

## CONSTRUCTION ENGINEERING MASTERS DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

### **Barriers to progression for Black women in the UK construction industry**

The lack of diversity in the construction industry has been well documented in the literature and is broadly recognised by the industry itself. There have been several initiatives implemented to tackle this and promote inclusive behaviours throughout large organisations in the industry. These initiatives and attempts to improve diversity and inclusion in the Construction Industry have achieved varying degrees of success. While the lack of women is evident in the industry, the lack of Black women is even more prominent. The slow rate of improvement of this race-gender balance is likely attributed to several complex factors.

It is known that diverse work groups achieve a greater exchange of information and experience more cognitive processing resulting in improved innovation and better problem-solving. This can in turn, help organisations to gain a competitive edge, win more work, reduce costs and increase profitability. Therefore, the issue of racial and gender inequity in the UK Construction industry is more than a moral obligation but it is critical to its future success.

This research uses 26 semi-structured interviews to explore some of the barriers to progression for this intersection through a reflection on their professional careers. Examining the experiences from the perspective of the target group is key to understanding the impacts of current practices. This thesis uses the Gioia method to explore to study the target groups interpretations of the events and experiences and how they shape their reality. The findings indicate that there are complex barriers to progression felt by Black women in the UK construction industry including issues associated with being authentic and the pressure and internal turmoil associated with assimilation, feeling undermined and undervalued, overcoming affinity bias and unlearning morals embedded from upbringing in order to fit the workplace culture, the benefit, absence and pressure associated with having and being role models and cases of clear stereotyping and discrimination still occurring.

The aim of this piece of work is to encourage and facilitate further work in this field to provide research-supported arguments to remove barriers to progression and achieve greater fulfilment, retention and equity for Black women within the construction industry.

**Keywords:** *Black women; Construction industry; Diversity; Progression; Promotion; Attrition; Sexism; racism; stereotypes.*

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