



Black History Year

‘Business & Organisations: An Intersectional Approach’

Dr Nene Ibokessien

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Research overview

- Workplace experiences of academic in Sub-Saharan Africa with a focus on Nigeria- one of the most influential countries in the region.
 - A lack of research on how women interact with organisational structures
 - Intersectionality: put forward by black feminists to understand the ways in which the interactions of gender and race limit black women's access to the labour market.
 - Lack of understanding of this intersection led to the marginalization of black women and black women's experiences.
 - Intersectionality studies have expanded beyond gender/race into mainstream social sciences.
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Research overview contd.

- It is important to question how much insight intersectionality can provide when researching issues of African women outside of the West, particularly with issues of accurate representation?
- Intersectionality is framed by black and third wave feminists but underpinned by western feminist epistemologies and cannot adequately analyse the experiences of African women.
- Intersectionality has been successful in examining complex differences, however intersectional analyses continue to be focused on the West ignoring cross-border local processes 'over there' and so intersectionality has not achieved its potential (Patil, 2013).
- Concept of intersectionality is important for examining inequalities for women in the work place but inadequate for analysing African women's experience.
- The social, cultural, geographical and historical realities of women in Sub-Saharan Africa require that intersectionality be conceptualised with Postcolonial and African feminisms.



Research: Findings

- Socio-cultural attitudes to gender have normalised gendered practices in academia and an absence of organisational policies to tackle these issues.
 - The women view themselves as successful academics with agency
 - Minority ethnic and religious women are more likely to experience discrimination in their organisations.
 - The women's experience of discrimination vary across different regions based on ethnic and religious affiliations, revealing a non-homogeneity of women in their workplace experiences.
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Key issues facing Black people in organisations.

Organisation

- BME individuals in the UK are both less likely to participate in and then less likely to progress through the workplace, when compared with White individuals. (McGregor-Smith Review, 2016)
- Barriers exist, from entry through to board level, that prevent these individuals from reaching their full potential.
- Discrimination and bias at every stage of an individual's career- from networks to recruitment and then in the workforce.
- Lack of role models for BME minorities, they are more likely to perceive the workplace as hostile, they are less likely to apply for and be given promotions and they are more likely to be disciplined or judged harshly.



Key issues facing Black people in organisations contd.

Gender

- Lack of Black women representation in senior roles and Black people particularly Black women continue to be under-represented at senior levels at work.
- Only 3.5% of Black people are at the top of UK's leading 1000 plus organisations, compared with 12.9% in the general population with less than a quarter of those positions being held by Black women (Operation Black Vote)
- Various barriers to women achieving senior positions: perceptions about women's potential; an absence of role models; careers information and guidance; career breaks; caring responsibilities; full time working being the existing norm; a lack of talent spotting; and a lack of mentoring.
- Intersections: Black women often face the double barrier of the gender glass ceiling and racial discrimination.



What can research/personal experiences tell us about good practice for fostering quality inter-cultural relationships?

- My research has had a more international focus and the experience has been complex.
- My place as an African researcher in the West has made me highly aware of my positioning as black and as a woman as I navigate the racialized, classed and national differences in a such a diverse country as the UK.
- Succeeding in an intercultural space requires open mindedness.
- The courage to speak up and engage in meaningful dialogue.



Advice for personal and professional development for aspiring Black people

- Mentorship
 - Make use of any available career counselling
 - Reach out to your networks
 - Send in those applications-Don't let imposter syndrome win!
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