



# Barriers to the legal profession

---

**Rosaline Sullivan**

**July 2010**

## Introduction

“Increasingly, children’s success at school determines their success as adults, determining whether and where they go to college (university), what profession they enter, and how much they are paid” (*Buckham and Lee, 2002*).

The provision of legal services at the highest levels and in the most prestigious firms is dominated by white, male lawyers from the highest socio-economic groups. Our belief is that such an outcome does not occur as a result of overt discrimination but instead barriers to entry and progression occur over the lifetime of individuals seeking a career in law from initial education, to training, to gaining experience within a law firm. This paper explores each stage that an individual follows in pursuing a career in law and the evidence that can help explain the socio-economic characteristics of lawyers we see in England and Wales.

## Overall purpose of research

*The Legal Services Board (LSB) has been formed to reform and modernise the regulation of the legal services market place in the interests of consumers. One focus of the LSB’s first year was on “promoting access to a diverse profession”. In 2010/11 the LSB extends this area of focus to “developing a workforce for a changing market”, enabling us to consider more widely what consumers and procurers of legal services need, want and should be able to expect from the legal workforce. Promoting a legal workforce that is open to the widest pool of talent is recognised across the sector and government as a priority area. We believe that fair access to the profession, as well as retention and progression of lawyers within it, is critical to ensuring access to justice and high-quality legal services for consumers. David Edmonds (Chair of the LSB)*

Few contributors to the debate on issues of equality in the legal profession argue that direct discrimination is responsible for the levels of disadvantage and differentiation in access to jobs and training contracts. The focus of discussion has shifted from exclusion and discrimination towards hierarchy and lack of differentiation within the profession (*Rolfe and Anderson, 2003*)

Research focused on barriers to entry and progression in the legal market tends to be at one stage, for example gaining the training contract. We believe that the lack of diversity in the legal market arises from a combination of factors that make pursuing a career in legal services difficult for those outside of the traditional norm for a lawyer. In the legal market such cumulative problems: failing to gain the right A-levels; not getting work experience in law firms while at school; attending the wrong university; training at the wrong firm all add up to insurmountable barriers that permanently effect the careers of lawyers and segregate the market.

Each step of an individual’s progress to becoming a lawyer acts as a necessary building block towards a successful career. With the wrong A-levels or attending the wrong school a child’s chance of attending a top university is significantly reduced. Without attending a top university and having had work experience at a law firm an individual will struggle to get a training contract at a top law firm and be more likely to have to fund the Legal Practice Course themselves. Once they arrive at a top law firm or barristers chamber if they cannot fit

the culture they will not progress to partner. Each stage is dependent on success at the previous stage. A successful career is not made by a single decision but a series of events that are affected by factors often out of the control of the individual who wishes to have a legal career.

We hope this analysis of existing research will help us to identify future policy options to increase diversity. Some policy options will be within the control of the LSB, others not, some will be outside of legal services altogether.

## Education

Initial education is essential for the career of the aspiring lawyer affecting both the university they attend and also their ability to get a training contract.

The social class a child is born into has a strong bearing on how well they perform at school, qualifications obtained and subsequent productivity and earnings (*Feinstein, 1999*). Disadvantaged children start school with significantly lower cognitive skills than their most advantaged counterparts (*Buckham and Lee, 2002*). Children from disadvantaged social backgrounds, with lower family income, from a lower social class or parental education have been found to achieve less educationally than their more advantaged peers; the “socio-economic group achievement gap” (*Feinstein, 2003*). This difference may in part be attributed to the drive and support of the parents, as twice as many parents in professional occupations expect their children to go to university compared to parents from lower socio-economic groups (*Panel on Fair Access to Justice, 2009*). The expectations of parents seem to impact on their children’s desires. 1 in 5 young people from average backgrounds, and 1 in 8 young people from poorer backgrounds, currently aspires to be a professional. This is three times fewer than young people from professional backgrounds. Children from middle class backgrounds also have the opportunity to talk about the professions with their parents or when meeting members of the professions during their childhood. They become accustomed to talking to such individuals at social engagements (*Bar Council, 2007*), thus raising their confidence and knowledge of opportunities available; preparing them for applying to enter the profession in later life.

This theory is supported by data from The Law Student Cohort, (*Shiner and Newburn, 1995*), which indicates that law students’ social origins vary significantly according to their sex and ethnicity. Women were more likely than men to come from families where neither parent had a degree or a professional qualification; 44% compared to 42%. Ethnic minority law students were found to be from less privileged backgrounds than their white counterparts; 60% of white respondents had at least one parent with a degree or professional qualification; 47% of African Caribbean; 40% of Indians and 20% of Pakistani or Bangladeshis.

The in-built advantage that children from higher socio-economic groups have is supplemented by links that have built up over time between independent schools and legal firms. Research has identified barriers at a very early stage in the progress to the legal market. Rolfe and Anderson (2003) found that some law firms have developed stronger links with selective and independent schools, compared to comprehensives. One reason a public sector organisation gave for targeting a selective school was they had trainees attend this

school and they wanted to get their name known within it. This obstacle clearly applies more to those who do not attend selective schools, most likely to be those from a lower class or with lower incomes.

Other firms were involved in initiatives organised by the independent schools careers association (ISCO) which assists private schools in their careers education programmes. Such initiatives aimed at independent school children may account for the majority of leading judges and barristers attending independent schools - 70% and 68% respectively (*the Sutton Trust, 2009*)

Strategies encompassing independent school children could, arguably, be detrimental to state school children who are often in need of the greatest guidance. Limitless London is a scheme established by two trainee solicitors to address such a lack of guidance in state schools. Set up by two trainee solicitors to aid high-achieving, ambitious, Barking and Dagenham state school children to attend university and compete for top jobs. This not-for-profit organisation works with local teachers and pupils to provide careers advice for young adults through presentations, mentoring and hosting workshops in City law firms.

The Bar, along with the Citizenship Foundation, reach out to state school children through the Bar National Mock Trial Competition, where state school children take on the roles of lawyers, witnesses, court staff and jurors at Crown and High Courts. This aims to promote diversity in the profession by introducing young people to the legal profession (*the Bar Council, 2007*)

Although little research has been conducted to assess the impact of such schemes the market has been found to be more accessible to state school children than 20 years ago, with 68% of partners in magic circle firms independently educated in 1988 in comparison to 55% in 2004 (*the Sutton Trust, 2009*). It is difficult to establish if such findings can be attributed to access schemes and we must take caution that the Sutton Trust, 2009, also found that young partners at such firms are as likely to have been privately educated now as they were twenty years ago.

Lessons we can learn from this area of research literature are both that support in the early period of education can have a significant impact on outcome as can mentoring and/or links between schools and law firms. Those individuals from higher socio-economic classes tend to have this early support, providing them with an early advantage when pursuing a legal career.

## **University**

Although young participation in higher education in England is on the increase, with a rapid increase from 30% for the 1994:1995 cohorts, to 36% for the 2009:2010, socioeconomic factors impact the rates of participation (*HEFCE, 2010; 5*). This is supported by the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions' report which states that "social class has, and remains, a strong determinant of participation in higher education, and this gap has not closed substantially in the last half century". Although this gap has not closed, there has been a steady increase in the number of traditionally under-represented groups going on to higher education. Figures released by the Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2009, show that in

2000-01 25% of young people entering higher education were from less advantaged socio-economic backgrounds, in comparison to 29.1% in 2006-07 (*PoFAP, 2009; 87*). Despite this improvement in the representation of socioeconomic individuals in higher education, there still remains a need to do more to create equality for over half of all young people in England are from less socio-economic backgrounds - twice as high a proportion as the proportion entering higher education (*Public Accounts Committee, 2009*).

The popularity of law courses at UK universities has increased rapidly in recent years, with universities responding by expanding courses. This has resulted in an increase in law graduates in the UK. The increased number of young people pursuing a career in law is bound to increase the competition of the market. In practice the choice of which university to attend can have as big an impact as the choice of degree.

There are over 100 universities in the UK (Universities UK). These can be divided into research-intensive Russell Group universities<sup>1</sup>, referred to as 'old' universities, which include Oxford and Cambridge (Oxbridge), other 'redbrick' universities (also referred to as 'old' universities) and post-1992 universities (referred to as 'new' universities). Academics often desire to attend Russell Group universities or old universities as these tend to gain more respect than new universities, although this is speculative.

The type of institution attended varies according to school background and parents' level of education. This may reflect the strong correlation found between social background and educational attainment or could also result from other unobserved factors. Those from less privileged backgrounds are concentrated in new universities, with well over half (56%) of those who attended a comprehensive school attending a new university, as had 59% of those whose parents did not have a degree or professional qualification. This was in comparison to 33% who had been to an independent school and 34% of those who had a graduate parent (*Shiner, 1995*).

Russell Group universities have the reputation for being the progression route for white, middle class, privately educated individuals. This perception is possibly founded by the dearth of students from lower socioeconomic groups attending such universities, for example 2,500 students from private schools entered Oxbridge in 2006/07 in comparison to 250 from lower socioeconomic groups (*Higher Education Statistics Agency*). These figures are alarming considering that only 7% of the school-aged population are privately educated (the Sutton Trust, 2009). Such overrepresentation from students from private schools has caused concern, with the Sutton Trust, 2004, noting that there are some 3,000 well-qualified young people attending state schools and sixth form colleges who are not among the 30,000 students who attend leading universities, despite achieving grades as good or as better than the entry requirements to courses in those universities. It is hard to determine what is preventing state school pupils from attending pre-1992 universities. Some researchers suggest this may be due to lack of confidence or lack of knowledge about which universities to attend and the impact of the choice of university; there is clearly a gap in those who are able to attend and those who attend as 45% of independent school students who obtain the

---

<sup>1</sup> University of Birmingham, University of Bristol, University of Cambridge, Cardiff University, University of Edinburgh, University of Glasgow, Imperial College London, King's College London, University of Leeds, University of Liverpool, London School of Economics and Political Science, University of Manchester, Newcastle University, University of Nottingham, University of Oxford, Queen's University Belfast, University of Sheffield, University of Southampton, University College London, University of Warwick

equivalent of an A and two Bs go to a leading university, in comparison to 26% of state school students who achieve the same grades (*the Sutton Trust, 2004*).

Ethnic minority law graduates are significantly more likely than their white equivalents to have studied at a new university with 87% of African Caribbean having done so (*Shiner and Newburn, 1995*). Research has shown that the desire to 'fit in' and belong at university (*Read et al, 2003*) affects the choice of institution among BME and working-class students. This theory is supported as only 16% of students at the Russell Group universities originating from lower socio-economic backgrounds (*Higher Education Statistics Agency*) in contrast to around 60% of all BME students are concentrated in new London universities (*Bhattacharyya et al, 2003*). This sheds further light on why there are a number of well qualified individuals not attending Russell Group universities and demonstrates that actions to address school performance alone would still fail to address the whole problem for ethnic minorities and students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds

The theory that those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are a small minority in leading universities in part due to lack of guidance is supported by findings by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) on the Reach for Excellence (RfE) Programme at the University of Leeds (*the Sutton Trust, 2010*). The RfE programme is a university outreach scheme that provides support for local able 16 year olds from disadvantaged backgrounds, with the objective to raise their chances of enrolling at old universities. The duration of the programme is two years, where students are provided individual mentoring, advice sessions, a summer school and university visits. Such guidance and support can help young people from disadvantaged communities overcome the 'cultural obstacles', considered to be the "psychological leap" for young people with no graduate peers imagining becoming a lawyer (*the Sutton Trust, 2009; 11*).

Students on the programme are found to be more likely than similar students not enrolled on the programme to enter higher education, 87% and 65% respectively, and twice as likely to enter Russell Group universities, 45% in comparison to 21%. As the study was based in Leeds, a large number of students are found to enrol at the University of Leeds from the RfE programme. This potentially overcomes the financial barrier found to prevent those from lower socio-economic groups entering higher education as research has found that such individuals are less willing to travel, as students who attend universities far from home need "greater financial resources than if they lived at home" (*the Sutton Trust, 2004*).

The Social Mobility Foundation have a similar scheme with the aim to decrease the socioeconomic gap in higher education by providing a range of supports for bright, less privileged A Level students, enabling them to realise their potential and progress into good universities and professions. Students are provided with an e-mentor in their desired profession and helped to secure internships.

Although such diversity initiatives have been commended some researchers have criticised universities for "faltering on some of the more social aspects of diversity which also effect students' academic and social experience" (*the Runnymede Community Study, 2007*). The presence of a more diverse community, such as ethnic minority students, does not result in a community of equal access, participation and opportunity. Such students need to identify with the university community (*McNay, 2005*). A lack of belonging may cause BME and

those from lower socio-economic groups to lack confidence in their ability to adapt to the culture at pre-1992 universities.

Two types of policy approach could be adopted to address the challenges identified in this section. Either we seek ways to help students from lower socio-economic groups and BME groups to attend Russell Group or old universities, and integrate in such institutions, or encourage law firms to widen their pool from which they recruit (or both). Both solutions present major policy challenges.

## **Work experience**

Having legal work experience aids the entry to the legal market in a number of ways. The working knowledge and practical experience gained makes students more attractive to prospective employers while providing direct links to firms who offer training contracts.

Having relevant experience significantly increases the chances of being offered a training contract with 63% of those who had carried out vacation work being offered a contract in comparison to 43% of those who had not carried out work experience (*Shiner and Newburn, 1995*). This stage of the students' career is arguably just as important as the qualifications obtained; a high proportion of large firms recruit their trainees from work experience (*Rolfe and Anderson, 2003*).

Work experience can take place at an early stage with 18% of students having undertaken it in Year 10 or 11, aged 14-16 (*Francis and Sommerlad, 2008*). Such experience may not be accessible to all students, as students with connections to the professions are twice as likely to have secured early work experience as those without such connections (*Francis and Sommerlad, 2008*).

Undertaking work experience before university can also improve the chances of gaining entry to a leading university. Such behaviour displays commitment and development to the professions and "these factors can often make the difference between two applicants with equal academic records" (*the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions, 2009; 100*).

Social background is significantly related to the success of gaining work experience with those from privileged backgrounds more likely to achieve this (*Shiner and Newburn, 1995*). This lack of social diversity may be due to firms receiving requests for work experience from family members of clients or colleagues, with one large firm allocating three of its ten vacation placements to such individuals (*Rolfe and Anderson, 2003*). Those from a background in which internships are commonplace are more likely to know of their existence and have the social networks to know the qualities that the firms are looking for (*the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions, 2009*). This may also shed light on the large proportion of independently educated individuals in the market, with students from independent schools twice as likely to have a relative in the profession as students at comprehensives (*Halpern, 1994*).

The expense of work experience and internships often creates obstacles to the non-privileged. These opportunities are usually poorly paid, disadvantaging those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds or from outside urban areas. "The opportunities available to a

bright young person from a working class home in Cumbria are very different to those open to a middle class graduate living in the South East”( *the Sutton Trust, 2009; 11*)

Ethnic groups in general are less likely to carry out work experience than their white peers, with the exception of Indian students (*Shiner and Newburn, 1995*). This lack of equality has been addressed by Sponsors for Educational Opportunity London (SEO) who offer mentoring and find summer internships at corporate law firms in the City. This programme is targeted at outstanding undergraduates from ethnic minority groups currently under-represented in the market. This scheme also provides great networking opportunities with access to senior partners at all firms, including magic circle firms. The goal of this programme is to secure training contracts for such individuals, which has been achieved with an impressive success rate of 80% of SEO interns securing a full-time position with a sponsoring firm.

Although this scheme has been found to be successful at progressing BME individuals into the market it does not eradicate the financial barrier for some BME and lower socioeconomic individuals. The tendency for firms not to pay their work experience students closes access to those from less advantaged backgrounds who cannot afford to work unpaid during their holidays.

The potential policy options to address the diversity challenges posed by the need for work experience are varied, from abolishing all work experience to requiring firms to offer payment for work experience and recruiting students from a wider pool. Of course it is possible that even if students were given new opportunities previous experience and socio-economic conditioning would result in the ‘new’ recruits failing to perform as well as traditional students.

### **The Legal Practice Course (LPC)**

The LPC is a year long course aimed specifically at legal practice. It is a crucial part of the pathway leading to a career as a solicitor.

There is an evident financial barrier to completion of the LPC with tuition fees in the region of £11,000 (*Young Legal Aid Lawyers, 2010*), depending on location and quality of institution. Financial barriers are considered so great that 42% of individuals who did not apply for the LPC cited financial reasons for their failure to do so (*Shiner and Newburn, 1995*). This financial barrier is more prevalent for those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, with 38% of students found to fund their LPC with money from their parents. Students from less privileged backgrounds, defined as those who had attended a comprehensive school or those whose parents did not have professional qualifications, were less likely than their more privileged peers to have received professional sponsorship or parental contributions, but were more likely to have used a commercial loan (*Shiner and Newburn, 1995*). Those who do not receive professional sponsorship during their LPC are also more likely to carry out paid employment, a possible detriment to their performance (*Vignaendra, 2001*).

The university attended influences the source of finance for the LPC, with 74% of Oxbridge graduates receiving professional sponsorship, in comparison to just 27% of old university graduates and 14% of new university graduates( *Shiner and Newburn, 1995*). Students who



have their course funded are likely to have a training contract with the firm sponsoring them. This has profound implications for BME and those from lower socioeconomic class due to their lack of representation at old universities, such as Oxbridge, as discussed earlier.

The probability of professional funding for LPC is also dependent of the type of legal work individuals wish to undertake. While it is not uncommon for large commercial firms to meet fees, in some cases providing a living allowance on top, it is unheard of for any legal aid providers to provide such support. The Legal Services Commission award grants, but these only cover 60% of the fees (*Young Legal Aid Lawyers, 2010*). Such lack of funding may have severe consequences for those attracted to legal aid work.

The challenge presented by the LPC to increasing diversity is significant but potentially could be addressed through increasing access to low cost funding solutions such as extending student loan availability. Alternatively, solutions could instead look at the availability of training contracts which include LPC funding.

### **Training Contract**

Before a person who has completed the LPC can practice as a solicitor they must also complete a two-year training period; a 'training contract'. Gaining a training contract is considered much more difficult than gaining a place on the LPC. In 2008, the Law Society reported that 7,000 individuals completed the LPC with only 6,000 training contracts available in 2009 (*cited in The Lawyer*). Students are aware of the competition in the market, with the average student applying to 46 organisations, though 22% had applied to 100 places or more. This competition for places constitutes a further, greater, barrier to entry to the profession (*Shiner and Newburn, 1995*).

The firm in which a solicitor receives their training can have profound affects on their pay, conditions and career prospects. Firms can also ease the financial burden faced by students as many large firms recruit students at university, paying their fees and a maintenance grant during the Legal Practice Course or paying for recruits without a law degree to attend the CPE course (*Rolfe and Anderson, 2003*). Research has focused on the inequality in firms' practices and policies for recruiting individuals for training contracts. The recruitment process varies according to the size of the firm, creating different barriers to the profession depending on the firm individuals apply for.

Smaller firms have been found to undertake 'informal' methods of recruitment. During interviews with firms to establish their recruitment cycle, it was reported that a number of small firms in the area exchanged information on current paralegal staff who were looking for training contracts and recruited 'as and when', while one medium-sized firm was found to recruit entirely from students on summer placement, which decreases the chance of a broad socio-economic spectrum, as discussed previously. However, the researcher does reassure that "such poor practice does appear to be unusual" (*Rolfe and Anderson, 2003; 4*).

Larger firms actively seek applicants for training contracts through a range of activities centred on their preferred universities, invariably Oxbridge and pre-1992 universities. This targeted recruitment creates a great advantage for those from old universities with 53% of Oxbridge graduates found to have attended a recruitment exercise from a potential employer

in comparison to 38% of students from pre-1992 universities and 21% from new universities (*Halpern, 1994*). These activities include attending law fairs, holding presentations and workshops providing information on how to apply for training contracts and sponsoring clubs and events. Such methods are geared towards university students at the earliest possible stage and demonstrate that “inequalities in access to information about careers in law do not end once students arrive at university, but are compounded by the greater involvement between firms and their favoured universities” (*Rolfe and Anderson 2003; 22*). With 31.4% of all training contracts held at corporate firms with 81 or more partners and 15.8% with firms with 26 to 80 partners, and such firms likely to carry out such targeting, competition for those at other universities is high (*Sommerlad and Stapleford, 2008*)

Few firms have been found to have links with new universities resulting in those who have not attended the targeted universities having to overcome further barriers after the LPC stage (*Rolfe and Anderson, 2003*). Students from new universities seem to be aware of this hurdle as, on average, they applied to over four times as many places as Oxbridge students (*Shiner and Newburn, 1995*).

This recruitment strategy may clarify why attendance at certain universities nearly doubles the chance of securing a training contract. Those from old universities, excluding Oxbridge, were almost twice as likely to secure contracts as those from new universities (*College of Law, 2008*). Attending a new university was found to have a more significant impact than the gender, ethnicity or socioeconomic group of applicants for training contracts (*Shiner and Newburn, 1995*)

Firms target old universities as they believe that this will have an impact on the quality and calibre of recruits, with the belief that universities with higher entry requirements deliver more demanding courses and better graduates. In a survey of recruiters, just over a quarter of respondents felt that new universities produce lower quality graduates (*Rolfe and Anderson, 2003*). This opinion of inferiority is reflected in the success of students securing training contracts being irrespective of their academic performance and more based on the university attended, with 75% of students with high UCAS points and a first from a new university securing a training contract; not much variation to those with a upper second and high UCAS points from an old university (73%) (*College of Law, 2008*). Such was the influence of having been to Oxbridge that 84% of applicants from this type of institution who had gained a lower second or below were more likely to be offered a training contract than those at old universities or post 1992 universities who achieved better; 79% of those who gained a first or 2.1 from an old university were offered a training contract in comparison to 60% of those who had achieved the same from a new university. This further demonstrates that firms are willing to disregard academic achievement in favour of university attended (*Shiner and Newburn, 1995*).

University recruitment strategy can have a significant impact on socioeconomic and BME diversity as the institution a student attends is generally a result of their performance at school and in turn, strongly affected by their socioeconomic background, as discussed previously. However, we must consider the impact the emergence of a black and minority ethnic middle class will have on the impact of prior educational performance. This still leaves those in a low social class to overcome barriers to entry to the profession.

Some firms are aware that this method of recruitment can be detrimental to those at new universities, and agreed that excellent students can be found at such establishments, but believed that it was not the responsibility of the firm to change such attitudes (*Ashley, 2009*). Some felt that changes were necessary during the school stage to enable more ethnic minority students to realise their potential and attend old universities (*Rolfe and Anderson, 2003*).

Some firms have, however, started to change their recruitment practice by not targeting Oxbridge and old universities, in order to achieve a more diverse intake as they believe this would benefit their business among clients and staff. Pressure from the Law Society was also found to affect the desire to change (*Rolfe and Anderson, 2003*).

This lack of university diversity in firms is much less of an issue in Germany and Italy, where recruits come from a much more diverse group of universities. This is attributed to the exams taken by law students being the same across all universities, meaning that candidates can be compared to one another on the basis of exam performance and not university attended. There has, therefore, been a suggestion that a reform of the education of law students has the potential to decrease the prominence of old universities students in the market (*Cook et al, 2010*).

One factor which creates a barrier for all individuals, yet greater for some, is the impact of the credit crunch. The decline in the small high-street firms of the profession causes a barrier for those who are considered unsuitable for larger firms, with smaller firms considered to provide a refuge for those who would have difficulty securing a place with larger firms (*Shiner, 2000*). The Law Society, 2009, reported a 7.8% decrease in the amount of registered trainees in comparison to 2008. The decline in retention rates for trainees in larger firms, with Clifford Chance ending 21 of its 70 training contracts in September 2009, will inevitably create greater competition for progression in the market. Many firms are offering fewer places on their intake, with Field Fisher Waterhouse not bringing a single trainee on board in 2011 (*City A.M.*).

Firms recruiting students for training contracts undoubtedly face significant challenges given the large numbers of students applying for the limited places available. Sifting between students to create a manageable shortlist is made considerably easier by simple rules that may damage attempts to improve diversity. Despite the difficulties addressing the diversity challenges at this stage, it is a crucial stage in particular if we wish to increase the proportion of BME students joining the top law firms.

### **Progression as a lawyer**

Once individuals have surmounted the barriers at each stage of entry to the profession many still face obstacles to progression within the profession. Research has shown a negative correlation with numerous characteristics, such as ethnic origin, gender and social class, and the chance of progressing to high ranks within the profession, for example becoming a partner in a firm.

Despite a high number of female and ethnic minority individuals training in legal services professions, the diversity of the sector quickly declines with more experienced or senior

individuals within the sector. This needs to be addressed due to the lack of diversity in powerful positions having a potential adverse impact on the rest of the market.

Women today account for 46.1% of solicitors with practising certificates, a figure steadily increasing (*the Law Society, 2009*). Women are well-represented at the entry stage to the profession accounting for 61% of law students (*statistics from Higher Education Statistics Agency*) and 61.7% of all trainees (*the Law Society, 2009*). Despite this increase in the number of women entering the profession, women only account for a quarter of all partners in private practice; 24.8%. A higher proportion of men achieve partnership status than women within the same amount of time, with 74.7% of men becoming partners or sole practitioners within 10-19 years in the industry, in comparison to just 46.7% of women (*the Law Society, 2009*). "Gender is clearly a significant category of disadvantage, and the subordination of women within legal practice has been well documented" (*Francis 2006; 476*).

Female solicitors are not well represented across the spectrum of firms and industries. Male trainees are much more likely than female trainees to be placed in large firms, with 81 or more partners; 39.6% and 31.9% respectively. Females are more likely to be placed in smaller firms, with 13% of females training in firms with 5-10 partners in comparison to 9.8% of males (*the Law Society, 2009*). Women have been noted to be more likely to work in community orientated and lower paid fields, such as family, employment and benefits (*Bolton and Muzio, 2007*) or pursuing careers outside of private practice (*Law Society, 2004*). In 2008, women accounted for 48% of solicitors employed in commerce/industry, 57% of Crown Prosecution Service solicitors and 62% of local government solicitors (cited in *Pleasence et al, 2009*). Little research has been conducted to establish whether this lack of diversity in firms and fields is due to large firms discriminating against females or whether females are opting for smaller firms and different fields due to the perceived benefits they can offer them.

However, common perceptions of areas being designated for women, for example family law, have been heightened by the fact that people are directed towards these areas at the early stages in their careers (*DCA, 2006*). The tendency for certain groups to be directed into particular areas of law has been suggested as a possible explanation for the narrowing of the pool from which applicants are selected for silk and judiciary (*Malleson and Balda, 2000*) and may not be an indicator of choice, just expectation.

Family commitments lead to women requiring more flexibility within their career. Women may choose to work in different areas to men due to the "greater flexibility, and the greater sensitivity towards equal opportunities' issues demonstrated outside private practice" (*Duff and Webley, 2004; 109*). This is supported by the finding that women are reluctant to apply for judiciary due to the perceived lack of flexibility it offers, with female judges agreeing that talented women are lost to the profession due to its unwillingness to offer flexible ways of working, possibly accounting for the lack of female representation within the judiciary (*DCA, 2006*). Improving flexibility for employees can increase the number of female partners; Berrymans Lace Mawer has the highest proportion of female partners among the top 50 UK firms by turnover, with 35% female partners. Senior partner Terry Renouf has partly attributed this to the firm's focus on defendant insurance work, which allows greater flexibility in time management and the availability of part-time working arrangements to all its partners (*the Lawyer, 2010*).

However, creating flexible options may meet some reluctance from female solicitors, who were found to believe their careers would be damaged if they took up more flexible working arrangements. A survey conducted by King's College London and the Association of Women Solicitors found that half of women lawyers considered that solicitors who took up flexible working were "viewed as less serious about their careers" (*the Law Society Gazette, 2010*); 44% said flexible working had a negative impact on promotion aspects. If the perception of job insecurity is correct then this may lay claim to the lack of female representation amongst all partners. We must note that there is demand for such flexibility with 96% of women lawyers said they wanted a career which integrated with their personal and family life; there is, therefore, a need to change the perceptions of flexible working within the profession.

Looking at the feminised profession of legal executives supplies us with insight into why such an industry is so attractive to the vast amount of women within it, with females accounting for 72% of all members (*ILEX Membership Survey, 2000*). Legal executives report a high degree of control over their work with little gender difference (*Francis, 2006*). This suggests that some industries are able to eradicate the lack of confidence (*Francis, 2006*) some women experience in different industries, such as the judiciary (*DCA, 2006*) However, we must take caution that legal executives working in larger companies experienced considerably more limitations (*Francis, 2006*).

In the same respect as legal executives being an industry dominated by women; the judiciary is an industry composed largely of men. Whilst women make up 51% of the population, and ethnic minorities nearly 8%, their representation in the judiciary stands at 26% and 5% respectively (*The Times*). There have been a number of suggestions for why women and BME individuals fail to progress to judiciary. There remains a prevalent concern about 'fitting in' to the judiciary, with a perception of the judiciary as being "composed of old, white privately educated, middle/upper class males" (*DCA, 2006; 13*). This results in a reluctance to apply for judiciary, with some ethnic minorities concerned about direct discrimination as they "had come up against judges who they felt had fairly racist or 'snobbish' viewpoints" (*DCA 2006; 30*). The lack of perceived diversity within the judiciary was also cited as a deterring factor, due to fear of isolation (*DCA, 2006*).

The culture of the profession creates a passive barrier for females. Networking is considered an essential requirement for progression in many professions, and likely to be just as important in law. Women in the legal profession have been found to be concerned about their ability to join in the male pastimes, such as golf (*DCA, 2006*). Individuals are often expected to attend after-hours events, often notified at the last minute (*Francis, 2006*), which women are less likely to attend due to family commitments. Such networking events require females to assume gendered roles. Younger, female staff are expected to attend these events to keep things sociable while the male Equity Partners tout for work (*Sommerlad and Sanderson, 1998; 176-7*). The inability of females to attend such events due to family commitments, and the hierarchy roles they are expected to play when they do attend, are likely to cause women to lack in confidence, a possible detriment to their desire to progress, although this is speculative.

The masculine ethos of the profession is not only evident in social situations; women lawyers experience problems seeking a promotion (*Francis, 2006*). There is such demand for assimilation that women who take on male characteristics of the profession succeed in reaching the top (*Sommerlad and Sanderson, 1997*).

While 38.4% of white Europeans in private practice are at partnership level, the corresponding proportion from ethnic groups is significantly lower, 25.9% (*the Law Society, 2009*). This may reflect the relatively new entry to the profession from ethnic minority groups, but it is a concern that it could also be indicative of potential discrimination in firms.

A recent study conducted by the National Association for Law Placement in the USA found that the attrition rate for minority lawyers is far greater than that of their white peers. A study of second and third year associates found that 65% of black associates intended to leave their firm within two years, in comparison to 45% of white males. (*Wilkins, cited on BlackSolicitorsNetwork.co.uk*). Such figures have implications for diversity at the top of firms as lawyers typically assume senior associate duties by year four. It is hard to distinguish the cause of the high attrition rate for minority groups, however, it may be a combination of lack of experience with clerks considered to be unwilling to give high profile briefs to BME barristers, instead preferring the 'safer' option (*DCA, 2006; 23*), and the lack of integration BME individuals may feel in such an elite field.

This lack of representation has caused concern: "despite increasing numbers of people from black and ethnic minority backgrounds in professional jobs, many professions are still unrepresentative of the modern society they serve" (*the Panel on Fair Access to Justice, 2009*). Such misrepresentation is believed to be of detriment to consumers as "clients expect their lawyers' profile to reflect society. They demand a credible service that is sensitive and responsive to cultural and racial diversity." (*Black Lawyers Directory Business Case for Race Diversity*).

Socioeconomic factors still contribute to individual success. A survey of magic circle law firms found that the young partners of today are almost as likely to have been privately educated as the older partners twenty years ago; 71% and 73% respectively (*the Sutton Trust, 2009*). This suggests that those from a lower socioeconomic background, who are likely to have attended a state school, will still be burdened by this aspect even after completing the necessary training. This further demonstrates the impact attending a state school can have in such an elite industry.

There is an evident gap between the number of females and ethnic minorities entering the market and those progressing within it. Policy initiatives need to be derived to address such a progression gap.

The lack of transparency within the profession needs to be addressed. All vacancies should be advertised externally in order for those without connections to have a fair chance.

Firms should ensure that once females and those from ethnic minorities have joined the firm they are not at a disadvantage regarding likeliness of progression due to social differences, or because they opt to choose flexible working arrangements. It may be plausible to address detriments of social differences by ensuring firms conduct less male-orientated or alcohol-related social events. Barriers facing females and ethnic minorities can be measured, and therefore reduced, by conducting internal staff surveys to gain perceptions on obstacles to progression.

# Barristers

Barristers are one of the oldest professions in England and Wales; and one of the highest status professions in class schemata (*Bottero, 2005*).

Given the high profile of the profession, it is pressured to strive towards creating an equal entry and progression route, with the Bar Council commissioning research to reduce perceived barriers, which shall be discussed later.

## The Bar Professional Training Course (BPTC) formerly BVC

After completing a law degree, graduates decide what route of the legal profession, if any, they wish to pursue. If they wish to become a barrister they must take a one-year (full time) or two years (part time) Bar Professional Training Course (BPTC), as required by the Bar Council.

An initial barrier to entry to the Bar, preventing some graduates pursuing this career path, is the perception of the Bar. The Bar is perceived as predominantly dominated by those from “socially, financially and educationally privileged backgrounds” (*Neuberger, 2007; 16*). Sociologists believe that individuals are motivated by the need to belong, joining groups with which they have commonalities such as socioeconomic status (*Fiske, 2004*). This theory implies that those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds will be discouraged from applying to the Bar as they do not fit the perception. This is, however, difficult to measure as there has yet to be a study to ascertain the socioeconomic background of entrants.

The BPTC, like the LPC, creates a financial barrier to those who are less well off. The cost of the BPTC depends, on some extent, on the provider. Currently, the College of Law charges £14,670 for a one year course in London. On its own, this is a large sum to pay but even more burdensome when one considers living costs.

The BPTC was, until recently, solely studied at the Inns of Court School of Law in London. This was believed to be an advantage due to the proximity to the Inns of Court who provide support for trainee barristers. However, this was thought to provide a disadvantage to some students who were based outside London, leading the Bar Council to allow universities to offer the course. There are currently only ten institutions offering the BPTC, the majority of which are metropolitan cities. This may create a financial barrier for those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds who are from outside these cities.

Although the Bar shows higher female participation than the average in professional employment (*Census, 2001*), female participation at the Bar still falls behind the solicitor profession. Females accounted for 51% of BPTC students in 2007/08 (*the Bar Council*) in comparison to 61% of trainee solicitors. There is no doubt that the Bar has become more accessible for women, however, we expect this figure to be higher considering that females are well represented at universities, especially in law degrees.

## **Pupillage**

After completing the BPTC trainee barristers must complete a pupillage, arguably the most important part of their training.

Places for pupillages, as with training contracts, are difficult to secure with Mason (2004) noting that there are over three times the number of would-be-pupils as there are pupillages. This competition for places may be heightened for ethnic minorities. In focus groups carried out by the Legal Services Commission, 2009, BME barristers felt that they were “less well informed about the application process and profession...than their white counterparts” (LSC, 2009; 12). It was also highlighted that connections in the profession play a big part in securing a pupillage, with many BME barristers being less well connected. Once individuals have overcome the competition for pupillage; the pupillage creates a further financial barrier due to the minimum salary being just £9,996 a year (Gillespie, 2007). Entry to the profession is costly resulting in members incurring debt from training and education. Along with the majority of pupillages in London, this lack of financial support is likely to put great strain on those from lower socioeconomic groups.

The concentration of pupillages in London may affect the structure of the Bar, with the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions, 2009, finding that working class students are less “geographically mobile” with regard to university attended. The London Bar may, therefore, be less socially diverse. However, the abundance of junior barristers in London may be beneficial to those junior barristers outside of London, where they are more likely to get exposure to high level cases (LSC, 2009)

The university attended also impacts on the chance of obtaining a pupillage. The 2007/2008 Pupillage Supplementary Survey conducted by the Bar Council found that 68% of pupils had attended a Russell Group university. As discussed previously, the barriers facing those attending a new university are more applicable to those from ethnic minority groups and lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

Raising the minimum salary for pupillage may encourage those who are financially unstable to pursue a career in the Bar. If this is supported by guidance on the application process to those from lower socio-economic backgrounds or ethnic minorities, this may result in a more diverse profession.

## **Progression as a barrister**

Many researchers have discussed the institutional discrimination (McGlynn, 1999a) that is believed to exist at the Bar, causing women to have unequal outcomes and representations to men.

Existing studies show that the career progression for females, ethnic minorities and men differs. Female barristers are more likely to conduct legal aid work than men, and are over-represented in certain types of criminal defence work, particularly those relating to sexual offences and children; whilst being under-represented in other fields such as fraud (LSC, 2009). With surveys conveying that those who practise in civil law earn more than those who



practise crime, the choice of career progression for females may impact on their income (LSC, 2009).

Career progression is somewhat reliant on choice of the individual, yet it is also influenced by the perception in the profession of traditional areas of practice for female and BME barristers. Clerks have a great deal of influence over the career of barristers; “the barrister has very little control over the progress of his or her career in the very early stages; it all depends on the barrister’s clerk” (Flood, 1983; 3). Considering the influence over career clerks have it is worrying that there is “consensus that clerks allocate work to certain barristers and often this is based on typecasting.” Women believe that they are stereotyped into sex cases and public law childcare cases whereas men tend to be allocated the more lucrative fraud, complex crime and ancillary relief cases (LSC, 2009; 17). This ‘pigeon-holing’ is likely to create difficulty for females who wish to enter traditionally male areas of law.

Barristers have the opportunity to become sole-practitioners once they have completed three years’ call. While this may be a desired option for some as they have more control over their work and their hours, this is a great financial risk as barristers are responsible for covering all their overheads.

Whilst the minority of barristers (20%, *Bar Council, 2008*) work in the employed bar, women are under-represented in the self-employed field, with just 30% of self-employed practitioners being female compared to 46% of the employed Bar (*Bar Council, Records Office*). Monaghan (2008) suggests this lack of representation is due the self-employed Bar requiring all practitioners to bear the financial risk; there is no sick pay or maternity leave. Barristers are expected to work long hours and travel; this is not an option for some women with children. Employed barristers have the benefit of being offered more regular hours, less travel and paid maternity leave. The expectations from working as a barrister may also account for the lack of women barristers in comparison to women solicitors.

The retention level in self-employed practice supports the theory that women are disadvantaged in self-employed practice. A high proportion of female respondents to the Exit Survey believed that having children had affected their careers at the Bar.

An option to decrease the discrimination BME and female lawyers experience is to educate clerks on equality and diversity training, they currently receive training but this may not be enough. If clerks are more willing to challenge the assumptions within the profession, they may be able to aid barristers to overcome the typecasting.

## **Conclusion**

Inequality within the legal profession is determined by factors such as gender, age, ethnic background and social class, impacting on outcomes such as pay and career.

Entering the profession remains difficult and expensive. Individuals from lower socio-economic groups face great financial barriers as the training stages to the profession are costly. The financial barriers to entry may be raised due to the reluctance of banks to provide loans for training, such as the LPC (*the Law Society Gazette, June 2010*) and the recent suggestion from some universities to increase tuition fees.

At each stage of the process of entry and progression, those from higher socio-economic backgrounds are at an advantage: attending a more academic school followed by a Russell Group university - which supply individuals with the knowledge of and contact with law firms; gaining work experience, often through contacts; and having similar social attributes to those in the profession, making them more appealing to firms. These advantages are likely to account for the over-representation of those from private schools in the profession, leading to the profession being perceived as having an elitist culture.

The culture of the profession prevents women and ethnic minorities from progressing in the market due to the great emphasis placed on networking. Women and ethnic minorities often do not attend events due to their different cultural values, family commitments or reluctance due to the expectation for females to establish a demeaning role. Females from all social backgrounds face further obstacles to progression due to the lack of perceived flexibility, preventing them from meeting family commitments and possibly restricting their progression to partnership.

The culture of the profession has been found to impact on career choice. Qualitative studies have identified a concern regarding fitting in, leading some to pursue different career paths within the profession which are perceived to be less discriminating, for example family law.

Before addressing barriers it may be beneficial to conduct further research to understand the experience of those within the profession. The LSB has recently commissioned Leeds Metropolitan and Westminster universities to undertake such analysis, which is due to be released in October 2010. This qualitative study of female and ethnic minority professionals shall provide a greater understanding of their career choices and whether they are a product of the culture, structure or institutions of the profession. Once we know the cause of female and ethnic minority misrepresentation in areas of the market we will then know how best to address the issue.

Although addressing each barrier to the profession may be of some benefit, individuals susceptible to inequality need to be aided through each stage of entry and progression to the profession to overcome the obstacles presented. By addressing the discrimination within the legal profession we may be able to improve the wider picture, such as the levels of social mobility in the UK being lower than many other advanced countries (*the Panel on Fair Access to the Profession, 2010*) meaning that "if you are born poor, you are more likely to stay poor in this country than in many other advanced nations" (*the Sutton Trust, 2009; 3*).

## References

Ashley, L (2009): *Making a Difference? The Use (and Abuse) of Diversity Management at the UK's Elite Law Firms*. University of Oxford

The General Council of the Bar (2007) *Entry to the Bar Working Party*

The General Council of the Bar (2008) *Diversity*, London. Table 1  
[www.barcouncil.org.uk/about/statistics](http://www.barcouncil.org.uk/about/statistics)

Bhattacharyya, G. Ison, L. & Blair, M. (2003) *Minority Ethnic Attainment and Participation in Education and Training: The Evidence*. DfES Research Topic Paper RTP01-03

Bolton, S and Muzio, D (2007) *Can't live with 'em; can't live without 'em: Gendered segmentation in the legal profession*

Bottero, W (2005) *Stratification: Social Division and Inequality*. Oxford. Routledge

Buckham, D and Lee, V (2002) *Inequality at the starting gate: Social background differences in achievement as children begin school*

Chevalier, A. & Conlon, G. (2003) *Does it pay to attend a prestigious university?* London: Centre for the Economics of Education, London School of Economics and Political Science

City A.M. (1<sup>st</sup> July 2009). *Trainee problem threatens pyramid*. <http://www.cityam.com/city-focus/trainee-problem-threatens-pyramid>

The College of Law (2008) *Destinations and Diversity: LPC and BVC Students Finishing Summer 2007*

Cook, A, Faulconbridge, J and Muzio, D (February 2010) *Professional Education, Global Professional Service Firms and Professional Work in Europe: The case of Law*

Connor, H. Tyers, C. & Modood, T. (2004) *Why the Difference? A Closer Look at Higher Education Minority Ethnic Students and Graduates*. DfES Research Report RR552

Cook, A. and Muzio, D. (2010) *Professional Education, Global Professional Service Firms and Professional Work in Europe: the case of Law*. University of Lancaster and University of Leeds

Curtis P. (2006) *Segregation, 2006 style*. The Guardian. Cited in Runnymede Community Study (2007)

Department for Constitutional Affairs (2006) *Judicial Diversity: Findings of a Consultation with Barristers, Solicitors and Judges*. Final Report. Conducted by Opinion Leader Research

Duff, L and Webley, L (2004) *Equality and Diversity: Women Solicitors*. London: Law Society

- Feinstein (1999) *The Relative Economic Importance of Academic, Psychological and Behavioural Attributes Developed in Childhood*. The Centre for Economic Performance, London School of Economics and Political Science
- Feinstein (2003) *Inequality in the early cognitive development of British children in the 1970 cohort*
- Fiske, S.T. (2004). *Social beings: A core motives approach to social psychology*. United States of America: Wiley
- Flood, J (1983). *Barristers' Clerks: The Law's Middlemen*. Manchester University Press
- Francis, A (2006) *"I'm not one of those women's libber type people but..." Gender, Class and Professional Power within the third branch of the English Legal Profession*. Social and Legal Studies. SAGE Publications
- Francis, A and Sommerlad, H (2008) *Access to legal work experience and its role in the (re)production of legal professional identity*. Presented at the Annual Conference of Social Legal Studies Association, Manchester
- Gillespie, A (2007) *The English Legal System*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Halpern, D (1994), *Entry into the Legal Professions: The Law Student Cohort Study- Years 1 and 2*, London: The Law Society
- Higher Education Funding Council for England (2010/03) *Trends in young participation in higher education: core results for England*
- The Higher Education Statistics Agency cited in the Sutton Trust, 2009. Annual reports on performance indicators for universities found at:  
[http://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php/component/option.com\\_pubs/Itemid.122/](http://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php/component/option.com_pubs/Itemid.122/)
- House of Commons Public Accounts Committee: *Widening participation in higher education*. Fourth Report of Session 2008-09.
- LawCareers.Net <http://www.lawcareers.net/Information/Features/Detail.aspx?r=1240>
- The Law Society (2009) *Trends in the solicitors' profession: Annual statistical report 2009*
- The Law Society (2004) *Women Solicitors*. London
- Law Society Gazette (2010) Banks' reluctance to grant loans impedes student access to LPC <http://www.lawgazette.co.uk/news/banks039-reluctance-grant-loans-impedes-student-access-lpc> 17 June 2010
- Law Society Gazette (2010) *Women solicitors believe flexible working damages career*. <http://www.lawgazette.co.uk/news/women-solicitors-believe-flexible-working-damages-career> 25 March 2010
- Law Society Gazette (2003) *'Fair Play Involves Fair Pay'*  
<http://www.lawgazette.co.uk/news/fair-play-involves-fair-pay>

The Lawyer (27 January 2010) *BLM is most female friendly firm in UK top 50*.  
<http://www.thelawyer.com/blm-is-most-female-friendly-firm-in-uk-top-50/1003262.article>

The Lawyer (9 November 2009) *Lack of contracts fail to halt increase in law students*

The Legal Services Commission (2009) *Quality Assurance for Advocates: Summary Report of the QAA Equality and Diversity. Data Survey and Focus Groups, containing recommendations for pilot design*

Limitless London <http://www.limitlesslondon.org/>

Malleson, K and Balda, F (2000) *Factors affecting the decisions to apply for silk and judicial office*. Lord Chancellor's Department.

Mason, D (2004) *A Ticking Time Bomb?* 154 New Law Journal 1601

McGlynn, C (1999a) *Women, Representation and the Legal Academy*. 19 Legal Studies 68-92

McNay, I. (2005) *Higher Education Communities: Divided they Fail?* In: Perspectives: Policy & Practice in Higher Education

Monaghan, K (2008) *Neuberger and the 'F' word*. Durham University Conference 22 February 2008

The National Association of Law Placements <http://www.nalp.org/minoritieswomen>

National Equality Panel (Jan 2010) *An Anatomy of Economic Inequality in the UK: Report of the National Equality Panel*. Crown copyright. Can be found here:  
<http://www.equalities.gov.uk/pdf/NEP%20Report%20bookmarkedfinal.pdf>

Neuberger (2007) *Entry to the Bar Working Party*. The Bar Council

Opinion Leader Research (2006), *Judicial Diversity: Findings of a Consultation with Barristers, Solicitors and Judges*. Final Report. Prepared for: Department for Constitutional Affairs

The Panel on Fair Access to the Professions (2009) *Unleashing Aspirations: The Final Report of the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions*

Pleasence, Pascoe T. and Balmer, Nigel J. (July 15, 2009), *Looking Through the Glass Ceiling: Projecting Women's Future Participation in the Solicitor's Profession in England and Wales*. Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1434553>

Read, B. Archers, L. and Leathwood, C. (2003) *Challenging Cultures? Student Conceptions of 'Belonging' and 'Isolation' at a Post-1992 University*. Cited in Runnymede Community Study (2007)

Rolfe, H and Anderson, T (2003) *A firm choice: law firms' preferences in the recruitment of trainee solicitors*. Commissioned by the Law Society

The Runnymede Community Study (2007), *Not Enough Understanding? Student experiences of diversity in UK universities*

The Russell Group. [www.russellgroup.ac.uk](http://www.russellgroup.ac.uk)

Shiner, M and Newburn, T (1995), *Entry into the Legal Professions: The Law Student Cohort Study- Year 3*, London: The Law Society

Shiner, M (2000) *Young, gifted and blocked! Entry to the solicitors' profession*. In P Thomas (ed.) *Discriminating lawyers*. London: Cavendish

Social Mobility Foundation <http://www.socialmobility.org.uk/>

Sommerlad, H (2008) *"What are you doing here? You should be working in a hair salon or something": outsider status and professional socialization in the solicitors' profession*. Leeds Metropolitan University

Sommerlad, H and Sanderson, P (1997) *The Legal Labour Market and the Training Needs of Women Returners in the United Kingdom*. *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 49(1): 45-64

Sommerlad, H and Sanderson, P (1998) *Gender, Choice and Commitment: Women Solicitors in England and Wales and the Struggle for Equal Status*. Aldershot: Ashgate

Sommerlad, H and Stapleford, J (2008) *Barriers to entry and progression in the solicitors' profession in England and Wales*

Sponsors for Educational Opportunity, London. <http://www.seo-london.com/>

The Sutton Trust (2010), *The Reach for Excellence Programme: a summary and discussion of findings from the first cohort of students*

The Sutton Trust (2009), *The Educational Backgrounds of Leading Lawyers, Journalists, Vice Chancellors, Politicians, Medics and Chief Executives*; The Sutton Trust submission to the Milburn Commission on access to the professions

The Sutton Trust (2004), *The Missing 3000: State school students under-represented at leading universities*

Universities UK. [www.universitiesuk.ac.uk](http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk)

Vignaendra, S. (2001). *Social Class and Entry into the Solicitors' Profession*, Research Study 41. The Law Society

Wilkins, D Why law firms are not making progress on diversity- Lessons from the US experience. Cited on [www.BlackSolicitorsNetwork.co.uk](http://www.BlackSolicitorsNetwork.co.uk)

Young Legal Aid Lawyers (2010), *Legal aid lawyers: the lost generation in the "national crusade" on social mobility*. A response to the Government consultation paper "New opportunities: Fair Chances for the Future" (January 2009) and the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions report "Unleashing Aspirations" (July 2009)