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ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGE OF APPOINTING
MORE PUBLIC SECTOR BLACK, ASIAN &
MINORITY ETHNIC (BAME) CHIEF EXECUTIVES
THROUGH UTILISING AN APPRECIATIVE
INQUIRY RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Owen Williams

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in
partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Business Administration

February 2020

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Abstract

The primary research objective of this study is to identify an approach to address the challenge of appointing more public sector Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic (BAME) Chief Executives Officers (CEOs) to at least reflect the prevailing UK BAME working age population percentage of 14%. This is achieved through placing greater emphasis on the role and accountability of senior gatekeepers and challenging the inherently negative discourse of the extant literature by applying an appreciative inquiry research framework, which is used to explore the thoughts of present-day senior gatekeepers and ultimately leads to the development of a BAME CEO 'Enhanced prospects model'.

The construction of this model is pulled together by virtue of seven qualitative research interviews - framed through a 5-D appreciative framework - with a set of unique senior gatekeepers. The uniqueness of these gatekeepers is marked by the fact that they have recruited and selected at least one BAME CEO across the public sector, which for the purposes of this study is defined as UK local government and NHS provider organisations.

Key elements of the BAME CEO 'Enhanced prospects model' include the championing of a more appreciative discourse alongside an umbrella theme for senior gatekeepers linked to greater personal accountability. The need for greater gatekeeper 'ownership' is identified along with key gatekeeping activities, which include:

- limiting 'conscience cleansing' behaviours;
- becoming 'skilled diversiasts' and;
- proactively 'headhunter shaping'.

Importantly, the developed model does not strive to replace previous scholarly and practitioner attempts to impact on the career prospects of BAME people, but it does seek to broaden the metaphorical bandwidth of the debate with the expected effect of enhancing the prospects of appointing more BAME CEOs across the public sector.

Key words: senior gatekeepers, appreciative inquiry, BAME chief executive, conscience cleansing, diversiast, headhunter shaping, snowy white peaks.

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“Impossible is just a big word thrown around by small men who find it easier to live in the world they've been given than to explore the power they have to change it. Impossible is not a fact. It's an opinion. Impossible is not a declaration. It's a dare. Impossible is potential. Impossible is temporary. Impossible is nothing.”

Muhammad Ali (17 January 1942 - 3 June 2016)

“And the men who hold high places must be the ones to start to mould a new reality”

Rush ('Closer to the heart' soundtrack - from the album 'A farewell to kings', 1977)

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List of Abbreviations & Glossary

| | |
|--------------|--|
| Acas | Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service |
| BAME | Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic |
| BBC | British Broadcasting Corporation |
| BME | Black and Minority Ethnic |
| CE | Chief Executive |
| CEO | Chief Executive Officer |
| CQC | Care Quality Commission |
| DBA | Doctorate in Business Administration |
| DoH | Department of Health |
| DoH&SC | Department of Health and Social Care |
| EDS2 | Equality Delivery System |
| EHRC | Equality and Human Rights Commission |
| ET | Employment Tribunal |
| LGBTQ | Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer |
| MOJ | Ministry of Justice |
| MPS | Metropolitan Police Service |
| NHS | National Health Service |
| NHS Provider | Organisation responsible for providing direct patient services |
| NHSE | NHS England |
| NHSI | NHS Improvement |
| WRES | Workforce Race Equality Standard |

1. The BAME Public Sector Challenge

1.1. Overview

The primary research objective of this thesis is to identify an approach to addressing the challenge of appointing more Public Sector Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic (BAME) Chief Executives (CEOs) to at least reflect the prevailing UK BAME working age population percentage of 14%. This would represent a change of moving from circa 13 BAME CEOs to approximately 97 (Kline, 2013; Kline, 2014; Tulsiani & Phillips, 2014; Kline, Coghill & Naqvi, 2016; Parker, 2016; McGregor-Smith, 2017). As defined by the Institute of Race Relations, the acronym BAME represents “terminology normally used in the UK to describe people of non-white descent” (Institute of Race Relations, n.d.).

For longitudinal context, just after his election to Prime Minister in 1997, Tony Blair (Labour) stated in a speech in Brighton that:

We cannot be a beacon to the world unless the talents of all the people shine through. Not one black High Court Judge; not one black Chief Constable or Permanent Secretary. Not one black Army officer above the rank of Colonel. Not one Asian either. Not a record of pride for the British establishment. (Blair, 1997)

Two decades later in the latter part of 2018, Prime Minister Theresa May (Conservative) affirmed that she believed:

too often ethnic minority employees feel they're hitting a brick wall when it comes to career progression...Our focus is now on making sure the UK's organisations,

boardrooms and senior management teams are truly reflective of the workplaces they manage...to create a fairer and more diverse workforce (May, 2018).

Over a period of 20 years, both these Prime Ministerial statements echo a similar aspiration which is to see more ethnic minority leadership across public, private and voluntary sector organisations. These statements also underline a lack of progress against this specific aim and further emphasise the reality that this has remained the case for a number of decades.

Linked specifically to this lack of progress, the academic Roger Kline contributed to a few very high-profile studies that gained prominence in the media as well as some academic circles. His work, described as the "snowy white peaks", contends quite strongly that there remain multiple examples of BAME senior management employment at board level, not mirroring that of the UK BAME working age population of 14% (Kline, 2013; Kline, 2014; Kline et al., 2016; McGregor-Smith, 2017, p. 9).

To strengthen the point made by Kline (2014), there were circa 13 BAME CEOs working across both local government and the providers of NHS services in 2018. This is a number that has fluctuated during this study due to retirements and new appointments. However, it essentially means that by using the combination of 408 UK local authorities and 288 UK NHS provider organisations as a statistical denominator, only 1.87% of the combined number (696) of these public sector institutions are estimated to be led by a BAME CEO (HSCI, 2017; LGiU, 2017; McGregor-Smith, 2017; NHS Confederation, 2017; NHS Scotland, 2018).

1.2. Introduction

In recent years the academic Roger Kline has contributed to two very high-profile pieces of research work that have gained prominence in the media as well as some academic circles. The first is “Discrimination by Appointment” which, through a mixed method research approach, reasoned that in terms of selection and appointment processes for all types of recruitment, the National Health Service (NHS) “appears to continue to significantly discriminate against BME [sic] staff at both shortlisting and appointment stages” (Kline, 2013, p. 16).

In his second piece of work called ‘The “snowy white peaks” of the NHS’, Kline (2014) further contends that:

It is surely time to urgently and decisively address the widespread, deep-rooted, systemic and largely unchanging discrimination that black and minority ethnic staff within the NHS face. The evidence is now clear that their treatment is a good predictor of the quality of patient care (Kline, 2014, p. 66).

Such was the impact of these studies that they led to the national commissioning body known as NHS England (NHSE) to advocate and support the creation of what is now known as the Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) and the Equality Delivery System (EDS2).

Both the WRES and EDS2 came into force, solely for NHS provider (of direct patient services) organisations, as of April 2015, with the WRES requiring all organisations effectively employing the totality of the NHS workforce to:

demonstrate progress against a number of indicators of workforce equality, including a specific indicator to address the low levels of BAME board representation (Kline et al., 2016, p. 6).

In a frequently asked questions document developed to support the introduction of the WRES and the EDS2 and produced by Kline et al. (2016), one of the recommendations for interested parties wishing to know more about the origins of these initiatives is that they should read in detail the “snowy white peaks” work of Kline (2014).

On following this recommendation, if one accepts Kline’s (2014) analysis and conclusions in their entirety, it can be understood why there has been a determined effort from scholars, practitioners and society in general to address the potentially negative symbolism and connotations of “snowy white peaks”. Indeed, the policy and media driven desire to make progress against a proposition of “deep-rooted, systemic and largely unchanging discrimination”, should be at the very least recognised for its persistence in trying to address the status quo (Kline, 2014, p. 66).

1.3. Snowy white peaks

The following two tables are extracted and adapted from the work of Kline (2014). Table 1.1 represents ethnicity data for Executive board composition in England and the sub catchment area of London for the year 2006.

Table 1.1

Executive board members London and England ethnicity. 2006

| Ethnicity | England | | | London | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| | Chief Executive | Board Executive | Other Senior Manager | Chief Executive | Board Executive | Other Senior Manager |
| White British | 273 | 1089 | 3255 | 57 | 311 | 1674 |
| White Irish/O White | 5 | 57 | 205 | 4 | 38 | 209 |
| Black and Minority Ethnic | 3 | 64 | 363 | 3 | 39 | 333 |
| Not Known | 3 | 33 | 108 | 2 | 8 | 43 |
| Total | 284 | 1243 | 3921 | 66 | 397 | 2259 |

Source: Kline (2014, p. 29)

As can be seen, the England ethnicity numbers in Table 1.1 indicate that there is around a 1% chance of being a BAME CEO in 2006 which by comparison with the category of “White British” is low when compared against a UK BAME working age population of 14% (McGregor-Smith, 2017, p. 9). Significantly, as can be seen in Table 1.2, the trajectory as far as London NHS boards were concerned, became even less favourable in comparative percentage terms from the period of 2006 to 2014 according to the data sourced by Kline (2014). The additional inference is that as the numbers of NHS organisations reduced in London over the 8-year period of measurement, the percentage chances of there being a BAME CEO further reduced from 5.0% to 2.5% against a UK BAME working age population of 14% (McGregor-Smith, 2017, p. 9).

Table 1.2

London trust boards executive membership. 2006/2014

| Ethnicity | 2006 | | | 2014 | |
|---------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | Chief Executive | Board Executive | Other Senior Manager | Chief Executive | Board Executive |
| White | 61 | 368 | 1883 | 38 | 197 |
| Black and Minority Ethnic | 3 | 39 | 333 | 1 | 16 |
| Not Known | 2 | 8 | 43 | 1 | 3 |
| Total | 60 | 396 | 2259 | 40 | 216 |
| %age BME | 5.0% | 9.6% | | 2.5% | 7.4% |

Source: Kline (2014, p. 30)

Based on the information contained in Table 1.1 and Table 1.2, it is perhaps unsurprising that both the NHS hierarchy and equality, diversity and inclusion campaigners, felt a need to do something. Consequently, the WRES and the EDS2 were conceived and introduced (Kline et al., 2016).

However, the issues identified by Kline et al. (2013, 2014, 2016) are not unique to the NHS. Regarding the wider UK public sector, the broader literature reviewed painted a picture that is not dissimilar to that of the NHS. For example, Miller (2016, p. 206) in his study of BAME career progression across education and academia provided a range of statistics which indicate that, as of 2014, there were "454,900 full time equivalent teachers in state-funded schools in England" and a total of "104" (0.022%) of these were BAME head teachers. This figure of 104 represented 3% of all head teachers.

Similarly, the BBC News reported the following headline in May 2016 of "Police ethnic diversity record 'shocking', MPs warn" ("Police diversity", 2016). This news related to a report

commissioned by the House of Commons, Home Affairs Committee, which consisted of a range of statistical facts about BAME employees in the England and Wales Police Force with a specific emphasis on the position of senior officers (House of Commons, 2016). For example, at paragraph 4, the report quoted that:


four forces (Cheshire, North Yorkshire, Dyfed-Powys and Durham) do not employ any Black or Black British police officers at all; that only two Chief Officers self-identify as BME; and that 11 forces have no BME officers above the rank of Inspector.

Figure 1.1 highlights the UK Police ranking structure and according to the House of Commons, (2016, Para. 20) report:

only 1% of all Chief Officers (2 out of 201, where ethnicity is known) are black, Asian or minority ethnic people...Dal Babu told us that there was “not a single, non-white face among all the chief constables and all the police and crime commissioners” and that there was only one BME person out of the 59 members of the National Police Chiefs’ Council...

Figure 1.1

UK police ranking structure

| | |
|---|---------------------------|
|  | Police Constable |
|  | Sergeant |
|  | Inspector |
|  | Chief Inspector |
|  | Superintendent |
|  | Chief Superintendent |
|  | Assistant Chief Constable |
|  | Deputy Chief Constable |
|  | Chief Constable |

Source: "Police Ranks and Roles Explained" (2012)

To place this in context, only 0.0015748% (2) of the 127,000 Police officers in England and Wales were self-identified as BAME Chief Officers. Indeed, of the total workforce, only 5.495% (6,979) of Police officers were from BAME backgrounds.

Furthermore, and perhaps surprisingly, in places such as West Yorkshire with a regional BAME population of 18.2%, only 5.1% of Police officers came from BAME backgrounds which was marginally less than the percentage (5.495%) for the whole of England & Wales.

In a similar vein to Policing and the NHS, the original work of Wadsworth & Wilson (2010) prompted the Guardian newspaper to run the following headline: “Campaigners question why local government bosses are almost all white”. Again, the story is like that of the NHS and the Police with the article attempting to focus on a grand total of seven “Groundbreaking CEOs” making it to the position of CEO in local government over a duration spanning 20 years.

Post Wadsworth & Wilson (2010) and in terms of a broader local government context of 408 UK Local Authorities, Tulsiani & Phillips (2014) summarise that:

Ethno-cultural diversity in local authority leadership is so low that it almost defies analysis; there is just one non-White local authority Chief Executive Officer in London and none amongst the eight ‘Core Cities’ outside London (Tulsiani & Phillips, 2014).

Although this situation improved by the appointment of two BAME CEOs in the last couple of years to 2018, the overall picture including the retirement of at least one BAME CEO, suggests that there is room for improvement against most BAME population comparators.

To briefly summarise, the studies of Tulsiani & Phillips (2014) and Kline et al. (2013, 2014, 2016) led to a discourse that suggested that there remain multiple examples of BAME senior management employment at board level, not mirroring that of the UK BAME working age population of 14% (McGregor-Smith, 2017, p. 9). In addition, from the perspective of BAME equality campaigners and perhaps just as concerning for them on this topic, the public sector position is similarly reflected across the private sector. For example, Parker (2016, p. 5) examined the top FTSE 100 companies and identified that of the:

1,087 director positions in total, UK citizen directors of colour represent only about 1.5% of the total director population...only nine people of colour hold the position of Chair or CEO.

1.4. Literature review

Review of Kline's (2014) description of 'Snowy white peaks' and other applied research reports (Tulsiani & Phillips, 2014; Kline, Coghill & Naqvi, 2016; Parker, 2016; McGregor-Smith, 2017), indicate that there is a longstanding lack of progress across both the public and private sectors when it comes to board level BAME senior management recruitment - including the specific role of CEO. Kline (2014) and other authors highlight that a central cause of these circumstances is racial / BAME "discrimination" (Saggar, 2016, p. 18) which is further characterised as being "systemic" and / or "institutional" (Bridges, 1999, p. 298; Kline, 2014, p. 56; Walter, Ruiz, Tourse, Kress, Morningstar, MacArthur, & Daniels, 2017, p. 213).

Using a literature review convention adapted from Bryman & Bell (2015, p. 92) which amongst a series of questions asks:

- What concepts and theories are relevant to this area?
- Are there any significant controversies?
- Conclusion - what unanswered questions remain?

The remainder of this section is developed with a series of sub-sections which focus on what the literature says about this central underlying concept of systemic BAME discrimination.

The review also considers the impact that such discrimination has (specifically) on the employment prospects of BAME senior managers at the very highest levels of public sector organisations. Where evidenced through the literature, barriers to progress are also discussed alongside understanding the approaches to mitigating the impact of systemic BAME discrimination and its effects on BAME senior management career prospects.

For the purposes of this review, the terms BAME and / or race discrimination are similarly defined using the Pager & Shepherd (2008, p. 182) definition which expresses this form of discrimination as the “unequal treatment of persons or groups on the basis of their race or ethnicity”.

1.4.1. Systemic BAME discrimination

Systemic BAME discrimination expands beyond the Pager & Shepherd (2008) definition of discrimination as it not only involves individual or group interactions but also activities and behaviours at both an organisational and cross-organisational level. It is also a concept that has existed across significant periods of time (i.e., decades) and as Agócs & Burr (1996) indicate, where discrimination is systemic and BAME related, it is not easily remedied. They further conclude that this form of discrimination consists of:

patterns of behaviour that are part of the social and administrative structures and culture of the workplace, and that create or perpetuate the position of relative disadvantage for some groups (and advantage for others), or for individuals, on the basis of their group identity (Agócs & Burr, 1996, p. 31).

To emphasise the breadth of such discrimination, Squires (2017, p. 3) describes systemic BAME discrimination as a far-reaching concept which can be found in many aspects of life. For example,

“publishing” where on analysing BAME participation across a range of publishing related roles (e.g., publishers, authors, readers) as well as “featuring within books”, Squires (2017, p. 3) reaches the conclusion that:

UK publishing presents a ‘diversity deficit’. This diversity deficit, despite a raft of diversity initiatives, suggests systemic and institutionalised practices of implicit and explicit discrimination within the literary economy (Squires, 2017, p. 3).

Beck, Reitz & Weiner (2002 p. 374) highlight that systemic BAME discrimination is not just a UK phenomenon but is a concept that is evident in different countries. As an example, through their study of the Canadian health system, the authors draw attention to what is described in their research as:

Racial discrimination in employment which is "systemic," that is, built into organisational structures and processes, and often involving informal activities and cultures [which] by its [very] nature is difficult to identify (Beck et al., 2002 p. 374).

The range of study findings from Agócs & Burr (1996); Beck et al. (2002) and Squires (2017), indicate that systemic BAME discrimination permeates aspects of life where BAME people (or communities) typically represent a minority in terms of a population whether it be a smaller geography such as a town or at a national country level. Such discrimination also applies where BAME people represent the minority in an organisational workforce context or at a more complex level, where a BAME minority has been a constant feature in a given population context but has had very little power to influence the development of societal norms, customs and practices.

As indicated one of the negative impacts of systemic BAME discrimination is that it reduces the career and employment prospects of BAME people (Kline, 2014) which is why a range of approaches have been tried over time to reduce the effect of such discrimination. For example, anti-discriminatory law has been a feature since after the second world war with an initial focus on disability linked to veterans who may have suffered life changing injuries during combat (Kandola, 2009). Specific race related, anti-discrimination, legislation materialised in the UK as a result of the introduction of the 1965 Race Relations Act which was aimed at addressing “the treatment of one person less favourably than another on the grounds of colour, race, ethnic or national origins” (Kandola, 2009, loc. 264).

Whilst this introductory legislation and the subsequent anti-discriminatory law introduced over a few decades has led to some important developments such as equal opportunities policies and a focus on reducing pay differentials, Dickens (2007, p. 486) highlights that:

What law can achieve is necessarily limited...Arguably, the full potential of what the spirit of the current equality legislation requires is not being realized in practice (e.g. limited tackling of structural discrimination)...what compliance with the current law requires (apart from the recently instituted public sector equality duty) is also fairly limited. It is therefore not particularly surprising that the impact of the legislation in terms of changing distributional outcomes appears to have been limited.

Dickens (2007) reference to “structural discrimination” and the “limited” role that the application of anti-discriminatory law has played in combatting this aspect of systemic BAME discrimination (Beck et al., 2002) is noteworthy as it is the structural embeddedness of this concept that makes it potent and difficult to address. In more recent times the suggested limitations of race based anti-discriminatory law have been further compounded by what Adams & Prassl (2017) identify as the drop in discriminatory cases (of all types) being brought forward as a result of the introduction of

mandatory Employment Tribunal fees of £1,200 from July 2013. Therefore, taking these factors into consideration, it seems reasonable to surmise that whilst the anti-discrimination law does have a mitigation role in reducing systemic BAME discrimination, this would seem to have limitations particularly as it relates to the structural embeddedness of such discrimination.

Alongside the legislative anti-discrimination approach, the proactive management and fostering of greater diversity is another area of mitigation that has been applied in respect of reducing the impact of systematic BAME discrimination and improving the employment prospects of BAME people. By way of example, Noon (2007) contends that there is evidence of UK non-BAME (white) decision makers being willing to breakthrough systemic BAME discrimination barriers if it is perceived to be of benefit to their business or personal interests to do so. As one of the examples to support his proposition, Noon (2007) draws attention to the 1948 story of the MV Empire Windrush. A ship, which arrived at Tilbury Docks from Kingston, Jamaica, carrying 492 passengers of Caribbean heritage.

Despite the expression of hostility and culturally embedded racism (Agócs & Burr, 1996) from various sections of the indigenous non-BAME UK population, media and political spectrums - the Windrush passengers were eventually allowed to land and live permanently in the UK. In doing so, they went on to make a significant contribution to addressing the economic jobs capacity shortfall that followed the Second World War, as well as a having a positive multi-generational impact on the UK (Alexander, 2018).

Taking Noon's (2007) point about similar pro-diversity decision making further, there is ongoing evidence of largely non-BAME decision makers continuing to take unpopular immigration

decisions which have led to greater BAME representation in employment. This is supported by the figures in Table 1.3, which highlight that there has been at least a threefold increase in the growth of the non-UK born population of England and Wales between 1951–2011 - albeit this growth may include both BAME and non-BAME people.

Table 1.3

The growth in the non-UK born population of England and Wales 1951-2011

| 1951 | 1961 | 1971 | 1981 | 1991 | 2001 | 2011 |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 1.9m | 2.3m | 3.1m | 3.2m | 3.6m | 4.6m | 7.5m |

Source: 1951-2011 Censuses, Office for National Statistics

The theme of taking pro-diversity decisions in the face of systemic BAME discrimination, and most importantly who has it within their gift to take such decisions, are noteworthy points for review when considering how the prospects of senior BAME career progression can be further enhanced. The question of the ‘who’, is expanded upon later in the literature review when the discussion covers “gatekeepers” (Lewin, 1997). However, at this stage attention is briefly drawn to the underpinnings of such decision-making through the perspective of Agócs & Burr (1996), who suggest that such decisions are typically based on a worldview that values diversity and believes that proactively managing diversity and inclusion is a strong antidote to the negative employment impacts of systemic BAME discrimination.

Agócs & Burr (1996) and other scholars (Richard, 2000; Kandola, 2009; Ferdman, 2017) hold a core belief that decision-making taken from a pro-diversity perspective is more likely to positively

address the deep-rooted cultural challenge that systemic BAME discrimination presents - as well as the associated knock on consequences for BAME career prospects (Agócs & Burr, 1996).

Richard (2000) advocates for decision making that promotes greater diversity for organisational benefit and does so with a targeted focus on racial diversity. He explains his focus on race by citing that it is the most frequently mentioned dimension of diversity (p. 64) amongst HR managers and CEOs. He further argues that at the heart of attaining greater competitive advantage for an organisation, is the diversity of its human resource and whilst an organisation can have technological and physical resources, these are far easier for competitors to replicate than the benefits and uniqueness derived from a racially diverse workforce (Richard, 2000).

Richard (2000, pp. 165-166), also asserts that greater racial diversity within an organisation can enable better decision-making in complex business situations; create additional "value"; provide greater resistance to "imitability" and establish "rarity" on the basis that a "strategic asset must be rare in order to offer sustained competitive advantage". Ferdman (2017) agrees with the importance of fostering diversity but also stresses the importance of simultaneously paying attention to inclusion by stating that:

Inclusion is an active process in which individuals, groups, organizations, and societies—rather than seeking to foster homogeneity—view and approach diversity as a valued resource. In an inclusive system, we value ourselves and others because of and not despite our differences (or similarities); everyone—across multiple types of differences—should be empowered as a full participant and contributor who feels and is connected to the larger collective without having to give up individual uniqueness, cherished identities, or vital qualities (Ferdman, 2017, p. 238).

Similarly, Kandola (2009, loc. 362), who is also a diversity and inclusion advocate, is so convinced about the need for organisational diversity that he has "reservations" about the need for any form

of business case justification at all. However, Richard (2000) does make it clear that there are circumstances where the benefits of racial diversity will be less compelling and discusses his study findings as follows:

The results demonstrate that the positive impact of racial diversity on firm performance has to do with context. In the absence of consideration of context, a negative relationship between cultural diversity and firm outcomes may emerge (Richard, 2000, p. 171).

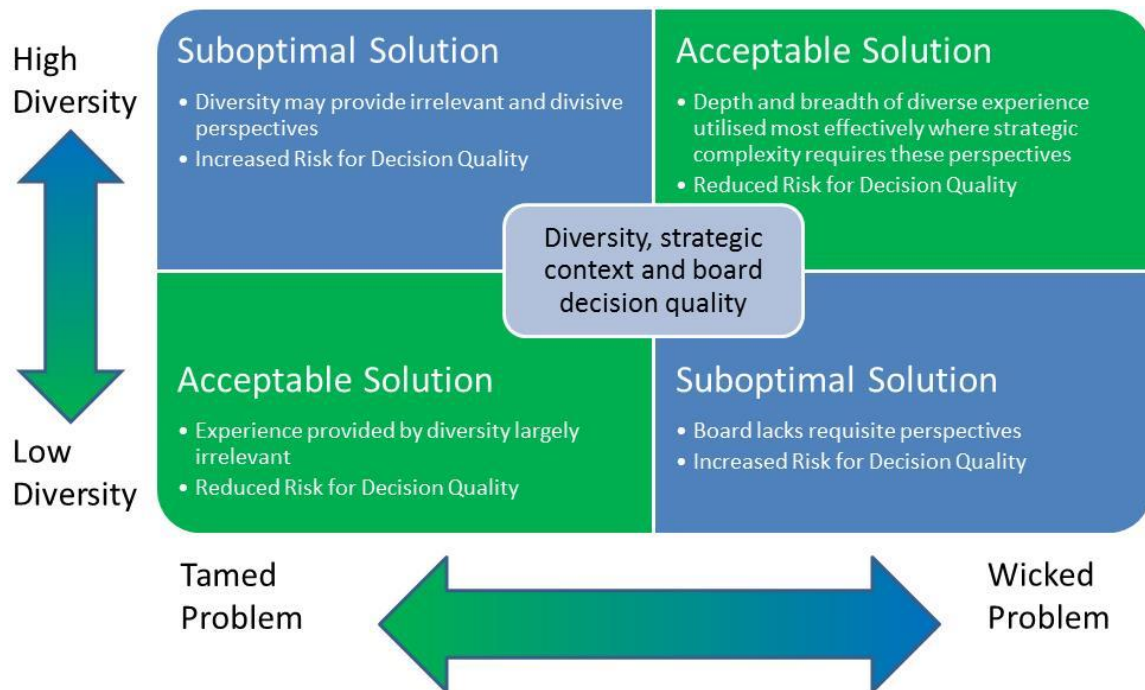
Noon (2007), also surfaces a version of ‘context matters’ when it comes to considering the role of diversity when he argues that:

The costs of pursuing equality initiatives might be judged by managers to outweigh the benefits and consequently managers will be able to articulate a rational and evidence-based argument for not pursuing such initiatives because it is not in the interests of their business. For instance, the benefits of a multi-ethnic workforce bringing wider perspectives and ideas for new ways of working or product development might be offset by managers’ fears of increased ethnic/racial tension or the loss of customers (Noon, 2007, p. 778).

In a subtler way than Noon (2007), Van der Walt, Ingley, Shergill & Townsend (2006) support the assumption that the benefits or efficacy of diversity, and particularly that of board diversity, are context driven. To emphasise this point more clearly, the adapted chart at Figure 1.2 blends the thinking of Van der Walt et al. (2006, p. 132) with that of Rittel & Webber (1973, pp. 155-160). The latter scholars have been heavily cited for originating the concept of “wicked” and complex issues and the lesser discussed concept of “tamed” issues. By combining the concept of wicked and tamed issues, it is possible to make the point that the need for diversity at any level, including within the boardroom and associated decision-making, should be considered in context.

Figure 1.2

Diversity, strategic context and board decision quality



Source: Van der Walt et al. (2006, p. 132) modified with Rittel & Webber (1973, pp. 155-160)

Figure 1.2 emphasises that context is very important as it relates to the effectiveness of diversity and therefore, for example, when considering systemic BAME discrimination and associated employment prospects, it is appropriate to consider the context in which the presumption of wilful or unconscious discrimination may or may not exist.

To this point of the literature review it is suggested that underlying the present reality of "snowy white peaks" (Kline, 2014) is the largely influential concept of systemic BAME discrimination, which is characterised as being culturally embedded in many organisations across numerous sectors. In order to reduce the impact of such discrimination and its influence on BAME recruitment and selection at the senior management level, the role of anti-discrimination law has been considered alongside the parts that pro-diversity decision-making and the active management

of diversity can play. The role of law seems less impactful than might have been envisaged by legislators, but nevertheless alongside diversity and pro-diversity decision-making the combination of these elements all have a role to play in addressing systemic BAME discrimination, particularly, where the context is conducive to realising the additional benefit(s) that diversity can bring.

1.4.2. The controversy of the ‘who’

Despite some of the approaches to mitigating its impact, systemic BAME discrimination remains deeply rooted in the structures and administrative processes of organisational and societal life (Agócs & Burr, 1996; Beck et al., 2002; Squires, 2017). This perspective has symmetry with the views expressed in the earlier sections of this chapter which highlight the associated and longstanding problem of a lack of BAME senior management career progression in general, and comparatively low levels of representation at the CEO level (Tulsiani & Phillips, 2014; Kline, Parker, 2016; McGregor-Smith, 2017).

As Pager & Shepherd (2008) reinforce, the impacts of systemic BAME discrimination are far reaching and result in wider disadvantage for BAME people across housing, health and employment. However, whilst these are largely established realities, Pager & Shepherd also argue that it remains the case that many white (non-BAME) people fundamentally believe (p. 186) that:

a black person today has the same chance at getting a job as an equally qualified white person, and only a third believe that discrimination is an important explanation for why blacks do worse than whites in income, housing, and jobs (Pager & Shepherd, 2008, p. 186).

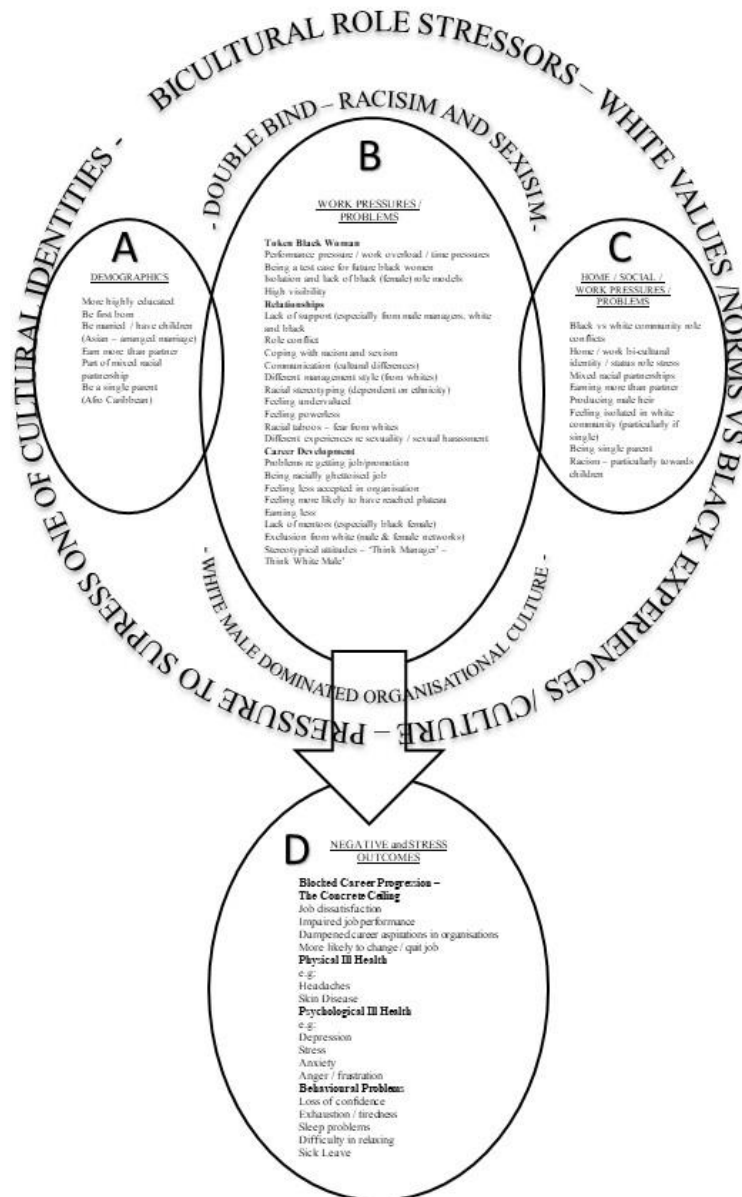
This is an important point to consider because despite the strong arguments (Agócs & Burr, 1996; Beck et al., 2002; Kandola, 2009; Squires, 2017) that support the existence of systemic BAME discrimination and the various approaches that have been applied to mitigate its impact, there remains a core group of people across society who do not necessarily believe that there is a problem.

The consequences of this are significant as exemplified by the work of Davidson (1997) which involved a qualitative study into the career prospects of BAME Women Managers. In conclusion, Davidson (1997) determines that BAME research participants believe there is a “Concrete ceiling” to career advancement in their respective organisations and beyond.

To both reinforce and summarise her findings, Davidson (1997, p. 99) produces the following graphic, shown at Figure 1.3.

Figure 1.3

The black and ethnic minority woman manager – a model to illustrate the typical profile, pressures/problems and negative outcomes/stress compared to her white female counterpart



Source: Davidson (1997, p. 99)

What is stark about Figure 1.3 (see Appendix 6 for readable detail of parts A to D) is how the BAME women research participants feel about their career prospects. Their comments suggest that not only is the impact of systemic BAME discrimination restrictive, it can generate a form of “learned [and sometimes forced] helplessness” (Thomas, 1986, p. 372) which leaves them largely believing that it will not be possible for them to pursue a career path of choice. Particularly, one that could take them to the hierarchical pinnacle of their respective organisations or institutions - hence the identification of a concrete (not glass) ceiling.

The works of Pager & Shepherd (2008) and Davidson (1997) describe each side of a metaphorical discrimination coin where on the one side significant numbers of white people don't believe that there is a problem in respect of systemic BAME discrimination and its impact on employment prospects. On the other side, BAME people experience this discrimination in a way that leaves them feeling that in terms of advancing their career prospects, their ethnicity is likely to lead to “physical” and “psychological ill health” as well as “job dissatisfaction” (Davidson, 1997, p. 99).

Furthermore, according to Tilbury & Colic-Peisker (2006), these differing perspectives have real consequences in terms of BAME career prospects. In their qualitative study into the reasons why employers were less like to recruit BAME or migrant employees, they found the following tactics and reasoning given by largely white indigenous employers as to why it is difficult to recruit and select such employees:

- [employers were] avoiding the topic by talking about other forms of discrimination and equity issues;
- transferring [the responsibility for] discrimination to clients (customers, or for recruitment agents, employers);
- transferring discrimination to the market;
- transferring discrimination to job (ir)relevant issues;

- transferring discrimination to other staff; and
- transferring the problem to the potential employee (Tilbury & Colic-Peisker, 2006, p. 657).

A key word in the analysis of Tilbury & Colic-Peisker (2006) is that of “transferring” which infers that the employers from this study were keen to transfer responsibility for the lack of BAME recruitment to other people or issues which they projected to be beyond their [employers] span of control. Similarly, in Noon’s (2010, p. 730) research into “positive discrimination” as a tool for transforming minority recruitment and selection prospects, he posits that the arguments made against such activity included reverse discrimination and an apparent concern about the “negative” impacts on the minorities themselves:

Criticisms of positive discrimination coalesce around four main objections: the failure to select the ‘best’ candidate, the undermining of meritocracy, the negative impact on the beneficiaries and the injustice of reverse discrimination (Noon, 2010, p. 730).

In both the Tilbury & Colic-Peisker (2006) and Noon (2010) papers, what is apparent is that neither the employers nor those arguing against positive discrimination in these examples, seem willing to take responsibility for the role that they could play in positively influencing the discriminatory employment circumstances and issues at hand. Often the views expressed are about others or there is an inference that they themselves find it too hard to address the systemic BAME discrimination issues highlighted or the impact(s) that such discrimination has on BAME employment prospects.

Based on this and the broader extant literature reviewed, the fundamental controversy here is not really whether systemic BAME discrimination exists or whether it impacts on BAME employment prospects (Agócs & Burr, 1996; Beck et al., 2002; Tilbury & Colic-Peisker, 2006; Noon, 2010; Squires, 2017). What is perhaps controversial is the extent to which the extant literature is

generally vague and opaque when it comes to identifying ‘who’ is specifically responsible for addressing systemic BAME discrimination and, for example, its negative employment consequences either at the organisational or cross organisational levels?

For example, taking a sample of relevant journal articles, the discourse in relation to the ‘who’ seems to include the “greater state” or the “free market” (Noon, 2010, p. 737), or in another example it is “employers...clients...applicants” (Tilbury & Colic-Peisker, 2006, p. 670), and in the case of Dickens (2007, p. 486) it is about “many actors” and the “government”.

It is likely that these multiple descriptions of the ‘who’ are a somewhat natural consequence given that systemic BAME discrimination is defined as structurally deep rooted and multifaceted (Agócs & Burr, 1996; Beck et al., 2002, Squires, 2017). However, it is also possible that a lack of real attention to the detail of the ‘who’ is part of what reinforces the existence of systemic BAME discrimination. And, whilst it is very insightful to reveal knowledge such as the “transferring” of responsibility by employers, does the literature need to become more granular and detailed about who in employing organisations should act and be accountable in terms of changing the status quo (Tilbury & Colic-Peisker, 2006).

1.4.3. The role of the senior gatekeeper

If greater granularity and understanding is seen as important, the question then becomes one of ‘who’ are the specific groups of people, or individuals, who can at an organisational level influence whether some (or all) of the systemic BAME discrimination impacts discussed thus far will continue? Or perhaps, as Burgelman (1983, p. 64) discusses, who are the “top management” that

will manipulate “context” and “influence the type of [organisational] proposals that will be defined and given impetus”?

In Lewin’s (1997, pp. 300-301) work based on the challenges of the Jewish ethnic and religious minority community in America following the Second World War, he articulates that:

discrimination against minorities will not be changed as long as forces are not changed which determine the decisions of the gatekeepers. Their decisions depend partly on their ideology - that is, their system of values and beliefs which determine what they consider to be “good” or “bad” - and partly on the way they perceive the particular situation...Gate sections are governed either by impartial rules or by “gatekeepers.” In the latter case an individual or group is “in power” to make the decision between “in” or “out.”...Thus if we think of trying to reduce discrimination within a factory, a school system, or any other organized institution, we should consider the social life there as something which flows through certain channels. We then see that there are executives or boards who decide who is taken into the organization or who is kept out of it, who is promoted, and so on (Lewin, 1997, pp. 300-301).

Lewin’s (1997) concept of the gatekeeper starts to frame the answer as to ‘who’ can manipulate “context” and “influence” the status quo of systemic BAME discrimination and its associated BAME employment impacts (Burgelman, 1983, p. 64). In addition, and in contrast to some of the relevant extant literature, it starts to help to define, at a more granular level, the likely characteristics of the senior gatekeepers who could notionally play a role in the reduction (or magnification) of systemic BAME discrimination and the associated employment issues discussed earlier.

At this point, some scholars or equality champions may be inclined to seize upon this gatekeeper thought process and say that this line of thinking is obvious and not necessarily new. However, there does appear to be a gap in the extant literature about the traits of these senior gatekeepers

(Lewin, 1997) and what motivates or demotivates them specifically to positively influence the BAME senior management employment challenge, which is central to this study.

The extant BAME related literature and applied research tends to favour discussion and conclusions that centre on actions for improvement at the organisational or institutional level (e.g., greater state, government), rather than exploring more fully what specific accountability for improvement would look like for the most senior gatekeepers (Tilbury & Colic-Peisker, 2006; Noon, 2010; Kline, 2014). For example, in the case of the 2016 Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) investigation into the alleged discriminatory conduct of the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), only one of the subsequent 18 recommendations is specific to a senior gatekeeper, whereas the other 17 feature more generic language, which may have some benefit but is less clear about which senior gatekeeper(s) within the MPS is / are accountable for bringing about the required change in behaviours (Carstensen, 2016). By way of clarification, being ‘accountable’ in the context of this thesis is centred around the definition of accountability as suggested by Mulgan (2000, p. 569) which is about “requiring officials [senior gatekeepers] to answer, explain and justify, while those holding them to account engage in questioning, assessing and criticising”.

As highlighted, there seems to be a lack of comment on the habitus of senior gatekeepers when perhaps there is a real opportunity for further exploration of their "ideology" (Lewin, 1997, p. 300) as well as more discussion on how they think and what really drives their decision making, particularly at the very highest levels of board of director recruitment and selection.

This lack of focus on senior gatekeepers, in the context of the systemic BAME discrimination issues discussed here, is possibly driven by scholarly oversight but it may also be the case that the process of identifying and being specific about gatekeepers is perceived by researchers to be problematic. For example, can a single senior gatekeeper or small group of such people be held accountable for improving the complex and multifaceted BAME discrimination issues which are systemic (Agócs & Burr, 1996; Beck et al., 2002; Squires, 2017)? The extant BAME literature doesn't provide clear answers to such a question but what is known is that such accountability for senior gatekeepers does exist for a range of complex and systemic issues in other fields which are deemed as important such as medical practice (Checkland, Marshall & Harrison, 2004), and therefore there is no obvious explanation as to why circumstances would be different in this BAME context.

Other researcher problems related to understanding gatekeepers could be due to the difficulty in accessing very senior people as well as the challenge of extracting honest opinions on contentious issues. Also, as discussed by Harris & Ogbonna (2016, p. 63), gatekeeping might not be just about "isolated powerful individuals" but is perhaps more about "mutually reinforcing influencing behaviours of individuals and groups".

That said, a key assumption in this study and borne out subsequently in the primary research, is that when it comes to the practice of recruiting to any CEO or board of director position, the final 'yes' or 'no' decision is likely to be determined by one or two key individuals (Lewin, 1997; Burgelman, 1983). For sure, a variety of stakeholders e.g., "shop floor workers" (Harris & Ogbonna, 2016), may be involved or influence the broader recruitment and selection process. However, it is unlikely they would have more sway on a final selection decision than immediate line management. This view is supported by Wyatt & Silvester (2015, p. 1258) who, in their study

of BAME career experiences, describe line managers as "gatekeepers" because they have "power over access to a number of methods of career assistance" including that of recruitment and selection.

The journal article of Maxwell (2004) can be used as an illustration of how the intentions of senior gatekeepers could be scrutinised when he describes the approach of Greg Dyke as follows:

Importantly, diversity has a highly placed advocate in the BBC in its director-general, Greg Dyke, who publicly acknowledged that the BBC is "hideously white" (Maxwell, 2004, p. 192)

To some degree, Maxwell (2004, p. 192) venerates Mr Dyke's contribution and argues that due to his "sponsorship", diversity is "embedded in the BBC's strategic planning". Indeed, Mr Dyke himself clearly understands his role when he comments that:

You can have all the equal opportunities policies you like, but if actually, the gateman doesn't let blacks through the gates, you've got a problem, haven't you? ('Dyke', 2001).

The relevance of this example is that the position of Director General in the BBC is recognised as perhaps the most senior leadership and management position in that organisation. Both Mr Dyke and Maxwell (2004) seem to acknowledge the formers position as chief (non-BAME) gatekeeper and subsequently, Mr Dyke goes on to declare that within two years from 2001 that:

by 2003, 10% of the BBC's UK workforce and 4% of management [circa 80 employees] would be from ethnic minority backgrounds ('Dyke', 2001).

Approximately fifteen years later, based on a December 2016 Freedom of Information (FOI) request, the actual number of BBC management employees earning £150,000 or more was 103 people. A total of eight (7.77%) of those people, self-identified themselves as BAME under the definition applied to this study. Based on this information, if asked today, would Mr Dyke indicate that he left the BBC too early (i.e., 2004) to have influenced the current organisational position. Alternatively, might he suggest that having eight BAME employees amongst the BBC's top management earners is tantamount to success or that there were other forces beyond his span of influence at play. The central point is that we genuinely do not know as the question(s) of this senior gatekeeper and others like him are generally not directly asked regarding BAME career progression, either journalistically or through the extant literature.

To emphasise this point, there is limited evidence, either academically (Maxwell, 2004) or journalistically, of questions being addressed to Mr Dyke whilst he held the position as gatekeeper or thereafter. For example, as Deming (2000, p. 41) would perhaps suggest, what was Mr Dyke's planned "method to achieve" his "aim" to reform the representative nature of the BBC or for that matter the FA Council membership which he also sought to change in a latter role as Chair of the FA.

The Mr Dyke scenario and Maxwell's (2004) assertion regarding the effectiveness of the formers advocacy during his time at the BBC, is an example of an omission in the extant BAME literature concerning those most senior and influential gatekeepers and the opportunity to develop a more granular understanding of their intentions and accountabilities. For example, what motivates gatekeepers and what are their ideologies (Lewin, 1997) and approaches to issues such as the employment of very senior BAME executives at board of director level? It is important to note that consideration of this lack of understanding, is not just focused on those senior gatekeepers

who perhaps have at best a mixed track record of tackling systemic discrimination or taking or making such recruitment decisions. The extant literature is also missing opportunities to maximise knowledge and contributory learning from those very senior gatekeepers who, for example, do have a positive track record of breaking through the barriers of systemic BAME discrimination and successfully recruiting BAME CEOs in large public sector organisations.

On this basis it is argued that there needs to be a focus on improving understanding of key senior gatekeepers and what may or may not motivate them towards the recruitment of very senior BAME CEOs or executives at board of director level in the public sector. In providing new and insightful knowledge about senior gatekeepers, there is an opportunity to supplement the established scholarly perspective with regard to systemic BAME discrimination (Agócs & Burr, 1996; Richard, 2000; Kandola, 2009), through the development of a broader understanding of the ideological intent of senior gatekeepers and how they could become more accountable for improving on the BAME related status quo.

Therefore, a central aim in terms of contribution to knowledge in this study will be to bridge this gap in knowledge and focus its primary research on senior gatekeepers in the public sector, defined as:

the one or two individuals within a public sector organisational context who through their seniority, line management or regulatory responsibilities are most able to impact and influence the process and decision making relating to the recruitment and selection of suitable BAME, or other, candidate types to the highest executive job position(s) within the organisation(s) or institution(s) for which they have ultimate responsibility.

1.4.4. Literature review conclusion

It is difficult to refute that systemic BAME discrimination exists and that it has negative impacts on the recruitment and selection of BAME people at all levels of organisational hierarchy - including the most senior executive position of Chief Executive (Agócs & Burr, 1996; Beck et al., 2002; Kandola, 2009; Kline, 2014; Squires, 2017). Both anti-discrimination law and the proactive management of diversity have been cited as examples of mitigatory approaches to systemic BAME discrimination but the structural and administrative embeddedness of this form of discrimination is understood to be context driven, challenging and very resistant to positive change (Agócs & Burr, 1996; Richard, 2000; Beck et al., 2002; Squires, 2017).

It is argued that the controversy here is not really whether systemic BAME discrimination exists or whether it impacts on BAME employment prospects. What is posited as controversial (and a gap in knowledge) is the extent to which the extant literature is generally vague and opaque when it comes to identifying ‘who’ is specifically responsible for addressing systemic BAME discrimination and, for example, its negative employment consequences either at the organisational or cross organisational levels (Agócs & Burr, 1996; Beck et al., 2002; Tilbury & Colic-Peisker, 2006; Noon, 2010; Squires, 2017).

In response to this controversy, a combination of the findings related to the roles of “top management” and “gatekeeper” adapted from both Burgelman, (1983) and Lewin, (1997) are used to underpin the answer as to ‘who’ can manipulate “context” and “influence” the status quo of systemic BAME discrimination and its associated BAME employment impacts. This assists in establishing the primary research question which is fundamentally about developing a more

granular understanding of key senior gatekeepers (as defined earlier) as to what may or may not motivate them towards the recruitment of very senior BAME CEOs or executives at board of director level in the public sector?

Further to this central research question is the opportunity to gain deeper knowledge through understanding the perspective of those senior gatekeepers who have seemingly broken through systemic BAME discrimination challenges (Noon, 2007) and in the context of this study, made BAME appointments to the highest organisational levels - such as the position of CEO.

This is important for reasons of balance and contrast across the literature where on the one hand, we see the compelling research of Davidson (1997) and Thomas (1986, p. 372) which both legitimately draw attention to the negative aspects felt by their BAME study research participants, leading to the development of concepts such as “concrete ceilings” and the relaying of participant thoughts such as “I’m Black; therefore, I won’t get the promotion”. On the other hand, we see less compelling research across the extant BAME related literature concerning ‘what has or is working’ and therefore by seeking to address some of this gap there is the possibility of contributing further to increasing knowledge about reducing systemic BAME discrimination and the associated employment issues discussed. In achieving such balance across the relevant literature, we may also lessen the discourse “reproduction” risk highlighted by van Dijk (2008, p. 102) which is that:

“although discourse may seem just "words" (and therefore cannot break your bones, as do sticks and stones), text and talk play a vital role in the reproduction of contemporary racism” (van Dijk, 2008, p. 102).

By suggesting the inclusion of a more positive (and balancing) discourse is not meant to be a specific criticism or an attempt to discredit any extant BAME related literature but the opportunity

for a more granular understanding of senior gatekeepers through a lens of what works seems relevant in terms of new knowledge and contribution. It is also the case that the present author is an example of being both a BAME senior gatekeeper as well as a candidate and these experiences (good and bad) should help to motivate and inform interest in this perspective and will undoubtedly effect how this research is pursued, hence the following statement of positionality.

1.5. Statement of positionality

Immediately upon suggesting the insertion of a more upbeat approach to the challenge of BAME senior management career progression, it is hard not to imagine that several scholars and diversity practitioners would deem such a thought process as an attempt to duck what is, and continues to be, a challenging set of issues. For example, the continuance of systemic BAME discrimination and alongside this, how to effectively manage diversity and take pro-diversity and inclusion decisions for better outcomes. With some degree of legitimacy, some scholars and practitioners would probably point to the paucity of positive examples on which to build affirmative stories and subsequently raise expectancy levels as suggested by Thomas (1986, p. 375), and it might be (or is) the case that through a lens of what has not worked they would be right. Nonetheless, there are more optimistic stories out there and as the present author of this thesis, I believe it is relevant to share a statement of my own positionality to provide both a supportive and (perhaps) balancing perspective to what seems to be the preferred 'negative' disposition across the extant literature (Davidson, 1997; Maxwell, 2004; Kline et al., 2014, 2016; Tulsiani & Phillips, 2014; Carstensen, 2016; Saggar, 2016; Parker, 2016; McGregor-Smith, 2017).

In sharing this perspective in the first person, I would ask the reader to keep in mind an underlying question as to why there have not been more attempts across academia to explore in any depth the notion of what may have worked regardless of sample size. Equally, I would ask the reader to keep in mind the possibility of achieving improved theoretical and practical outcomes if the academic and practitioner worldview, has more balance in terms of describing the good as well as flawed realities. I use my own experiences to show what is possible, if not common.

Kezar & Lester (2010, p. 165) describe “positionality” as focusing “on the intersection of various aspects of a person's identity, such as race, class, and gender” in shaping perspectives. They further acknowledge that this brings inherent complexity as a result of having to focus “on multiple identities inside and outside the context of the workplace.”. With this in mind, I would reference the fact that I have first-hand employment experience in overcoming and living through elements linked to the snowy white peaks (e.g., systemic BAME discrimination), being a very senior gatekeeper and being a senior BAME candidate. This is because I am currently a BAME CEO of a large public sector organisation of circa six thousand people and I have previously held the same CEO position across two other large-scale public sector organisations.

As a part of considering my early background and CEO leadership experiences and their relevance to this study, the positionality perspective I have used to underpin this section of the thesis is both based on Kezar & Lester (2010) and the reinforcing narrative of Foote & Bartell (2011, p. 46) who posit that:

Positionality of the researcher is shaped by his/her unique mix of race, class, gender, sexuality, and other identifiers, including positions of power into which society has placed the person, as well as his/her personal life experiences within and around these identifiers

At the beginning of the last decade, I was described by Wadsworth & Wilson (2010), as a “ground breaking” CEO by virtue of my longevity as a BAME CEO in local government. A few years later I was listed as one of the top 50 NHS CEOs according to the Health Services Journal and described by Moore (2016) as “the only BME chief executive on our list”.

Whilst these facts could be viewed as “obsessing” (Delamont, 2007, p. 3) about myself, this is not the intention and to my knowledge it remains a fact that, with the exception of a general leadership report by government (Rose, 2015) and two very recent research studies undertaken in the latter part of 2019, I cannot recall - across two decades of senior management - any other examples of being specifically questioned academically as a senior gatekeeper or BAME candidate about my personal experiences of recruitment, selection or organisational life. To my knowledge, none of the individual senior gatekeepers who were involved in my recruitment and selection have ever been researched as to their associated decision making - other than post-appointment being asked journalistically about my subsequent recruitment to the position of CEO.

I make these points as given the uniqueness and national profile of my CEO tenure(s), they are a further example that academic and scholarly focus is principally focused on what is not working as opposed to seeking out what does. Scholars such as Kline, 2013; Kline, 2014; Kline et al., 2016; Tulsiani & Phillips, 2014; Saggar, 2016; Parker, 2016; McGregor-Smith, 2017 have produced significant BAME related reports or academic work during my tenure as a prominent BAME CEO. However, except for Rose (2015), to my knowledge, none of these pieces of work have sought to include significant examples of what has worked from me or other BAME CEOs.

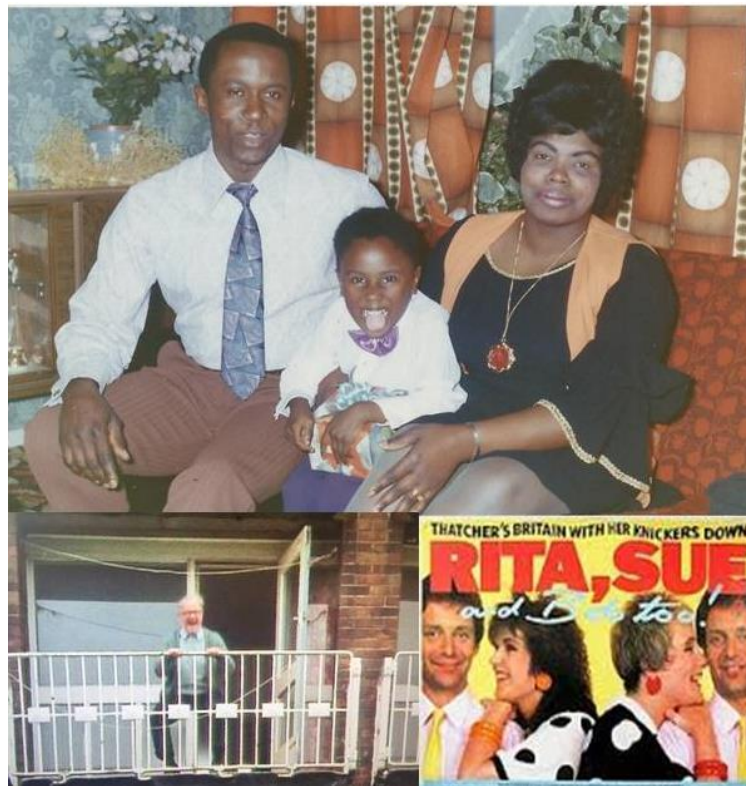
By briefly using this reflection of my history, I am attempting to highlight what further and deeper exploration of senior gatekeepers or candidates could yield from an ongoing research and learning perspective. The reader is encouraged not to see my story as just a set of relayed experiences but to imagine if people such as Greg Dyke (Maxwell, 2004) or other such gatekeepers shared their experiences (good and bad), what this might mean in terms of learning in regard to addressing the stated BAME challenge.

I can confirm that my personal life journey did not start from some unusually beneficial starting point, which can sometimes be perceived to be the case for people judged to have had comparatively successful careers. This seems an important point to make given that the substantive concerns expressed in some of the extant literature about board level opportunity, implies a default disadvantage as a result of having BAME origins. To some extent, this could be correct in terms of the challenging background that I have experienced as a BAME person but not in my experience, necessarily correlated to where my subsequent career attainment has gone thus far.

To explain this challenging background context more fully, I was born and bred in Bradford, West Yorkshire some 50 plus years ago and left school after failing A-Levels and resits aged 18 with three O-Levels in Maths, English and Technical Drawing. My parents, who were of Jamaican origin, brought me up. They came to this country [England] to answer the economic migrant call of the late fifties / early sixties. Sadly, both my parents have passed away but their role in shaping the person I am today is very much a part of me and they are pictured with me at the top of the historical picture mosaic shown at Figure 1.4.

Figure 1.4

Historical picture mosaic



For further context, Figure 1.4 also contains a screenshot pulled from a reasonably well-known film called "Rita, Sue and Bob Too" made in 1982, based on the memoirs of Andrea Dunbar who was the sister (I believe) of a fellow student of mine at Buttershaw Comprehensive School (Dunbar, 2000). This is relevant as the picture shows an elderly actor playing the role of a character shouting a range of profanities (some racial) from what I believe to be one of the top floor flats of what was Deepdale House, Buttershaw, Bradford. If this is correct, this is the same building in which the earlier picture of my parents and I was taken (i.e., 3 Deepdale House).

I believe this to be relevant in the sense that I can confirm from my own worldview that much of what is depicted in the movie as being the cultural norms (e.g., values, behaviours and expectation

driven by prosperity and race) of Bradford at that time were very true to my own experience. Particularly, the somewhat racially charged dimension of what it is like growing up on one of the largest, white working-class, council estates in England at a time when only a handful of households contain people with BAME origins. These were influential times and they formed the basis of what I believe to be the resilience of character that I have today. In particular, the experience of seeing systemic discrimination and unconscious racial bias playing out in some aspects of both my personal life and career.

In terms of my career, as well as working in the private sector, in the last 18 years I have worked for four public sector organisations and as discussed have been the CEO of three of them. I have chosen to anonymise these organisations in this study based on ethical considerations for the people that work within them and because of what Medford (2006, p. 853) identifies as "slippage":

There is slippage between truth (or our experience of reality) and truthfulness because sometimes it seems appropriate - even necessary - to abbreviate, edit, or otherwise modify our life stories in our writing (Medford, 2006, p. 853).

Regarding my experience of "snowy white peaks", as far as I have been able to deduce, I am one of approximately 13 BAME CEOs working across both UK local government and NHS provider organisations. As pointed out by Wadsworth & Wilson (2010) and Moore (2016), the uniqueness of my reality is that I have consistently been in the minority as a senior black executive across the public sector which means, if nothing else, I have a conscious or sub-conscious understanding of what it takes to stay in leadership roles that have hardly ever been occupied by BAME people.

In terms of "systemic" BAME discrimination, I have experience of being hired as a CEO on three separate occasions (Kline, 2014). On each occasion I understood that I had become the first ever

BAME CEO for the organisation in question. For two of those organisations and at the time of writing this thesis, I remained the last BAME CEO that each of those organisations has recruited and I am not aware of any BAME additions to their very senior management teams since my departure but this could have changed by time this research is in the public domain.

Over the last two decades, I have also unsuccessfully applied for three other board CEO and non-executive positions in the public sector. To my knowledge, none of the organisations to which I applied, have ever recruited a BAME CEO or very senior management BAME employee. In addition, as far as I know, none of them have any BAME executive representation on their board or their most senior management teams at the time of writing this thesis.

For the roles to which I applied but was unsuccessful, whether I was ultimately hired or not, I believe that it may have been the case that in a couple of those scenarios, "systemic discrimination" may have been at play (Agócs & Burr, 1996, p. 31; Kline, 2014, p. 66). I suggest this given the line of questions and discussion that took place pre-interview and the subsequent feedback received following my non-appointment. I would characterise this as also being in the realm of "unconscious bias", which as Kandola (2009, loc. 1487) suggests, is a part of "the human condition" and whilst it is disappointing to have such thoughts in the back of your mind as a candidate, I have tried hard to adopt the thought processes of Corbet & Roberts (2013) who advocate the avoidance of "blame" and instead I have had a mindset of 'proving them wrong'.

Further to this, there have been a couple of occasions where my subjective perception of an external recruitment agency left me questioning that organisation's approach to seeking to reduce the possibility of discrimination against BAME candidates like myself. By way of example, as you

may know, prospective candidates sometimes get the opportunity to discuss and share their experiences of a recruitment process. On a couple of occasions when speaking to my exclusively white counterparts, the nature of the recruitment agency and subsequent client questions have seemed different giving the impression that the demonstration of knowledge sought from my application was at a more basic level than those of my white colleagues. For example, across my interviews, I would be asked to demonstrate my understanding of the basics of strategy creation whereas this level of knowledge was clearly deemed as inherent in my white colleagues and not asked of them, despite the fact that very few of them could claim to be more experienced than myself not only in terms of developing strategy but in delivering on associated measurable outcomes.

In relation to being a senior gatekeeper myself, I would suggest that I have been such for nearly two decades, largely across the public sector but also across the private sector as well (Lewin, 1997, p. 300; Harris & Ogbonna, 2016, p. 63). Bearing in mind Medford's (2006 p. 853) notion of "slippage", I estimate that I have been involved in approximately two dozen recruitment and selection processes linked to comparative board appointments. By my recollection this led to a total of three BAME candidates being recruited to board or very senior management team positions. During this time, I have also acted as a referee for several BAME candidates, with one being subsequently appointed as a CEO.

For most recruitments that I have been involved in as a senior gatekeeper, it is invariably the case that external recruitment agencies were hired to do the initial executive search for candidates (Lewin, 1997, p. 300). Consistently, this yielded exclusively or largely non-BAME candidate long-lists and this against a context of assignment briefs being built on my express gatekeeping

requirements that as far as possible a broad range of diversity characteristics (e.g., age, race, LGBTQ, gender, disability et al.) should be a feature of the search process.

It is my experience as a senior gatekeeper that, typically, BAME candidates who have demonstrated interest in a very senior management job, tend to do so by responding directly to job advertisements or making direct contact with me without being directly sourced through the executive search organisations commissioned to develop long-lists. In general, for those three or four BAME candidates who were subsequently shortlisted for roles where I was the senior gatekeeper but were not subsequently appointed to a role, I can recall two instances where insufficient preparation for interview and experience were the primary reasons for a lack progress when compared against the subsequently successful candidates. There is one instance where it was a very tight call between another non-BAME candidate, and it was the opinion of an interview advisory group that swayed my decision against the BAME candidate at that time. In every case direct interview feedback was offered by me as the senior gatekeeper and this was taken up in all but once instance.

I hope that just through this very brief statement of positionality and the sharing of my experiences and thought processes, the thesis reader is provided with a unique BAME candidate and senior gatekeeper perspective on issues such as "snowy white peaks" and "systemic discrimination" (Agócs & Burr, 1996; Kline, 2014,). This kind of extrapolation of knowledge, in particular that of the senior gatekeeper involved in BAME senior management recruitment, appears to have been neglected and is not easy to find replicated across the extant literature referenced in this chapter of the thesis.

To some degree, this is not surprising and further endorses the perspective that the favoured position of what does not work is the overriding focus of scholars and practitioners (Kline, 2014; Parker, 2016; Sagggar, 2016). However, as implied at the beginning of this section, if you took the simple positionality passage constructed here (and the several others that surely exist) and added it and them to the existing negative discourse as balancing contributions, it is my belief that the shaping of theory would be nuanced differently and applied practice to date would be better positioned to improve outcomes. Clearly, my opinions are subjective, but the findings of this thesis will potentially provide for more substance to this working proposition.

1.6. Conclusion

A broad conclusion from this chapter is that context matters and on occasion some of the dominant extant literature (Agócs & Burr, 1996; Beck et al., 2002; Kandola, 2009; Kline, 2013; Kline, 2014; Kline et al., 2016; Tulsiani & Phillips, 2014; Parker, 2016; Squires, 2017) concerning the identified BAME challenges, prefers to focus on system and organisation and therefore potentially underplays the more granular roles of senior gatekeepers for example (Van der Walt et al., 2006, p. 132; Rittel & Webber, 1973 pp. 155-160). As a result, it has become a regularised part of the extant discourse for underachievement against the desired BAME outcomes, to be described as “systemic” without always a clear demonstration that a process of contextualisation and granular review - as advocated by Richard (2000) - has necessarily been undertaken in reaching such findings and conclusions (Kline, 2014).

The findings from this chapter indicate that there is a significant opportunity for a “revelatory” contribution to knowledge to be developed about the role of senior gatekeepers (Nicholson et al.,

2018, p. 210). It is contended that these people are fundamental to changing the perceived status quo in relation to the stated BAME challenge, which at its basic level would see senior management employment across public sector boards mirroring that of the UK BAME working age population of 14% (Lewin, 1997; Kline, 2014; McGregor-Smith, 2017, p. 9). At its optimum level and as a primary research objective, this same BAME challenge would specifically seek to:

identify an approach to addressing the challenge of appointing more public sector Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic (BAME) Chief Executives to reflect the prevailing UK BAME working age population percentage of 14%.

It is concluded that a primary research focus on senior gatekeepers is a significant and additional source of new knowledge which could compliment the more traditionally explored systemic BAME discrimination and managing diversity and inclusion discourse, which regularly features as a part of the themes of snowy white peaks and BAME candidacy (Kline, 2013; Kline, 2014; Kline et al., 2016; Tulsiani & Phillips, 2014; HMCIC, 2016; Parker, 2016; McGregor-Smith, 2017).

It is fully accepted that this more traditional BAME discrimination and diversity discourse has its place in terms of creating a broad picture of theory, knowledge and practice. However, it tends to come from a perspective of what is not working and overlooks or inadvertently dismisses what may have worked as highlighted in the shared statement of positionality perspective, which demonstrates that there are examples of positive success, which could be introduced into the academic debate if scholars chose to do so.

There is also a tendency for some of the extant literature to follow approaches like Maxwell (2004) and his very positive profile of Greg Dyke as a senior gatekeeper and the BBC as an institution.

Like the study of Maxwell (2004), the dominant literature seemingly has two general directions, the first of which typically relies upon action or learning relating to organisations and institutions rather than specific individual senior gatekeepers who would be directly accountable for organisational or systemic outcomes (Kline et al., 2014). The second direction is centred on a seemingly un-evidenced admiration and veneration for certain senior gatekeepers as exemplified through Maxwell (2004, p. 192), who when discussing Greg Dyke claimed, “As a result of the director-general’s sponsorship, diversity is now embedded in the BBC’s strategic planning”. Clearly, neither Maxwell (2004) or Mr Dyke could not have foretold the future but as already pointed out in this chapter, the reality for the BBC is very different especially when observing BAME career progression at the senior management level or the raging debate about longstanding gender pay inequality for broadcasters (Ryder, 2018).

Therefore, not only is there a negative discourse in place across the literature in general, when some scholars have sought to be more appreciative, they do so by showcasing poor examples despite having more longitudinally credible cases on which to research. Put simply, there appears to be an omission across the extant BAME literature, which is about not providing sufficient, granular, evidence of attempting to test the breadth and veracity of views held by senior gatekeepers. This seems to be the case either through the study of senior gatekeepers who have not made much progress on influencing the aspired for BAME outcomes or for that matter, those gatekeepers that have made progress. In either case, the literature has been limited in describing the impact of this key group.

Alongside this lack of focus and challenge of senior gatekeepers, is the issue that the general scholarly discourse is underpinned by negativity i.e., the problem and what is not working. This is not necessarily a revelation as after all the nature of academia is legitimately built upon solving

problems and issues that are perceived as not going as envisaged by the scholar or other interested parties. However, there does appear to be an opportunity to place a learning spotlight on the attitudes of senior gatekeepers but to do so in a way that seeks to explore what could be gleaned from what is or has worked no matter how small such examples may be in number and magnitude.

Through combining these factors with the senior gatekeeper definition highlighted previously and by narrowing down the BAME challenge to that of the recruitment and selection of the position of the CEO, two things become possible. Firstly, through developing knowledge relating to the recruitment to the most senior accountable officer position, there is an opportunity for those prospective BAME candidates previously submerged in “learned helplessness” to enhance the chances of fulfilling their career aspirations by virtue of being exposed to positive cognitive experience(s) which in turn could increase their expectancy of success (Thomas, 1986, p. 375). Such exposure could be achieved by sharing the experiences and knowledge of senior gatekeepers who do know what it is like to recruit BAME candidates into the top jobs in the public sector.

Secondly, on the assumption that it is possible to influence gatekeeper thinking, there is a further opportunity through a process of role modelling what good looks like, to develop a senior gatekeeper roadmap for taking steps that would ethically and lawfully increase the proportion of BAME CEOs. This in turn, could create a sense of progress and confidence amongst the broader community of senior gatekeepers wishing to make changes to the status quo but who have historically become stuck as to how to personally make a difference on this specific ambition or the broader aim of senior management.

In summary, the primary objective of this thesis study is focused on addressing the challenge of appointing more public sector BAME CEOs to at least reflect the prevailing UK BAME working age population percentage. This will be done through the identification and utilisation of an approach embedded in 'what has worked' across a cohort of senior gatekeepers who have successfully made such an appointment.

2. Appreciative Inquiry

2.1. Introduction

As discussed, the desire to appoint more public sector BAME CEOs, could be further advanced by sharing the experiences of senior gatekeepers who have direct knowledge of what it is like to recruit BAME candidates into the top jobs in the public sector. However, to maximise this opportunity for learning from senior gatekeepers, there is a need to move away from the narrowness of the existing scholarly debate which, has focussed on what has not worked and in some cases responds to the stated BAME challenge through a prism of ‘limited impact’ action planning characterised by Kandola (2009, loc. 43) as “legalised, proceduralised, standardised”.

To effect this change from “problem solving” action planning (Kandola, 2009; Hammond, 2013), to a more positive method of addressing the identified BAME employment issues, there is a need to identify an alternative approach. A method or framework, which could lend itself to the sharing of ‘what works as well’ in order to extract, where possible, positive lessons learned for use in developing role modelling opportunities for other senior gatekeepers.

Based on the criteria of looking for an approach that places greater emphasis on what has worked, the concept of “Appreciative Inquiry” (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987), is ultimately incorporated as a framework to meet the primary research aim of this thesis.

In choosing to adopt appreciative inquiry, other possible approaches to a ‘what has worked’ mode of analysis are considered such as co-operative inquiry, participatory action research and action inquiry. However, these are subsequently discarded for the following reasons.

Co-operative inquiry is generally positioned in the extant literature as having a real focus on group-based research and therefore it is harder to conceive of how it would fit with a focus on individual, senior gatekeeper, research participants as is the case with this study (Reason, 1994; Heron & Reason, 1997).

Participatory action research is also viewed as problematic to use in this study as it tends to be described as a problem-solving approach which relies heavily on exploring the power of the “oppressed groups” (Reason, 1994, p. 12; Heron & Reason, 1997). For the reasons identified in the previous chapter, there is no obvious reason to believe that senior gatekeepers represent an oppressed group. There is an argument that they are perhaps exhibiting aspects of “learned helplessness” (Thomas, 1986) but this is a far cry from being oppressed as it is plainly the case that senior gatekeepers have dominant power in the context of their organisations and the inter-organisational relationships and decision-making processes that typically exist.

Perhaps the closest concept to appreciative inquiry in terms of approach is that of “Action Inquiry” and its emphasis on transforming “organizations and communities into collaborative, self-reflective communities of inquiry” (Reason, 1994, p. 19), the similarity being that the concept of appreciative inquiry is about transforming from a ‘what is not working’, problem solving ethos, to one which starts with a ‘what is working’ perspective. In the end appreciative inquiry is the preferred choice because for practical access reasons the research participants for this study could

not really be a part of a community and they did not demonstrate any overt need to be persuaded to transform to a position of self-reflection in the context of the BAME related challenge that they were being asked to consider. As individuals they were naturally enthused by being given the opportunity to contribute to the debate and demonstrated this by choosing to be individually involved regardless of other important competing pressures on their time.

Therefore, based on a spectrum of positively learning from ‘what works’ through to a pure problem-solving orientation, appreciative inquiry is assessed to be more towards the former, and therefore less likely to influence the primary research findings of this thesis towards the more commonly articulated deficit discourse discussed in Chapter One (Reason, 1994; Reason & Bradbury, 2008; Kline, 2014).

The remainder of this chapter provides an overview of appreciative inquiry, which includes discussing its various component parts and summarising its evolution as a theory. Furthermore, the scene is set for how appreciative inquiry is ultimately applied as a research framework for the thesis.

2.2. Overview and evolution of appreciative inquiry

Over thirty years ago and across the space of a twelve-month time frame, Cooperrider (1986) and Cooperrider & Srivastva (1987) authored two seminal academic studies called “Appreciative inquiry: Toward a methodology for understanding and enhancing organizational innovation” and “Appreciative Inquiry into Organizational Life”. Cooperrider, Whitney, Stavros, & Stavros (2008, p. 3) subsequently defined appreciative inquiry as:

the cooperative co-evolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them...The inquiry is mobilized through the crafting of the “unconditional positive question,” ...AI interventions focus on the speed of imagination and innovation instead of the negative, critical, and spiralling diagnoses commonly used in organizations. The discovery, dream, design and destiny model links the energy of the positive core to changes never thought possible (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p. 3)

Across the literature, appreciative inquiry is described as being underpinned by a “Social Constructionist” epistemology which is grounded in a belief that people have significant sway over the “nature of the realities that” they “perceive and experience and that to a great extent we actually create our realities through shared symbolic and mental processes” (Fitzgerald et al., 2003, p. 5).

Based on this epistemological grounding, appreciative inquiry grew into a recognised approach for organisational change (Martinetz, 2002). Through its social constructionist underpinnings, it was maintained by Cooperrider et al. (1986, 1987) to be a breakthrough theory in contrast to what was then viewed as the dominant “Lewinian” based “Action Research” approach to organisational development and change (Bushe, 2011, p. 6). The utility of action research at the time was described as being built on a cyclical triumvirate of process which involved the three components

of “planning, action and fact-finding” leading to what Cooperrider et al. (1986, 1987) believed to be an academically entrenched ethos of problem solving (Lewin, 1946; Fitzgerald et al., 2003, p. 5).

Cooperrider & Srivastva (1987) formed the view that the interpretation and application of action research was funnelling approaches to organisational change down a path that placed more emphasis on fact finding and solutions rather than the generation of theory. It was reasoned that this direction of travel, at the expense of theory generation, was leading towards organisational change issues being addressed through a narrowing prism of perspectives, almost to the extent that such approaches to change were, in the minds of Cooperrider & Srivastva (1987), increasingly starting to resemble more of an observable, positivistic approach to change management, which was not what they believed Lewin intended from his early work in developing action research (Lewin, 1946, 1951; Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Bushe, 2011).

A further concern identified by Cooperrider & Srivastva (1987) was that by virtue of less emphasis on theory, the capacity for new “generative” (p. 2) thoughts was being neutralised through a more dominant perspective which seemingly placed a higher value on “problem solving” (p. 17) action based research. In turn, it was contended that these foremost thought processes were then leading to an increased focus on the production of results based on a narrow platform of organisational change inquiry rather than thinking about the possibility of other broader forms of inquiry. It was through this lens of readdressing the balance between theory and problem solving that appreciative inquiry was developed (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987).

Core to appreciative inquiry as a theoretical concept is a desire to place much greater emphasis on what works as opposed to focusing on what is not working. As Bushe (2011, p. 6) wrote, “questions about conflict create more conflict” and therefore by adopting a traditional problem-solving approach the inquirer or researcher may be unwittingly contributing to an exacerbation of an organisational problem rather than providing insight into its resolution. By contrast a focus on what works and “building on” the “strength” of what people do well in an organisational setting is claimed to be more likely to enhance performance and make people feel much more positive about their organisational prospects, circumstances and environs (Bushe, 2011, p. 11).

Table 2.1 represents the four original headline principles of appreciative inquiry as identified initially by Cooperrider & Srivastva (1987, pp. 25-26):

Table 2.1

Headline principles of appreciative inquiry

- | |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Research into the social (innovation) potential of organizational life should begin with appreciation.2. Research into the social potential of organizational life should be applicable.3. Research into the social potential of organizational life should be provocative.4. Research into the social potential of organizational life should be collaborative. |
|--|

Source: Cooperrider & Srivastva (1987, pp. 25-26)

Under the umbrella of these four headline principles, several other guiding principles evolve, which Meier & Geldenhuys (2017, p. 2) describe as giving “credence to links between theoretical developments across a range of disciplines” and serves “as premises for Appreciative Inquiry”. Common amongst these guiding principles are those described and adopted by various scholars (Howieson, 2011; Kelm, 2005; Subirana, 2016, p. 84) as “constructionist; simultaneity; poetic; anticipatory and positive”.

Regarding the **constructionist** principle, this is defined as being underpinned by social constructionism and is based on a view that through a connection of words, worlds are generated and as a result “what we focus on becomes our reality” (Meier & Geldenhuys, 2017, p. 2).

The **simultaneity** principle is underpinned by a perspective which advocates that change is stimulated by the types of questions we ask and further to this that the very act of asking a question stimulates the change process.

With the **poetic** principle, Bushe (2011, p. 8) suggests “organizational life is expressed in the stories people tell each other every day, and the story of the organization is constantly being co-authored.” By implication, this principle indicates that our daily exchange of narrative with colleagues very much grows to become our reality.

Regarding the **anticipatory** principle, through envisaging a positive outlook or future, this very act of optimism, influences people towards the anticipated end point. In essence, the anticipation of a positive horizon stimulates people towards the identified or target summit.

Similarly, the **positive** principle describes a focus on the positive, i.e., what works. As can be seen from Table 2.1, the first principle of beginning with appreciation together with positivity are central themes to the theory of appreciative inquiry and as discussed have been used to distinguish it as an approach from other methods of inquiry such as problem solving. To bolster this point around appreciation and positivity, Hammond (2013, p. 16) suggests that:

If a team or organization or civilization keeps hearing how dysfunctional it is, members will behave accordingly.

Therefore, if the starting point of a dialogue or inquiry is based on what works in an organisation (or for an individual), then the resultant behaviour is likely to mirror that positivity going forward as well as building the confidence of organisational participants in any related change process. This thought process is captured in simple terms through the following comparative illustration (Figure 2.1) which is produced by Hammond (2013, p. 13) as an adaption of the “Appreciative Inquiry” work of Cooperrider & Srivastva (1987).

Figure 2.1

Problem solving & appreciative inquiry focus comparison



Sources: Hammond (2013, p. 13) – Adapted from Cooperrider & Srivastva (1987)

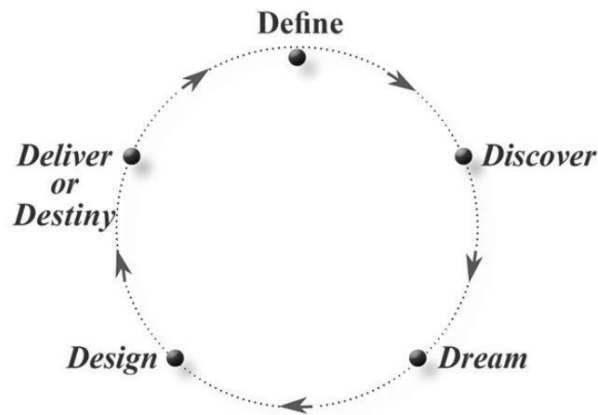
2.3. The 5-D process of appreciative inquiry

During the development of appreciative inquiry, Cooperrider & Srivastva (1987) became conscious of being accused of producing yet another “how to do” management narrative and therefore were initially of the view that their work should remain in the theoretical domain for as long as possible (Bushe, 2011). Underpinning this thought process is the desire to avoid the potential criticism that their work is just another organisational change management fad. However, over time, such is the interest in appreciative inquiry that it evolves into application models built on a series of key assumptions which are described by Hammond (2013, p. 11) as follows:

1. In every society, organization, or group something works.
2. What we focus on becomes our reality.
3. Reality is created in the moment, and there are multiple realities.
4. The act of asking questions of an organization or group influences the group in some way.
5. People have more confidence and comfort to journey to the future (the unknown) when they carry forward parts of the past (the known).
6. If we carry parts of the past forward, they should be about what is best about the past.
7. It is important to value differences.
8. The language we use creates our reality.

Built on these assumptions, the process of appreciative inquiry moves from an initial model of “appreciate, benchmark and co-create” (Hammond, 2013, p. 21) on to the 4-Ds of “Discovery, Dream, Design, Destiny” (Bushe, 2011, pp. 2-3). Grounded in the headline and guiding principles discussed previously, further evolution led to the development of the “5-D Cycle” (Hammond, 2013, p. 22) which Watkins, Mohr & Kelly (2011, p. 71) describe as a “systematic approach to organization change” as illustrated in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2
5-D cycle



Sources: Watkins et al. (2011, p. 71); Hammond (2013, p. 22)

2.3.1. Define

As a result of earlier criticism of the conceptual 4-D framework, a fifth ‘Define’ stage is added leading to the development of a 5-D (Watkins et al., 2011) approach to appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). An aspect of this criticism includes the suggestion that the original 4-D model lacks an issue-based focal point and therefore runs the risk of making the approach to organisational change too broad in application which in turn would lead to a reduction in the benefits to be had in any associated change process (Bushe, 2011).

The ‘Define’ stage reinforces the application of appreciative inquiry as a sequential model of change as illustrated in Figure 2.3.1, which consistently starts with an attempt to define an issue based on the prevailing context, and then subsequently moves in a sequential manner through each of the remaining 4-Ds arriving back at the definition phase (Watkins et al., 2011). As Figure 2.2 suggests, once initiated, this process progresses as a continuous change management cycle

providing ongoing encouragement for participants involved in the change to keep blending the best of what has worked in the past, with the best of what could be imagined and subsequently delivered at a point in the future (Hammond, 2013).

In terms of developing a definition, Watkins et al. (2011) emphasise that change advocates using the 5-D model need to be conscious that the creation of the ‘Define’ stage requires the avoidance of slipping into a problem-solving mind-set. To reduce the chances of this happening, they highlight the importance of using the right language and developing questions from an appreciative platform. An example of this in practice is described through the consideration process they go through in developing a definition for a project focused on “Increasing Gender Equity” (pp. 113-114):

The “problem” was defined as a male dominated culture...managers were ready to address the “problem” ...Our choice is whether we focus on moments of breakdown in cross-gender relations in this company or focus and learn from the moments of excellence – no matter how rare they may or may not be” (Watkins et al., 2011, pp. 113-114)

The approach advocated by Watkins et al. (2011), emphasises that ideally the ‘Define’ stage should be developed appreciatively and that if this is done on the assumption of “what we focus on becomes our reality” (Hammond, 2013, p. 11), then the whole tenor of a change management approach can be driven from a positive and confidence building perspective for those involved.

2.3.2. Discovery

Following the 'Define' phase is "Discovery", which focuses on "the best of what is" in the defined topic of the individual or organisation (Martinetz, 2002, p. 35). So as per the previous Watkins et al. (2011, pp. 113-114) example of "Increasing Gender Equity", learning and sharing from moments of existing "excellence – no matter how rare they may or may not be", is an important component of the 'Discovery' phase.

To maximise the opportunity from developing this phase, there is a need for a high degree of discipline as there could be a tendency for the group of people involved in a change management scenario to slip into problem solving mode or deep reflection on what does not work rather than appreciating and staying in the positive (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987, 2013; Martinetz, 2002; Bushe, 2011; Hammond, 2013).

Built on positive people stories of what works well, the 'Discovery' phase is perhaps the most appreciative element of the 5-D cycle, as this is where positive reflections of the past and the current day are harnessed and then used to reinforce confidence in the development of any future aspirations that may be established in the subsequent 'Dream' phase (Martinetz, 2002, Bushe, 2011).

'Discovery' is also the phase concerned with what Barros & Cooperrider (2000, p. 23) describe as "mobilizing a system inquiry into the positive change core". This speaks to the need to proactively develop the conditions on which positive recollection of what has worked (and why) can be brought into the appreciation process, regardless of whether this is informally sourced from a

“conversation with a friend or colleague” or more formally extracted from “an organization-wide analysis involving every stake-holder, including customers, suppliers, partners and the like” (p. 23). For example, setting the right conditions in any change context could mean using external facilitators experienced in appreciative techniques rather than those who may naturally favour problem solving approaches when facilitating organisational or individual change management sessions.

2.3.3. Dream

The ‘Dream’ phase is described by Martinetz (2002, p. 37) as where “we dream about what might be. We look for themes that appear in the [Discovery] stories” and utilise them to develop a series of future “provocative propositions” which are defined as:

clear statements that define the shared visions for the organization’s future. It is this collection of propositions that provide clear direction for all the organization’s activities. In this phase, the provocative propositions are written at a macro level. A macro level means that the propositions are broad, general statements...” (Martinetz, 2002, p. 37)

The thoughts of Martinetz (2002) underscore the sequential process of appreciative inquiry and emphasise that dreaming in an appreciative context is broadly developed on the foundations of an issue being clearly and appreciatively defined and then reinforced through a collection of discovery based positive stories about what has worked. Watkins et al. (2011) further imply that the building of positive discovery stories around the defined area of focus is important but the extant literature does not generally suggest that this should be treated as a hard and fast rule, which means that the capture and description of what works well, does not necessarily have to relate directly to what has been defined as the areas of focus. This makes sense as there may be occasions when clear

definitions are not possible, for example, where an organisation may be intent on taking a totally different direction to where it has been before. In this context, there would not necessarily be ready examples of what has worked well in terms of the defined area of focus. However, still reminding stakeholders of what they do well generally fits with the appreciative assumption highlighted by Hammond (2013, p. 11) regarding the carrying forward of what is the “best about the past” as a confidence builder for future thoughts and actions.

Building on a platform of ‘Define’ and ‘Discover’, the ‘Dream’ phase uses the confidence of past achievement to develop future dreams, it further seeks to stretch the thinking of those involved as described by Cooperrider et al. (2008, p. 44) who explain that:

the primary purpose of the *Dream* phase is to expand or extend people’s sense of what is possible...It is also generative in that it seeks to expand the organization’s potential, keeping in mind the voices and hopes of its stakeholders (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p. 44).

Not only does the dreaming stage seek to expand thinking, it also encourages participants in the change process to consider the unthinkable not just in a working context but across relationships at home as well as work. Whitney & Trosten-Bloom (2010, p. 8) describe this process of thinking the unthinkable as a:

time for people to collectively explore hopes and dreams for their work, their working relationships, their organization, and the world. It is a time to envision possibilities that are big, bold, and beyond the boundaries of what has been in the past (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010, p. 8)

Thus, the appreciative mixture of a clear definition, confidence built on a positive reflection of past achievements and being bold about the future, is the place where change agents and participants should arrive having followed the first three phases of the 5-D model.

2.3.4. Design

As Hammond (2013, p. 28) suggests, the fourth phase of ‘Design’ is the part of the 5-D sequence where “you use convergent thinking to write directions to achieve the agreed upon future”. This phase is also where provocative propositions are further developed into “confident and assertive statements of what the organization hopes to achieve” (Trajkovski, Schmied, Vickers, & Jackson, 2013, p. 97).

Trajkovski et al. (2013) underscore the provocation element of the developed intentions and propositions based on the discomfort that is caused amongst the change participants. By their very nature, these provocative statements seek to use the emotion of discomfort in a way that is less likely to perpetuate the status quo but with some form of structure which Meier & Geldenhuys (2017, p. 3) describe as akin to a new “architecture project” where “structures are created that become the containers and boundaries that facilitate the action” of the final ‘Delivery’ phase (Barrett & Fry, 2005).

2.3.5. Delivery (or Destiny)

The fifth phase before the sequential loop back to the first phase of 'Define' (Watkins et al., 2011, p. 71; Hammond, 2013, p. 22) is that of 'Delivery (or Destiny)', which is essentially about the realisation of the developed 'Dream'.

Of note is that Cooperrider, Sorensen, Yaeger, & Whitney (2001) chose to incorporate the use of the word "Destiny" alongside that of "Delivery" as they believed that sole use of the latter was problematic for two reasons. Firstly, they were concerned that the notion of delivery "evoked images of traditional change management implementation" (Bushe, 2011, p. 3). Secondly, Cooperrider et al. (2001) were anxious that the interpretation of delivery was potentially too restrictive and they explained their thinking on this as follows:

the word delivery simply did not go far enough. It did not convey the sense of liberation we were seeing – like the well documented hotel case, where the system transformed itself from a one-star to four-star hotel by using AI and literally putting a moratorium on all the traditional problem solving efforts that it had going (Barrett & Cooperrider, 1990; Cooperrider et al., 2001, p. 16)

Hammond (2013) highlights that a more recent application of appreciative inquiry has resulted in interchangeability between the use of 'Delivery' and/or 'Destiny', but she places more import on this fifth phase representing an overall change process that is relentlessly positive leading to more "appreciation as time goes on" (p. 33). Alongside this positivity, Whitney & Trosten-Bloom (2010, p. 9) also reinforce that the 'Delivery (or Destiny)' phase is about "a series of inspired actions that support ongoing learning and innovation", which speaks to reducing the restrictive concerns expressed by Cooperrider et al. (2001, p. 16), whilst at the same time demonstrating that appreciative inquiry does also have practical properties. To reinforce the intent of Cooperrider et

al. (2001), for the remainder of this thesis, the fifth “D” is referred to as ‘Destiny’ unless it is specifically described in quoted literature as ‘Delivery’.

In summary, whether it be the original 4-D conceptual framework (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p. 3) or the subsequently developed 5-D cycle of appreciative inquiry, the underlying assumption of focusing on incidences of what has worked “no matter how small” or “rare they may or may not be” (Watkins et al., 2011, pp. 113-114) as a basis for developing a positive future - is what sets appreciative inquiry apart from many other approaches to change. However, there are those who are critical of appreciative inquiry for this reason amongst several others.

2.4. Criticism of appreciative inquiry

Critics of appreciative inquiry tend to centre on the suppression of negative feelings or emotions incorporated into an overly positive approach. They say that suppressing what they would deem as naturally occurring negative states of mind within an organisational change setting is both counterproductive and counterintuitive (Bushe, 2011). To some extent Hammond (2013, p. 11), who alongside Cooperrider is a longstanding and recognised advocate of appreciative inquiry (Hammond & Royal, 2001), drew attention to this very point when through highlighting underpinning assumptions she wrote that “it is important to value differences”.

This assumption could be readily described as contradictory because there are likely to be individuals or groups within most organisational settings whose reality will be negative and therefore to diminish or not incorporate their feelings into an organisational change process is potentially contra to the point of valuing difference. It is also conceivable that through suppression of certain emotions, information vital to the change process can be missed as a part of the 5-D, Define phase for example.

This is a point that Corbet & Roberts (2013) are consistently passionate about in that central to their hypothesis, regarding effective change management, is that there needs to be some form of pain or afflictive emotion felt and understood by those involved in the change process. They argue this on the basis that the chances of making a significant, individual or group, breakthrough within an organisational change context is less likely without expression of negative feelings and full articulation of the problems to be solved. Arguably, Corbet & Roberts (2013) and Cooperrider et

al. (2008) have a shared understanding about the need for stimulus based approaches to organisational change but the difference in the two paradigms is that the former believes that meaningful change is sustained through recognition of the pain and anxiety felt and the latter believes that it is positivity that will make the sustainable difference.

Grant & Humphries (2006) use pointed terms in their critique of appreciative inquiry particularly concerning the handling of negativity. For example, they refer to it [appreciative inquiry] as being “lopsided” (p. 402) in favour of being positive and argue instead for a blending of critical theory and appreciative theory, which in their opinion could lead to a (p. 414):

potentially productive tension between the intentions of critical theory (such as scepticism and exposure to abusive power) and appreciative inquiry (such as inspiration) can contribute to the development of new research and practitioner activities (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000) endorsing the mutual aspiration of enhancing human flourishing. The counter balance provided by such tension may reduce the risk of distortion which may occur should one approach dominate indiscriminately (Grant & Humphries 2006, p. 414).

Cooperrider & Srivastva (2013) were neither blinded to the criticism of appreciative inquiry or for that matter dismissive of the role of a negative discourse in organisational change but sought to advance two points.

Firstly, why did it have to be an either/or? In the opinion of Cooperrider & Srivastva (2013) it is perfectly possible for the positive and appreciative aspects of appreciative inquiry and the inherent negativity that sits within the problem-solving context to live on the same relevant theoretical spectrum. Secondly, as Hammond (2013) pointed out, if a person or group participating in an appreciative inquiry change process is unable to shed a negative mind-set, it would always be

better to acknowledge this and work with that reality rather than to attempt to, artificially, dismiss it out of hand.

A further point of scrutiny in relation to appreciative inquiry is the degree to which as a model of inquiry, it can be applied either cross-organisationally or to circumstances involving a single person. In relation to the cross-organisational test, Mantel & Ludema (2000) explored the potency of an appreciative approach to change, not just across institutions but also beyond borders of different countries. Their journal paper indicated that it was possible to create a “worldwide web of positive conversation” (p. 43) and that through appreciative inquiry it is therefore possible “to identify resources and strengths within the individual, within the organization, within the community” and bind them together into “an integrated whole” (p. 52).

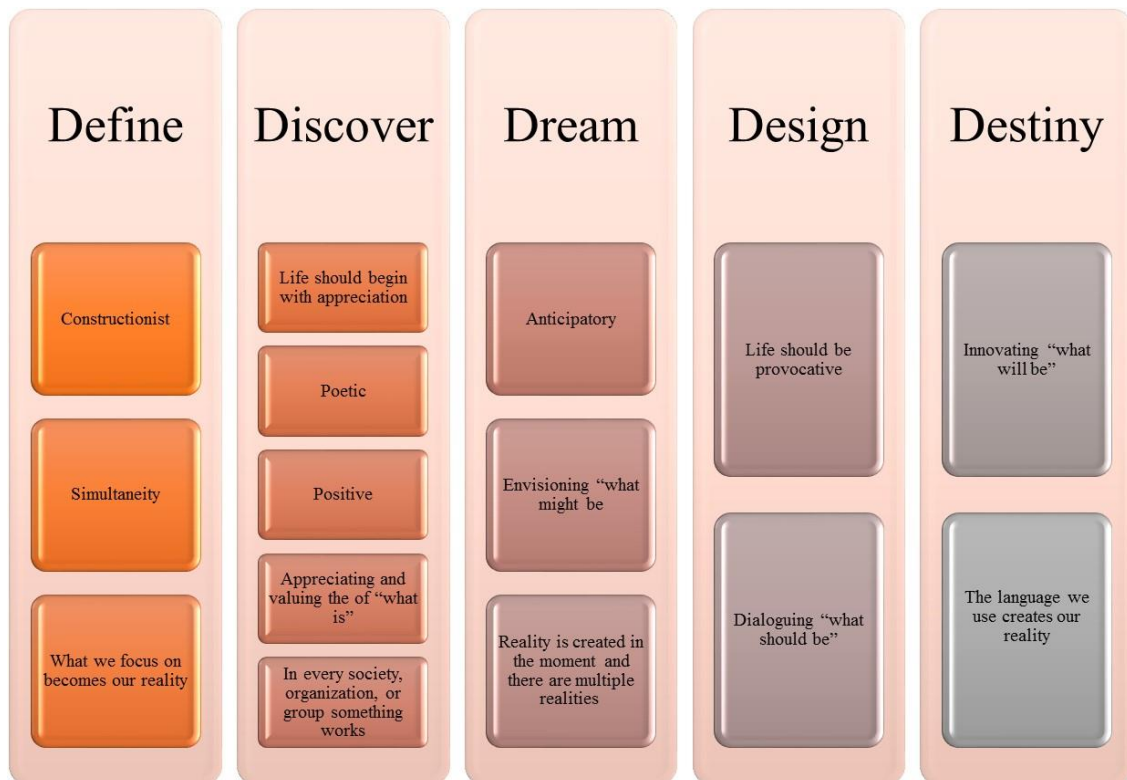
Working to the same conclusion but looking through the other end of the telescope to that of Mantel & Ludema (2000), Subirana (2016) argues that appreciative inquiry can work at the individual level as an approach to one-to-one coaching. In accordance with the appreciative nature of this mode of inquiry, she suggests that through her work it is possible to move the individual being coached from the language of “deficit” to that of “abundance” (Subirana, 2016, p. 44). Significantly, she also talks about the importance of the coach in any such relationship also needing to have their own self-awareness and avoid their own deficit thoughts or seeking to move to a problem-solving platform in any one-to-one. This reflects the point discussed earlier in relation to the ‘Discovery’ phase regarding the need to ensure that for a change process to be successfully stimulated by appreciation, requires facilitation and advocacy by change agents experienced in appreciative techniques (Watkins et al., 2011).

2.5. Conclusion

Through the appreciative inquiry worldview of Cooperrider & Srivastva (1987, 2013), an argument is made that purely problem-solving approaches have had mixed results in terms of resolving issues and successfully enabling sustainable organisational change. They and other scholars arrive at this conclusion through a theoretical evolution underpinned by a set of principles and assumptions. These have been discussed in this chapter and are graphically summarised in Figure 2.3 using each of five phases of the 5-D model, to highlight the key phrases and terms from the literature.

Figure 2.3

Appreciative inquiry – summary of key principles and assumptions



Sources: Cooperrider & Srivastva (1987, 2013); Bushe (2011); Hammond (2013)

Central to appreciative inquiry as an approach to change, is that it is steeped in a discourse of optimism about the past, present and future as exemplified through the words and bite sized narrative captured in Figure 2.3 (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; 2013). Scholarly advocates of appreciative inquiry (Bushe, 2011; Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; 2013) do acknowledge that negativity may to some extent be naturally occurring and deeply embedded amongst some participants in any given change context. However, they argue that no matter how small the example, if there are positive experiences that can be extracted from a given situation, it is important to do so as this provides both the motivation and confidence to change as well as increasing the chances of making any transformation sustainable (Bushe, 2011; Watkins et al., 2011; Hammond, 2013).

Appreciative inquiry tips the metaphorical change scales away from negative problem solving towards a confidence boosting appreciation about the future, built on a positive foundation of understanding and appreciating what has worked well in the past. This very thought process accords with the introduction to this chapter where the argument is made that the desire to appoint more BAME CEOs could be advanced by the sharing of experiences and knowledge of senior gatekeepers - who have direct positive knowledge of what it is like to recruit BAME candidates into the top jobs in the public sector.

No matter how small the example(s) (Watkins et al., 2011), the capturing and sharing of the senior gatekeeper story of what has worked in the context of appointing more BAME CEOs has synergy with the evolution and history of appreciative inquiry as a concept, and is in contrast to the existing and dominant scholarly discourse described in Chapter One.

Therefore, being true to the ethos of appreciation, a significant conclusion of this chapter is that appreciative inquiry provides for a really exciting opportunity to develop new knowledge through adopting a ‘what works’ research perspective and framework to the BAME CEO challenge identified in Chapter One. Other methods of inquiry (e.g., co-operative inquiry, participatory action research and action inquiry) have been considered, but appreciative inquiry is the preferred concept because its headline, underpinning principles are built upon a fundamental “appreciation” of what works (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987, pp. 25-26) and whilst this approach has typically been incorporated at the organisational level, there are examples of it being successfully adapted to apply across both individual people and multiple organisational scenarios (Reason, 1994, Mantel & Ludema, 2000; Subirana, 2016).

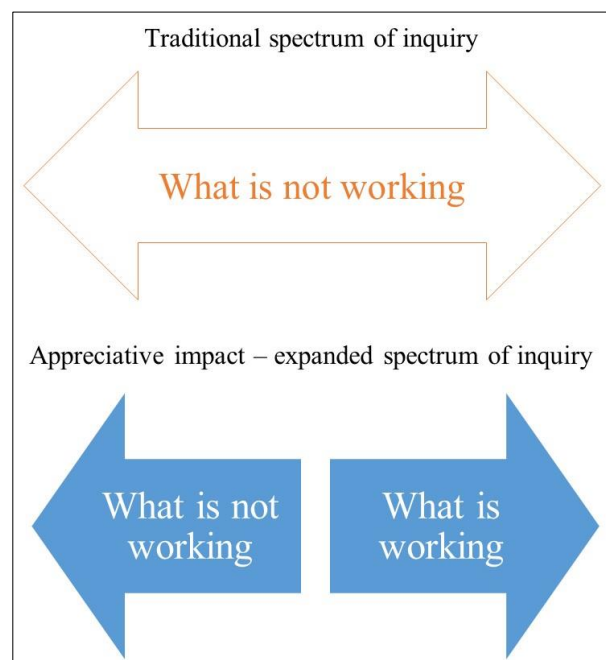
Appreciative inquiry is not a flawless approach as discussed by several scholars and commentators (Grant & Humphries, 2006; Bushe, 2011; Corbet & Roberts, 2013). However, its creators and advocates do not really describe appreciative inquiry in exclusivist terms or in isolation from other concepts such as action learning (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987, 2013; Hammond, 2013). Moreover, they recognise and sponsor a worldview that appreciative inquiry widens the theoretical debate beyond that of problem solving to create a spectrum of inquiry and approach to change which ranges from utilising the strengths of ‘what is working’ through to understanding ‘what is not working’ and why.

Figure 2.4 uses this notion of widening the theoretical debate to illustrate the central point of this conclusion that the introduction of appreciation presents the opportunity to broaden the spectrum of inquiry from the traditional and well established discourse of ‘what is not working’ in regard to

the stated BAME CEO challenge, to a blend which also incorporates what we can learn from ‘what is working’.

Figure 2.4

BAME CEO Challenge spectrum of inquiry – appreciative vs traditional



Through the development of a thorough understanding of the origins of the stated BAME challenge (Chapter One) and applying the identified attributes of appreciation (Chapter Two), the next step of this study is to develop a research framework and approach which fully incorporates the core elements of appreciative inquiry and at the very least broadens the spectrum of inquiry and provides for different insights to that of the traditional problem solving approaches of the past.

3. Research Approach & Method

3.1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to explain how the stated BAME challenge and the application of the model of appreciative inquiry are used to develop an appreciative research framework targeted at senior gatekeepers who had a contribution to make towards addressing the challenge of appointing more public sector BAME CEOs.

The chapter is structured by firstly exploring the development of the theoretical research underpinnings linked in part to appreciative inquiry and other theoretical constructs which were subsequently discounted. This is followed by explanation of the assumptions, limitations and delimitations of the research study in general and the data collection method used to collect the thoughts of the key group of senior gatekeepers.

More detail is then provided about the senior gatekeeper research participants and interview process as well as description of the approach to validity across the study. This is then followed by a section relating to researcher reflexivity and then prior to the conclusion of the chapter a description of how the research data is analysed and made ready for the subsequent findings, discussion and conclusion of the study.

3.2. Theoretical research underpinning

In terms of developing the theoretical research underpinning of this thesis there were a few constituent parts that lead to what ultimately turned out to be a qualitatively led approach to the primary research. For example, in the earlier thesis chapters a case is developed that in part this research is at the edge of a spectrum focused on the “revelatory” end of knowledge as opposed to that of testing existing theory (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Bryman & Bell, 2015; Nicholson et al., 2018, p. 210).

In addition, the specific decision to incorporate appreciative inquiry as a part of the research approach and subsequent analysis, lent itself to the right-hand side of what Lincoln, Lynham & Guba (2011) described as the continuum of “Inquiry Paradigm”, which is shown as follows in Table 3.1 (Heron, 1996; Heron & Reason, 1997, pp. 289-290).

Table 3.1

Inquiry paradigm

| Positivism | Postpositivism | Critical | Constructivism | Participatory |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Realists “hard science” researchers | A modified form of positivism | (Feminism, Race) Create change to the benefit of those oppressed by power | (Interpretivist) Gain understanding by interpreting subject perceptions | (Postmodern) Transformation based on democratic participation between researcher and subject |

Source: Lincoln, Lynham & Guba (2011)

As described by various scholars, appreciative inquiry is strongly associated with a social constructivist perspective (Cooperrider, 1986; Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Fitzgerald et al., 2003; Meier & Geldenhuys, 2017). That said, this does not mean that for the purposes of this thesis, appreciative inquiry could only be applied using qualitative methods and techniques. However, in the context of this primary research, the more interpretative and participatory aspects of this approach and the nature and sample size of research participants, did ultimately lend itself to a qualitative approach.

By way of example, the fact that the number of very senior gatekeepers who had recruited a BAME CEO was small and that these people would be difficult to access, further influenced an inquiry positioning towards the “Constructivism” and “Participatory” end of the “Inquiry Paradigm” highlighted in Table 3.1 (Heron, 1996; Heron & Reason, 1997, pp. 289-290; Lincoln et al., 2011).

Consideration was given to the degree to which this thesis inquiry paradigm could have been more centred in “Critical Theory” and the associated notion of creating change to the benefit of those oppressed by power and the assumption that senior gatekeepers had that power (Lincoln et al., 2011). However, on assessment, the judgement is that a critical theory based approach would be more in keeping with the existing, dominant, scholarly discourse of what was not working which is not the intended focus of this primary research. Also, in the case of this primary research, investigation did subsequently take place of those who were deemed to have power i.e., senior gatekeepers but with the nuance being about learning how their power had been utilised for progressive purposes that could contribute to the primary research objective (Lincoln et al., 2011).

Ontologically, there is a case to be made that there are potentially observable, positivistic and single truth aspects to this thesis (Lincoln et al., 2011). For example, the potential to observe the fact that the historic levels of BAME CEOs across the public sector has steadfastly stayed below the comparative UK working age population levels of 14% (McGregor-Smith, 2017, p. 9) or that the associated scholarly focus largely focusses on the discourse of what has **not worked** or is not working (Lincoln et al., 2011; Bryman & Bell, 2015). However, as highlighted in the statement of positionality discussed in Chapter One and the researcher reflexivity described in this chapter, the ontological viewpoint is much more in keeping with multiple realities. For example, as argued previously, one of the central tenets of this thesis is that the BAME CEO challenge does not reside in the single truth of what is not working but at the very least can be inclusive of investigative thoughts about what is working. Equally, in this study the existence of multiple realities is not just the preserve of the researcher but also the senior gatekeeping participants who themselves are diverse characters with multiple perspectives which subsequently proved to be beneficial in terms of the findings (Lincoln et al., 2011; Easterby-Smith et al., 2012).

Similarly, from an epistemological outlook, the primary research objective of this thesis and associated questions could have been described as seeking to objectively assess what affected associated organisational behaviours through outside observation (Bryman & Bell, 2015). However, as identified across the combination of the statement of positionality and Researcher reflexivity, the applied epistemological outlook is in fact more akin to researcher participation. This judgement is based on the conscious efforts undertaken to subjectively assess, influence and learn about how the stated BAME challenges is being addressed across the selected public sector from a more optimistic people and cultural perspective (Lincoln et al., 2011; Easterby-Smith et al., 2012; Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Naturally, both the ontological and epistemological perspectives outlined have relative strengths and weaknesses. For example, would an approach to research, which lent itself to a qualitative and participatory understanding of the thought processes of a relatively small number of senior gatekeepers, produce a contribution to knowledge that is potentially generalizable to the extent of influencing future theory development or praxis? In the end, the answer to these questions and others are influenced by the reality of having a numerically small pool of research participants and as Nicholson et al. (2018) argue, generalizability would to some degree be dependent on what happens in the future in terms of scholarly interest and citation. However, what is known is that existing quantitatively driven, problem solving approaches such as the WRES, are already a common part of practice and in many respects this research seeks to extend the spectrum of what is already understood as well as providing for a fresh contribution to knowledge where possible (Kline, 2014; 2016; Nicholson et al., 2018).

3.3. Assumptions, limitations and delimitations

Cohen (2009, p. 300) asserts that “there is no research study without a basic set of assumptions” and in developing the research approach and the final guiding schedule of research questions, several such assumptions, limitations and delimitations are applied (Creswell, 2012).

By way of example, it is assumed that any BAME CEO or equivalent senior person is more likely to have been selected and appointed by a majority of non-BAME decision makers. It is also assumed that such key non-BAME decision makers across the NHS and local government are likely to be middle aged to older white males and this latter assumption proved to be the case in the research participants on a basis of four out of seven.

In terms of data collection, it was also assumed that techniques such as one to one in-depth interviews were more likely to yield better rates of participation and richness of response data due to the expected seniority of the target audience and the likely competing requests for their time. This proved to be the case as all the research participants were high profile individuals with multiple responsibilities and therefore essentially time poor. It is assuring to note that some of the research participants did comment on how they much preferred the opportunity for a targeted, time managed, face-to-face dialogue rather than being expected to fill out questionnaires on such a complex subject matter. In any event, given the wider number of people who could have qualified as senior gatekeepers in this BAME CEO context, it is likely that there would not have been enough numbers to warrant the use of a data collection approach involving questionnaires.

In fact, this latter point became one of the identified limitations as the numbers of potential research participants across England were correctly anticipated to be small (i.e., no more than circa 20 to 30 people) in total, which is a factor as to why local government progress is also considered alongside the NHS when defining what is meant by public sector in this thesis (Sapsford & Jupp, 2006). It also proved to be the case that in almost every research interview with the senior gatekeepers in question, time had lapsed from the original recruitment decision to select and appoint their BAME CEO. Therefore, there is a heavy reliance on the research participants' recall and memory of events which in some cases occurred several years previous (Cohen, 2009; Creswell, 2012). Other limitations include diary access to potential research participants which meant that plenty of planning including travelling to the offices of all participants and 'what if' contingency thinking needed to be applied to the data collection process. This is also true of the researcher who – as stated in the statement of positionality section – is a full time CEO.

Regarding delimitations, as implied previously, the research for this thesis is not imagined as being generalizable in say a quantitative, positivistic sense (Lincoln et al., 2011). That said, as described in the validity part of this chapter, the approach applied to the overall research does consider how the final analysis can be successfully presented and understood for application and consideration beyond the thesis itself - given that the emphasis of the study leans towards that of theory building as opposed to that of testing existing theory (Cohen, 2009; Nicholson et al., 2018, p. 210).

In terms of further conscious delimitation, consideration was given as to whether other aspects of the broader public sector, for example, the Police or for that matter the private and voluntary sectors should be considered in terms of the scope of the research and therefore widening the potential for more research participants. However, the gains to be had were judged to be limited as the examples of recruited BAME CEOs in other sectors is very small. In addition to this, the literature points to comparatively greater levels of policy emphasis (e.g., Snowy White Peaks) across the NHS and local government concerning the specific position of BAME CEO versus the more general area of very senior management (Kline, 2014; Tulsiani & Phillips, 2014; Winsor, 2016). As a result, other public sector areas (e.g., Policing) were in the end consciously excluded as a part of the research scope and the final definition of the 'public sector' came down to a focus on local government councils and the NHS provider organisations described in Chapter One.

3.4. Data collection method

In determining the preferred data collection method, a range of factors are considered. These include the diversity and nuance of the research questions and a process of imagining how the research participants would be best able to respond given their context as time poor people of pre-

eminence. Equally, as identified in the theoretical underpinnings section, the incorporation of appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987) and the associated constructivist and participatory paradigms influenced data collection choices towards those which would, for example, better facilitate research participants being able to stay in the positive mental space of what has worked (Lincoln et al., 2011; Creswell, 2012).

Therefore, as indicated already, in-depth, semi-structured face to face interviews are selected as the preferred method of data collection. Not only does this approach seem to fit with the theoretical underpinnings of the research approach but also with the articulated assumptions, limitations and delimitations.

Alternative data collection options were considered either for use alongside or instead of semi-structured interviewing (Creswells, 2012, loc. 634). For example, consideration is given to “unstructured interviewing” (Garson, 2016, loc. 373), but this felt counter-intuitive to the application of an underlying appreciative inquiry framework as well as, perhaps, a step beyond the researcher’s perceived skill set as discussed in the reflexivity section.

As referenced previously, pure “observation” is not really a possibility as in every instance the original recruitment and selection process had been concluded prior to the thesis research. Therefore, the chances of being able to observe a future instance is, based on history thus far, highly unlikely given the unique context of the research in question (Creswell, 2012; Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Similarly, limited expectation was placed on the possibility of utilising “artifacts, documents and records” as in this instance such data collection types, other than high level Nomination Committee documents, are more likely to be confidential in the context of standard recruitment and selection practice (Creswell, 2012, loc. 634). Also, given the passage of time since some BAME CEOs had been recruited, it would probably have been difficult to locate any meaningful documentation and in any event, such information was unlikely to be made available to an external third party without multiple and time-consuming permissions being secured.

Regarding sampling, as described by Creswell (2012, loc. 3065), the research participants of this study are selected on the basis that they can “purposefully inform an understanding of the research” in question. Other sampling options were contemplated such as “probability, convenience and snowball” but these were largely discounted in preference of a “purposive” sampling approach. That said, some of the principles of snowball sampling are incorporated and described as follows (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 190; 192; 442).

A two-step process was deployed in securing these very senior gatekeepers as research participants. Although not an exact science, step one involved contacting Yvonne Coghill (Director – WRES Implementation Team – NHSE) and utilising informal BAME senior management networks to develop a reasonably comprehensive list of previous or currently serving BAME CEOs across local government and NHS provider organisations.

The identification of these CEOs led to a ‘snowball’ like dialogue and discussion resulting in them agreeing to make initial introductions with the most senior gatekeepers involved in their recruitment, selection and appointment. Step two then involved the purposively sampled target

participants being directly approached to see if they would be interested in partaking in a face to face research interview and the documentation used in part to secure their involvement is shown in the Appendix 1 - research participant information sheet.

3.5. Research participants and interview process

Following approaches to twelve people, seven very senior gatekeeper participants agreed to participate in the research interview process. These are described in Table 3.2 using pseudonyms so that agreed upon identification and anonymity could be optimised. Of the five gatekeepers that did not become involved in the research, this was down to a range of circumstances including poor personal health, family matters and availability. None of these five people declined to be involved as result of the proposed research subject matter.

Table 3.2

Senior gatekeeper research participants

| Pseudonyms | Field | Interview Month | Still Active |
|------------|------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Regina | NHS | October 2017 | Yes |
| Debbie | NHS | October 2017 | Yes |
| Fred | Local Government | November 2017 | Yes |
| Patrick | Local Government | January 2018 | Yes |
| Donald | Local Government | January 2018 | Yes |
| Arnold | NHS | January 2018 | Yes |
| Rachel | NHS | January 2018 | Yes |

As can be seen from Table 3.2, all the research participants interviewed are still active as prominent leaders and gatekeeping figures with the majority having varying degrees of national and/or international profile. This is important to understand for two reasons. Firstly, it justifies the decision not to go beyond identification of gender and describe their age, ethnicity or geographic location as this would have been problematic in terms of preserving their anonymity. By way of example, the principle described by Bryman & Bell (2015, p. 129) of maintaining agreed “confidentiality” and “anonymity” has been applied to the conscious omission of participant ethnicity details. This is on the grounds that the senior gatekeepers (as defined earlier in the thesis) who have recruited a BAME CEO are so small in number that any demographic information beyond gender could seriously increase the risk of research participant identification.

Secondly, and more generally, as a group of research participants their value in terms of sharing knowledge of best practice and role modelling for other gatekeepers is of greater current and future relevance than if they had been no longer active at the time of interview.

It should be noted that of the seven research participants, three of them were involved in the recruitment of the same BAME CEO. A further (fourth) participant had experience of recruiting two BAME CEOs which meant that overall the views subsequently provided by all seven participants related to their experience of six recruitments of BAME candidates to the position of CEO. Of the three senior gatekeepers involved in the same recruitment process, there is some consistency of perspectives on issues such as the importance of choosing the best candidate, but there are also areas of distinction such as their opinions on the sourcing of talent for recruitment. In looking for patterns amongst these three participants there is little to suggest that as a result of relating their shared experiences of the same CEO recruitment process this created a markedly different set of views from the other four participants who did not have a similar shared experience.

Therefore, whilst it is important to acknowledge the shared recruitment experience of three participants, the judgement is that the consolidated findings of all seven participants are not unduly impacted or skewed. Also, in the context of maintaining overall anonymity, there could have been a scenario where by unduly focusing on the opinions of a subset of the final group of participants, it might have increased the chances of being able to deduce the real identities of the participants as well as the CEO in question.

All seven research participants were interviewed under the conditions and framework that had been agreed with them as a part of Appendix 2 - informed consent form, which set out elements such as the expected duration of the interview and what the research participants could expect in terms of their contribution, confidentiality and anonymity. The informed consent process also signposts research participants to the University of Huddersfield Business School Research Ethics Committee, which has approved the progression of this thesis based on the meeting of a set of ethical standards, which requires explanation of compliance and is highlighted in Appendix 3 - postgraduate research student ethical review form. Subsequently, at each interview the informed consent was mutually signed, with the research participant retaining a copy for their own record.

Interviews were conducted using an interview schedule of guiding questions (see Appendix 4) and this was shared with research participants several days prior to the scheduled interviews. This was an important part of the interview process based on the experience of the researcher, which is a point that is expanded upon further in the reflexivity and data analysis parts of this chapter. Although two hours were planned for each interview, they actually lasted between 40 and 82 minutes in duration and as the findings chapter demonstrates, all participants made important contributions regardless of interview length, which is something that Bryman & Bell (2015, p. 482) commented on in terms of essentially suggesting that most interviews had some form of merit

regardless of duration and therefore the fact that all did not require the allotted time is deemed inconsequential.

3.6. Validity

As a part of understanding the delimitations of this study, it was concluded that this research was not imagined as being generalizable in say a quantitative, positivistic sense (Lincoln et al., 2011). It is also the case that through the application of an appreciative inquiry research framework, the emphasis of this study leant towards qualitative theory building as opposed to that of testing existing theory - whether it be quantitative or qualitative in nature (Cohen, 2009; Nicholson et al., 2018, p. 210).

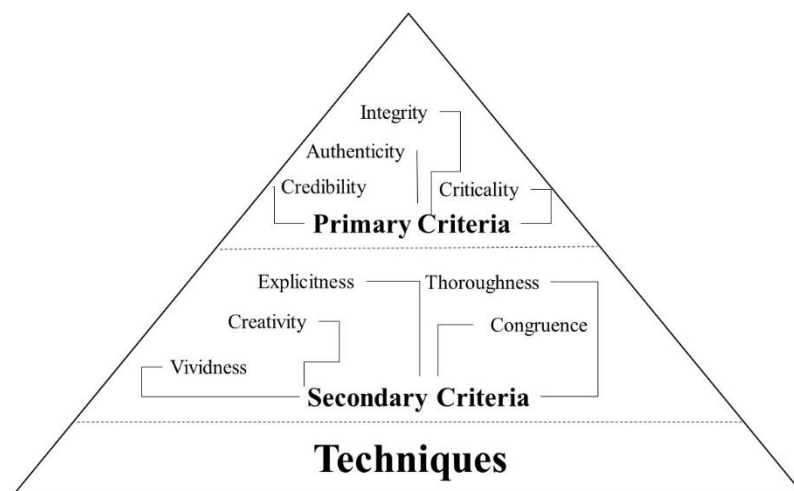
Nevertheless, there are inevitably scholars who would be critical of qualitative approaches in general and would question the validity of a study consisting of seven interviews regardless of whether the overall intent is to build theory (Lincoln et al., 2011; Creswell, 2012; Bryman & Bell, 2015). Consequently, to provide some sense of robustness and self-critique to this study, a model developed by Whitemore, Chase & Mandle (2001) is used as a guide to develop and apply some of the key validation “techniques” that are undertaken as a part of the research approach. This particular model is favoured as it summarises the work of multiple scholars such as Lincoln and Guba in regard to the establishment of qualitative validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

The definition of the Whitemore et al. (2001, p. 529) model is shown as follows together with a graphic and tabular assessment (Figure 3.1), which is a summary of the literature review the authors undertook to produce what is described as primary and secondary validity criteria:

the concept of validity in qualitative research is illustrated through the explication and differentiation of primary criteria, secondary criteria...Primary criteria are necessary to all qualitative inquiry; however, they are insufficient in and of themselves. Secondary criteria provide further benchmarks of quality and are considered to be more flexible as applied to particular investigations (Whitemore et al., 2001, p. 529).

Figure 3.1

Contemporary synthesis of validity criteria in qualitative research



Source: Whitemore et al. (2001, p. 530)

| Criteria | Assessment |
|---------------------------|---|
| Primary Criteria | |
| Credibility | Do the results of the research reflect the experience of participants or the context in a believable way? |
| Authenticity | Does a representation of the emic perspective exhibit awareness to the subtle differences in the voices of all participants? |
| Criticality | Does the research process demonstrate evidence of critical appraisal? |
| Integrity | Does the research reflect recursive and repetitive checks of validity as well as a humble presentation of findings? |
| Secondary Criteria | |
| Explicitness | Have methodological decisions, interpretations, and investigator biases been addressed? |
| Vividness | Have thick and faithful descriptions been portrayed with artfulness and clarity? |
| Creativity | Have imaginative ways of organizing, presenting, and analyzing data been incorporated? |
| Thoroughness | Do the findings convincingly address the questions posed through completeness and saturation? |
| Congruence | Are the process and the findings congruent? Do all the themes fit together? Do findings fit into a context outside the study situation? |
| Sensitivity | Has the investigation been implemented in ways that are sensitive to the nature of human, cultural, and social contexts? |

Source: Whittemore et al. (2001, p. 534)

Regarding this thesis, some of the “techniques” deployed are largely in support of “primary criteria” with one or two elements of “secondary criteria” (Whittemore et al., 2001). For example, in terms of credibility, the research findings are developed in a way that is reflective of the experiences of senior gatekeepers and this is underpinned by the data analysis technique of regular referral and interpretation of the verbatim transcripts of the recorded interviews. The subsequent findings also demonstrate authenticity by virtue of capturing the subtle nuances that exist across participants in areas such as talent fostering where some gatekeepers emphasise the need to develop a pool of BAME talent whereas others believe that such a pool already exists.

In terms of criticality, both the statement of positionality and appreciative inquiry sections of this study provide for examples of the ongoing critical appraisal applied to the research approach and method. In the case of the former (statement of positionality) section there is a self-critique of the author’s role as a senior gatekeeper and in the latter, the scholarly limitations of appreciative inquiry are discussed openly and acknowledged.

In some respects, the achievement of integrity and most of the other primary and secondary criteria will be determined post completion of the study and potentially through any associated future publication(s) but records from the DBA course and supervisory processes, can and do, demonstrate a regular and systematic approach to checking the validity of the research proposal, method, findings and conclusion.

Of the secondary criteria, the approach and rationale for maintaining anonymity of both senior gatekeepers and associated BAME CEOs has been highlighted in this chapter and represents an example of the importance placed on sensitivity as a part of this study. Also, whilst there is criticism in this study of the prominence and impact of the “what is not working” elements of the extant literature primarily described in Chapter One, it is done so in a way that still respects that such discourse has a legitimate place alongside the narrative of “what is working” as illustrated in Figure 2.4.

In terms of thoroughness, as referenced previously, following approaches to twelve people, seven very senior gatekeeper participants agreed to participate in the research interview process. As subsequently discussed in the next section it is impossible to be exact as to the number of other senior gatekeepers that are out there with direct experience of recruiting and appointing BAME CEOs, but we can be confident that number is likely to be a two-digit figure given the estimated low numbers of such CEOs over time. Therefore, in terms of the “completeness” of the gatekeeper responses to the questions posed, there is a degree of confidence that this has been achieved given the length of time obtained with these time poor participants and the depth of responses they gave as highlighted in both the data analysis and findings sections of this study (Whittemore et al., 2001, p. 534). Regarding the “saturation” element of “thoroughness” (Whittemore et al., 2001, p. 534),

the output of 19 themes from the findings and the depth of analysis undertaken, do reach a point where “no new or relevant data” emerges, however, it would be an over claim to suggest that full “theoretical saturation” is achieved (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 443).

3.7. Researcher reflexivity

Berger (2015, p. 229) wrote that “the degree of researcher’s personal familiarity with the experience of participants potentially impacts all phases of the research process”. Based on this line of thinking, the process of “personal familiarity” is initially explored in the statement of positionality discussed in Chapter One but not the extent to which familiarity directly impacted on the research process. Therefore, in this section, the distinct reflexivity lens applied discusses the thesis author’s inherent inquiry perspective and its impact on this research specifically with the aim of ensuring that the reader(s) of this study have knowledge that appropriate consideration was employed to develop, as Berger (2015, p. 219) further described, an understanding of “the benefits of researcher’s familiarity with the subject and for curbing its potentially negative effects”.

As a basis for extracting my “familiarity” (Berger, 2015, p. 219) and at the same time switching to the first person, the broad “sensitivity” framework discussed by Bryman & Bell (2015, p. 700), is used as guidance to help describe my prevailing “cultural, political and social context” as the thesis researcher and author.

I last completed academic research when I undertook my MBA, which was awarded from the University of Huddersfield in 1999. The gap between my MBA and the DBA did play a part in the approach to data analysis and the specific use of the Appendix 4 - interview schedule of guiding

questions. Due to a self-assessment of my inherent research skills and competencies, I felt more confident of achieving data rich interviews by having “research questions in mind” built upon the underlying thought processes of appreciative inquiry (Garson, 2016 loc. 201). It is also the case that I felt increased confidence in the required data analysis aspects of this research because of the application of a “Straussian” (Garson, 2016 loc. 200, 382) view of Grounded Theory, particularly its support of using pre-existing coding frameworks to assist data sourced through the commonly used application of semi-structured interviewing.

In terms of my preferences in relation to ontology and epistemology, I believe that 25 years ago, I would have had personal leanings towards a more single truth “Post-Positivist” outlook (Lincoln et al., 1985). This was linked to the fact that early on in my working career, much of my practice centred on quantitatively based marketing and performance database analysis. Over time, I have experienced what I would describe as a significant ‘right-shift’ towards a more social constructivist view of the world with a preference for the “Symbolic” perspective described by Prasad (1993) who wrote that:

human beings possess images of themselves that are shaped by meaningful social interaction. These self-images influence how people assign meaning and how they eventually engage in meaningful action (Prasad, 1993, p. 1404).

Indeed, my research instincts have been further influenced towards the constructivist and participative theories discussed earlier in this chapter because of witnessing the demise of what I would describe as ‘populist quantitative research’ approaches, for example, those applied to polling in respect of the UK Brexit referendum and the US/UK General Elections, which in the end were palpably – even with degrees of confidence – misleading in terms of predicting eventual outcomes (Gramlich, 2017). Consequently, my personal confidence and belief in words, terms and

concepts such as observable; single truth; deductive and positivistic et al., have been very much diminished in favour of their opposites: that is, participative; multi-truth; inductive thematic analysis and constructivist (Creswell, 2012; Bryman & Bell, 2015; Garson, 2016).

This reflection is important in the context of this thesis as it highlights that I have probably brought a healthy degree of scepticism to quantitatively underpinned initiatives such as the WRES, which is referenced at several points throughout Chapter One; in particular, the notion that using quantitatively driven analysis such as the WRES, will then act as a major catalyst to behavioural change and lead to improved outcomes.

The historical evidence presented in this thesis suggests that invariably such initiatives do not have sustainable impacts when it comes to BAME senior management progress in the public sector. That said, this does not mean that I have fundamentally ruled out the incorporation and application of quantitative approaches or mixed methods, but my natural preference is now much more qualitative.

There is no doubt that during this research I will have inserted my personal perspectives either wittingly or unwittingly. I will also have brought the influence of my philosophical stance about research theory into this thesis as well. However, I'm confident that this has been managed in a way that has not substantively inhibited the primary research and, as you will read in the 'Define' part of Chapter Four, I have been very comfortable in analysing and learning from the varying and different perspectives that emerged from the interview process.

3.8. Data analysis

Across the seven in-depth research interviews that were completed, the total aggregated interview length is 464 minutes, resulting in 61,187 words being subsequently transcribed. To analyse the transcribed data a “Straussian” view of grounded theory was adopted due to its support of using pre-existing coding frameworks to assist data analysis together with the “commonly” used application of semi-structured interviewing as a data collection method (Garson, 2016, loc. 200, 382).

As a starting point, the use of pre-existing coding is not only important for the researcher effectiveness reasons touched upon in the previous reflexivity section, but it also allows for a greater emphasis on ‘what is working’ through the incorporation of the 5-D appreciative inquiry cycle (see Figure 2.2) as the baseline coding framework. Consideration was given to the application of a pure bottom up application of grounded theory as encouraged by the “Glaserian” research perspective, but this could have negated the appreciative benefits of appreciative inquiry, therefore undermining one of the established goals of the study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Garson, 2016, loc. 207).

Other than the initial demographic questions, each of the interview guiding questions for the semi-structured interviewing process were developed so that research participants would be stimulated to provide responses which related to the primary research objective of appointing more BAME CEOs. Each question is nuanced towards appreciation of what had and would work well, which as an approach, facilitated text coding of responses to at least one phase of the appreciative inquiry 5-D cycle.

Table 3.3 provides for a quick overview as to the degree to which each interview question generated a participant response to be subsequently coded to at least one if not all of the 5-Ds. Several questions generated responses or statements from senior gatekeeping participants coded under all 5-Ds. There are also a couple of examples where the questions produced participant responses that are (guided by the 5-D definitions in Chapter Two) completely coded to the 'Discovery' and 'Dream' phases.

Table 3.3

Interview schedule of guiding questions and the locus of collective participant responses against the 5-Ds

| Interview Schedule of Guiding Questions | Define | Discovery | Dream | Design | Destiny |
|---|--------|-----------|-------|--------|---------|
| Thinking about any issue relating to diversity (e.g., race, gender, disability) which person or institution do you think has got the approach to diversity right? Why do you think that this is the case? | X | X | X | | |
| What do you personally value most about any form of diversity that is important to you? | X | X | X | | |
| Thinking specifically about race which person or institution do you think has got the approach to race related diversity right? Why do you think that this is the case? | X | X | X | X | |
| Thinking about the organisation to which you played a part in recruiting a BAME CEO, what was the work environment like at that time? | | X | X | | |
| What is it about the organisation that made the recruitment of a BAME CEO possible? | X | X | X | X | X |
| In terms of your personal outlook what do you think that you might have in common with other colleagues who have taken the same decision to recruit a BAME CEO in other organisations? | X | X | | X | X |
| If you were advising a decision maker who was wavering about appointing a talented BAME CEO because they were concerned about the reputation of their organisation what would your advice be? | X | X | X | X | X |
| Imagine a future where over 50% of organisations have BAME CEOs. What would have changed versus the organisational recruitment and selection processes that exist today? | X | X | X | X | |
| In a world where BAME CEOs were the norm, what would be the typical behaviours of politicians and how would that contrast with what happens now? | X | X | X | X | X |
| When it came to your experience of selecting a BAME CEO did you feel any undue pressures and if so how did you overcome them? | | X | X | | |
| If a recruitment company was used in the process of recruiting your BAME CEO what are your reflections on the advice they gave? | X | X | X | X | |
| If you were advising a recruitment and selection consultancy on how to improve the number and quality of BAME candidates that it has on its books what would you say? | X | X | X | X | X |
| Imagine a world where a Work Force Race Equality Strategy wasn't needed and associated action plans didn't exist how would you encourage people to see the benefits of diverse leadership? | X | X | X | X | X |
| What would be the one positive change that you would suggest would make a difference to increasing the number of BAME CEO's in the Public Sector? | X | X | X | X | X |

Table 3.4 highlights examples of some of the actual interview text that is transcribed and coded against the appreciative inquiry phases of ‘Define, Discovery and Dream’ and this in turn corresponds to the three ‘Xs’ shown against the first question in Table 3.3. These and other research participant comments along with their designated pseudonyms were painstakingly captured in this way and stored in a master file containing 5-D allocated responses to the interview questions.

Table 3.4

Grounded Theory - 5-D appreciative inquiry analysis framework

| Schedule of Guiding Questions | Define - what we look for we will find | Discovery - identify the best of ‘what is’ | Dream - what might be | Design - what will be | Destiny - creating the future you have envisioned |
|---|--|--|---|-----------------------|---|
| Thinking about any issue relating to diversity (e.g., race, gender, disability) which person or institution do you think has got the approach to diversity right? Why do you think that this is the case? | <p>I would find that very difficult to answer actually (Regina)</p> <p>right <u>no</u>, there’s nothing (Fred)</p> <p>I find that a very difficult question to answer...I haven’t found any organisation that I would say is brilliant...there are several which are sincere (Arnold)</p> <p>they don’t really know how to do it and they get confused by a lot of well-intentioned guidance that actually frightens them rather than...makes it easy for them to make decisions to have a more diverse (Arnold)</p> | <p>US Military’s work around progression (Debbie)</p> <p>Deutsche Bank for example...stuff around women and disabled staff (Debbie)</p> <p>it’s not something I’ve really thought about to be honest...National Health Service seems to be a good broad section of people (Fred)</p> <p>the sort of one that everyone says is...Ernst & Young...because they appear everywhere and I’ve spoken to Ernst & Young in the past (Arnold)</p> | <p>how many BME freedom to speak up people are there and how many champions throughout the organisations are going to be BAME...because we know that one of the things that black staff don’t do is come forward and say that they’ve got an issue (Debbie)</p> | | |

Sources: Hammond (2013, p. 22); Garson (2016, loc. 200)

The creation of this master file required many hours of reading and re-reading the source transcripts and then iteratively assessing and selecting which of the participants’ comments made sense to be applied to a relevant D of the 5-D appreciative coding framework. At the conclusion of this several month-long process, this master file included text coding totalling 55 pages and containing some 15,914 words, inclusive of a very small subset of text comments which were

extracted from the original transcripts primarily for reflexivity purposes. For reference, Appendix 5 – grounded theory analysis framework, contains a blank version without interview transcript text but the full 55 pages are safely stored and available on request subject to agreed ethical guidelines (Garson, 2016, loc. 200).

Once the master file was created, a further process of iterative analysis and aggregation of coding was undertaken similar to what Garson (2016, loc. 211) describes as the part of Grounded Theory which is about modification “based on emergent meanings”. In developing this stage of coding, “provocative” (Donovan, Meyer & Fitzgerald, 2007, p. 6) propositions and statements influenced by the construct of appreciative inquiry, were created and used to describe the emergent themes, which were themselves underpinned by the patterns of research participant thinking that emerged from interviews. As well as encompassing “provocative” descriptors (Martinetz, 2002; Donovan et al., 2007) the process of thematic labelling also followed the thoughts of Strauss (1987, p. 25) who implied that such descriptors are to some degree in the eye of the researcher when he wrote:

many indicators (behavioral actions/events) are examined comparatively by the analyst who then “codes” them, naming them as indicators of a class of events/behavioral actions Strauss (1987, p. 25)

This further process of meticulous analysis and aggregation of coding led to the development of 19 themes and these were fundamentally created through a blend of direct (or in part) quotes attributable to the research participants or they were developed through the research author’s experience and subsequent interpretation of what the participants were trying to convey as events and behaviours.

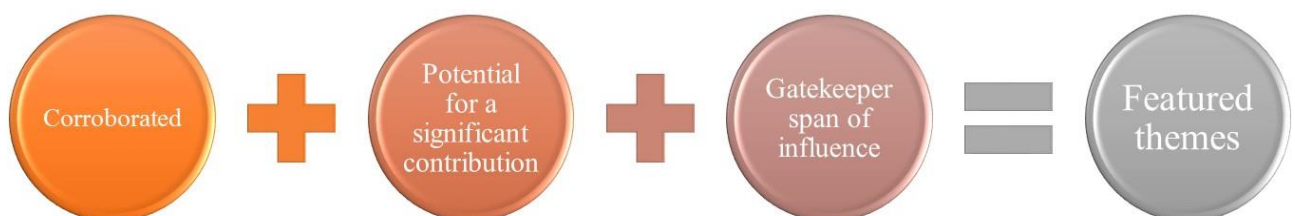
The final substantive part of the data analysis process used for this study involved the filtering of the 19 themes into what are described in the later discussion chapter as featured themes. The purpose of developing these featured themes is about giving consideration as to how the thematic output from the application of the 5-D appreciative framework, could be more readily used to influence “changes to practice” in senior gatekeepers (Wellington & Sikes, 2006, p. 725).

These featured themes are not in addition or aggregated but a selection from the original 19 based on their potential contribution to knowledge and priority in terms of understanding their ongoing utility to the stated BAME CEO challenge.

In identifying these featured themes, a filter process was applied consisting of the following elements of 1) corroborated, 2) potential for a significant contribution, and 3) gatekeeper span of influence. These are illustrated at Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2

Featured theme filtering process



The ‘Corroborated’ element of this filter is based on the degree to which an emerged theme is supported by the thoughts of two or more fellow participants. The ‘Potential for a significant

contribution’, is underpinned by synthesising the emerged themes with the literature discussed in the first two chapters and making an assessment as to the extent to which there is overlap and agreement with the emphasis and conclusions about the literature reviewed.

The third filter relates to an estimation of the ‘Gatekeeper span of influence’ which is determined by a combination of what the senior gatekeepers across the literature and this study highlighted as their influence on associated matters together with the research author’s experiences as a gatekeeper described in the earlier statement of positionality part of Chapter One.

3.9. Conclusion

This chapter explains how an appreciative research framework is developed to assist in extracting the learning from senior gatekeepers about the challenge of appointing more public sector BAME CEOs.

In terms of theory and research underpinnings, a core part of this conclusion is that the research approach and method are constructed to focus primarily on generating a form of appreciative theory based on the thought processes of senior gatekeepers who have experienced the virtually unique act of appointing a BAME CEO. Indeed, such is the uniqueness of this particular gatekeeping behaviour that the adoption of a more positivistic or critical theory inquiry paradigm is perceived to be of little benefit as there is not much existing ‘what has worked’ theory to test – unless, of course, you are fixated on exploring and highlighting what continues not to work (Kline, 2014; 2016).

In terms of assumptions, limitations and delimitations, the core demographics of senior gatekeeper participants are broadly confirmed as anticipated (i.e., white male/female), along with the challenge of gaining access to their diaries for research purposes. This reality - blended with the general research thrust towards theory development - led towards the consideration and application of a more qualitative research method, which is subsequently applied through in-depth, semi-structured, research interviews.

Regarding sampling, as described by Creswell (2012), the seven research participants of this study were selected on the basis that they could “purposefully inform an understanding of the research” in question. Other sampling options are contemplated such as “probability, convenience and snowball” but these are discounted in preference to the described “purposive” sampling approach, which consequently proved successful in getting agreement and involvement from senior gatekeeper participants (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

A recurring theme of the research method and approach is the need to maintain anonymity not only for the senior gatekeepers but also for the small numbers of CEOs that they had recruited. This is an additional and essential part of the decision to use qualitative interviewing techniques and resulted in participants feeling able to express their thoughts in a full and frank manner.

The participants’ commitment to the study also benefits from the appreciative nature and framework of the research approach as does the process of data analysis, which includes the use of a pre-existing coding framework based on the 5-D cycle of appreciative inquiry for interviewing and subsequent data analysis purposes (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Garson, 2016).

As discussed in the researcher reflexivity part of this chapter, not only does the approach to sampling, interviewing and data analysis positively impact on participants, but it also plays a part in increasing the researcher effectiveness of the thesis author who had completed his last substantive piece of academic work in 1999 as a part of his MBA.

Ultimately, the combination of all the factors discussed in this chapter and conclusion, lead to the painstaking development of themes which are discussed in the following Findings chapter as well as the meticulous establishment and conceptual development of the featured themes that underpinned much of the discourse for the remaining Discussion and Conclusion chapters.

4. Findings

4.1. Introduction

As previewed in the data analysis section and conclusion of the last chapter, 19 themes have been developed through the completion of a detailed analysis of the research participant interviews. In this chapter, each theme is presented as a product of the iterative process of assessing the participants' responses to the BAME subject matter in conjunction with the pre-existing coding framework based on each of the 5-Ds of appreciative inquiry.

In some instances, the participants' comments do not always flow for the reader in terms of perfect grammar. However, they are presented as close to verbatim as possible in an attempt to provide a sense of how gatekeepers expressed their thinking when responding in a way that is not always possible when interview transcripts have been grammatically adjusted to read as perfect unbroken English.

The 19 themes are allocated by relevance to a specific 5-D phase, although on occasion there is some commentary as to whether a theme could be placed in another 'D' phase. In addition to this, there are two or three themes where additional pre-discussion commentary is added to further contextualise the descriptor applied by the researcher to a particular theme. Although this might provide for a mild sense of inconsistency of approach, it does not impede the subsequent discussion and conclusion of the thesis.

The thematic descriptors which have been developed are in some cases intentionally “provocative” (Martinetz, 2002; Donovan et al., 2007), driven by a combination of what the research participants have expressed directly themselves or what could be inferred by the researcher’s perspective and interpretation of the patterns of response (Strauss, 1987).

4.2. Define

In terms of the 5-D pre-existing framework used here, the appreciative inquiry concept of ‘Define’ is based on what Hammond (2013, p. 22) describes as “what we look for we will find” and is the first stage of the sequential model of change which consistently starts with an attempt to define an issue. The defining of an issue is based on the prevailing context, and then subsequently moves in a sequential manner through each of the remaining 4-Ds arriving back at the definition phase (Watkins et al., 2011). Therefore, at a simplistic level, it could be argued that the broad description of Define for this thesis is based on the specific research objective:

to identify an approach to addressing the challenge of appointing more Public Sector Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic (BAME) Chief Executives to at least reflect the prevailing UK BAME working age population percentage of 14%.

At a more granular level, as a part of the pre-interview process, the research participant, information sheet explained to interviewees that:

...the core purpose of this study is to see what can be learned from you as one of a small number of people who have been actively involved in the recruitment of a Chief Executive from a BAME background.

Based on the established research objective and information sheet explanation, it is not unreasonable to take a perspective that there would not have been many additional factors to consider in relation to the 'Define' phase of these findings. However, through consideration of the appreciative underpinnings briefly described here and in more detail in Chapter Two, this 'Define' based frame led to the development of six themes.

4.2.1. Inculcation of the negative (Theme 1)

Early in the interview process, research participants did have some interesting emergent perceptions relating to the 'Define' phase such as the broad theme of diversity generally and their thoughts regarding the extent to which there were institutional or individual exemplars that they could confidently reference. Examples of this are as follows:

I would find that very difficult to answer actually...you're asking me the question as if I should know but I have no idea I don't look at these statistics in sufficient detail across the sectors (Regina)

Right, no there's nothing...(Fred)

I find that a very difficult question to answer...I haven't found any organisation that I would say is brilliant...there are several which are sincere (Arnold)

The views of Regina, Fred and Arnold are interesting in that they almost immediately test the overarching appreciative intent of this thesis albeit responding to a broader diversity context. Or to put it another way, despite being advised that they themselves and their institutions had been involved in a uniquely positive diversity event, it was initially difficult for them as research participants to remain in a positive 'what has worked' mind-set.

In some respects, these early responses vindicated the in-depth, semi-structured, interview approach to data collection in that had the method of collection been less participative, then maintaining an appreciative intent may have proved problematic. Nevertheless, such was the profundity of feeling about the lack of diversity exemplars, it felt important for a proportion of the interview process to let research participants follow their own natural instincts. To some degree, this supported one of the main points highlighted in Chapter One, which is that the thought process of ‘what has not worked’ or ‘is not working’ has become so inculcated that even amongst this group of participants, it was initially hard for them to remain positive.

Arnold explains in more depth his general scepticism regarding the concept of diversity exemplars by suggesting that organisations in general struggle with diversity issues as a result of a heavy dependency on external guidance generated by regulatory bodies.

...they don't really know how to do it and they get confused by a lot of well-intentioned guidance that actually frightens them rather than...makes it easy for them to make decisions to have a more diverse...and that's all aspects of diversity (Arnold)

Similarly, but perhaps on a broader scale, Patrick opines that the situation nationally does not bode well due to a lack of communities being reflected across organisational hierarchies and Debbie further laments that there is a lack of a systematic approach in the NHS to improve the flow of BAME talent.

...I'm not sure we have. I don't think as a country – maybe there will be an organisation out there that's not maybe a national or large scale organisation – there'll be an organisation out there that potentially on paper will look like –

everything is nicely you know set up – I don't think there is a big institution that any of us could point to that fully reflects either the community that it leads or the country it sits within (Patrick)

...actually to not have systems to ensure that we recruit the best of our talent means that we are not doing what the NHS needs (Debbie)

These views are potentially significant because as a group of research participants, these are vastly experienced individuals that all have board roles (or equivalent) at the highest echelons of multiple organisations. Therefore, whilst the reasons for this less optimistic discourse may be based on simple gut perceptions or logic, one of the early emergent meanings from the interview process is what could be described as the ***'Inculcation of the negative'***. This descriptor suggests that despite participants and some of their associated institutions being real life role models of the positive, there seems to be a natural propensity for them to drift towards a less than positive discourse particularly when talking about organisational diversity and inclusion more generally, this despite the attempts pre-interview to steer participants towards a more positive and optimistic discourse.

4.2.2. Educational attainment (Theme 2)

Fred questioned the statistical legitimacy and significance of the analysis that suggested that the proportion of BAME CEOs is lower than the broader working age population reality. He further implies that a lack of comparative educational achievement may have been a root cause to the lack of fulfilment of BAME people into CEO and other senior level roles:

it is...but certain jobs have qualifications that you need...so obviously, I don't know whether 14% of the population...might be 14...but they'd need to have the qualifications to fit the job anyway...if they've got the qualifications fine but...quoting actual percentages of what the population is...it just depends on

whether they're qualified for the job... as the years go by, more and more people from different backgrounds that are getting the qualifications...it's like football managers...my wife's dead keen on football and she's talking about the...Paul Ince's of this world...you don't get many football [managers]...in that position but I don't know how many have applied for these (Fred)

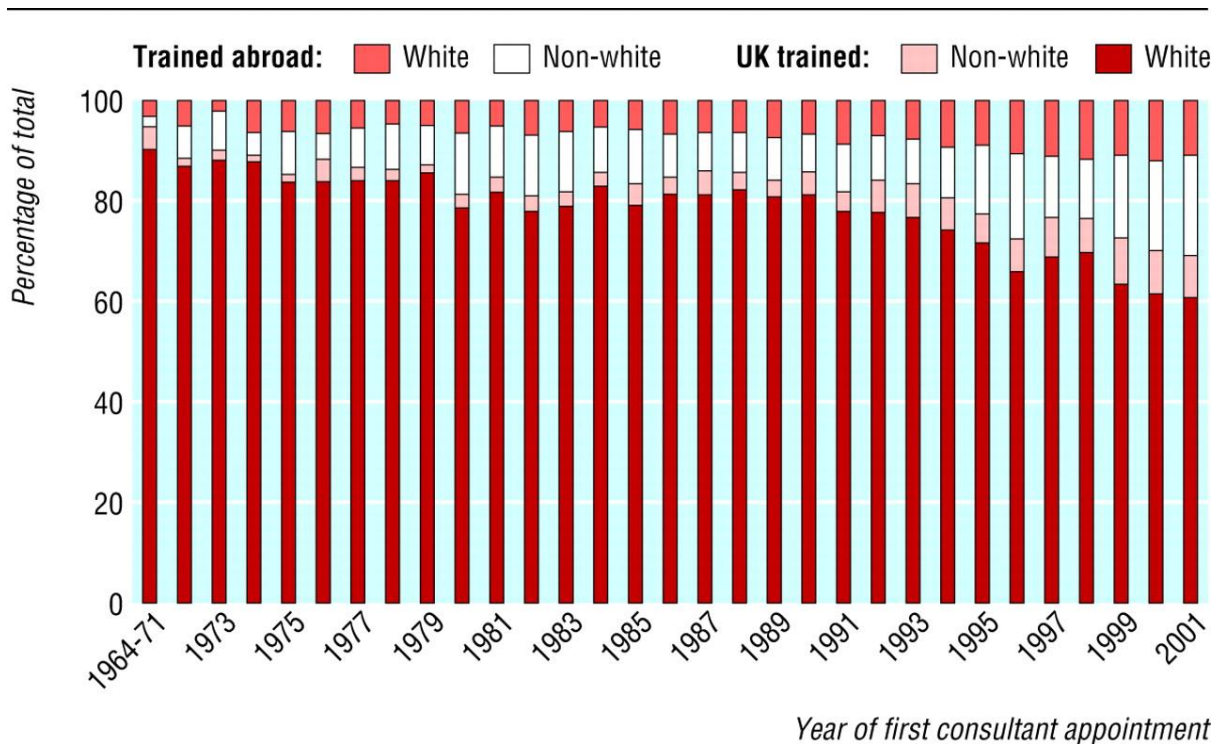
Fred's point of view is not replicated by other research participants and therefore based on the featured theme filter process described in the previous chapter, the value of his contribution here is arguably limited. However, it is an interesting perspective that a senior modern-day gatekeeper would have a view that could be interpreted as suggesting that people of BAME origin may be insufficiently educated and therefore this could be a barrier to career attainment at the highest levels. Whilst Fred's logic and the general educational statistics may support comparative academic accomplishment differences between different population demographics, behaviourally, he himself did play a part in finding and recruiting a BAME candidate who was clearly sufficiently educated and "qualified" in his mind to be the CEO of his organisation.

This does not make Fred's views redundant but neither does it suggest that ***Educational attainment***' is enough of a gatekeeping rationale as to why BAME CEO recruitment has not taken place. To illustrate this latter point, the following Figure 4.1 shows the "Percentage of NHS consultants by ethnic group and place of training grouped by the year of their first consultant appointment" (Goldacre, Davidson & Lambert, 2004). As can be seen, the proportion of BAME consultants first appointed into post since the period 1964-1971 has almost trebled by the year 2001. Whilst still a significant minority group overall, in this instance the pool of highly educated BAME people within the NHS has arguably grown as a potential source for eventually selecting a BAME CEO within a provider organisation. This growth is also replicated in more recent analysis of BAME medical staff which according to NHS workforce data has grown to 42.9% of the total

“medical workforce” as of March 2018 (‘NHS workforce’, 2019). Yet, the reality of CEO appointments has remained static in terms of BAME.

Figure 4.1

Percentage of NHS consultants by ethnic group and place of training grouped by the year of their first consultant appointment



Source: Goldacre et al. (2004)

4.2.3. Multiple identities (Theme 3)

When discussing the original intent of this research with Rachel she is initially adamant about the need for such a discussion to avoid being simply funnelled down a narrow pathway, particularly, one which is one-dimensional in terms of diversity and inclusion i.e., BAME and its associations with the protected characteristic of race.

For me this isn't just about ethnicity, it's about all forms of inclusion (Rachel)

Rachel's thought process is like Regina's but through a slightly different lens in that she [Regina] is of the opinion that the associated language and aggregation that the BAME acronym suggests, is essentially outdated and inconsequential.

I don't accept this... BAME... heading...I think it is convenient but it's far too high a level of aggregation to be useful... (Regina)

Regina's thought process is somewhat compelling in that she highlights generational considerations. She believes that such is the change between generations that to have aggregated terms such as BAME is in some respects meaningless and could potentially lead to aggregation-based conclusions and actions that lack the necessary level of sophistication and granularity needed to influence change in a modern day society.

what I call generation 2.0; generation 2.5; generation 3.0 are growing up...and have grown up...they're not children anymore...they've grown, they've entered the work place as people with, effectively, multiple identities...I think this whole business of how we self-describe our identity is something that we need to start talking about...you asked me right at the beginning about my ethnic identity but actually I will tell you I have many identities (Regina)

Although they are being discussed from slightly different perspectives, both Rachel and Regina's perceptions on either the narrow, race-based, focus of the BAME acronym or its potential outdatedness in terms of meaningful population-based analysis, are both relevant challenges in terms of the overall 'Define' phase. With this in mind a further emergent meaning for consideration is '**Multiple identities**', which is essentially concerned with ensuring that population descriptors

for research sampling or analysis purposes are meaningful and acknowledge that in modern society traditional demographic labels (and acronyms) such as BAME may no longer be as relevant to research participants, as well as their meaning for research inquiry purposes, may be less relevant than previously understood.

4.2.4. Leadership clique (Theme 4)

A further theme for the 'Define' phase relates to what could be described as the '**Leadership clique**'. So, for example, Arnold questions whether the model of leadership within the NHS is appropriately modern and comfortable with issues of equality. He hints that there is a sense of unwholesome deference that exists and behavioural modelling that inevitably, in his view, leads to a certain pen portrait of NHS leadership, which is inclusive of being deferent to typically "white" very senior managers.

I see in the NHS a slight sort of...almost archetypal senior leader...and there's a lot of...in a sector where...people keep on about...it is almost like evangelical...you know...I've touched [Confidential's] hand...and it's that sort of thing and it's who you know...everyone's the same...a bit cliquy...and I think that's a problem because everybody wants to be like the person they perceive as being a successful person and those are nearly all white and they have a certain sort of manner about them which I can recognise as an NHS manner so it's quite...careful what I say...I don't find it...as quite as relaxed about these things as I would expect it to find about the equality issues...it seems that we have to do it rather than...it just ought to be what life's like... and so we have all these initiatives which...I occasionally get a bit cross about...because I wonder whether they actually make any difference when you see this sort of slightly cliquy...model of what a male or female Chief Executive should look like...(Arnold)

It is further interesting to note that as Arnold describes his feelings on this matter, he initially hesitates in expressing his state of mind despite the confidential nature of the discussion. This is fascinating to observe and, in some respects, given his seniority and experience, provides

authenticity to the leadership and culture points he makes. It is clear he does not view himself as a part of the “clique” he describes, but he is equally wary of the power and influence of the leadership group to which he is referring.

Similarly, Fred provides his perspective on why leadership and culture are key concepts and concurs with Arnold, albeit from a local government viewpoint, that leadership cliques are not helpful. He contends that the consequence of this in leadership terms is that it is restrictive and impacts unhelpfully on the quality of decision making.

you can too often get little groups of people...cliques of people from one particular type of background...they're making the rules and decisions but they haven't got a clue what people out there are really thinking...it would help society as a whole...if people in positions of responsibility have actually got some experience and knowledge of what other people are doing out there (Fred)

Patrick is also quite stark in his opinions on the prevailing leadership and cultural aspects of local government. He questions the degree to which councils are attractive to BAME communities in general and queries through his LGA example as to whether perhaps local government has the type of emotional antennae to spot that certain ethnic groupings are noticeable by their omission, e.g., people of Black Caribbean and/or African Origin.

Councils are not an employer of choice for the BME community because actually it doesn't matter what level you go to, you know even at that entry level and I don't believe that's because the council is saying no I just don't think the community sees it as potentially as a job – and I hate to use this – but for them. (Patrick)

the LGA runs a national graduate programme...I looked out, it was in Warwick and there was 100 young people in the room and I would say actually more women than men, it was quite interesting, it would be interesting to track their careers...but

good start, actually quite a lot of Muslim women, which is good. Caribbean, Black – nothing (Patrick)

Arnold, Fred and Patrick's comments all point to 'Leadership clique' across the NHS and local government, which for the purposes of this thesis are sectors that have been defined as the 'Public Sector'. A clique, because the interviewees' observations as senior gatekeepers are couched in a reality of long-established deference and familiarity with limited or no immediate expectation of change either to be led by them as leaders or others.

4.2.5. Political divisiveness (Theme 5)

As a part of understanding the potential scope of the 'Define' phase more fully, initially, consideration is given as to whether research participants' views about the role of politics and politicians could be more readily attributed to the theme of the 'Inculcation of the negative'. However, such are the opinions of research participants, who for the most part either are leading politicians themselves or at the very least are people who have strong political conviction, it is legitimate to develop theme on its own. For example, Regina describes a political worldview in which she portrays the very foundation of politics as being built on a core principle of division and furthermore promoting what makes us different versus celebrating what we have in common:

I think if they're good politicians they...should feel happy about it and they should feel a sense of achievement...if they're not good politicians and there'll always be people who thrive on exposing divisions between people for their own political needs in all sorts of ways...whether it's the poor versus the rich; whether its east end versus the west end; whether it's London versus [Confidential]...they thrive on that kind of thing because politicians...have that constituency...they define their constituency (Regina)

For Arnold, his view of the role of politicians is defined by his own confidence levels in their ability and willingness to address the BAME challenge, which is the focus of this research and the broader questions relating to diversity and inclusion. He ultimately concludes that he would prefer to put his trust and confidence in everyday people in general rather than the institution of politics and politicians.

I suspect that deep down...I bear more confidence in the average person...but actually a lot of politics go on their scoring points... I think there's something more fundamental about how people behave to each other (Arnold)

Rachel is less cryptic in describing how she feels about the contribution of politics generally, but in conveying her views she does, however, offer a comparative glimmer of hope in referring to the WRES.

well I suppose it doesn't feel like they're [politicians] doing anything really in this space at all at the moment so I suppose the first thing is to hear them talk far more openly...you know I think WRES has really been effective (Rachel)

However, whatever sliver of positivity may exist, the prevailing role of politics according to these research participants is one of divisiveness; point scoring; incapable of generating confidence; and by and large feckless in terms of speaking truth to power.

4.2.6. Conscience cleansing (Theme 6)

The previous two emergent themes of 'Leadership clique' and 'Political divisiveness' are possibly more traditional factors that perhaps the research participants may naturally have applied to problematic issues more generally and not specifically to the stated BAME CEO challenge.

However, Arnold introduces a theme which could be said to be more specific to the tenet of the senior gatekeeper developed from the extant literature. He believes that there are hidden sincerity and integrity issues at play in relation to advancing the senior career prospects of BAME people which he describes as ‘conscience clearing’:

I'm not persuaded by all that, I think it's...conscience clearing...senior management think they've got to do something...we'll set up another programme...now I may be completely wrong...happy to be completely wrong but that's my perception...and elsewhere...I've found it works better...by just being very clear about leadership from the top...living the values and making sure that no one wavers from those values (Arnold)

Arnold's thoughts are centred on his belief that amongst very prominent or influential gatekeepers across England there is a conscious form of behaviour taking place that is essentially about being seen to do the right thing as opposed to doing something based on real, genuine, personal or institutional conviction. He is not alone in his thinking, as Debbie describes a situation where she is approached by a prominent external search firm that works extensively across the public sector and carries noteworthy influence and weight in terms of gateway behaviours. The approach to her is based on getting her views as a prominent and successful gatekeeper in respect of BAME senior management career progression but her subsequent involvement leaves her ‘disappointed’.

so if I'm being really honest and I was disappointed...I spent a lot of time talking to them about it...I went to see them I had two or three sessions and they produced some really good literature and started to build their knowledge and reputation about that sort of skill set of being able to find a more diverse pool...they never come back to me and said...this is what we managed to do (Debbie)

Not only does this organisation not come back to Debbie to share or promote their learning but, in her view, she is left with a feeling that they have used her to advance their reputation as potential thought leaders in the space of BAME career progression. This leaves Debbie feeling disappointed

with a nagging belief that the organisation in question is more interested in marketing themselves as knowledgeable whilst in the background, and based on their own organisational behaviours, they are not really committed to this agenda for change.

Debbie also provides another example of where she turns the spotlight on what a high-profile gatekeeping leader needs to do with the lack of a senior BAME presence in their own institution. In sharing this experience, she gives the impression that she may have 'scared the horses' with her approach and challenge to the person in question.

I said to [Confidential] the first thing you've got to do is change what you've got...because you're someone that I would look up and think...yeah...I'm going to have a conversation with you...(Debbie)

In some respects, Debbie's experiences may have been about a blend of institutional as well as individual conscience cleansing. As a further instance, Debbie also illustrates another experience of attempting to influence a very senior gatekeeper into more direct action with regard to BAME diversity.

I remember going to see [Confidential] arguing this with [him/her] had to be about holding organisations to account...so if we've got to do four hour waits in A&E we find a way to do it...so if we've got to have more BAME people we will find a way to do it...and we're held to account for our CQC [Care Quality Commission] (Debbie)

Suffice to say that Debbie's suggestion regarding accountability falls on deaf ears bringing into question, in her mind, whether this high-profile NHS gatekeeper is more interested in being seen to do the right thing versus taking the bold steps that would have signalled real intent and leadership on the part of the person in question and the broader NHS. Arnold also discusses a lack

of authenticity, which further supports the concerns expressed by Debbie. He is singularly unimpressed by what he considers to be people with gatekeeping influence, largely moralising about the need for change, but not demonstrating behaviours to back up their rhetoric. He views this kind of gatekeeper conduct as a combination of conscience clearing and hiding in plain sight to avoid proper scrutiny of performance in respect of CEO and other BAME senior management career progression.

I'm not a great one for moralising about things and not making something happen as a consequence...I think that's clearing conscience in general...sort of a good way of feeling better about it...I get quite firm with people who make assumptions about people of any background...than they should...till you actually see them deliver (Arnold)

This perception of 'clearing conscience' and its association with a low appetite for personal risk, on the part of some gatekeepers, is what leads to the development of '**Conscience cleansing**' as a genuine theme for consideration in the 'Define' phase of this study. Such behaviour is in stark contrast to the brave approach to personal risk exemplified by Regina who described her experience, as a gatekeeper, of being at the opposite end of the conscience clearing spectrum i.e., that of having an authentically clear conscience through being prepared to withstand criticism and having the conviction of actually trying to do the right thing.

it's a difficult one to say in public because people will say to me what do you care you're a successful person...why do you care you've turned yourself into a man to...make the change happen...and all of those are not necessarily untrue because all...anything that you do in life particularly in the work environment you give yourself the best chance to succeed (Regina)

Regina's words suggest that conscience cleansing was and is a conscious choice for gatekeepers and although it may involve elements of individual discomfort, it is a path that does not have to be

taken provided as Arnold indicated, gatekeepers are prepared to commit to the right values and behaviours.

4.3. Discovery

The ‘Discovery’ phase is summarised by Hammond (2013, p. 25) as the identification of “the best of what is”. In the context of this study, this part of the 5-D sequence is important as it marks the stage of the ensuing research participant dialogue where the thematic discourse is purposefully channelled towards the affirmative. Also, as per Watkins et al. (2011, pp. 113-114), “excellence – no matter how rare” it might be, is central to the general concept of appreciative inquiry and the ‘Discovery’ phase.

Thereby in comparative terms, the ‘Define’ phase is, in part, used to represent a place where research participants can purge themselves as far as possible of problem solving or negative thoughts. By contrast, the ‘Discovery’ phase is very much used to encourage participants to stay positive and it is in this spirit that the following four themes are developed.

4.3.1. Exemplars (Theme 7)

It is initially difficult for most of the research participants to think positively about institutions or individuals which could be described as role models not only in the framework of the BAME CEO challenge but more broadly in the context of diversity, inclusion and the specific dimension of race. However, following a period of palpable reflection by all participants, the various examples slowly started to flow as illustrated through the following comments by Debbie and Fred. These

comments and others are used to form part of the first 'Discovery' based emergent theme of institutional and people '*Exemplars*'.

US Military's work around progression...Deutsche Bank for example...stuff around women and disabled staff (Debbie)

it's not something I've really thought about to be honest...National Health Service seems to be a good broad section of people (Fred)

Fred's comment is reflective of some of the other participants' responses in that despite being given prior access to the guiding interview questions, it is not easy for a number of participants to come up with positive examples that are naturally known to them. Indeed, in terms of non-verbal communication cues at interview, it is manifest in facial expressions, hand gestures and general hesitation that most participants found this line of thinking challenging.

It may have been the case that most participants have genuine issues with recollection but based on the spread of discussion across interviewees, it felt more likely that the memorable examples were simply not there in the number or quantity, which given the seniority and experience of this group of participants is somewhat surprising. This lack of naturally occurring diversity-based exemplars for some participants is exemplified by Arnold who in terms of an institutional example could only refer to an organisation that initially had been referenced to him through the observations of others.

the sort of one that everyone says is...Ernst & Young...because they appear everywhere...they seem to be very clear about their values and what the company stands for...what it expects of its staff...and they certainly are very public about that (Arnold)

Debbie also struggles to think about general diversity exemplars but subsequently references Ernst & Young albeit when specifically responding to the interview guiding question related to race. Like other participants, Debbie seems to be at ease generating more institutional examples when thinking about the specific [race] diversity characteristic. She also felt confident in referencing an NHS institution, which is an interesting perspective given the broader literature review undertaken in Chapter One and the less than positive comments she herself makes regarding the NHS on a whole as illustrated in the 'Define' phase.

so if I look at Ernst & Young and this whole stuff they do around inclusion; IBM and other groups have done some really good work...I think there are NHS organisations that are striving to do this well...I'd put North West London Foundation Trust in that category (Debbie)

Patrick felt unable to describe any organisation as sufficiently progressed in any category of diversity. However, he felt it important that institutions that were trying to do the right thing should be acknowledged. Hence his citation of the Metropolitan (Met) Police which again is a real contrast to some of the chronicled issues relating to the same organisation in Chapter One of this thesis. That being said, Patrick's rationale for identifying the Met Police is potentially an authentic example of appreciative inquiry in practice.

...this is potentially a bit controversial – but somewhere like the Met Police who came under sustained attack and that sort of blood-letting around institutional racism, and then another wave of it would come and then another wave of it would come. But I think perhaps they are at least alive to the issue and I think actually there are probably institutions that you could pick out that recognise the issue...So I think there are a number of organisations that are on that first step – we've got a problem. I'm not sure how many organisations or institutions whether that be parliament, the police, NHS, councils, who actually have worked out how we go on to solve it. (Patrick)

So, whilst most research participants struggled to identify other high-flying institutions in terms of the broad diversity question, both Arnold and Rachel were more confident about referencing their own organisations either in relation to board diversity or the NHS more generally. In doing so, each provides a rationale as to what they thought had made their respective organisations both unique and progressive.

we've also made a conscious effort to diversify the board members both in ethnicity, gender, sexuality...age...and I think that has helped a lot because although they may not be any particular group...in terms of diversity that's represented in the candidates you do get a much richer discussion happen...so I'm not selling that as perfect because it is not but that diversity in the board I think helps...because you do get that voice that says... 'well what about?' (Arnold)

I suppose I am biased, the first place that springs to mind is where we are now. I think even before [Confidential]'s appointment or the Chief Executive's appointment and actually even before [Confidential] arrived the board felt more diverse than other NHS bodies I've been involved with and certainly anywhere I have been involved with in my commercial and professional life...So I suppose I would think of the NHS in my experience as a service user or carer and then this Trust in terms of my experience as an institution. (Rachel)

The one research participant who genuinely seems to be the exception to the rule is Donald. His distinctiveness from the others is built on the fact that he is assertive and clear about his example of the Ford Motor Company and describes the journey which he feels that organisation has been on.

Ford Motor Company...have again been on a journey of diversity for...35 years...started it was probably full of white, anglo saxon men, now it's like the United Nations, but it's much better for it...they've [Ford] opened up the opportunity. Diversity isn't something necessarily elusive but it is about getting the message out to everybody, all and anybody and giving them the opportunity. (Donald)

Whilst other research participants found it difficult to think about broader institutional exemplars across diversity in general or the specific of race, some of them were more able to reference individuals who they perceived to have positively impacted on the race dimension.

I think Trevor Phillips is obviously well known for his involvement and approach to it...he obviously has been keen on promoting that sort of thing as well... encouraging and promoting it and making sure that it's done fairly and properly (Fred)

well the two people who are in the public eye that would come to mind is Victor Adebawale...he's actually on the board of NHS England and probably David Lammy the MP for Tottenham...they're both willing to advance their views on life... there are other people who I don't know...who I admire...Baroness Amos and Sharon White who's the Chief Executive of Ofcom (Arnold)

Interestingly, Rachel also references one of the research participants from this thesis as an individual exemplar. However, due to reasons of anonymity it is not possible to comment about this person without revealing their real identity. This is slightly frustrating but in some respects these circumstances provide affirmation that at least one of the participants interviewed is naturally recognised as a gatekeeper who has exercised their ability to influence the thoughts of others when it came to leading on the BAME CEO Challenge and the associated diversity issues.

[Confidential] would have to be one of my role models I think for how s/he has managed to celebrate the strengths in people... so by 2016...[his/her] organisation was in a more confident place and reasonably secure financially (Rachel)

To summarise, the development of the '*Exemplars*' theme is not straightforward because capturing and representing the views of participants in a way that did not subtly portray negativity is more challenging, and highlights once again the seemingly inherent pull of the problem-solving mentality. That said, Figure 4.2 represents a picture montage of the institutions and people

identified by the research participants either as fully-fledged exemplars or at the very least on a recognisable journey towards improvement and perhaps universally distinguished exemplar status.

Figure 4.2

Exemplars – institutional and people



(Images and brand logos sourced via Google internet search)

A couple of things stand out in respect of Figure 4.2. Firstly, it is noticeable that in terms of the people shown, all are representative of the Black dimension of the Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic (BAME) acronym. Is this by chance or representative of something more meaningful in terms of the lack of naturally occurring examples regarding Asian & Minority Ethnic (i.e., AME without the ‘B’) figure heads or white leaders for that matter? Equally, could this be that at a subconscious level, people are more likely to associate a black face when considering race-based diversity issues? Also, regarding some of the institutions shown such as the NHS or the Met Police, this is a selection that seemed at odds with several evidentially based counter arguments chronicled in the first chapter literature review.

That said, as discussed, perhaps there is some broader learning to be had from the appreciative view adopted by Patrick which sought to recognise that these organisations are plausibly, through experience, more self-aware of the issues at hand despite their widely perceived lack of progress. Therefore, they are potentially in a stronger position to meet the BAME CEO challenge over time and/or provide learning for other organisations that are starting their journey or lack self-awareness. Taking this thought process a step further, there is perhaps a further opportunity for these institutions to get on the front foot and proactively seek to advance their own institutional development by voluntarily and regularly exposing their strengths and weaknesses to other less mature organisations as opposed to being regularly castigated in the court of public opinion and beyond.

4.3.2. Diversity enthusiasts (Theme 8)

As a part of the literature reviewed in Chapter One there is a claim proffered that a dominant part of the scholarly view put forward is built on the interpretations of authors and stakeholders who by default advocate organisational and leadership diversity as a good thing. It is suggested that such is their enthusiasm for diversity that they could be said to be '*Diversity enthusiasts*' practising the art of inbuilt and unwavering enthusiasm for the cause of diversity across a variety of characteristics such as age, race, sexual orientation, gender, disability, liberalism et al.

Therefore, it was interesting to try to understand whether a 'Diversity enthusiasts' theme would naturally emerge as a part of the 'Discovery' phase. This proves to be the case but perhaps with a modicum of sophistication beyond that briefly explored in the extant literature. By way of

example, Regina defines herself and her personal commitment to diversity in general by highlighting what she personally gains by being exposed to different people.

I think in specific terms I look for people who bring a different set of experiences...life experiences and come from a different attitudinal perspective (Regina)

This train of thought is also supported by Debbie who not only describes the impact on her personally but articulates what she thinks is the wider impact on the quality of general decision making. For Debbie the concept of diversity and inclusion is a no-brainer and she portrays a stance of not being able to comprehend or countenance an alternative perspective such is her conviction.

There's also all the arguments around a diversity of thought...we are looking at a broad leadership and there's enough evidence to show that group think by people who all look the same that you get the same kind of results and outcomes but if you have a diversity of thought around the table then you actually get lots of different solutions and your decisions are better...so my view is why wouldn't you? (Debbie)

Arnold and Donald also share a similar conviction to Debbie about decision making and the multiple thought provocation properties of diversity.

...if you are going to make a difficult decision or any important decision...you want as many different opinions as you can because you're likely to get a more robust decision (Arnold)

I think it's the richness that it can bring to any discussion. There might be a subject that is no different from me talking to a guy that I grew up with but there are discussions when people think differently, they've had different experiences, they've been raised differently, different cultures and they can bring a different slant on it and what I like is the fact that one it might be a surprise, it might give you an advantage, it might actually put you into a different direction that you alone would never have thought of (Donald)

This natural enthusiasm for diversity is also shared by Fred although he brings a historical perspective on how geopolitical factors have shaped his thinking. In particular, he cites the adversarial narrative of ‘George Wallace’ who was a prominent American politician in the sixties who is credited (or discredited) with making racially charged statements such as “I say...segregation now...segregation tomorrow...segregation forever”, which in some respects is pretty self-explanatory in terms of his viewpoint at that time (Brown, 2016). Fred’s personal call to action thoughts are as follows.

I think it is good to have a good cross section of people from the community involved in different things...I was born in the fifties...the years that made the impression on me were the early sixties to late sixties and that was the time of change...I mean you saw what in America before...the deep South of America...George Wallaces of this world...people like that...so the world was changing when I was...and that’s what partly attracted me...got me interested in Politics...I thought this isn’t right, do something (Fred)

The combined thoughts of Regina, Debbie, Arnold, Donald and Fred provides for a blend of factors such as the argued benefits of multiple life experiences, diversity of thought linked to decision making and the influence of big ‘P’ politics which all seemingly play their part in shaping their individual gatekeeper journeys towards the common place of being ‘Diversity enthusiasts’.

There is also a sense from Arnold and Rachel about the significance of fairness and equality when they reflect on the importance of diversity to them. Noticeably their positioning is as much about societal progress as well as the personal or organisational references made by other research participants.

I just have this belief that everybody should just be able to be themselves...and to be...have equal opportunity within society (Arnold)

what matters to me as a person...that people are treated fairly is just part of who one is and so any sense of unfairness has just always been absolutely anathema to me throughout my life so I support that's where I come from one level, but on another level in my commercial career I worked for [Confidential] and the reason I worked for [Confidential] was because it was employee owned and that business model felt right to me...There was an ethical base to it which I identified with very strongly (Rachel)

As identified through Rachel's articulation of her thoughts, as well as the highlighting of wider communal fairness, her strength of personal conviction and commitment to diversity is palpable and pervasive across many of the points she raises throughout her total interview. This is also true of Patrick, but the nuance he adds in his description is that the benefits to him are at a more subconscious level and a part of who he is as opposed to being something special that he acquires over time i.e., a kind of nature over nurture.

I've always been like surrounded by people who are not necessarily originally from this place. I don't think it's...been a really conscious thing for me...it's the rich tapestry of life, whatever you want to call it. I don't...compartmentalise my friends or acquaintances into their ethnic grouping I just think you can be a tosser, you can be a really good friend, whatever. For me it's not an issue, to be honest. (Patrick)

It can be gleaned through the respective dialogue that the overarching point in relation to these research participants is that they all have enthusiasm, as senior gatekeepers, for diversity which is authentic and the antithesis of the 'Conscience cleansing' types of behaviour that are described as a theme in the 'Define' phase. That said, there is a note of wise caution highlighted about the outlook of 'Diversity enthusiasts' which Rachel brings to life when she comments about a specific, prominent, enthusiast known to her.

I follow [Confidential] – but I do notice the people who re-tweet his/her stuff...will be a circle of [Confidential] and you know it does become a sort of echo chamber and how you get it further is a big issue. It's one of the things that I do go on things like Twitter because I hope by me re-tweeting stuff takes it out of the echo chamber and I think that's why [Confidential]...was very keen to get involved in the WRES work to start with because I think s/he felt it was really important that prominent white wo/men were seen to be associated with this work (Rachel)

The core message in what Rachel counsels is that there may be a potential blind spot for 'Diversity enthusiasts' in that such might be the conviction and nature of such people that they are likely to be more comfortable in environs which are occupied by people who share the same diversity beliefs as them. As a result, there is an inherent 'echo chamber' risk as well as the potential hypocritical notion that if you're only happy having a dialogue with people who agree with your diversity perspective, can you truly claim to have embraced diversity and its claimed sub benefits such as 'diversity of thought'. Arnold expands on this perspective in succinct fashion when he outlines his experience of a national diversity conference that he attended.

...it was people talking to themselves...so there are lots of...I mean they were mostly black staff...not all but mostly and...they were talking with their selves...complaining about problems and I thought to myself this isn't going to solve your problem (Arnold)

The other point to be gleaned from Arnold's worldview is the subtext of blame and the old saying which suggests that "when people point fingers at someone else, they should remember that three fingers are pointing back at them" (Bytheway, 2007, loc. 120).

So, in the context of the literature review and as a nuanced emerging theme in the 'Discovery' phase of this thesis, practically all the research participants use language which could define them

as ‘Diversity enthusiasts’. However, as a cluster of gatekeepers, this group are also aware that in unreservedly embracing this position there are some risks as well as opportunities. For example, as a downside, pointing blame fingers at those people considered not to be ‘Diversity enthusiasts’ is potentially the opposite of exhibiting a positive approach to diversity. On the upside, the consistent and fair application of diverse behaviours can lead to broader and better diversity of thought and associated decision making.

4.3.3. Best person (Theme 9)

It would have been slightly surprising if the theme of ‘*Best person*’ which is associated with recruiting and selecting of such did not feature highly on the research participants’ set of priorities when seeking to employ their CEO - regardless of their candidate’s ethnic status. However, it is insightful to listen and learn from the research participants’ best person rationale as gatekeepers. For example, Fred is at pains to assert that the ethnicity of his successful BAME CEO candidate is not a conscious factor in his (and others) recruitment and selection decision making.

I mean we didn’t consciously say well alright we’ll have a...Black Ethnic...it was genuinely because...he was the best (Fred)

However, put bluntly, the degree to which Fred and any of the other research participants would have openly admitted to the disproportionate sway of ethnicity in their recruitment decision making is probably unlikely. That said, in part of her best person account, Debbie makes the point about ensuring that the recruitment process, which she led, does not fall into what she perceives to be the status quo of inevitably selecting a ‘white’ candidate as best.

Her thinking in this instance is based on her perception that without a high degree of her 'Diversity enthusiasts' rigour being applied to the whole recruitment and selection process (e.g., her unequivocal diversity led brief to the headhunters), then inevitably the process would lead to the ethnicity of 'white' automatically equating to being the 'best'. The assumptions which largely underpinned Debbie's thinking are based on her perspective that because of the naturally occurring 'white' majority population for sourcing senior candidates, combined with the reality of historic recruitment decision making leading to 'white' candidates being selected for CEO roles, hence her following viewpoint:

...one is about an expectation about a holding to account...and that's just about having the best person...so just because you're white...doesn't mean to say you're the best (Debbie)

Donald is more conventional in his thinking and attributes his decision making to the core goal of wanting to get the best person based on the combination of his aspiration for his organisation and value for money. However, he does highlight the point that his approach to achieving this is about making sure that the metaphorical candidate pond that he is fishing in, is as wide as possible.

Because we had at that time an ambition, we wanted to get the absolute best for our money and that's what we set out to go and find. Didn't know where it was going to come from, who it was going to be. We just wanted to cast the net far and wide and get the best. (Donald)

Like Donald in terms of convention, Arnold's best person interpretation is steeped in his fiduciary duties as the lead member of his board. He also cautions against applying other non-commensurate criteria and highlights the risk to the broader agenda of equality and diversity through making the wrong choice and then, for example, unintentionally allowing for attribution of failure to be linked to ethnicity of selection.

I can honestly say it is just the best candidate for the job...if you're appointing on some other factor than the best candidate...you're not fulfilling your responsibilities as a board member...but also there is a risk that that candidate may then not do well because they weren't the right candidate and that then would damage any moral position you might wish to take about equality (Arnold)

Both Regina and Rachel describe their perspective on the search for the best person as being the theme that they would naturally have in common with other gatekeepers who have successfully recruited a BAME CEO. They are also vociferous in making it clear that the search for the best is their primary motivating factor.

...have somebody who would be best suited for fulfilling those needs of that Trust or whatever organisation...and that would be very much a common theme (Regina)

we want to appoint the best Chief Executive... so I'd hope that's what we've got in common and I'd hope that they were driven by nothing more than that. We didn't set out to appoint a BME Chief Executive, we set out to appoint the best Chief Executive. (Rachel)

Patrick equates the search for the best with his organisational and personal need for outcomes in a limited period. Again, this is hardly a surprising finding but thinking about the broader context of the 'Discovery' phase, perhaps there is a message that the modus operandi for this group of research participants is not likely to be different for the broader universe of gatekeepers.

I always say we are in a results business – we are and every four years there's an election and someone decides whether I keep my job or not. I want to surround myself with people who are going to give me the best opportunity to be able to continue to deliver the things I want to deliver. Now whether that is a BME or a woman or whatever I am going to employ absolutely the best person for the role, (Patrick)

Therefore, if for these research participants their approach to recruitment is ultimately about getting the *'Best person'* then, as stated, it would be difficult to imagine that this is a unique position versus the approaches of other gatekeepers.

4.3.4. Appreciate the positive (Theme 10)

A thread across some research participants is their ability to *'Appreciate the positive'* in difficult situations which comes across as a general optimism about the future. In some cases, this is evidence based and in others more intuitive. For example, when Rachel talks about the WRES, whilst she does not believe it to be a panacea, she does think it has potential to be a building block for promoting action and governmental accountability with regard to achieving greater race-based diversity in the workplace.

well I think the pros is...the organisation having a stated and formal and public position [via the WRES]...I think actually they're a force for good... government have a responsibility to create...policies that protect...people who might be disadvantaged in various ways...and I think that these kind of interventions are right and to me it describes...society that's moving along...that recognises its problems and is moving forward...and my fear actually would be if politicians don't feel that they need to do this (Regina)

This sense of appreciating the positive is also conveyed in a wider context by Fred who suggests that the broader diversity agenda and the aspect relating to race has moved on. In observing his nonverbal communication signs at interview, he is considered in expressing this view and is keen not to convey complacency or a sense of 'job done', but nonetheless he is eager to articulate a personal awareness of positive movement.

is it just me or...I mean prevalent years ago...but is it as prevalent as much as it was...I don't know...I haven't encountered it as much recently (Fred)

This appreciation of the positive is a powerful narrative to recognise as it is underpinned by a combined sense of broad optimism as captured by Donald who also shares a story about his BAME CEO, which demonstrates the importance he places on managing prejudice and promoting diversity as a positive contributory factor to progress in life.

something in me says that if you scrubbed [Confidential] clean as it were from his/her colour and you put him/her in a room that [person] would come out top and I think that's the essence for me. It's about giving people those life experiences where they can demonstrate they are the best candidate and if we can get to a point where people put aside their prejudice and just focus on the contribution I think we will see a lot more people from all walks of life get to those elevated positions (Donald)

Equally, Arnold sources the portrayal of his optimism through a story about a fellow recruitment gatekeeper who for all intents and purposes is, in his opinion, not a typical person to naturally advocate for a BAME CEO. However, by virtue of an objective approach together with proactive management of any biases, this same gatekeeper becomes a leader in the recruitment process.

but he was one of the people...he's a sort of a gatekeeper...and then we went through the process objectively and when we decided he was a very good advocate for the [Confidential] in question...the others sort of followed (Arnold)

The common theme among these research participant stories and extracts is that they are rooted in a form of optimism about the future. There could be a question as to the uniqueness of their positivity, but their willingness to promote the positive about politically sensitive subjects (e.g., BAME senior management career progression) is significant as it shows that it is not always about gatekeepers having to adopt defensive positions solely focussing on what has not worked.

4.4. Dream

The 'Dream' phase is the third phase of the 5-D model of appreciative inquiry and is described by Martinetz (2002, p. 37) as where "we dream about what might be. We look for themes that appear" and continue to develop "provocative propositions".

Although the emphasis of the 'Dream' phase is about the future, it is not exclusive of the past and therefore modified past achievements or "the best of what is" can be a possibility for consideration when developing themes (Hammond, 2013, p. 25). That said, where possible the emphasis is on encouraging thoughts and propositions that are likely to feel new or a stretch to the individual or organisation. Based on these conceptual underpinnings, the 'Dream' based frame led to the development of four themes.

4.4.1. Talent enabling (Theme 11)

The fostering of talent is an example of a 'Dream' based theme that is not necessarily a new concept, but the combined thinking of the research participants creates an interesting and thought provoking window into the feelings of this particular set of gatekeepers. For example, Debbie is unequivocal that when looking at the future sustainability of the NHS there is a need to have developed a more diverse pool of talent, which would be ready for appointment at the point of interview - if the service is going to meet the challenging population demands of the future.

...so the first thing is the NHS...needs the best of its talent... so what support do we put in place to enable them to present themselves wonderfully well at that interview and that's not just about interview prep that's actually the leadership programme that s/he went on beforehand... (Debbie)

Fred further develops the notion of '**Talent enabling**' in that for him it is about a future where the right conditions are created for talented people from all backgrounds to want to be involved. He couches his opinion by prioritising a future emphasis on engagement over that of policy development.

it's alright having a policy of having...we'll have so many of this and so many of that but you've got to encourage people to...to actually want to get involved (Fred)

Donald promotes a blend of talent enabling that not only focuses on creating a pipeline for the future but looks to take advantage of the talent that is, in his opinion, already available. He also urges a degree of risk taking on the part of gatekeepers who in his judgment have the opportunity to create environments where leadership is demonstrable at every level of hierarchy.

it sort of comes down to the fact of you need to, if you like, fill the pipe, with if you like as I say the pool of people that are eligible. If I'm going to say about appointing people at chief executive level we've got to have that calibre and talent coming through and they're there, you're a good example of it. They're there but it means taking people on...leadership at all levels to make sure we've got that succession because what you're not gonna do, is if you have like a layer of clay where people aren't aspiring to the higher echelons, you haven't then got that pool of people that you're gonna take people and promote them into chief executive positions. I seriously don't think we've got that right for the moment and if we're gonna fix it at the top we need to fix it right the way down. (Donald)

In some respects, these initial thoughts of participants assume that the subsequent source of talent has been identified or that pools of talent exist and therefore it is just about knowing where to look. However, the very early identification of talent is also seen as a significant part of the future “what

might be” of this particular theme, alongside that of having the requisite level of supportive coaching, mentoring and confidence building.

In general, the research participant perspective at this point not only consists of talent identification but it similarly features wider encouragement for talented BAME people to get involved supported by wrap around mechanisms aimed at providing nurturing assistance including things such as interview preparation. That said, Rachel is keen to emphasise that this would or should only occur without an explicit reliance on overtly biased acts.

...it's not positive discrimination but it is identifying talent early and mentoring that talent and I think it is really important that that is done in a targeted way (Rachel)

As a part of the ‘Talent enabling’ theme, exposing or showcasing those who would be identified as talented, is likewise seen as a significant part of the future possibilities.

...expose the talent that you've got, whatever colour, whatever creed, race, expose that, the organisation will be better for it (Donald)

In this instance, not only would the imagined fostering process incorporate ways for spotting talent through a diverse lens, but it would correspondingly involve using the people who are recruited as ‘talented’ to simultaneously play an additional or dual role as advocates for the fostering process and its broader developmental objectives.

Regina focuses on confidence building and influencing the perspectives of the next generation of talent who in her view may have consciously or sub-consciously dismissed reaching the highest

echelons of institutional leadership. She also highlights the need for developing resilience in relation to rejection as a part of 'Talent enabling'.

...I think that we really to need to create a confidence and understanding for people who never thought about going for these jobs because of their view of themselves and...we need to get them to think about this and not to think about this...only if they're definitely going to succeed but to think about it as an option when they may not succeed (Regina)

This theme of preparing talent for the future, unsurprisingly, starts to incorporate the role of recruitment and selection agencies, which to this point in the overarching structure and presentation of this thesis have not featured much. However, from this point forward the research participant narrative regarding their role does start to be more pointed and features in earnest as a part of the 'Talent enabling' theme. Particularly, the proactive role that is envisaged for them in developing talent for the future against what is ultimately viewed to be their less than positive contribution to fostering at the point of participant interviews.

I think if they do much more of that bringing people on...and I'm surprised they don't...and I don't think they're terribly good at doing that...I guess coz they just want the next pay cheque for having found somebody (Arnold)

As can be gleaned from Arnold's reflection, he believes that a brighter future, in terms of the contribution of recruitment and selection consultancies to 'Talent enabling', is predicated on such organisations upping their game. Patrick has a slight nuance on Arnold's incompetency premise with a perhaps more sympathetic perspective in that he believes that there is an equal amount of responsibility on institutions to develop the necessary talent for the future.

I think they [R&S Consultancies] would come back and they would say you give me the candidates that are coming from this mid-level of organisations in local government and we will place them (Patrick)

Patrick broadens his institutional responsibility thinking further by explaining what needs to happen in his field of practice, which is local government.

Local authorities need to think about routes into professional roles, don't just appoint people who have the right degree, think about actually do we want somebody that's got some other skills, like an ability to talk to customers and the other thing would be thinking about how your council should better reflect, particularly in that middle management, where we're gonna get the next generation of leaders, chief execs, directors, should that not look a bit like the place that you serve. (Patrick)

More generally, it could be argued that Patrick's thoughts are more akin to the 'Design' phase of the applied appreciative inquiry framework, which is subsequently used to develop themes and the contribution of recruitment and selection consultancies more generally. However, the premise that a future part of 'Talent enabling' is in essence the responsibility of all stakeholders is judged as an important point to reflect in this 'Dream' phase, especially, given the references made at a couple of points within Chapter One about the notion of blame and the dangers of singularly pushing the responsibility for action and change on to others.

4.4.2. Local community mirroring (Theme 12)

A further 'Dream' based theme is that of '**Local community mirroring**' which relates to the notion that the workforce of an organisation should be representative, at all levels, of the communities or customer base that it serves. It is noticeable in the emergence of this theme that local government research participants are quite passionate about this and none more so than Patrick.

I don't think there is a big institution that any of us could point to that fully reflects either the community that it leads or the country it sits within (Patrick)

Mirroring the community is a key tenet of Patrick's interview narrative and as he explains he articulates a primary leadership role for local government which in some respects creates an interesting double-edged set of questions. For example, why would the entity that is claimed by Patrick and others to have struggled to mirror its communities be charged and perhaps more importantly trusted, with the responsibility to create the desired new future? Nevertheless, Patrick is committed to his convictions.

I think actually local government should be leading the way in this because actually for all of the things that local government stands for actually it should best represent its local community, so if you're in London half the London boroughs, a third of the London boroughs, should probably have BME senior management teams, not just the chief, the entire senior management team should come from a BME background, but I don't think the problem's there. I actually think local government would recruit I don't think the pool is there to recruit from – I would love to know the stats for BMEs who are working in that sort of third or fourth level of an organisation. (Patrick)

There is a slight conflict in Patrick's viewpoint in that on the one hand he believes that local government is best placed to create this mirrored future and lead on recruitment yet his assessment of a shortage of a 'pool' seems to imply that he expects said 'pool' to be created from elsewhere; this despite local government being the second the largest public sector employer behind the NHS.

Fred's perspective on the future need for 'Local community mirroring' is supportive of some of the elements expressed by Patrick but he ties his thoughts more to the importance of involvement more generally.

I think it is good to have a good cross section of people from the community involved in different things (Fred)

It is worth noting that in describing the underpinnings of the ‘Local community mirroring’ theme, most of the research participants seem to be arguing for this to be driven based on the demographics of the people that the organisation serves locally needing to be reflected in the makeup of the organisation’s workforce.

4.4.3. Clarity of purpose (Theme 13)

A further theme that the research participants demonstrated that could be a part of the future ‘what might be’ is a sense of having a ‘*Clarity of purpose*’ about a few key issues. For example, when Debbie discusses the importance of a no blame culture in her organisation, she is on the one hand describing the positive progress the organisation has made under her leadership to a point but on the other hand, she is also describing that she needs to have further clarity of purpose about this into the future. Particularly, if her notion of continuous improvement is to be sustained.

a lot of work about how we would not be an organisation of blame that we would be open and we’d see failures as learning (Debbie)

In some respects, the nature of this theme is not so much about the subject matter requiring attention or focus but the emotional attachment placed by the participants on the need to be clear about their convictions in the future. Debbie provides a further example of this awareness of the need for clarity when discussing her expectations about board diversity.

it is about leadership...so I'm really clear that I expect a diverse board...that's what I do so if you look at my board as a whole...we are the most diverse board...so it is important to me look at your WRES...what's that telling you look at your staff survey results what is that telling you...and it's also not a moral thing so I've got this really clear 'right space' approach to this...then go and have the conversation about why it's so important for their organisation (Debbie)

This sense of the future importance of clarity is also projected by Arnold as he gives his opinion on the significance of having conviction and doing the right thing when it comes to making future job appointments and the potential reputational implications of a lack of clarity.

you shouldn't have any truck with any of the other things...you should just appoint...because if you're worried about that...sounds as though the organisation in which you're worrying on behalf of is not an appropriate organisation...we have to have a black candidate; we have to have woman candidate; we have to have whatever it is...a gay candidate...because if you don't have those the rest is almost predetermined...if you're white middle class people...you know, you're going to have a white middle class person who is Chief Executive...I mean how could you otherwise (Arnold)

Donald further demonstrates the future need for 'Clarity of purpose' by referencing values and the role they play as well as setting out the determinants of clarity that he would apply when advising and leading others as a gatekeeper now and into the future.

where the world is a...big place full of different people and you take everybody as you find them so that's what I'd be saying...you take everybody on their merits, look past the colour and sexuality, religion, do it on what your values are, what you are trying to achieve and who best fits it (Donald)

A cynical perspective could suggest that Donald and others are just demonstrating a sense of them knowing best. However, experience of the interviews suggests that participants seem cognisant of the risk of it just being about their opinions and they balance this against a belief that in the context

of their leadership roles, they need to limit ambiguity when trying to convey and receive feedback on key organisational messages. Equally, they seemingly understood and demonstrated the centrality of having ‘Clarity of purpose’ into the future as gatekeeping leaders, as without this they are acutely aware that a dilution of their various leadership messages is problematic to the realisation of their personal and organisational ambitions.

4.4.4. Diverse leadership (Theme 14)

A future where ‘*Diverse leadership*’ is essentially the institutional norm and consistently role modelled is described as important by research participants and is in part linked to the description of diversity highlighted through the ‘Diversity enthusiasts’ theme. For example, Debbie ‘cut to the chase’ by expressing her belief that a future with diverse boards should be a given.

...what would have changed you would have diverse boards...(Debbie)

Rachel nuances this perspective further by linking the prospect of more diverse boards to that of improved decision making which is a similar tenet to parts of the literature review in Chapter one and earlier thematic discussion.

*having sat on a board that wasn't diverse and now sitting on a board that is, I have absolutely no doubt the benefits of a diverse board to better decision making.
(Rachel)*

Similarly, Arnold’s thoughts are linked to more effective decision making but specifically to that of interviewing and how through a more diverse board, important cultural differences would be

less likely to be misinterpreted or misunderstood in a way that might be possible in more homogeneously constructed boards going through similar decision-making processes.

...the boards need to be mixed or at least you need to have someone on the board who can offer a commentary to the other board members...either on the interview panel or there to advise the interview panel on issues that they may raise and want to discuss...which are related to say race...coz then I think...people know their own image (Arnold)

As well as decision making, Patrick expands on the opportunity that ‘Diverse leadership’ presents into the realms of problem solving. He also adds the dimensions of political leadership and mirroring of place into his narrative.

if we're trying to solve an issue that is bigger than who I'm going to choose as my next chief exec we need to have political leaders that look like the places they represent as well (Patrick)

Arnold explores the political diverse leadership aspect further by also setting out his expectation that not only would we see diversity expressed through race, but it would also be reflective of other characteristics such as gender.

well you'd want a much more diverse set of politicians I'd guess...I mean you'd want to see them such...that it becomes a sort of a non-issue...because they're just...picking the best people...we're voting for the best people...although that's always a complicated issue...and so just much more representative of society...I mean our political class hasn't been very representative of society...gender is a big issue...in the past and still is an issue...and although it's getting a little bit better on ethnicity it's still not good...particularly in the senior positions...although I think there is a very slight hint that they're taking...trying to do something but it is not good...and it's a bit tokenistic it feels...so there is something about the generation of candidates I suppose...a genuinely representative view...so it's no longer an issue...it's just going back to my moral stance...they're individuals, if they're good there should be no barrier... (Arnold)

The discourse of research participants demonstrates that ‘Diverse leadership’ is something that they would expect to feature as a part of the future, both organisationally and politically. In their opinion, this would enable greater options for dealing with wicked issues and improve decision making by virtue of moving away from homogeneity of thought, which can occur by virtue of having less diverse leadership.

Rachel underscores this better decision-making point by highlighting the need to celebrate diversity and the opportunity for gatekeepers to demonstrate the visible aspects of diverse leadership should they feel confident about doing so.

I think it's getting people to, or all leaders to talk more openly about who they are...I knew that the [Confidential], who is a very typical White male in a suit, was gay because he talked about it at a dinner but I've never heard him talk about it openly at all. Finally...he just stood up in front of staff and talked about what being a gay chief executive meant... suddenly he was talking about it and why it made him a better chief executive and so I think celebrating diversity always sounds a bit sort of banners and flags and days, but I think it is actually people being open at work about what makes them good at what they do but also what challenges it's brought (Rachel)

4.5. Design

Trajkovski et al. (2013, p. 97) suggest that the ‘Design’ phase is where provocative propositions are further developed into “confident and assertive statements of what the organization hopes to achieve”. Hammond (2013, p. 28), advocates that this phase is the part of the 5-D sequence where “you”, i.e., the research author or facilitator, “use convergent thinking to write directions to achieve the agreed upon future”.

Thinking further about the ‘Design’ phase as applied here, it is worth reiterating the distinction between a focus on problem-solving versus that of appreciative inquiry as illustrated in Figure 2.1. Especially, the difference between “action planning (Treatment)” and “innovating what will be” (Hammond, 2013, p. 13), as this implies that when we think about design, we are not thinking about the traditional sense of specifying or planning something, which we might do in a problem-solving context. Here, design thoughts are less likely to include the language of S.M.A.R.T. objectives (Doran, 1981) and more likely to feature positive thoughts about a future in which themes that may seem unrealistic today, are imagined as possible tomorrow. Based on these conceptual underpinnings, three themes are developed as a part of the ‘Design’ phase.

4.5.1. Headhunter shaping (Theme 15)

As referenced in the description of the ‘Talent enabling’ theme developed under the ‘Dream’ phase, the thesis findings did not until that point have much reference or regard to the role of recruitment and selection consultancies sometimes described as executive headhunters. There was a degree of conscious decision making here in that there is such a distinctly dismissive view from research participants of these organisations and their contribution to the recruitment process overall that it would have been easy to place them as a theme within the ‘Define’ phase.

However, most research participants did use a headhunter and through the subsequently described inadequacies of these recruitment and selection consultancies emerged the theme of **‘Headhunter shaping’**, a premise which, if understood and applied by gatekeepers, seemed to create a ‘Design’ theme which could provide for both a theoretical and practical anchor to the future sustainability of some of the developed ‘Discovery’ and ‘Dream’ related themes. Rachel captures the essence

and potential of this theme albeit in a way that perhaps causes pause for thought across the boardrooms of several executive headhunter organisations.

...the pool of people they speak to is so narrow...if you say there is only 1% of existing CEOs and local authorities maybe I shouldn't be so hard on them that they always ring the usual suspects but they do so...I mean headhunters will only do – they are like estate agents – they are there to provide what the business is asking them to provide so I think trusts need to also be stronger in saying this is what we are looking for and if you don't come up with it go away and try harder...blaming the headhunters...it's a bit like blaming the estate agents, they will do what the market tells them to do so I think it is very beholden on individual search committees to make what they are looking for much clearer and to just say go away and try harder. (Rachel)

What is significant about Rachel's point of view is that she is in no way abdicating her personal responsibility as a gatekeeper by taking the route of simply discrediting headhunters. On the contrary, she advocates that as a gatekeeper, she and others like her have a key role in shaping the market almost in a Ghandi like moment of being the change you want to see in the world (Gunn, 2006).

Regina gives examples of the shaping advice that she would proffer ranging from urging headhunters to move away from tick box exercise consultancy through to adapting their business models.

the advice I give them all the time...is forget what you've got in your box because what you've got in your box results in somebody...I get two, three calls a week...because I'm on everybody's books...I think that's ridiculous they have to wake up and be less lazy...they are very lazy at the moment... there is more people...but many of their business models rely on the fact of just looking at people they know...they basically rely on placing me from job to job to job and that model it doesn't work if you are going to increase the pool (Regina)

Words and tone can be important when listening to what people say. Both Regina and Rachel have no problem in categorising the headhunters in question as “lazy”, which is said with real conviction on the part of both.

well firstly I didn't want us to use a recruitment company and we did a beauty parade and rejected all three...we knew we were looking for something different – but that's not different in terms of it had to be someone who was BME but it had to be the right person for us as an organisation and I didn't sense any of them got that and if I'm honest I thought the presentations they gave were lazy (Rachel)

Hence, in terms of ‘Headhunter shaping’ and what gatekeepers are looking for there is a sense of searching for the antithesis to the laziness which would be about overtly showing energy, effort and care about the assignment brief but in a way that would respect and respond to the ‘Clarity of purpose’ articulated by these gatekeepers.

In this, there is also a message for other gatekeepers about raising the bar of expectation on the premise that seasoned executive headhunters would only exhibit the behaviours of laziness if allowed to do so. For those not involved in regular dialogue with executive headhunters, it might seem astonishing that scenarios of perceived laziness would exist given the vast sums of money and finders fees involved. Nevertheless, this is clearly a lived reality for this group of gatekeepers but one in which they believe they have the power to influence if the broader gatekeeping community also go its collective act together.

Debbie’s headhunting advice also incorporates elements of the previously identified ‘Talent enabling’ theme such as the need to engage and nurture prospective candidates of the future and to be also thinking beyond the immediate next client.

warming up BME clients and people that they can see are coming through beforehand...[if] you're a really good headhunter you're not just thinking about the field at the moment you're thinking about the field that could come through (Debbie)

In some respects, Debbie's comments connect with Regina's expressed thoughts about the business model for headhunters. Particularly, the possibility that if there were gatekeeper-led incentives for such organisations to foster talent and bring it through, then the market dynamic might change and create a greater chance of there being more public sector BAME senior managers or CEOs into the future.

By way of example, would gatekeepers as clients be prepared to pay a higher commission fee to headhunters for mutually acknowledged harder to reach clients coming from certain communities or backgrounds such as BAME? Alternatively, as implied by Patrick, would gatekeepers consider only working with executive headhunter firms who they themselves could demonstrate through their own non-executive and executive board demographics that they are mirroring the standards to which their clients aspired?

The thing I would say is how many BME recruitment consultants in local government do you see. Again are you going to place somebody, potentially a difficult placement for all of the reasons we've said before, if you don't fully understand what that individual can bring to the table (Patrick)

Significantly, it is unlikely that any of these thoughts or ideas would require legislation and therefore they could be enacted essentially by the will of gatekeepers and their adherence to an individual and collective 'Clarity of purpose'.

In addition to these thoughts, Rachel introduces a sense of the answer is right in front of us, when she describes how she feels that headhunters need to focus on the professions where experienced BAME professionals already operate even if this means looking outside of the public sector. She also advocates that in terms of the NHS, the clinical profession is most likely to be the source which delivers future BAME CEOs.

I think if I was looking to develop quickly in the NHS, I would focus probably more on the professions and as I think that is the quickest win is clinical leadership...so I think a lot of our BME talent is probably concentrated in the professions, whether that's accountancy, whether that's nursing, whether that's in particular medicine so I think the more we can encourage the moves into Chief Executive from those talent pools my instinct is that will improve diversity quite quickly. (Rachel)

Regina also concurs with this perspective and further endorses the need to focus on those professions where success and progression is already associated with people of BAME origins.

they have to spend a lot more time looking where these people are and I already mentioned before to look at professions...look at...instances where there's been success in terms of people achieving things in their career...(Regina)

At its core, the theme of 'Headhunter shaping' provides for a potentially compelling narrative through promoting the notion that it is in the hands of gatekeepers to shape how executive headhunting organisations can contribute to the prospect(s) of there being more BAME CEOs in the public sector. To achieve this requires gatekeepers to have personal conviction as well as cognisance of how headhunters develop their respective business models, and which related factors could be used to influence behavioural change.

As a broader reflection, the importance of the ‘Headhunter shaping’ theme is further magnified by virtue of assessing the degree to which executive headhunting features in key pieces of extant literature such as the “Snowy White Peaks” of Kline (2014). It does not and, for example, neither does it seem to be the highest priority for Tulsiani (2014, p. 26) who as an executive headhunter himself, seems comfortable challenging public and voluntary sector “Chairs and CEOs to think harder about who their successors might be” but in the same article, he feels less compelled to provide the same explicit advice to his fellow senior executive colleagues from the headhunting industry sector.

This demonstrable lack of attention in the extant literature and amongst key scholars and gatekeepers is in keeping with the thoughts of Faulconbridge, Beaverstock, Hall & Hewitson (2009) who argue that:

the rise of executive search firms, headhunters, as labour market intermediaries and their tactics for defining and managing contemporary elite labour recruitment practices is too often ignored (Faulconbridge et al. 2009 p. 801).

Therefore, by focusing on ‘Headhunter shaping’ it is argued that not only is there the potential opportunity to improve the efficacy of executive headhunting through spotlighting their contribution in the BAME context; it would also place responsibility for shaping their behaviour directly at the door of gatekeepers who commission them for recruitment and selection purposes.

4.5.2. Authentic political championing (Theme 16)

Under the ‘Define’ phase of findings, politics and politicians have come in for some harsh criticism from research participants. As a result, this led to the development of the ‘Political divisiveness’ theme.

At the same time across almost all research participants there is a semblance of a love and hate mind-set at play. Therefore, although some participants wish that politics could in some way be by-passed altogether, there is an acceptance that meaningful political advocacy built on collaborative behaviours could perhaps contribute positively to the stated BAME challenge.

Indeed, based on the majority of research participant opinion, it is evident that it would be difficult to imagine how some of the themes developed across the ‘Discovery’ and ‘Dream’ phases could prosper without being meaningfully underpinned by adequate levels of political buy-in, hence the development of the ‘*Authentic political championing*’ theme.

Debbie envisages a future where such are the changes across the public sector that politicians do not fear being accountable but take pride in demonstrating their personal and political commitment to the cause of diversity and the associated themes discussed in this thesis. She is clear about the nature of the political conversations that would take place in the future and how they would demonstrably place import on these very issues.

I think our politicians will be actually more vocal about...equality and human rights and...what their expectations are...coz part of the public sector changes is the way in which they are held to account (Debbie)

It would, perhaps, have been easy to be sceptical about Debbie's buoyant point of view particularly in the context of UK politics, which throughout the duration of the production of this thesis have been mired in a range of divisive conversations. For example, diversity-based debates related to Brexit and anti-Semitism have clearly fractured relationships not just across traditional party lines but within political parties themselves. However, despite the known context of politics at the time of the interviews with research participants, it is vital that their 'Design' thoughts, no matter how farfetched they may seem, are viewed through a lens of appreciation and plausibility. Consequently, when Rachel describes the positive dialogue that she would envisage hearing from politicians, a perception that her thoughts might provoke cynicism or would be perceived to lack credibility, is a moot point.

I suppose I would like to hear politicians also really getting that...diversity means better decision-making, better teams, better motivated staff, better retention (Rachel)

Donald's more pejorative opinions are provocative as he assesses the skills and competencies of his peer group elected members.

I don't think we've got the members that are (1) educated, (2) competent, proficient...we ask members to come and do a pretty serious job these days and...we do recruitment from people that have a good community feel about them but these aren't professional people. They, in many cases, are people of low education that just wanna do the job, then you put them in a position where they're selecting a chief executive and I think that may be part of it, not the whole answer, part of the problem (Donald)

Through an appreciative 'Design' perspective on Donald's comments, a positive, yet provocative, translation is one where success for him is a political world where greater levels of educational

attainment and professional experience are apparent amongst elected members of the future. Whilst some may find Donald's perceptions objectionable, an appreciative perspective cannot dismiss them out of hand.

4.5.3. Flattery and self-image (Theme 17)

A further 'Design' based theme is developed solely from the thoughts of Regina who introduces a narrative which is about encouraging people to guard against the trappings of fame and adulation. Regina makes the point that if you are a new or longstanding BAME CEO or senior figure, then as of a result of your likely uniqueness, you need to avoid becoming carried away with your own fame or inadvertently becoming the token success story.

so it is very easy to become a star and it's... a very bad place to be for everybody...we need that footprint to be more than one or two and that then normalises the situation...my judgement is we've have largely managed that with women (Regina)

There are potentially many ways of interpreting Regina's comments. However, one point she seems keen to convey is that of cautioning the small number of people perceived to have made it, being recycled across multiple, high profile, fora. This is due to her belief that such individuals run a self-inflicting risk of encouraging a spirit of 'job done' amongst a range of important people including, for example, 'Diversity enthusiasts' or for that matter 'Conscience cleansers'.

it's not unnatural if you spend a lot of time trying to get to that position and then somebody comes around and says gosh...you're the best thing since sliced bread...we're all vulnerable to flattery and self-image (Regina)

There is also a subtler message in Regina's other words which is about encouraging those BAME colleagues who have managed to attain the highest levels of office to understand the need to throw the proverbial rope or ladder back over their shoulders for others to be able to climb to the same heights or beyond. In her view a key issue for anybody wanting to help other BAME prospects, is their credibility. Consequently, the risk is that those colleagues caught in headlights of adulation and flattery may, through a lack of self-awareness, unintentionally create antibodies to such an extent that their ability to influence the wider 'Discovery' and 'Dream' themes becomes limited.

In 'Design' terms, consciousness of the personal and external impact of 'Flattery and self-image' is about those uniquely placed BAME senior gatekeepers, managing excessive praise, dealing with the perceptions of having made it and adopting good role modelling behaviours, which by doing so, create the "boundaries that facilitate" the right kind of "action" (Meier & Geldenhuys, 2017, p. 3).

4.6. Destiny

Hammond (2013, p. 34) describes the 'Destiny' phase as "creating the future you have collectively envisioned" based on "the spirit of a continuous future versus a one-time project that is completed".

Cooperrider et al. (2008, p. 200) also indicate that:

The goal of the Destiny phase is to ensure that the dream can be realized... Like the other phases Destiny is systematic in terms of accommodating and continuing dialogue. Provocative propositions can be revised and updated.

Therefore, to paraphrase, the 'Destiny' phase is the appreciative stage where the realisation of dreams is a focus but not necessarily in the traditional sense of problem-solving, action planning, which by comparison, is more fixed in the language of milestones and solutions leading to results. In this context, 'Destiny' is different and is as much about the ongoing self-awareness and appreciative behaviours of leading organisational and system people (e.g., senior gatekeepers) and the role that they can play in positively influencing a broader coalition of stakeholders towards a desired change.

Based on these conceptual underpinnings, two further themes are developed which are a combination of what might be the key gatekeeping awareness and behavioural opportunities that could contribute towards the realisation of the primary research objective.

4.6.1. Gatekeeper ownership (Theme 18)

Behind many of the themes developed in this chapter sits a presumption that a gatekeeper will act if they are sufficiently motivated and they believe that their visible behaviours will lead to a meaningful change. The success or otherwise of their actions will also be dependent on their belief that they can sufficiently influence any given situation. For example, 'Local community mirroring', a theme developed as a part of the 'Dream' phase, has elements that a gatekeeper may have the motivation to act upon and a desire to influence but it would not be reasonable to set an expectation that such a transformation could happen quickly.

By contrast, 'Diversity enthusiasts' showing enthusiasm for diversity or choosing not to partake in 'Conscience cleansing' is arguably much more in the control or influence of individual

gatekeepers. Therefore, the expectation that some of these important themes can be developed and enacted on is to some extent dependent on the acceptance, appetite and ownership of the gatekeepers themselves.

Based on this context, Debbie's perspective supports the development of the '**Gatekeeper ownership**' theme. By way of example, as a prominent leader within the NHS, she discusses and contrasts the behaviour of the numerically small but powerful NHS gatekeeper community when it both owns and prioritises the need to act versus when it does not.

part of the public sector changes is the way in which they are held to account...I remember going to see [Confidential] arguing...about holding organisations to account...so if we've got to do four hour waits in A&E we find a way to do it...so if we've got to have more BAME people we will find a way to do it...and we're held to account for our CQC (Debbie)

Underpinning Debbie's observation is her encouragement of a greater prioritisation of the BAME senior management challenge through promoting gatekeeper engagement with the WRES. Her advocacy is based on her perception that the relevant gatekeepers could influence the channelling of appropriate attention and resources to any desired aim if they were so inclined.

As a further expansion of Debbie's point about the inclination of gatekeepers to act and deliver, in its initial deployment, the WRES discussed in Chapter One, only applied to public provider organisations in the NHS. It has been difficult to locate the origin of these circumstances but based on Debbie's understanding of this as NHS initiative, it should have been a gatekeeper expectation that all entities related to the NHS would come under the requirements of the standard as they do now.

However, the reality is that from the inception of the WRES in 2014 until recently, not one of the hundreds of Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) or entities such as NHSE, NHSI, CQC or the Department of Health & Social Care (DH&SC) were required to have had regard to the standard.

Debbie's fundamental point is about the commitment of the associated senior level gatekeepers, who in the same way they have rightly seen the importance of prioritising "A&E" service delivery, could have chosen to prioritise the stated BAME challenges but they were patently not so inclined by comparison of ownership behaviours and demonstration of intent.

The point about the choices that gatekeepers make being related to what they keenly view as important, is a particular matter for Arnold who questions the commitment to act and ownership of high-profile gatekeepers that he experienced at an event associated with the BAME subject matter of this thesis.

a couple of other [senior gatekeeper] people spoke and they were dreadful...they were superficial...when s/he said of course we're not very good...saying that we're not good at all...it was...unconvincing (Arnold)

In a problem-solving context, it would perhaps be a discussion point as to whether 'Gatekeeper ownership' could be described as an action when considering the 'Destiny' phase of appreciative inquiry. However, behaviourally, as alluded to by both Debbie and Arnold, either choosing not to act or acting half-heartedly for tick box purposes, would need to be replaced by gatekeeping behaviours which are at the very least authentic and preferably, demonstrated some conviction towards changing the status quo.

4.6.2. Multi-gatekeeping (Theme 19)

As discussed in Chapter Three, each of the research participants **were** selected because they had successfully led, as gatekeepers, on the recruitment and selection of a public sector, BAME CEO. However, what did emerge is that almost all these gatekeepers were often undertaking the gatekeeping role in more than one organisational or institutional context. For example, when Rachel described the context of the organisation where she had been directly involved in the recruitment of a BAME CEO, she exuded confidence about that establishment and the leadership that she and other board members had demonstrated.

...so by 2016 the organisation was in a more confident place and reasonably secure financially (Rachel)

However, she is also a prominent gatekeeper for a long established, national public sector, organisation which has no appointed BAME representation on its board and to her knowledge has never had, despite being responsible for a very large and ethnically diverse group of people. Yet, despite this reality, she held a personal point of conviction that:

we shouldn't have platforms that are not diverse. Anyway I think there are certain things that one just has to try and just get into how we do stuff and this is where I think for women I think that Athena Swan (Gregory-Smith 2018)...it wasn't saying you have to have x number of women but it does say conferences do not take place, science conferences particularly without a woman on the platform (Rachel).

Nonetheless, during the interview process, Rachel had pause for thought when asked to consider the contrast in her stated belief and the fact that in another gatekeeping context, she is on a

gatekeeping platform that is not diverse in terms of ethnicity. Rachel's thought process at that moment in time seemed to trigger for her a couple of moments of important reflection and greater self-awareness - firstly, that she would be a gatekeeper for as long as she occupied prominent decision-making roles; and secondly, that she had multi-gatekeeping responsibilities that perhaps required a more conscious commitment to consistency of approach and application of ideals. There was a sense in observing Rachel's verbal and non-verbal communication in that moment that she experiences what could be described as a positive moment of discomfort as she reflects on the duality of her gatekeeping experiences.

Regina contrasts her '*Multi-gatekeeping*' realities by reflecting upon the different experiences of being on the boards of two separate institutions one of which she described as being more ethnically diverse versus the other.

I suppose it's...not quite as diverse as this one would be... there is an explanation...it may not be a good one but...that board, is very much focused on...optimising its operations...so its...Non-Executive Directors are almost all from the private sector...and almost all from one part of the private sector which is logistics...so whatever [the] reason...I think that is one of the reasons because that board feels very open to me it doesn't feel as if it is a closed board...but the...outcomes haven't been similar to this board (Regina).

Both Rachel's and Regina's conscious reflection and appreciation of their 'Multi-gatekeeping' realities led to this theme being developed under the 'Destiny' umbrella because it clearly could not be taken for granted that all gatekeepers are consciously aware of the likely multiplicity of their gatekeeping status which seems to fit with the appreciative ethos of continuing dialogue and revision of propositions where appropriate. Thus, without a conscious act of being asked to consider what the implications of being a multi-gatekeeper are, it cannot be assumed that senior

gatekeepers would by default understand that a gatekeeping definition such as the following one used in thesis, would transcend more than one organisational context i.e.:

the one or two individuals within a public sector organisational context who through their seniority, line management or regulatory responsibilities are most able to impact and influence the process and decision making relating to the recruitment and selection of suitable BAME, or other, candidate types to the highest executive job position(s) within the organisation(s) or institution(s) for which they have ultimate responsibility (Thesis senior gatekeeper definition).

Through the act of raising consciousness and alerting people to the proposition (or revelation) that they may indeed be a multiple gatekeeper, the synergy with the 'Destiny' phase is about what Whitney & Trosten-Bloom (2010, p. 9) describe as developing "a series of inspired actions that support ongoing learning and innovation".

Therefore, once a senior gatekeeper becomes alerted and mindful of their 'Multi-gatekeeping' potential, this could assist in meeting the challenge of appointing more BAME CEOs through a form of conscious transfer of 'what works' for senior gatekeepers in one organisation to another.

4.7. Conclusion

Across the five phases of the appreciative inquiry research framework, 19 themes, based on 70 research participant contributions and 95 separate quotes, were developed by virtue of a process of meticulous analysis of the research participant interview transcripts, and utilising the 5-D cycle as a pre-existing coding framework as referenced in Chapter Three. These themes and their associated appreciative inquiry phases and the number of research participant quotes used, are shown at Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

19 themes developed across the 5-D appreciative inquiry framework by research participant contribution

| 5-Ds | Theme | Senior gatekeeper research participants | | | | | | | Participant and (quote) count |
|--|---------------------------------|---|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|---------|-------------------------------|
| | | Regina | Debbie | Fred | Patrick | Donald | Arnold | Rachel | |
| Define | Inculcation of the negative | X | X | X | X | | XX | | 5 (6) |
| | Educational attainment | | | X | | | | | 1 (1) |
| | Multiple identities | XX | | | | | | X | 2 (3) |
| | Leadership clique | | | X | XX | | X | X | 4 (5) |
| | Political divisiveness | X | | | | | X | X | 3 (3) |
| | Conscience cleansing | X | XXX | | | | XX | | 3 (6) |
| Discovery | Exemplars | | XX | XX | X | X | XXX | XX | 6 (11) |
| | Diversity enthusiasts | X | X | X | X | X | XXX | XX | 7 (10) |
| | Best person | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | 7 (7) |
| | Appreciate the positive | X | | X | | X | X | | 4 (4) |
| Dream | Talent enabling | X | X | X | XX | XX | X | X | 7 (9) |
| | Local community mirroring | | | X | XX | | | | 2 (3) |
| | Clarity of purpose | | XX | | | X | X | | 3 (4) |
| | Diverse leadership | | X | | X | | XX | XX | 4 (6) |
| Design | Headhunter shaping | XX | X | | X | | | XXX | 4 (7) |
| | Authentic political championing | | X | | | X | | X | 3 (3) |
| | Flattery and self-image | XX | | | | | | | 1 (2) |
| Destiny | Gatekeeper ownership | | X | | | | X | | 2 (2) |
| | Multi-gatekeeping | X | | | | | | XX | 2 (3) |
| Participant and (quote) count | | 11 (14) | 11 (15) | 9 (10) | 9 (12) | 7 (8) | 12 (19) | 11 (17) | 70 (95) |
| Note: one 'X' equals a single quote by a participant; 'XX' equals two quotes; 'XXX' equals three quotes. | | | | | | | | | |

Numerically, Arnold is the biggest contributor to theme development with Donald providing the lowest numeric quote count. Three participants (i.e., Regina, Debbie and Rachel) provide for one quote or more to support the development of at least one theme across each of the 5-Ds, and in general terms, the spread of the research participants' contributions proved sufficient in making theme development possible.

Many of these developed themes reflect varying degrees of appreciative intent, i.e., what is working or could work in the future. Given the generally negative tenet of the established literature discussed in Chapter One, the application of the 5-Ds as both an appreciative stimulus to the interview process and a pre-existing coding framework for analysis, have functioned as intended. This is not to say that all negative perceptions from the research participants have been discounted but on balance, many of these 19 themes support the conceptual thinking discussed at Figure 2.4 and offer the opportunity to positively broaden the spectrum of inquiry relating to the stated BAME CEO challenge. These thematic outputs provide the basis for discussion in the next chapter.

5. Discussion

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the developed themes are discussed further in relation to relevant literature and the potential contribution they make to the primary research objective of appointing more public sector BAME CEOs. Then, as described in the data analysis section of Chapter Three, these themes are filtered down to featured themes for discussion in terms of theoretical and practical opportunities to influence senior gatekeeper practice.

5.2. Developed themes summary

5.2.1. Define

Following detailed analysis of interviews with research participants, Figure 5.1 highlights the six themes developed under the 5-D phase of 'Define'.

Figure 5.1

Define themes



Five of these ‘Define’ based themes have synergy with aspects of the extant literature. For example, the ‘Inculcation of the negative’ theme, reflects earlier discussion regarding the “Concrete Ceiling” study of Davidson (1997). In the graphic shown at Figure 1.3, Davidson (1997, p. 99) depicts multiple barriers to career progression for BAME Women Managers’ and in doing so produces a negative narrative sourced directly from her research participants but with less emphasis on better prospects for a more positive future. A further example of inculcating the negative is its synergy with van Dijk’s (2008, p. 102) assertion that “discourse” can play “a vital role in the reproduction of contemporary racism”. This theme is a real example of how discourse which perhaps is grounded in sharing knowledge, addressing or sounding the alarm in respect to a specific problem, may also play a role in perpetuating the very same problem.

The 'Political divisiveness' and 'Leadership clique' themes are also reflected in existing literature. This is shown in the discussions about a lack of collaborative political will to change behaviour as demonstrated in the various Policing and the NHS examples used and the preservation of a current leadership model which perpetuates the existence of leadership by non-BAME people (Wadsworth & Wilson, 2010; Kline, 2014; House of Commons, 2016; Saggar 2016).

As referenced previously, the 'Educational attainment' theme comes from the perception of a single research participant. It is acknowledged that there is established literature (Judge, Cable, Boudreau, & Bretz, 1995), which correlates educational achievement with career progression but in this context the perspective of Goldacre et al. (2004) is used to suggest that comparative attainment levels in the NHS (Figure 4.1) are less likely to be a factor now in terms of appointing more BAME CEOs.

The 'Multiple identities' theme is linked to a perceived weakness in using broad generic descriptors (e.g., BAME) when attempting to characterise and make distinctions about the behaviours of individuals or communities of people. However, there is literature, which suggests that the dilemma and risk of relying on single identity descriptions is understood, as evidenced by Kandola (2009, loc. 918) who stated that:

Forging identities – creating categories. Social identity theory proposes the idea that each of us has not just one 'self' but many. Our different selves come to the fore depending on our social context. These selves correspond to widening social groups (Kandola, 2009, loc. 918).

Of the six themes developed, 'Conscience cleansing' has less compatibility with existing literature, which is perhaps not surprising as one of the central arguments of this thesis is that the dominant

literature (Kline, 2014; Saggar, 2016; McGregor-Smith, 2017) has underplayed the role and behaviours of senior gatekeepers. Therefore, it is argued that associated cleansing behaviours and direct approaches to addressing any subsequent consequences are less likely to have been considered in depth by scholars and are therefore considered as a novel contribution to knowledge.

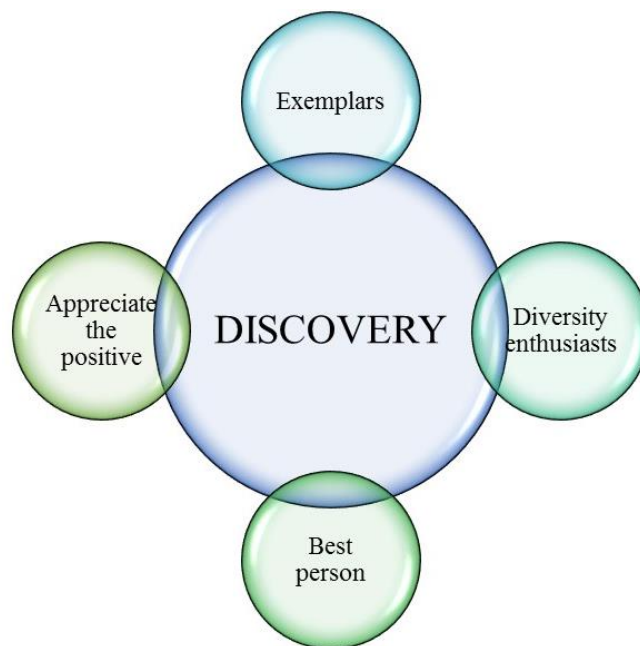
Furthermore, consideration is given to the possibility of ‘Conscience cleansing’ having links to concepts such as “tokenism theory” (Kanter, 1977; Stichman, Hassell, & Archbold, 2010). However, like the primary literature explored in this study, much of the scholarly focus is on the “tokens” (i.e., the recipients of tokenism), as opposed to the action and role of those specific gatekeepers who set the conditions for tokenism to thrive or otherwise.

5.2.2. Discovery

Figure 5.2 highlights the four ‘Discovery’ themes that emerged from analysis of research participant interviews.

Figure 5.2

Discovery themes



In general, these four ‘Discovery’ based themes can be characterised as a mixture of common and expected traits in research participants whilst others provide for insight into what makes them comparatively unique as senior gatekeepers. In terms of uniqueness, the emerged theme of ‘Exemplars’ provided for an alternative narrative to the generally accepted view of negativity regarding organisations and institutions such as the NHS and Police (Bridges, 1999; Kline, 2014; Morris, 2015; House of Commons, 2016). Under the ‘Exemplars’ theme these same organisations are essentially portrayed as potential beacons of hope by some of these gatekeepers and viewed through an appreciative lens. The existence of such a world-view would perhaps surprise some

scholars but the presence of this more positive outlook is important, as it supports a central tenet of this thesis that is about broadening the spectrum of inquiry as illustrated in Figure 2.4 and the increased opportunities for the advancement of knowledge as a result.

The identification of primarily black figureheads as leaders in the area of diversity and race (Figure 4.2) is another unexpected insight in terms of learning. It created the question as to whether this mattered or is there a potential inference that when this group of senior gatekeepers thought of diversity based on race, for them it is considered in terms of a black identity. It could also be that subconsciously there is a connection made to the thesis researcher being black but at this stage of analysing the findings, such thoughts are left unanswered.

The development of the 'Diversity enthusiasts' theme fits with the role of senior gatekeepers proactively managing diversity to reduce the prospects of snowy white peaks and its underlying issues of systemic BAME discrimination (Agócs & Burr, 1996; Bridges, 1999; Beck et al., 2002; Kline, 2014; Harris & Ogbonna, 2016; Squires, 2017). This theme also reflects the broader scholarly enthusiasm towards describing the importance of diversity and the role it plays in making organisations more effective and promoting better prospects for society in general. Indeed, such is the scholarly passion and enthusiasm for diversity, there is a case that perhaps the literature is over dominant and does not readily encourage alternative and opposing perspectives such as those advocated by Noon (2007) who challenges the efficacy and purported impacts of the business case for diversity and the premise of the need for development activities such as 'unconscious bias training' (Noon, 2018).

The potential for a unique contribution for learning from the ‘Diversity enthusiasts’ theme comes from the level of self-awareness and cognizance that research participants demonstrated regarding the potential impact of their and others enthusiasm about diversity. Whilst participants are very clear about the benefits of being ‘Diversity enthusiasts’, they are also acutely aware that there is an alternative, self-reflective, perspective which if left unchecked could have a detrimental impact to realising the opportunities that they believe diversity provides. For example, the unchecked behaviour of communicating to an ‘echo chamber’ of fellow ‘Diversity enthusiasts’ and/or the capacity to blame others who are deemed to be outside of the inner circle of diversity understanding and practice.

Regarding the emerged themes of ‘Best person’ and ‘Appreciate the positive’, their thematic development is perhaps less of a surprise other than to make the point that as far as these themes are concerned, they emphasise more commonality with what might be expected from gatekeepers in general. Therefore, whilst they are interesting themes, they very much mirror established scholarly thinking relating to some gatekeeping behaviours, for example, Muschewske (2008 p. 30), who highlights the need for ‘Best person’ thinking, by describing the need for “a rigorous step-by-step evaluation process...to confirm the best person for the job”. Also, Koteff (2004, p. 21) who through using examples relating to Ronald Reagan’s affirmative leadership abilities, emphasises the importance of positive leadership which encompasses “optimism” and persuades “people to follow”, and is “a sure-fire way to win friends and influence people” towards better results.

Consequently, as a part of exploring the themes of ‘Best person’ and ‘Appreciate the positive’ through the wider literature, a judgement is made that these are less likely to have impact on the

stated primary research objective by comparison with the insights and nuance associated with the ‘Exemplars’ and ‘Diversity enthusiasts’ themes.

5.2.3. Dream

There are four ‘Dream’ themes developed from analysing research participant interviews, which are shown in Figure 5.3.

Figure 5.3

Dream themes



The research participant responses that led to the development of the ‘Local community mirroring’ theme, match the established literature (Wadsworth & Wilson, 2010; Kline et al., 2014; 2016),

which strongly argues that organisations should be reflective of local communities. For example, McGregor-Smith (2017, p. 1) could not be more explicit when she recommends that:

Any organisation that is publicly funded must set and publish targets to ensure they are representative of the taxpayers they deliver for. The Government should go further and ensure that it is driving behaviour change in the private sector too. Anyone tendering for a public sector contract should have to show what steps they are taking to make their workplaces more inclusive in order to be awarded a contract. (McGregor-Smith, 2017, p. 1).

However, what is less clear, in this context, is the meaning of ‘local community’. For example, according to Lancashire County Council (2012) data, the organisation serves a population of 1,171,339 people based on the 2011 census. Black and minority ethnic (BME) people form 7.7% of the total population.

The County Council’s main head office is in its largest sub population area of Preston, which according to the same census data has a BME population of just below one in five people (19.5%) across a total sub County population of 140,200 (Lancashire County Council, 2012).

Of the elected leadership of the Council, 60 (91%) of the 66 elected members state their ethnicity as white. In addition, the ethnicity of its workforce shows that 473 employees self-identify as BME; 7744 as White; 982 as unknown with 6453 leaving the ethnicity survey field blank altogether. Excluding, unknown and blanks this means that the percentage self-certified workforce for the Council can be calculated as BME 5.8% and White at 94.2%.

Based on these numbers, if the concept of ‘Local community mirroring’ as described by research participants is applied to Lancashire County Council, the ethnicity/race dimension of ‘mirroring’

would be described as marginally failing. That is, 5.8% BME staff compared to 7.7% as a BME percentage of the total Lancashire population. On the other hand, would the Council be fundamentally failing by comparison with, for example, Preston that has a BME population of 19.5%? This is a crude case study analysis, but it emphasises the point that a future concept of ‘Local community mirroring’ would really need some detailed defining if it were to be deemed as a theme to focus on in the future.

The three other themes developed are not new concepts either in terms of established literature but as Bushe (2011, p. 3) suggests, “the dream phase often results in something more symbolic, like a graphical representation, than a mission statement”. Regarding the ‘Clarity of purpose’ theme, one of the core points made by research participants is the importance they place on being clear about their convictions and the need to provide clarity of purpose to the organisations for which they are responsible. Their perspective overlaps with existing scholarly principles such as those advocated by Sullivan (2013, p. 132) who suggests that leadership involves making fundamental choices and that “a choice wholeheartedly embraced creates clarity of purpose”.

The ‘Diverse leadership’ theme also, in part, has overlap with the ‘Diversity enthusiasts’ theme in that it is built on a central proposition that the concept of diversity has importance (Moule, 2009; Kline, 2014; Harris & Ogbonna, 2016; Ferdman, 2018). However, the former theme focuses on representation and the role that diversity plays in the quality of high-level, hierarchical, decision-making and representation, whereas the latter emphasises the inherent core diversity values that senior gatekeepers believe - with an understanding that such values can be limiting through a lack of self-awareness thereof. As highlighted in Figure 1.2, the model adapted from Rittel & Webber (1973) and Van der Walt et al. (2006), reflects the conceptual similarity between the developed

‘Diverse leadership’ theme and the established scholarly view about the impact of diversity on high-level decision making and representation, albeit with the caveat that context is important.

Like the other themes developed under the ‘Dream’ phase, ‘Talent enabling’ has synergy with an established body of literature, for example, Savanevičienė & Vilčiauskaitė (2017, p. 243) indicate that in general:

Talent management is the most important competence for the forward-looking companies, and such factors as demographic changes, mobility, globalisation, the economic climate, and business transformation only confirm its importance (Savanevičienė & Vilčiauskaitė, 2017, p. 243).

More specifically and not unsurprisingly given the main conclusions from Chapter One, Powell, Duberley, Exworthy, Macfarlane, & Moss (2013, p. 302) signal that as far as “BME” talent advancement is concerned:

Most SHAs [Strategic Health Authorities] recognise that BME staff in existing senior management and talent pipelines are not representative of the workforce or community. For example, the data on senior management ‘does tell a familiar story that is of little surprise. The senior leadership population is predominantly white, male, and in the higher age brackets’ (Powell et al., 2013, p. 302).

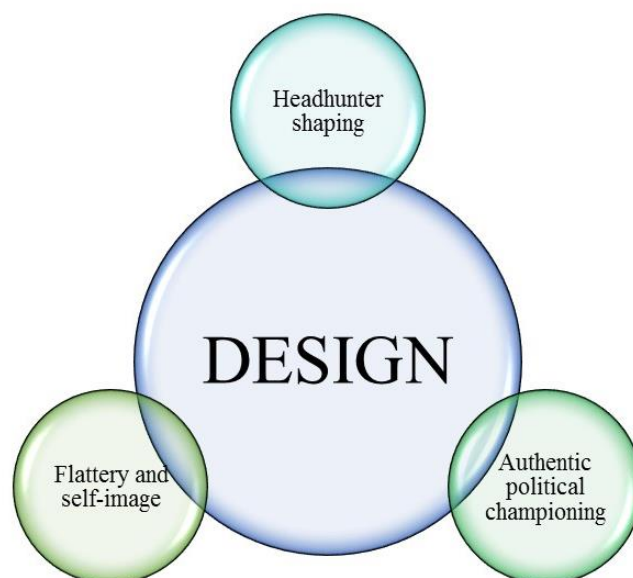
Notwithstanding these established scholarly points, the core debate that exists within the ‘Talent enabling’ theme amongst senior gatekeepers is the degree to which the talent is believed to be already in existence or needs to be further developed and nurtured. Both perspectives are likely to be relevant and therefore future talent enabling strategies would need to have a sufficiently blended approach if they are to impact on the primary research objective.

5.2.4. Design

There are three ‘Design’ themes developed from analysing research participant interviews, which are shown in Figure 5.4.

Figure 5.4

Design themes



The ‘Headhunter shaping’ theme is an important contribution to knowledge as the extant literature (Kline et al., 2013, 2014, 2016; Tulsiani & Phillips, 2014; Parker, 2016) is largely silent on the role that individual gatekeepers play in shaping the outputs and outcomes of executive headhunters who are important “intermediaries” in the recruitment and selection process (Faulconbridge et al., 2009, p. 801). McGregor-Smith, (2017) bucks this trend slightly in that she does advocate for direct involvement of “HR directors” (p. 5) and points out that:

Many larger organisations now use recruitment agencies to source new employees. This is a great opportunity to ensure that a more diverse pool of talent is considered during the recruitment process, and some agencies even specialise in diverse recruitment. Organisations should set their recruitment agencies clear guidelines for the level of diversity required, taking into account local demographics (McGregor-Smith, 2017, p. 22).

However, McGregor-Smith, (2017) only references HR directors once, before quickly getting drawn back into the more established discourse of “unconscious bias...senior teams” and “organisations”, none of which cuts directly to the accountability of those key senior gatekeepers who are at the heart of this thesis.

All but one of the research participants used external headhunter services in the instances of recruiting their respective BAME CEOs and the majority confirmed that they had been the lead commissioner and specifier of the headhunter services used to recruit the subsequently successful BAME candidate.

In practical terms, the theme of ‘Headhunter shaping’ is perhaps more in the span of influence of gatekeepers than by contrast with that of ‘Authentic political championing’. Albeit that some of the research participants held lead political roles at the time of interview, it is still more realistic and pragmatic to imagine them, as gatekeepers, determining the contribution of recruitment and selection companies than shifting the political ethos that exists within their own political parties as well as that of others.

As discussed previously, the theme of ‘Authentic political championing’, is envisaged by research respondents to represent a future where politicians would not fear being accountable but take pride in demonstrating their personal and political commitment to the cause of diversity and in part the

primary research objective of this thesis. The two political statements referenced in Chapter One (Blair, 1997; May 2018) are arguably authentic examples of this form of political championing but given the passage of time, to what degree are these statements ‘Conscience cleansing’ at play versus genuine acts of authenticity? As a theme, ‘Authentic political championing’, would seem to have connectivity with the established literature regarding authentic political leadership which is described by Iszatt-White, Whittle, Gadelshina, & Mueller (2018) as featuring “a clear sense of their ethical values...that leads them to act transparently and enact their values in their leadership behaviour”. However, the expectation that this theme would play a prominent role in the appointment of more BAME CEOs anytime soon is very low.

The third theme of ‘Flattery and self-image’ is developed from a single senior gatekeeper and is not corroborated by other research participants and therefore it would be harder to argue for greater prominence over that of the other two themes that emerged in the ‘Design’ phase. As a theme, ‘Flattery and self-image’ is built on an argument concerned with ensuring that, for example, those BAME colleagues that have made it over the line and become successful CEOs, need to guard against the trappings of fame and excessive praise, and avoid becoming carried away and inadvertently being used as the token success story.

These are complicated and nuanced thoughts and therefore there is not much in the established literature that could be described as comparable. Yet, it is perhaps an insight that in the future it may be worth revisiting and exploring more fully. as it is the ‘Flattery and self-image’ themes underlying sentiment regarding self-awareness and being grounded that would appear to have validity in terms of the ongoing discourse.

5.2.5. Destiny

There are two ‘Destiny’ themes developed from analysing research participant interviews, which are shown in Figure 5.5.

Figure 5.5

Destiny themes



The developed ‘Gatekeeper ownership’ theme has links to the Lewin perspective of gatekeepers and his view that “their decisions depend partly on their ideology - that is, their system of values and beliefs which determine what they consider to be “good” or “bad” (Lewin, 1997, pp. 300-301). Their ideological position not only influences how they think but what they are prepared to do. It is for these reasons that ‘Gatekeeper ownership’ is categorised as a part of the ‘Destiny’ phase

because without a conscious decision to take ownership of the BAME senior management issue then the evidence points to the status quo, of at least the last two decades, remaining in place.

In this study, some of the senior gatekeeping research respondents describe their direct involvement in, and ownership of, the recruitment process which eventually led to them to recruiting a BAME CEO, and through this study they provide key points of a roadmap to potentially assist other gatekeepers. However, unless these other gatekeepers truly choose to take ownership and proactively change their perspective on who is, as Lewin (1997, pp. 300–301) would say, “in” or “out”, then no amount of showing the way is going to result in significantly more BAME CEOs being appointed in the public sector.

The second theme of ‘Multi-gatekeeping’ focusses on the act of generating awareness amongst senior gatekeepers so that if they undertake gatekeeping roles across multiple organisations they are alerted and mindful of their opportunity to share good practice in relation to the challenge of appointing more BAME CEOs. Obviously, as far as this study goes, the aim is to achieve a form of conscious transfer of ‘what works’ for senior gatekeepers in one organisation to another and as (hopefully) the numbers of senior gatekeepers with positive, BAME related, recruitment experiences grow, then their opportunities to share cross-institutional best practice will grow likewise.

In the context of the 5-Ds, the development of the ‘Multi-gatekeeping’ theme as a part of the ‘Destiny’ phase may initially seem odd as it can be misinterpreted as leaning towards problem-solving and action as discussed previously. However, the development of the ‘Multi-gatekeeping’ theme very much fits with Cooperrider et al. (2001, p. 16) and their thoughts about the ‘Destiny’

phase being about “liberation” of thinking and certainly Hammond’s (2013, p. 33) perspective of “appreciation as time goes on”. If by placing continuous emphasis on ‘Multi-gatekeeping’, proactive steps are taken to get gatekeepers to think about the consistency of applying appreciative behaviours across multiple roles, this will feel like a positive step in the right direction.

In terms of wider literature and the developed theme of ‘Multi-gatekeeping’, Chang (2016) discusses “organizational ambidexterity” which is about the flexibility of behaviours that are required as a part of multi-functional leadership. In another study about isomorphism across organisations, DiMaggio & Powell (1983, p. 148) suggest that “once a field becomes well established...there is an inexorable push towards homogenization”. Both these studies have elements of what is imputed to the ‘Multi-gatekeeping’ theme, for example, the principles of flexibility implied in “ambidexterity”, and the harmonisation of established patterns of behaviour which is described in the isomorphic concept. However, both “ambidexterity” and “isomorphic” concepts are predominantly focused on organisations and therefore have much less emphasis on the importance and replication of positive, individual, gatekeeping behaviours that are a key part of the ‘Multi-gatekeeping’ theme (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Chang, 2016).

5.3. Featured themes

As described in the data analysis process discussed in Chapter Three, these original 19 themes are subsequently filtered down to a smaller number of featured themes. The purpose of focusing on these featured themes is to further understand how the thematic output from the 5-D, appreciative inquiry, framework can be refined to influence changes in “practice” amongst senior gatekeepers (Wellington & Sikes, 2006, p. 725).

This is important given the weight attributed to senior gatekeepers throughout this study and the potential for providing practical building blocks for gatekeepers in general, diversity practitioners and scholars to positively impact on the primary research objective. Moreover, by reducing the initial areas of thematic focus to four featured themes, it is believed that it will increase the chances of direct consideration and adoption by gatekeepers who are described in Chapter Three as time poor, busy people.

In identifying these featured themes, a filter process is applied consisting of the following elements of 1) corroborated, 2) potential for a significant contribution, and 3) gatekeeper span of influence. These were illustrated previously in Figure 3.2.

The ‘corroborated’ element is based on the degree to which an emerged theme is supported by the thoughts of two or more fellow research participants. As a result, the ‘Educational attainment’ and ‘Flattery and self-image’ themes are filtered out, even though both demonstrate the potential to be revisited for further research purposes at a point in the future.

Regarding the second filter, the earlier approach in this chapter of synthesising the developed 5-D themes against known literature, informs the ‘potential for a significant contribution’ filter. In some instances, this synthesis demonstrates that some themes overlap with existing literature as well as indicating the themes where there are potential gaps or disagreement with traditional scholarly opinion. For example, whilst the ‘Talent enabling’ theme provides for a thought-provoking window into the feelings of research participants, the comparative literature indicates that this theme could not be substantially developed beyond a “consolidatory” contribution to

knowledge and therefore it is not taken forward as a featured theme (Nicholson et al., 2018, p. 210).

A further example of the second filter in action relates to the ‘Inculcation of the negative’ theme. As discussed earlier in this chapter, this theme reinforces the omission identified in existing literature pertaining to the focus on ‘what is not working’. This leads to it being discounted as a featured theme on the basis that it would be hypocritical of this study to adopt and provide a spotlight on the very same discourse that is highlighted as a gap in the established literature.

Regarding the third filter relating to the ‘gatekeeper span of influence’, the thought process behind this is previously touched upon in the example of the theme of ‘Local community mirroring’ in that a gatekeeper’s direct influence on the makeup of their population community or customer base is limited. This same lack of gatekeeper influence also applies to themes such as ‘Political divisiveness’ and ‘Authentic political championing” where generally, to reduce the former and promote the latter, has in recent times been beyond the capability of some national political party gatekeepers. Therefore, to expect other senior gatekeepers to make significant inroads on these themes in a timely manner is unreasonable.

The ‘gatekeeper span of influence’ is a key filter given the importance placed on the role of senior gatekeepers in this thesis and the development of the following definition:

the one or two individuals within a Public Sector organisational context who through their seniority, line management or regulatory responsibilities are most able to impact and influence the process and decision making relating to the recruitment and selection of suitable BAME, or other, candidate types to the highest executive job position(s) within the organisation(s) or institution(s) for which they have ultimate responsibility (Thesis senior gatekeeper definition).

This third filter is perhaps the most subjective of the three filters applied because, as well as incorporating the views of the research participants and established literature, it is also reliant on the senior gatekeeping and candidate experiences of the author as expressed in the statement of positionality of Chapter One and the researcher reflexivity covered in Chapter Three.

Table 5.1 highlights how the filter process is applied to each of the 19 themes leading to the identification of the four themes that are deemed to have met all three of the selected filter criteria.

Table 5.1

Featured themes

| 5-Ds | Theme | Corroborated | Potential for a significant contribution | Gatekeeper span of influence |
|-----------|---------------------------------|--------------|--|------------------------------|
| Define | Inculcation of the negative | X | | |
| | Educational attainment | | X | |
| | Multiple identities | X | | |
| | Leadership clique | X | | |
| | Political divisiveness | X | | |
| | Conscience cleansing | X | X | X |
| Discovery | Exemplars | X | X | |
| | Diversity enthusiasts | X | X | X |
| | Best person | X | | |
| | Appreciate the positive | X | | X |
| Dream | Talent enabling | X | | X |
| | Local community mirroring | X | | |
| | Clarity of purpose | X | | X |
| | Diverse leadership | X | | |
| Design | Headhunter shaping | X | X | X |
| | Authentic political championing | X | | |
| | Flattery and self-image | | X | |
| Destiny | Gatekeeper ownership | X | X | X |
| | Multi-gatekeeping | X | X | |

The identification of Conscience cleansing, Diversity enthusiasts, Headhunter shaping and Gatekeeper ownership means that no featured theme is drawn from the 'Dream' phase. This is of limited consequence as the 5-Ds are primarily used as a pre-existing coding framework (Garson, 2016) and no assumption has been made in the research approach that either emergent or featured themes had to be generated across each of the five appreciative phases. In addition, as stated about

other non-featured themes, just because they did not become a further point of focus for this thesis, does not mean that they are excluded from any future consideration beyond the completion of the DBA.

5.4. Featured themes and suggested changes in practice

As referenced previously, the overarching reason for developing the featured themes is linked to facilitating sustainable changes to senior gatekeeper practice in the context of the primary research objective (Lewin, 1997; Wellington & Sikes, 2006). Therefore, this part of the chapter provides suggestions as to how each of the featured themes could be developed and how, as a combination of themes, they may positively influence senior gatekeeper behaviour into the future.

Regarding ‘Conscience cleansing’ behaviours, the aim is to limit the degree to which any gatekeeper indulges in such activity. Suggestions as to how this behaviour could be better managed include developing higher levels of self-awareness amongst gatekeepers and cultivating accountability strategies, which positively recognise the efforts of individuals to make a personal change and reduce ‘Conscience cleansing’ activity. Critics could argue that these suggested remedies are a contradictory attempt to problem solve, but this would miss the point that the origins of these featured themes come from an overarching process of appreciation and learning from those senior gatekeepers who have a record of achieving unique outcomes. On this basis, a more pointed criticism might be that what is good practice by one group of gatekeepers is not easily transferable to others and in some respects only time will tell. However, what has been established is that a novel theme such as ‘Conscious cleansing’ has come about through exploring ‘what works’ as opposed to the traditional approach of focusing on what has not been working.

When considering the ‘Diversity enthusiasts’ theme, it is perhaps easy to fall into a discourse, which makes an ‘opposites’ contrast with ‘Conscience cleansing’. However, such thinking overlooks the point developed in the ‘Multi-gatekeeping’ theme, which is the possibility that a senior gatekeeper could simultaneously occupy both a ‘Conscience cleansing’ and a ‘Diversity enthusiasts’ position across multiple gatekeeping responsibilities.

A further point relating to the ‘Diversity enthusiasts’ theme is that it is a miscalculation to assume that such a perspective is automatically a positive attribute for meeting the primary research objective. Granted, that as a gatekeeper, being enthusiastic about diversity is evidently a supporting activity to achieving the primary research objective but as outlined in the ‘Discovery’ phase, there are aspects of the ‘Diversity enthusiasts’ position which if left unchecked are potentially counterproductive.

Figure 5.6 gives some initial consideration as to what it might take from an enlightened gatekeeping perspective, to ensure ‘Diversity enthusiasts’ demonstrate their conviction in a way that positively advances the associated BAME issues. As a part of this thought process, the palpable enthusiasm from research participants for diversity has been considered, leading to the collapsing of the term, ‘Diversity enthusiasts’ to that of being described as ‘Diversiasts’. This may seem gimmicky; however, it serves a purpose of highlighting that whilst some gatekeepers may be strong and passionate advocates for the role of diversity, they should not be assumed to be a majority (Noon, 2007) and as far as this research suggests, they should be considered a minority amongst senior gatekeepers in general.

Nevertheless, it is contended that based on the opinions of research participants, ‘Diversiasts’ are an important senior gatekeeper grouping who are committed to practising the art of ‘Diversiasm’ which is built on unwavering enthusiasm for the cause of diversity across a variety of characteristics such as age, race, sexual orientation, gender, disability, liberalism etc. (Ferdman, 2018).

Taking this thinking a step further, the interpretation of ‘Skilled diversiasts’ illustrated in Figure 5.6, is based on subjective statements borne from the practical experience and positionality of the researcher. These statements suggest what gatekeepers might need to consider as diversity champions who do not alienate or create fear in others as a result of their personal commitment to diversity.

Figure 5.6

Skilled diversiasts



In Figure 5.6 the more ‘Skilled diversiasts’ position is proffered as a set of behaviours and thoughts, which if outwardly practised could create the conditions where other senior gatekeepers would feel less inclined to resort to ‘Conscience cleansing’.

This suggested difference between ‘Skilled diversiasts’ and the ‘Unskilled’ counterpart may seem overly nuanced to be understood or accepted as material. However, it is worth reflecting that at a broader macro level, the BAME % of the UK population is forecast to rise from current levels in 2018 of 13%-14% to just under 21% in 2031; and nearly 32% in 2056 (Rees, Wohland, Norman & Boden, 2012). Therefore, expectations regarding more BAME leaders being in senior management positions such as the CEO are likely to grow and consequently, it would seem reasonable to advocate for developing greater numbers of skilled gatekeeping ‘Diversiasts’ who

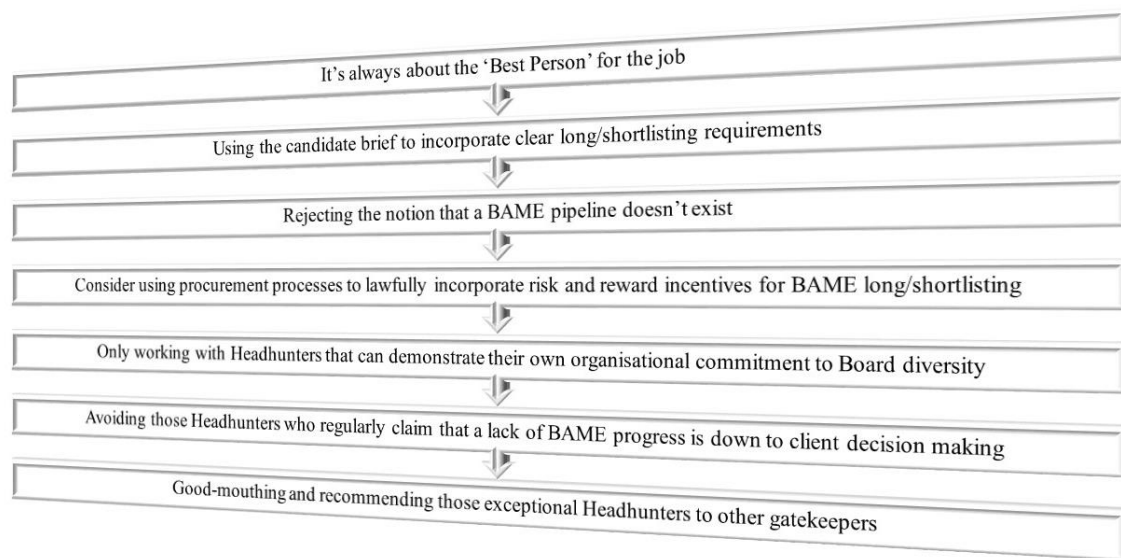
can play a role in positively facilitating this transition at both the societal and organisational levels. After all, the very gatekeepers in question will ultimately continue to be significant in terms of societal influence as they are typically the people in positions of comparative power to the rest of the population.

The sentiment of ongoing gatekeeper influence is also pertinent to the featured theme of 'Headhunter shaping'. As discussed by Faulconbridge et al. (2009, p. 807), "search firms have transformed recruitment practices and constructed themselves a position of power in elite labour markets". Faulconbridge et al. (2009, p. 807) also add that this benefits "those with Anglo-American origins" and that "it might be expected that in the UK and USA client behaviours are very similar".

Muzio, Hodgson, Faulconbridge, Beaverstock, & Hall (2011, p. 458) also imply that executive search "procurement guidelines and best practices can influence market behaviour". Based on these perspectives and the less than flattering opinions of research participants discussed in Chapter Four, the theme of 'Headhunter shaping' has been developed (see Figure 5.7) into a set of suggested principles which would enable senior gatekeepers to take back "power" in the context of BAME senior management recruitment and selection (Faulconbridge et al., 2009, p. 807).

Figure 5.7

Headhunter shaping



Starting with a 'Best person' principle and ending with the notion of 'Good-mouthing', the series of principles shown in Figure 5.7 mirror some of the thoughts expressed by McGregor-Smith (2017, p. 5) who, in her BAME career progression report, promoted the need to "examine recruitment". However, the core distinction between these "Headhunter shaping" principles and the views of McGregor (2017, p. 5) is that in this study, responsibility for enacting is not delegated to "HR directors" or the "Senior team" but to the very senior gatekeepers who based on this research sample are more likely to be Council Leaders and Chairs of NHS provider organisations.

The final (and fourth) featured theme of 'Gatekeeper ownership' is presented as the metaphorical umbrella for the desired senior gatekeeper behaviours and would consist of gatekeeping accountability and changes in practice built upon the practical application of the featured themes of headhunter shaping; limiting conscience cleansing and developing as a skilled diversist. Alongside, this would be the enactment of a default approach by senior gatekeepers to appreciatively seek out the thinking and behaviours of gatekeeping success as outlined across the broader thematic output. A further component of this theme will be the need to develop the matters

discussed in this thesis into publishable content, which can then form the basis for communicating and generating discussion across wider groups of gatekeepers and stimulating the process of altering practice as suggested.

5.5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has considered each of the 19 themes developed by means of the 5-D research framework used to analyse the views extracted from the interview transcripts of the seven research participants. These original themes were subsequently filtered down to four featured themes. The purpose of this was to understand how the thematic output from the 5-D framework, could be further refined to describe how increasing individual accountability and the “practice” of senior gatekeepers could be influenced towards addressing the primary research objective of having more BAME CEOs (Wellington & Sikes, 2006). These examples of putting the featured themes into practice form a part of discussing the claimed contribution to knowledge and study limitations / opportunities discussed in the next chapter.

6. Conclusion

6.1. Introduction

This chapter includes a conceptual model that provides for a single page view of the key topics from the literature reviewed during this study. The model also blends the literature and the ‘featured themes’ that have been developed and illustrates the key components that form a part of addressing the primary research objective in the future.

This chapter also includes a claim of a contribution to knowledge arising from this study before concluding with an assessment of limitations and opportunities.

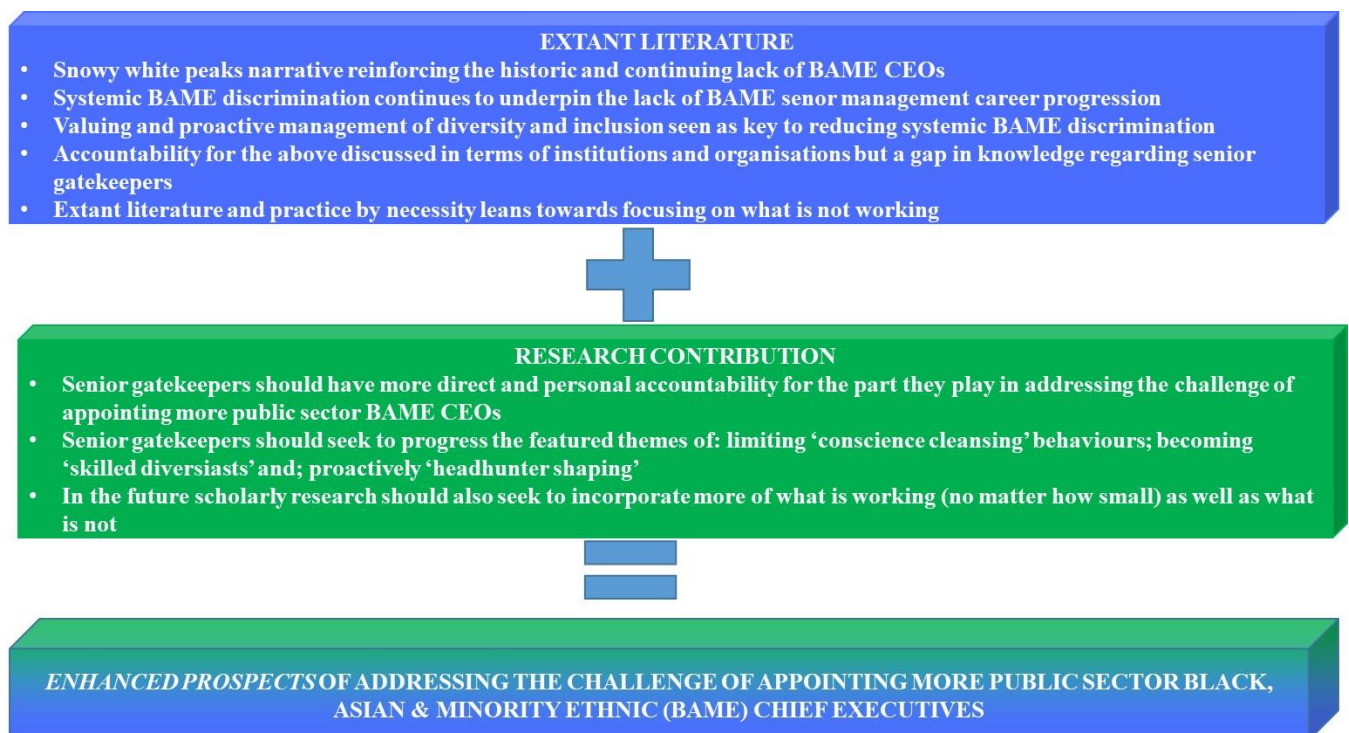
6.2. BAME CEO enhanced prospects model

The four ‘featured themes’ in Chapter Five were appreciatively generated from the opinions, thoughts and described behaviours of seven senior gatekeepers who each have a unique record of accomplishment regarding the recruitment of BAME CEOs. As research participants, these gatekeepers demonstrated ownership of their respective recruitment processes and a general awareness of conscience cleansing behaviours and the potential negative impact if left unchecked. In addition, the committed diversiasts amongst these gatekeepers were sophisticated enough to know when the attributes of diversity needed to be either reigned in or further projected. Equally, during their CEO associated recruitment and selection processes, most of these gatekeepers had taken proactive steps to shape what they wanted from their headhunters or internal HR teams.

However, it would perhaps be an over claim to guarantee that the transference of these featured themes to other gatekeepers would automatically result in more BAME CEOs being appointed. Nevertheless, it is argued that, through a combination of the findings in Chapter Four and the subsequent discussion in Chapter Five, the themed views of these research participants can contribute to knowledge in a way that suggests that the prospects of appointing more BAME CEOs could be enhanced. Figure 5.8 conceptually models how these featured themes and other contributory factors such as an appreciative discourse, could work in conjunction with key aspects of the extant literature, which is discussed in Chapter One, to enhance the prospects of having more BAME CEOs.

Figure 5.8

BAME CEO enhanced prospects model



This conceptual model is not proffered as an either / or scenario, as no evidence has been identified through this study which would suggest that, for example, the associated negative discourse of the extant literature will (or should) not exist at a point in the future and that key concepts such as systemic BAME discrimination will not warrant attention. However, like the widening of ‘spectrum’ thinking discussed at the conclusion of Chapter Three, there is scope for a more appreciative worldview to coexist alongside the more established discourse of the extant literature, thereby expanding the theoretical and practical opportunities for the primary research objective of this study to be met.

6.3. Claimed contribution to knowledge

The definition of ‘Senior gatekeepers’ developed in Chapter One and the specific focus placed on this group of elite decision makers throughout this study, is proffered as a significant contribution to knowledge. The justification for this claim is made on the basis that the findings of this study build upon Lewin’s (1997, p. 300) descriptive assessment of the power and influence of gatekeepers, by advancing a perspective that senior gatekeepers, as defined in Chapter One, should have more direct and personal accountability for the part they play in addressing the challenge of appointing more public sector BAME CEOs, to at least reflect the prevailing UK BAME working age population percentage.

In addition to establishing the importance of senior gatekeepers and the need for them to have greater levels of accountability and ownership, this study uses the views of a purposive sample of successful gatekeepers to develop thematic examples of what, in the context of the primary research objective, good gatekeeping practice looks like now and potentially for the future.

Chapter Five provides for a focus on the ‘featured themes’ developed from the views of these gatekeeping research participants and the outputs from these are claimed as a further part of this contribution to knowledge. The justification for this is twofold in that these ‘featured themes’ provide for perfectly reasonable but novel descriptions of positive senior gatekeeping behaviour and demonstrate how gatekeepers can be held accountable. Moreover, and integral to the claim of a contribution, the accountability for progression of these ‘featured themes’ is envisaged as being exclusively placed with the individual senior gatekeepers as defined in this study and not, other senior individuals (e.g., HR Directors) or ambiguously described groupings such as ‘senior management’ or ‘the organisation’, which the established literature tends to prefer.

Based on this targeted focus on the senior gatekeeper, it is contended that no existing scholarly (or practitioner) work has been identified that features examples of good senior gatekeeping practice, leading to successful diversity outcomes, which could claim to contribute to knowledge in this way.

6.4. Limitations and future opportunities

There are limitations to this research, which may also proffer opportunities for further research. For example, inquiry of an appreciative nature tends to focus on the glass half full and there are those critics who would say that this research lacks the balancing perspectives of most senior gatekeepers who have never appointed a BAME candidate to any position of seniority. This would be a reasonable criticism but like all research this is a contribution to a topical area of interest and

there would be nothing to stop a further focus on the wider group of senior gatekeepers in the future.

It is also the case that the 'enhanced prospects model' highlighted at Figure 5.8, does leave the question as to whether the described components are particularly unique to the circumstances of either BAME CEOs or senior management for that matter. There is perhaps an argument that you could replace the BAME acronym with 'Gender' or 'Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ)' and the core principles of the senior gatekeeper and the associated practical steps would still apply. This is not a claim being made in this thesis as there is insufficient evidence to draw enough conclusions either way but the question as to whether the findings of this research are specific to BAME CEOs or have a role across broader themes of diversity is a legitimate query - which will hopefully be considered further by scholars and practitioners.

The importance placed on senior gatekeepers is perhaps a statement of the obvious. However, this research did leave open the scholarly question as to why much of the prominent literature and suggested best practice has shied away from explicitly placing emphasis and accountability on this vital group of stakeholders. This is somewhat mystifying given the 'hiding in plain sight' importance that senior gatekeepers have in relation to BAME senior management progression in general and enhancing the prospect of having more public sector BAME CEOs (Lewin, 1997, pp. 300-301; Tulsiani & Phillips, 2014; Kline et al., 2016; Parker, 2016; Saggar, 2016; Nicholson et al., 2018).

However, in the context of generating more BAME CEO appointments, this research has brought the views of a small but important cast of senior gatekeepers to the fore and their opinions have proven to be instructive about what a positive enhanced future could look like. Therefore, whilst

this study may well be unique as an approach to researching very senior people, it should serve as a catalyst to encourage scholars and practitioners to move beyond the safe space of repeatedly referencing ‘senior teams, organisations and government departments’ to a discourse which regularly scrutinises the behaviour and practice of senior gatekeepers - including the author of this study.

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Appendix 1 - research participant information sheet

RISING TO THE CHALLENGE OF RECRUITING AND SELECTING MORE PUBLIC SECTOR BLACK, ASIAN, MINORITY ETHNIC CHIEF EXECUTIVES

Research Participant Information Sheet

Dear Colleague

I am a serving NHS Chief Executive and a University of Huddersfield Doctorate student who would like to invite you to take part in a unique research study that I am undertaking in the latter role. This study aims to learn from your experience of being a key decision maker in the recruitment of a Chief Executive who has come from a Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic (BAME) background.

Before you decide if you are willing to participate, you will need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask questions if anything you read is not clear or you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not to take part.

What is the purpose of the study?

It is believed that at this moment in time there are 9 (nine) BAME Chief Executives working across both Local Government and the NHS Providers in 2017. This means that of 418 UK Local Councils and 252 NHS Provider organisations, barely 1% of the potential Chief Executive population comes from a BAME background. To put this in context the BAME population for the whole of the UK is 14%.

As a result, the core purpose of this study is to see what can be learned from you as one of a small number of people who have been actively involved in the recruitment of a Chief Executive from a BAME background.

Why have I been invited?

You have been chosen for this study because you were a key part of a recruitment and selection decision that was and still is highly unusual. There have been past studies in this area and some point to the importance of recruitment decision makers but there are virtually no studies which have made a positive attempt to understand 'what has worked' by getting the views of people like you.

Therefore, the importance of your participation cannot be underestimated and should you choose to participate you will be one of eight to ten people that will be interviewed by me in a confidential one-to-one interview.

Do I have to take part?

The choice is 100% yours and it is up to you to decide. In terms of process, should you decide to be involved, I will describe the study in detail and go through the information sheet with you. I will then ask you to sign a consent form to show you agreed to take part. You are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason but as this is expected to be a largely positive experience I hope that will not be necessary.

**RIISING TO THE CHALLENGE OF RECRUITING AND SELECTING MORE PUBLIC
SECTOR BLACK, ASIAN, MINORITY ETHNIC CHIEF EXECUTIVES**

Research Participant Information Sheet

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be asked to take part in a one-to-one interview which will be face to face with me at a location convenient to you. The selected venue will be one which enables a confidential conversation to take place. You will be provided with an information sheet which provides more detail about the purpose of the study together with an interview schedule of guiding questions, which will help you to think about the subject matter in question prior to interview.

The interview should last no longer than two hours and could be shorter depending on your responses. Our conversation will be recorded through the use of a digital recorder and I will also make notes during the interview. I will also be more than happy to provide you with a copy of the digital recording via a secure memory pen post interview.

It is important for you to know that your identity will be anonymised as a part of writing and producing the final thesis and your data will be captured and stored digitally with encrypted passwords for safe storage. All references to you, your organisation, location or any other colleagues including Chief Executives; will be dealt with through the use of pseudonyms. This means that only you and I as the researcher will be able to attribute any comments used in the study.

It is also very important to stress that the interview process will not ask you questions about the actual success or otherwise of the recruitment and selection decision that was taken by you and others. This study is **NOT** an assessment or appraisal as to whether you made the right choice of Chief Executive now or in the past.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

I cannot promise the study will help you directly but the information extracted from the combined interview process will help to increase the understanding around how we create the possibility of proportionately more BAME Chief Executives across the Public Sector. More widely, it has the potential to broaden the national debate on board and leadership diversity which has arguably become very one dimensional over the last couple of decades.

What if there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, which you don't believe can be resolved through me as the primary researcher, you can ask to speak to Dr Annie Yeadon-Lee (a.yeadon-lee@hud.ac.uk) who is the lead for the University of Huddersfield DBA programme.

**RISING TO THE CHALLENGE OF RECRUITING AND SELECTING MORE PUBLIC
SECTOR BLACK, ASIAN, MINORITY ETHNIC CHIEF EXECUTIVES**

Research Participant Information Sheet

What will happen if I don't carry on with the study?

If you withdraw from the study all the information and data collected from you, to date, will be destroyed and your name removed from all the study files.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

It is intended that the results of this study will be made available on request and the expectation is that the summary of the dissertation will be submitted for formal publication through an appropriate journal. All research participants will automatically have the full results made available to them unless they specify otherwise. I would also reiterate that you will not be identified in any report/publication unless you have expressly given consent to being referenced.

Further information and contact details:

Owen Williams
Email: Owen.Williams@hud.ac.uk

Appendix 2 - informed consent

Informed Consent

University of
HUDDERSFIELD

I volunteer to participate in a research study conducted by Owen Williams from the University of Huddersfield. I understand that the study is designed to gather information about my experience of being a key decision maker in the recruitment of a Chief Executive who has come from a Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic (BAME) background. I will be one of approximately 6 – 10 people being interviewed for this research.

1. My participation in the study is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. If I decline to participate or withdraw from the study, no one will be told.
2. I understand that most interviewees will find the discussion interesting and thought-provoking. If, however, I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.
3. Participation involves being interviewed by Owen Williams from the University of Huddersfield. The interview will last approximately 90 minutes maximum. Notes will be written during the interview as well as a digital tape of the interview and subsequent dialogue. If I don't want to be taped, I will not be able to participate in the study.
4. I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure. Subsequent use of records and data will be subject to standard data use policies which protect the anonymity of individuals and institutions.
5. I understand that this research study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Huddersfield Research Ethics Committee. For research problems or questions regarding subjects, the Research Ethics Committee may be contacted through Alex Thompson (Telephone 01484 472529 or email m.a.thompson@hud.ac.uk).
6. I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.
7. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

My Signature

Date

My Printed Name

Signature of Owen Williams

Appendix 3 - postgraduate research student ethical review form

Postgraduate research student ethical review form (E2a)

THE UNIVERSITY OF HUDDERSFIELD
Business School Research Ethics Committee

POSTGRADATE RESEARCH STUDENT ETHICAL REVIEW FORM

Please complete and return via email to alex.thompson@hud.ac.uk along with the required documents (shown below).

SECTION A: TO BE COMPLETED BY THE APPLICANT

Before completing this section please refer to the Business School Research Ethics web pages which can be found under Resources on the Unilearn site (Ethics Policies and Procedures). Applicants should consult the appropriate ethical guidelines.

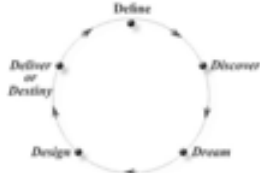
Please ensure that the statements in Section C are completed by the applicant (and supervisor for PGR students) prior to submission.

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Researcher(s) details | Owen Williams |
| Project title | RISING TO THE CHALLENGE OF RECRUITING AND SELECTING MORE PUBLIC SECTOR BLACK, ASIAN, MINORITY ETHNIC CHIEF EXECUTIVES |
| Award (where applicable) | Doctorate in Business Administration |
| Supervisor details (where applicable) | Chris Cowton |
| Project start date | Course commenced September 2014 |

SECTION B: PROJECT OUTLINE (TO BE COMPLETED IN FULL BY THE APPLICANT)

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| Issue | Please provide sufficient detail for your supervisor to assess strategies used to address ethical issues in the research proposal. Forms with insufficient detail will need to be resubmitted. |
| Aims and objectives of the study. Please state the aims and objectives of the study. | <p>The aim of this study will be to use appreciatively gained understanding obtained from the chosen research participants to develop both theory and suggestions for practice in meeting the challenge of the "snowy white peaks" and other narratives which argue that it is inequitable that BAME senior management employment at Board level in the Public Sector does not mirror that of the UK BAME population figure of 14% (Kline et al. 2013, 2014, 2016; Tulsiani & Phillips 2014; HMCIC 2016; Parker 2016; McGregor-Smith 2017).</p> <p>The primary objective of this study is, through the application of Appreciative Inquiry as a research method, to understand the attitudes and beliefs of very senior gatekeepers who have directly selected and appointed BAME Chief Executives to the Board(s) of large complex organisation(s) across the NHS and Local Government (Cooperider & Srivastva 1987; Hammond 2013).</p> |
| Brief overview of research methodology | The research method will involve the adaption of |

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| <p>The methodology only needs to be explained in sufficient detail to show the approach used (e.g. survey) and explain the research methods to be used during the study.</p> | <p>the "5-D Cycle" Appreciative Inquiry cycle as represented in the following graphic (Hammond 2013 p.22).</p>  <p>This will provide the framework for the development of a semi-structured interview schedule which will then be used for six to ten qualitative interviews with the target research participant group of very senior gatekeepers. The approach to data analysis will be based on grounded theory and associated thematic analysis (Bryman & Bell 2015).</p> <p>Also as the author of the dissertation is a serving Public Sector, BAME Chief Executive, an autoethnographic perspective has been developed in the study both from an analytical stance and also in terms of describing any bias in relation to the chosen research method.</p> |
| <p>Does your study require any permissions for study? If so, please give details</p> | <p>It is not anticipated that organisational permissions will be required. However, as a precaution, the research participants will, as a part of the informed consent process, be encouraged to declare any perceived issues or conflicts to their respective institutions as a part of their routine organisational standing orders. There is a high probability that these very senior decision makers are likely to be Elected Members or Non-Executive Directors and would have a responsibility to make a declaration of their participation in the unlikely event that they deemed that permission was required.</p> |
| <p>Participants Please outline who will participate in your research. Might any of the participants be considered 'vulnerable' (e.g. children)</p> | <p>The participants in this study are likely to be Non-BAME people who are or will have been in very senior public roles across the NHS and Local Government. They will be very senior gatekeepers, who have directly selected and appointed BAME Chief Executives to the Board(s) of large complex organisation(s) across the NHS and Local Government.</p> <p>It is not anticipated that any of these participants will be considered 'vulnerable'.</p> |
| <p>Access to participants Please give details about how participants will be identified and contacted.</p> | <p>Participants will be sourced through two routes. The first sourcing route will involve direct contact with previous or currently serving BAME Chief Executives who will have already agreed to make</p> |

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| | <p>initial introductions with very senior gatekeepers involved in their recruitment and appointment. Then, target participants will be approached directly by me as the study researcher. The introducing BAME Chief Executives will have no further participation or role in the study and the contents of the research will have no reference to them or participants thoughts about the success or otherwise of their time doing the job.</p> <p>The second sourcing route will be invoked in the event that the first doesn't yield sufficient participants for interview. This second route will involve review of publicly available Nomination Committee panel minutes where previously appointed BAME Chief Executives have been recruited. Such minutes will typically describe which very senior gatekeepers were involved in the relevant selection. Once identified the targeted research participants will be approached directly by me as the study researcher as to their willingness to participate in the study.</p> |
| <p>How will your data be recorded and stored?</p> | <p>Data will be captured and stored digitally with encrypted passwords for safe storage. All interviews will be recorded digitally and hand written notes will be scanned and stored electronically with hard copies destroyed soon thereafter.</p> |
| <p>Informed consent. Please explain how you will inform your participants about the study and whether they will be in a position to give informed consent.</p> | <p>As very senior decision makers, all research participants are expected to be in a position where they can give informed consent. Their decision making in respect of consent will be aided by the provision of an information sheet about the purpose of the study and they will be asked to sign an informed consent form.</p> |
| <p>Right to withdraw Please identify whether you are offering your participants a right to withdraw from the study and/or to withdraw their data from the study and how this will take place. If you are not offering a right to withdraw, please explain why.</p> | <p>All participants will be afforded the right to withdraw from the study and/or to withdraw their data from the study. The process for withdrawal will be covered off in the informed consent form and agreed with them as to how this will take place. It is believed that, given the nature of the very senior decision makers involved, having the opportunity to withdraw will encourage participation. It is not anticipated that withdrawal will be a regular occurrence in practice due to the appreciative nature of the research method.</p> |
| <p>Confidentiality Please outline the level of confidentiality you will offer respondents and how this will be respected. You should also outline about who will have access to the data and how it will be stored. (This information should be</p> | <p>Due to the relatively small sample size and the desire to promote confidence in participation, both the information sheet and the informed consent form will from the outset position this study as totally confidential. It will be explained to participants that their data will be stored digitally</p> |

| | |
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| <p>included on Information your information sheet.)</p> | <p>with encrypted passwords for safe storage. Access to this information will only be through the study author only.</p> |
| <p>Anonymity If you offer your participants anonymity, please indicate how this will be achieved.</p> | <p>As a part to the approach to confidentiality and to ensure anonymity for either themselves as research participants or their respective organisations, pseudonyms will be used to describe both participants and their associated organisations. There will be no reference to organisational geographical locations or the specific BAME Chief Executives who they were involved in recruiting. The discipline in this approach will be maintained across transcripts, digital media and the thesis itself.</p> |
| <p>Harm Please outline your assessment of the extent to which your research might induce psychological stress, anxiety, cause harm or negative consequences for the participants (beyond the risks encountered in normal life). If more than minimal risk, you should outline what support there will be for participants. If you believe that that there is minimal likely harm, please articulate why you believe this to be so.</p> | <p>It is not anticipated that either physical or mental harm will be caused to participants involved in this study. It is anticipated that that there will be minimal likely harm because the use of an Appreciative Inquiry based research approach is acknowledged as typically being a positive experience for those involved. This is because Appreciative Inquiry principally focuses on participants sharing their experiences about 'what has worked' and there is limited reason to think that this study will generate negative thinking or psychological stress and anxiety (Hammond 2013).</p> |

Retrospective applications. If your application for Ethics approval is retrospective, please explain why this has arisen.

Not Applicable

SECTION C – SUMMARY OF ETHICAL ISSUES (TO BE COMPLETED BY THE APPLICANT)

Please give a summary of the ethical issues and any action that will be taken to address the issue(s).

This study will have some focus on the reasoning behind the recruitment and selection choice of very senior gatekeepers as participants. Therefore, it will be ethically important to establish that this study will not be focused on the perceived success or otherwise of their selection choice. This will be addressed through the establishment of the consent process and further reinforced through the serving BAME Chief Executives used to source the participants. As further reassurance, it is unlikely that BAME Chief Executives would encourage participation if they themselves perceived that this could lead to an unauthorised third party assessment of their past or ongoing performance.

Other ethical points include the fact that there are only nine serving BAME Chief Executives in Local Government and the NHS which could present some unintended risk of identification of individuals or organisations. However, this research will focus firmly on understanding the collective decision making process of participants rather than individual people. Also, the consent, confidentiality and anonymity approach referenced in this submission will be adhered to at all times to minimise unintended identification risk. Related to this is an assumption which has been made that very senior gatekeepers will typically be Non-BAME. In the event that this is not the case then consideration will be given in the development of the semi-structured interview schedule to prepare for all related eventualities.

A further ethical consideration is that a part of this study will include the ~~autoethnographical~~ perspective of the author who is himself both a serving BAME Chief Executive and a very senior gatekeeper (Sikes 2013). Given that the author has worked in three organisations whilst being a Chief Executive, both individuals and organisations referred to through any autoethnography analysis, will be given pseudonyms to preserve identity where it makes sense to do so (Medford 2006).

It is intended that the final participant consent form will largely be developed from the research participant information sheet provided. Also, the interview schedule will be based on a broad adaptation of the appreciative inquiry "5-D Cycle" previously discussed in the methodology section.

SECTION D – ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS CHECKLIST (TO BE COMPLETED BY THE APPLICANT)

Please supply copies of all relevant supporting documentation electronically. If this is not available electronically, please provide explanation and supply hard copy.

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| I have included the following documents | | |
| Information sheet | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Not applicable <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Consent form | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | Not applicable <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Letters (Emails) | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Not applicable <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Questionnaire | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | Not applicable <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Interview schedule | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | Not applicable <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

SECTION E – STATEMENT BY APPLICANT

I confirm that the information I have given in this form on ethical issues is correct. (Electronic confirmation is sufficient).



Affirmation by Supervisor (where applicable)

I can confirm that, to the best of my understanding, the information presented by the applicant is correct and appropriate to allow an informed judgement on whether further ethical approval is required

Supervisor name/signature: Chris ~~Cowton~~

Date: 12/08/17

Name of applicant (electronic is acceptable): Owen Williams

Date: 12/08/17

All documentation must be submitted electronically to the Business School Research Ethics Committee Administrator, Alex Thompson, at alex.thompson@hud.ac.uk.

All proposals will be reviewed by two members of BSREC. If it is considered necessary to discuss the proposal with the full Committee, the applicant (and their supervisor if the applicant is a student) will be invited to attend the next Ethics Committee meeting.

If you have any queries relating to the completion of this form or any other queries relating to the Business School's Research Ethics Committee in consideration of this proposal, please do not hesitate to contact the Chair, Dr Eleanor Davies (e.davies@hud.ac.uk) ☎ [47] 2121 or the Administrator Alex Thomson (alex.thompson@hud.ac.uk) ☎ [47] 2529

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| Sikes, P. J. (Ed.). (2013). <i>Auto-ethnography</i> . Sage. London. |
| Tulsiani, R., & Phillips, T. (2014). <i>The Green Park Public Service Leadership 5,000. A review of diversity in the UK's public and charity sectors</i> . London (UK), United Kingdom: Green Park Group. |

Appendix 4 - interview schedule of guiding questions

Interview Schedule of Guiding Questions



Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research interview. The conversation that we are about to have is based on an approach that is called Appreciative Inquiry (AI). This may be something that you are already familiar with but essentially it is an approach that seeks to build on and learn from positive experiences.

The following questions are more a set of prompts but they have been provided to help stimulate your thinking and assist the flow of the conversation. You will see that where possible they focus on positive thinking and primarily 'what has worked' which is something that you are uniquely positioned to understand when it comes to the recruitment of a Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic (BAME) Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

Please remember that all your responses will be treated in the strictest confidence as explained in the Informed Consent form that you will have read and signed prior to this interview.

1. Can you please state your name and age?
2. At the time you were involved in the selection of the BAME CEO in question what was your job or role with the organisation in question?
3. What is your current job or role now?
4. How would you describe your own ethnicity?
5. Thinking about any issue relating to diversity (e.g., race, gender, disability) which person or institution do you think has got the approach to diversity right? Why do you think that this is the case?
6. What do you personally value most about any form of diversity that is important to you?
7. Thinking specifically about race which person or institution do you think has got the approach to race related diversity right? Why do you think that this is the case?

8. Thinking about the organisation to which you played a part in recruiting a BAME CEO, what was the work environment like at that time?

9. What is it about the organisation that made the recruitment of a BAME CEO possible?

10. In terms of your personal outlook what do you think that you might have in common with other colleagues who have taken the same decision to recruit a BAME CEO in other organisations?

11. If you were advising a decision maker who was wavering about appointing a talented BAME CEO because they were concerned about the reputation of their organisation what would your advice be?

12. Imagine a future where over 50% of organisations have BAME CEOs. What would have changed versus the organisational recruitment and selection processes that exist today?

13. In a world where BAME CEOs were the norm, what would be the typical behaviours of politicians and how would that contrast with what happens now?

14. When it came to your experience of selecting a BAME CEO did you feel any undue pressures and if so how did you overcome them?

15. If a recruitment company was used in the process of recruiting your BAME CEO what are your reflections on the advice they gave?

|

Interview Schedule of Guiding Questions



16. If you were advising a recruitment and selection consultancy on how to improve the number and quality of BAME candidates that it has on its books what would you say?

17. Imagine a world where a Work Force Race Equality Strategy wasn't needed and associated action plans didn't exist how would you encourage people to see the benefits of diverse leadership?

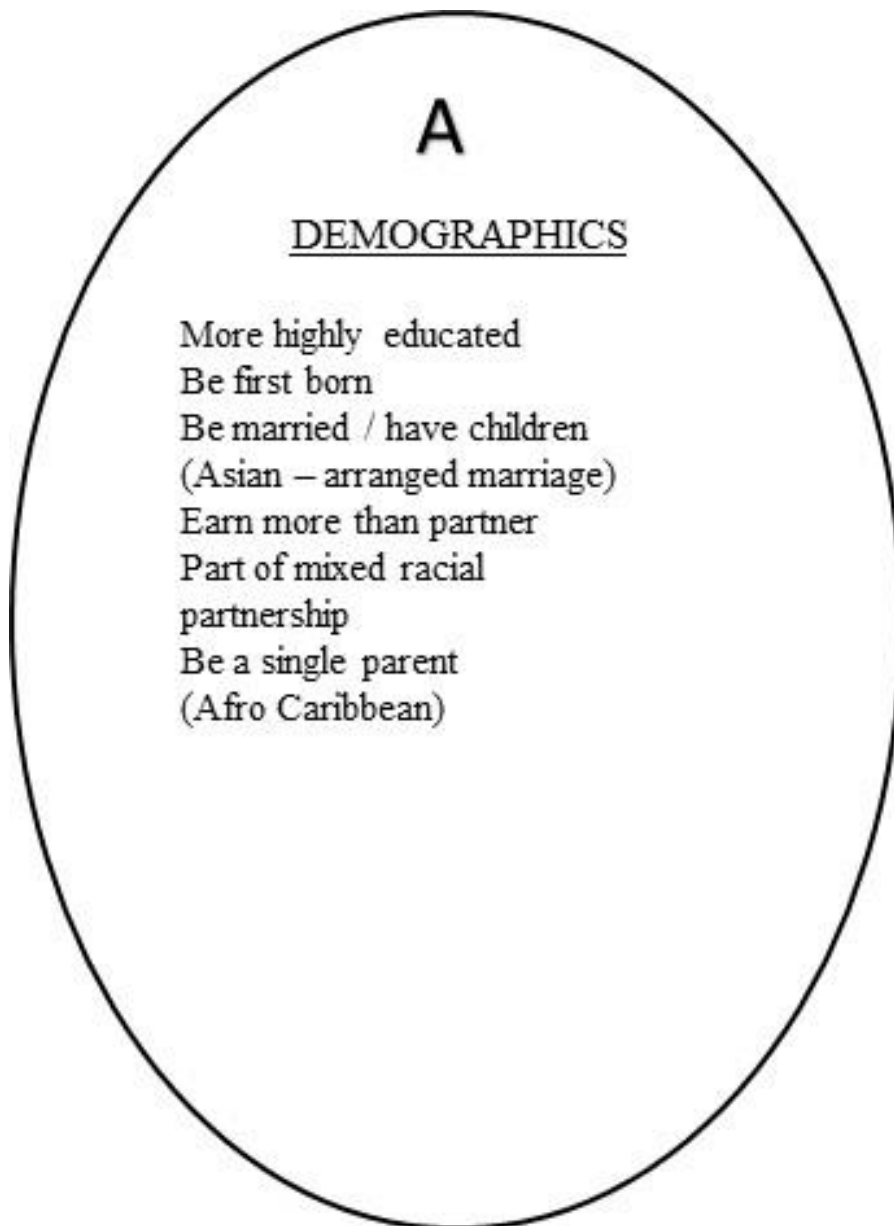
18. What would be the one positive change that you would suggest would make a difference to increasing the number of BAME CEO's in the Public Sector?

Appendix 5 – grounded theory analysis framework

| Schedule of Guiding Questions | Define - what we look for we will find | Discovery - identify the best of 'what is' | Dream - what might be. | Design - what will be | Destiny - creating the future you have envisioned |
|--|--|--|------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| Thinking about any issue relating to diversity (e.g., race, gender, disability) which person or institution do you think has got the approach to diversity right? Why do you think that this is the case? | | | | | |
| What do you personally value most about any form of diversity that is important to you? | | | | | |
| Thinking specifically about race which person or institution do you think has got the approach to race related diversity right? Why do you think that this is the case? | | | | | |
| Thinking about the organisation to which you played a part in recruiting a BAME CEO, what was the work environment like at that time? | | | | | |
| What is it about the organisation that made the recruitment of a BAME CEO possible? | | | | | |
| In terms of your personal outlook what do you think that you might have in common with other colleagues who have taken the same decision to recruit a BAME CEO in other organisations? | | | | | |
| If you were advising a decision maker who was wavering about appointing a talented BAME CEO because they were concerned about the reputation of their organisation what would your advice be? | | | | | |
| Imagine a future where over 50% of organisations have BAME CEOs. What would have changed versus the organisational recruitment and selection processes that exist today? | | | | | |
| In a world where BAME CEOs were the norm, what would be the typical behaviours of politicians and how would that contrast with what happens now ? | | | | | |

| Schedule of Guiding Questions | Define - what we look for we will find | Discovery - identify the best of 'what is' | Dream - what might be. | Design - what will be | Destiny - creating the future you have envisioned |
|---|--|--|------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| When it came to your experience of selecting a BAME CEO did you feel any undue pressures and if so how did you overcome them? | | | | | |
| If a recruitment company was used in the process of recruiting your BAME CEO what are your reflections on the advice they gave? | | | | | |
| If you were advising a recruitment and selection consultancy on how to improve the number and quality of BAME candidates that it has on its books what would you say? | | | | | |
| Imagine a world where a Work Force Race Equality Strategy wasn't needed and associated action plans didn't exist how would you encourage people to see the benefits of diverse leadership? | | | | | |
| What would be the one positive change that you would suggest would make a difference to increasing the number of BAME CEO's in the Public Sector? | | | | | |

Appendix 6 - the four components of the black and ethnic minority woman manager model extrapolated from Davidson (1997, p. 99)



B

WORK PRESSURES / PROBLEMS

Token Black Woman

Performance pressure / work overload / time pressures
Being a test case for future black women
Isolation and lack of black (female) role models
High visibility

Relationships

Lack of support (especially from male managers, white and black)
Role conflict
Coping with racism and sexism
Communication (cultural differences)
Different management style (from whites)
Racial stereotyping (dependent on ethnicity)
Feeling undervalued
Feeling powerless
Racial taboos – fear from whites
Different experiences re sexuality / sexual harassment

Career Development

Problems re getting job/promotion
Being racially ghettoised job
Feeling less accepted in organisation
Feeling more likely to have reached plateau
Earning less
Lack of mentors (especially black female)
Exclusion from white (male & female networks)
Stereotypical attitudes – ‘Think Manager’ –
Think White Male’

C

HOME / SOCIAL /
WORK PRESSURES /
PROBLEMS

Black vs white community role
conflicts

Home / work bi-cultural
identity / status role stress

Mixed racial partnerships

Earning more than partner

Producing male heir

Feeling isolated in white
community (particularly if
single)

Being single parent

Racism – particularly towards
children

D

NEGATIVE and STRESS OUTCOMES

**Blocked Career Progression–
The Concrete Ceiling**
Job dissatisfaction
Impaired job performance
Dampened career aspirations in organisations
More likely to change / quit job

Physical Ill Health

e.g:
Headaches
Skin Disease

Psychological Ill Health

e.g:
Depression
Stress
Anxiety
Anger / frustration

Behavioural Problems

Loss of confidence
Exhaustion / tiredness
Sleep problems
Difficulty in relaxing
Sick Leave