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# **Nurturing an inclusive organisational culture and the intersectionality of ethnicity and gender: examples from two case studies**

**Presentation by Kathryn Watson  
Global Equality & Diversity Conference 2019**

World Ranked – Triple Accredited – Award Winning



# The research projects

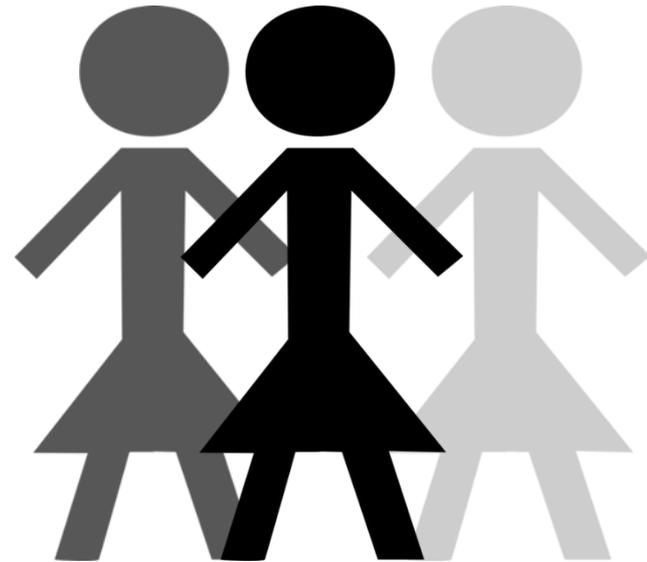
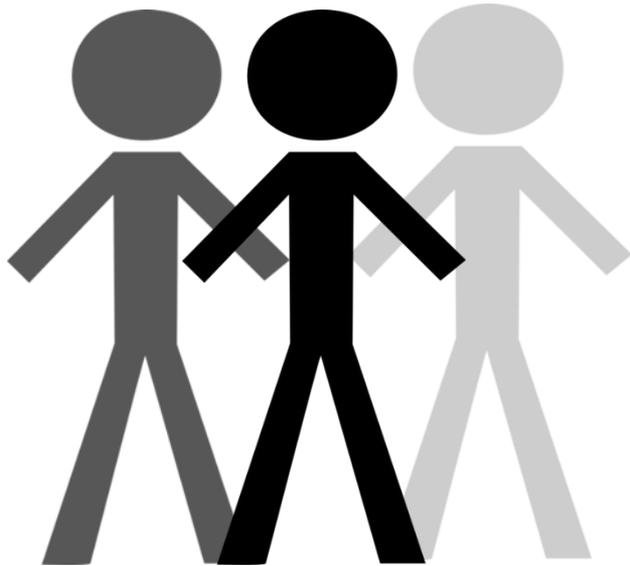
- Two case studies:
  - An ongoing study with a large UK FTSE retail company
  - A BAME study with a UK police force
- We use intersectionality as a theoretical lens to examine the experiences and perceptions of BAME female employees
- In-depth interviews with:
  - 12 BAME women staff in retail sector (various grades/roles)
  - 9 BAME women staff in policing (7 officers/2 staff)

# Different but similar

	Retail	Police
Leadership	CEO	Chief Constable
Structure	Head office & stores	Headquarters and police stations
Management	Corporate, regional and stores	Force, divisional, teams
Service	Customer service	Communities
Culture	Traditional, hierarchical	Command and control
Scale	National	Large region
Entry level	Customer service	Constables

# Intersectional framework

Intersectional approaches draw attention to the richness of multiple identities unique to each individual (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016)



# Inequalities at work: intersectionality of gender and ethnicity

- 29% of BAME women (21% of white women) believed that they had been overlooked for promotion <sup>1</sup>
- Career progression is very important for BAME individuals (70%) – compared with 42% of WB ...
- Yet 52% of BAME workers believe that they will have to leave their current organisation to progress in their career; as opposed to 38% of WB employees <sup>2</sup>
- Likelihood of institutional barriers, which adversely affect BAME employees; i.e. ‘inequality regimes’ <sup>3</sup>

1 BITC, 2015; 2 McGregor-Smith, 2017; 3 Acker, 2006

# CIPD Survey

	BAME Employees	White British Employees
Career progression to date has failed to meet expectations	40%	31%

Factors to kick-start career: significantly more important for BAME employees:

- More supportive line manager who coaches and develops me
- Having a mentor
- More transparent career paths
- Seeing that other people like me have progressed in the organisation
- Greater diversity of people at senior levels in my current organisation

*Source: CIPD, (2017) Addressing the barriers to BAME employee career progression to the top*

# McGregor Smith Review: Race in the workplace (2017)

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*“The evidence demonstrates that inclusive organisations, which attract and develop individuals from the widest pool of talent, consistently perform better. That is the business case.*

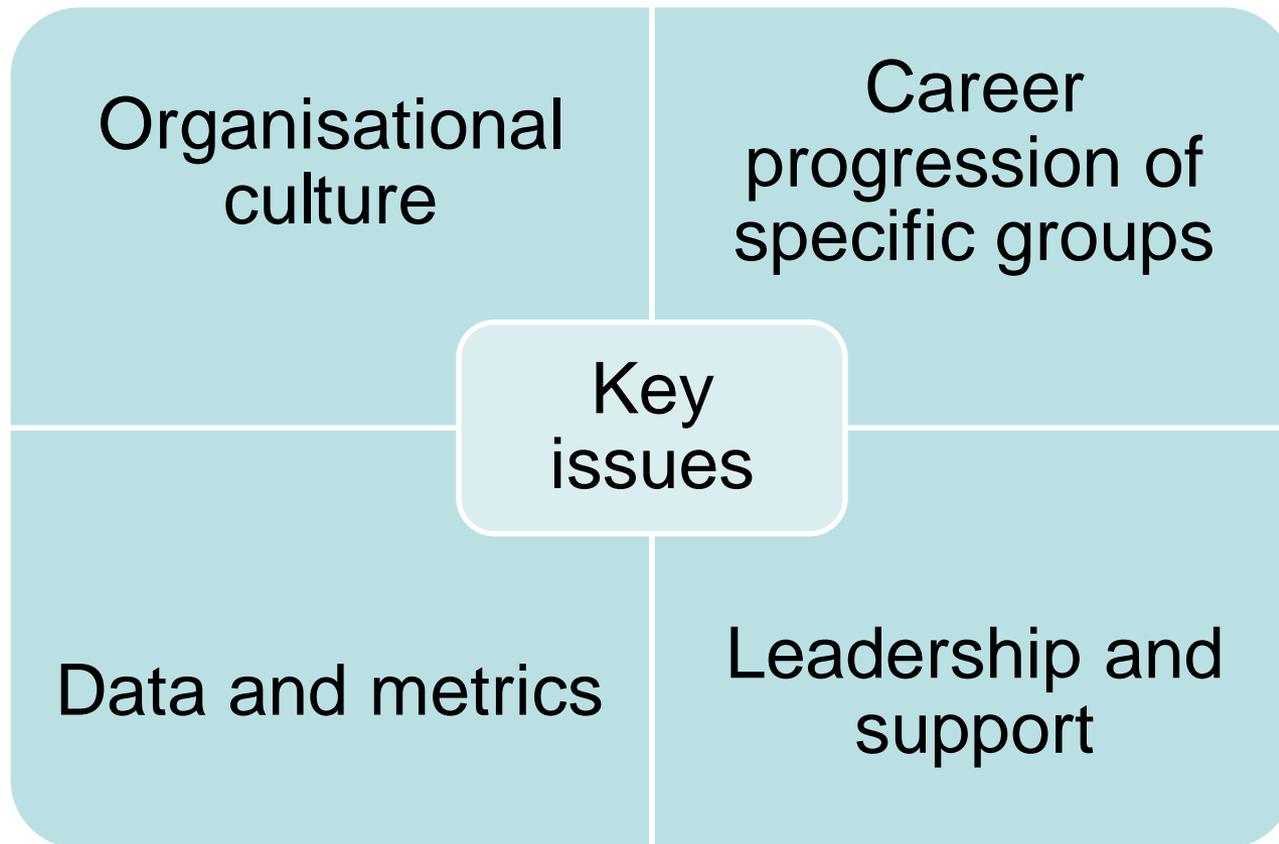
*“But I believe the moral case is just as, if not more, compelling. We should live in a country where every person, regardless of their ethnicity or background, is able to fulfil their potential at work. Sadly, we are still a long way from this.”*

# McGregor Smith Review: Barriers faced by BAME staff

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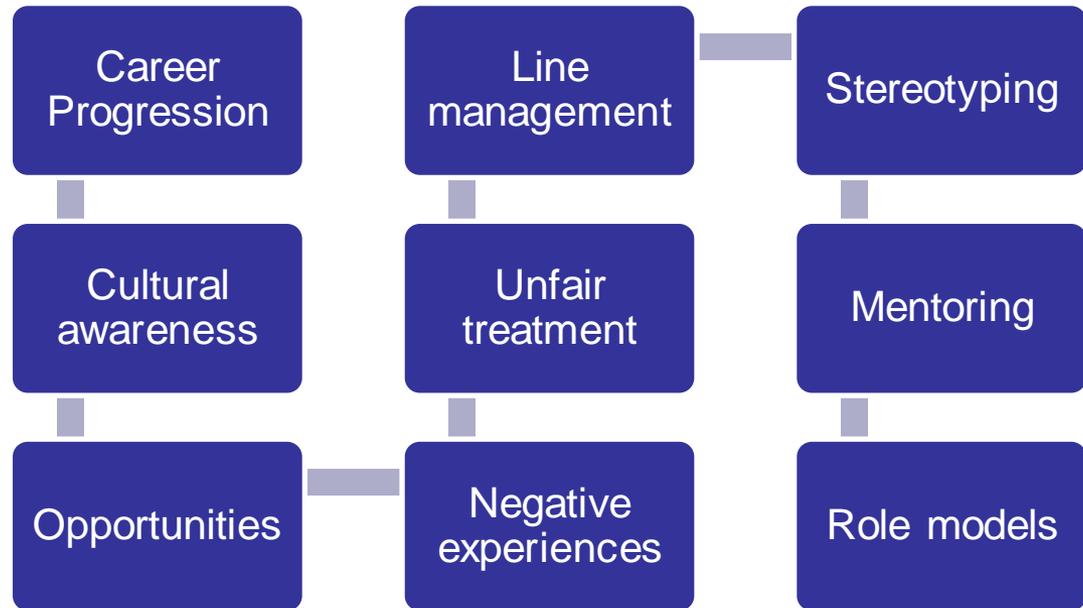
- Racial discrimination;
- Unconscious and conscious bias;
- Lack of role models, mentors and sponsors in very senior roles at board level;
- Lack of social or professional networks;
- Language (nuances and office banter);
- Stereotypical perceptions of BME groups;
- Lack of transparency of pathways into employment;
- Lack of understanding of cultural differences in various ethnic groups.

# D&I Issues



# Methodology

- Samples selected purely on gender and BAME ethnicity
- Face to face interviews with semi-structured questionnaire
- Transcripts analysed using NVIVO
- Thematic template approach



# Cultural awareness of colleagues: Retail

I don't think they do, to a certain extent. For example, looking after my father, to me, I can't not look after him, it's a family thing, a cultural thing, you have to look after your parents.

I think it's lack of awareness of other cultures and religion; but even within my team, you can tell they don't interact with any BAME people because of their background, where they come from and who they know; I'm probably the only BAME person they know.

I'm lucky in my group that I sit with, that they, on the whole, do, or they're open to learning and understanding. .... they were all interested in kind of, you know, what our festivals are and all different things, and they'll get involved in BAME activities and stuff.

# Cultural awareness of colleagues: Police

I think they're better now. Certainly, when I joined they didn't, because the training and what not wasn't there. But I think the officers that are joining now, the training is a lot better, they're a lot more aware.

Sometimes, yes, and then when you see your colleagues, so really respectful, we'll go to people's houses and you'll have that respect there and you'll be culturally aware. Then you come back to work and it's a bit different and they don't. There's been instances, comments said about the prayer rooms, comments said about officers that go and pray.

Yes, I do, and people are educated, they're more educated on that now in the force, and I think generally, certainly as the new student officers are coming in, they're already a much different generation, much more socially and much more aware of their cultural differences. I think there's been a huge change.

# Career Progression: Retail

At the moment, because of the circumstances that I've got, I'm fine where I am, but I feel that there isn't a lot of scope. I find that you're not necessarily notified of anything that might come up ... There was an apprenticeship that came up, but again, if felt like, for someone my age, it wasn't necessarily applicable to someone my age

I think yes and no. It depends. I think I've been really lucky to have been in some really good stores, have some really good managers that have really helped me prop myself up. I'd definitely say that that's played a big part in it as well. I think it is quite rapid career progression to this point, which I'm quite pleased about, but yeah, I'd say the graduate programme does set you up for that as well.

# Career Progression: Police

*I do feel, as a BME and as a female as well, I do think that you've got to be better than, say, a white male to get the job. You've got to shine more, you've got to work harder.*

*So I kind of feel sometimes that no matter how hard I work, no matter how hard I prove myself, if I ever get anything it's because I'm black and I'm female, and I suppose after a while you kind of feel like you're in a constant battle. But these are a minority of people, not everybody is like that.*

# Stereotypical perceptions: Retail

"Oh, you speak really good English." "Yeah, I do. I was born here, raised here, my parents sent me to good schools, so yeah I would hope so." Yeah, that kind of thing. And then, "oh, you're the Store Manager? Oh..." and you just know what they're thinking, because this is a very white area, and it's the older customer as well.

No, I've not been aware of any assumptions, not from colleagues; customers yeah, not from colleagues - I don't think, not that I've been aware of.

There is loads of issues, but it's a lack of awareness and it's the people that we hire and the environments they grow up in and it's the lack of interaction they have, and it's a lack of training. You can't help your upbringing or what communities you've grown up with, or your lack of interaction with BAME people

# Stereotypical perceptions: Police

I think people who know me know I'm quite... how can I explain it. I don't go backwards to come forward, so to speak. I don't know, maybe their experiences of dealing with some of the Asian females are they're quiet, they do what they're told and stuff. Do you know what I'm trying to get to, sort of thing?

I think the people doing it come from small villages so they haven't any experience of black people. So sometimes they're a bit surprised. I might speak to people within the organisation on the phone and then they might meet me, and they're like "oh, I didn't realise you were black. You don't sound black," and I said "I don't know what black sounds like, so... sorry."

Comments made about... a presumption made about what you would eat, because you're sort of from a mixed-race background, that you should only eat sort of only West Indian food, that you can cook West Indian food, that your parents would cook that.

# Implications

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- Need to address the challenges that prevent BAME women from progressing, being cognisant of multiple identities (carer, age, ambition, skills,
- Talent and ambition relate to all levels of the organisation people to achieve their potential
- With more transparent procedures and processes comes more individual responsibility for managing their own career progression
- We need to think more about different sub-cultures
- Mentorship is highly valued and important to help with career progression

# Recommendations

