryside and other natural open spaces.
- Monetary constraints are a significant contributing factor to the under-participation of minority ethnic groups in natural open spaces, however, it is unwise to assume a simplistic correlation between discrimination and poverty
- Leisure practices involve people making decisions about participation and there is a need therefore, to clarify the relationships between exclusion, non-participation and notions of choice.
- Using innovative media techniques, symbols and pictures it is possible to overcome communication problems without necessarily reducing the natural qualities of the environment itself.
- Offering activities to provide a positive experience of the countryside, such as escorted visits, led walks, mentoring schemes, inclusive planting schemes, educational visits, and personal contact, all help to increase participation.
- Evaluation policies and plans should be monitored regularly in order to ensure that racism and other forms of discrimination is actually being tackled, and that equality and diversity are promoted throughout organisations.
- Organisations can work towards projecting a philosophy of inclusion by featuring ethnic and other disadvantaged groups in all their publications and outreach material.

[Index](#)

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[Index](#)