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Absent or Overlooked? Promoting diversity among entrepreneurs with public support needs

1) Dr. Beldina Owalla*
Research Associate, Centre for Regional Economic and Enterprise Development (CREED), Sheffield University Management School,
Conduit Road, Sheffield S10 1FL, UK.
Email: b.owalla@sheffield.ac.uk

2) Prof. Tim Vorley
Pro Vice-Chancellor and Dean,
Oxford Brookes Business School, Headington Campus, Oxford, OX3 0BP, UK.
Email: tvorley@brookes.ac.uk

3) Dr. Tom Coogan
Assistant Professor, Haydn Green Institute for Innovation and Entrepreneurship
Nottingham University Business School, Wollaton Rd, Nottingham NG8 1BB, UK
Email: tom.coogan@nottingham.ac.uk

4) Prof. Helen Lawton Smith
Professor of Entrepreneurship, Department of Management
Birkbeck, University of London, Malet Street, Bloomsbury, London WC1E 7HX, UK
Email: h.lawton-smith@bbk.ac.uk

5) Dr. Katy Wing
Research Development Manager,
Loughborough University, Epinal Way, Loughborough, LE11 3TU, UK.
Email: k.wing@lboro.ac.uk

* Corresponding author

Biographical notes:

Beldina Owalla is a Research Associate at the Centre for Regional Economic and Enterprise Development (CREED) at Sheffield University Management School. She received her PhD in Business Administration (Entrepreneurship) from the Stockholm School of Economics in Sweden. She is currently involved in research projects looking at SMEs and productivity, promoting diversity and inclusion in business innovation and growth strategies of community businesses. Her research interests are in women's entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship education, diversity and inclusion in business innovation, SME growth and venture financing.

Tim Vorley is Pro Vice-Chancellor and Dean of Oxford Brookes Business School. He convenes the ESRC/Innovate UK funded Innovation Caucus and is co-director of the ESRC funded Productivity Insights Network. His academic interests are broadly in the policy and practice of entrepreneurship and innovation. He has co-edited two books, written several book chapters and published widely in academic journals including Entrepreneurship and Regional Development, International Journal of Management Review, International Small Business Journal, and Small Business Economics.

Tom Coogan is Assistant Professor at the Haydn Green Institute for Innovation and Entrepreneurship at Nottingham University Business School. He is Deputy Director of the MSc Business & Management Programme and teaches and researches entrepreneurship and innovation, with a particular focus on entrepreneurs with disabilities. He is an inter-disciplinary disability scholar who has taught and published across fields including Literature, Sociology and Business Management. He is currently working on his own research project on entrepreneurs with disabilities.

Helen Lawton Smith is Professor of Entrepreneurship, Birkbeck, University of London. She is the Director of the Centre for Innovation Management Research (bbk.ac.uk/cimr). Her research career has focused on the links between entrepreneurship, innovation, public policy and regional development in national and international contexts. She is the Founder and Research Director of the Oxfordshire Economic Observatory, School of Geography and the Environment, Oxford University (http://oeo.geog.ox.ac.uk). She is the author of 2 monographs and editor of 10 books. She has published over 75 journal articles and over 40 book chapters. She is Associate Editor, Strategic Change: Briefings in Entrepreneurial Finance. She was the principal investigator of a European Union project Transforming Institutions by Gendering contents and Gaining Equality in Research (TRIGGER) (2013-2017). She was the first Chair of the Regional Studies Association (RSA) Gender & Equalities Committee.

Katy Wing is Research Development Manager, Loughborough University. She has a varied professional background involving developing partnerships, collaborations and networks across the academic, non-profit and statutory sectors. Her PhD from the University of Nottingham focused on cross-sector strategic partnerships (CSSPs) between businesses and non-profit organizations. She has project managed the ESRC/Innovate UK funded Innovation Caucus, a UK-wide innovation evidence network, comprising social science academics, with the aim of ensuring that the UK's innovation policies and practices benefit from research insights from across the social sciences. She has extensive experience of working collaboratively to co-ordinate activity across different partner organisations and sectors, including directing projects funded by the Department of Health, the Department of Education and the Ministry of Justice, as a voluntary sector strategic partner. She also sits on the Management Board of Community Action Derby.

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ABSTRACT

Despite the widely recognized importance of diversity for business performance, knowledge concerning the support needs of under-represented groups is still limited. We adopt an intersectional approach to analyse the challenges and support needs of ethnic minority entrepreneurs, and those with disabilities, to participate in entrepreneurial activity in the UK. Our qualitative data is based on focus groups and semi-structured interviews. The findings suggest that engagement in entrepreneurship is influenced not just by minority status, but by the specific relations to other socio-demographic categories within which that status is embedded. Intersectional counter-frames form part of the strategies utilized by individuals to gain access to otherwise limited resources. We develop a conceptual model for promoting greater equality, diversity and inclusion, within an entrepreneurial ecosystem, and recommend a more holistic approach to realizing inclusive economic growth. This includes adopting a hybrid/blended approach that combines targeted programmes with the development of mainstream support programmes.

Keywords: equality, diversity and inclusion, intersectionality, counter-frames, policy initiatives, entrepreneurial ecosystem

1. INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship has been closely linked with innovation since the classic works of Schumpeter (1911/1934), and globally viewed as essential for achieving sustainable economic growth (Alsos et al., 2013; Croitoru, 2012). There is growing recognition that the full potential of entrepreneurship for achieving economic growth, societal wellbeing, and inclusion, can only be realized when entrepreneurship is a feasible option for all, irrespective of the social group with which they identify (OECD/EU, 2019). This has led to the proliferation of inclusive economic growth policies both within the UK and globally (Carter et al., 2015; Wright et al., 2015). Such recognition has also motivated entrepreneurial diversity research focused on understanding the challenges faced by disadvantaged or under-represented groups, including women, youth, seniors, disabled, immigrants etc., in accessing resources (Coleman et al., 2019; Cooney, 2008; Ram and Jones, 2008).

Diversity can be viewed as comprising different dimensions of observable (gender, ethnicity, age, physical ability etc.) and non-observable (cultural, cognitive, technical differences etc.) characteristics used to differentiate one person from another (Roberson, 2006). The wide ranging benefits of entrepreneurial diversity (Díaz-García et al., 2013; Hunt et al., 2018; Wiklund et al., 2018) for both economic growth and social well-being are well-documented. However, existing studies tend to focus on specific dimensions of entrepreneurial disadvantage in isolation, e.g. age, gender, race, minority ethnicity, etc. (Knight, 2016; Martinez Dy, 2020). This tendency leads to a perception of under-represented groups as being largely homogeneous, with the consequence that the impact of within-group differences, created by intersecting socio-demographic categories, on entrepreneurial activity remains largely underexplored. Our article addresses this knowledge gap, by adopting an intersectional perspective to understand the factors influencing the participation of ethnic minority

entrepreneurs and those with disabilities in entrepreneurial activities within entrepreneurial ecosystems.

Entrepreneurial ecosystems can be defined as a set of interdependent actors and factors that are mutually reinforcing in such a way as to facilitate entrepreneurial activity (Stam, 2015). However, the assumption that all entrepreneurs have equal access to resources, support and success outcomes within an ecosystem rarely holds in practice (Brooks et al., 2019; Brush et al., 2019). Inequalities exist within ecosystems and these do not occur in isolation. Intersecting socio-demographic categories can play a role in influencing outcomes particularly with regard to prejudice and discrimination (Atewologun, 2018; Marlow and Martinez Dy, 2018). While the concept of intersectionality has emerged as a major paradigm in social research, it has made minimal impact on small business research and public policy (Carter et al., 2015; Wright et al., 2015). Furthermore, knowledge of the support needs of under-represented groups is limited (Maritz and Laferriere, 2016; Ram and Jones, 2008).

Our article therefore seeks to gain a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and support needs of ethnic minority entrepreneurs and those with disabilities to participate in entrepreneurial activity. We also explore the challenges faced by policy initiatives in promoting equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) within an entrepreneurial ecosystem. We address the following research questions: a) what are the barriers, challenges and support needs of ethnic minority entrepreneurs and those with disabilities to engage in entrepreneurship? and b) how can policy initiatives effectively promote greater equality, diversity and inclusion within an entrepreneurial ecosystem? The qualitative data is primarily based on focus groups comprising participants from these two under-represented groups, and supplemented by semi-structured interviews with policymakers actively engaged in implementing EDI practices. We focus on understanding general experiences and perspectives rather than on evaluating specific policy initiatives or support programmes.

This article is based on a research project that focuses on the role of Innovate UK (the UK's innovation agency) in supporting and promoting innovative businesses and entrepreneurs with the potential and ambition to grow. Beyond its economic priorities, and in keeping with its statement of intent on diversity and inclusion, Innovate UK has a strategy to promote EDI across its programmes as a means of reaching the untapped potential of innovators from diverse backgrounds (UKRI Innovate UK, 2016). While previous EDI initiatives mostly focused on gender, there is growing attention to other dimensions of diversity with ethnic minority groups and those with disabilities being identified as a particular priority for Innovate UK (UKRI Innovate UK, 2016). The term "ethnic minority" as used in the article is based on the UK definition, which refers to all people who do not belong to the ethnic majority group i.e. white, of British origin and English-speaking (Office for National Statistics, 2003). We also recognise social model definition of "disability" which distinguishes impairment i.e. limitation of the mind and body, from disability arising from societal attitudes, institutions and environmental barriers (Kitching, 2014). However, in using these terms, we also acknowledge that they are used to refer to a large heterogeneous group of people.

Self-employment and entrepreneurship are important aspects of the labour market experiences for ethnic minority groups and those with disabilities (Jones and Latreille, 2011; Pavey, 2006; Ram et al., 2012). Since 2002, ethnic minority entrepreneurs have reported higher Total Entrepreneurial Activity (TEA) rates than non-minority entrepreneurs (Roberts et al., 2020). Similarly, studies indicate that a higher percentage of those with disabilities are self-employed (i.e. 21% and 9% of work-limited disabled men and women respectively) compared to non-disabled people or those with non-work limited disabilities (i.e. 17% and 7% non-disabled men and women respectively) (Jones and Latreille, 2011). However, while several policy and community-led initiatives in the UK have focused on supporting ethnic minority groups and those with disabilities, they face a number of challenges. The short-term nature of

initiatives, lack of cultural competence, disenchantment with initiatives, as well as lack of identification with the UK social model of disability (Employment Related Services Association (ERSA), 2018; Ram et al., 2012; Shakespeare, 2006) are some of factors affecting the impact of such programmes.

Our article builds on current entrepreneurial diversity literature by focusing on the diversity dimensions of minority status and disability. We advance this knowledge by analysing how these dimensions intersect with other identity categories to shape entrepreneurial activity and experiences. The article makes the following contributions. First, we adopt an intersectional perspective which emphasizes the heterogeneity of entrepreneurs as a group, while at the same drawing attention to how identity categories can intersect to create added layers of disadvantage for certain groups of entrepreneurs. Secondly, we highlight the different strategies that ethnic minority entrepreneurs and those with disabilities utilize, such as drawing upon various intersectional counter-frames to gain access to resources that are not readily available owing to their ethnic minority and/or disability status. Thirdly, we develop a conceptual model for promoting EDI within an entrepreneurial ecosystem, and recommend a more holistic approach to achieving inclusive economic growth. This includes adopting a hybrid/blended approach that combines targeted programmes with mainstream programmes in which EDI practices are embedded from development to assessment.

The rest of the article is organized as follows. In the next section we discuss the theoretical framework of the paper. We then describe the research methodology, before analysing the findings of the focus groups and semi-structured interviews. In the last section, we present the discussion, implications and conclusions.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Importance of intersectionality for entrepreneurship research

Prior literature on entrepreneurial diversity provides ample evidence of the economic and social benefits of diversity. Gender diversity has been shown to have a positive impact on creativity (Bouncken, 2004), radical innovation (Díaz-García et al., 2013; Nathan, 2014), and on firm performance (Hunt et al., 2018). The important role played by ethnic minority businesses in the social adaptation and integration of newly arrived migrants within their local communities is well supported (Carter et al., 2015). Studies also highlight the potential benefits to be gained from making entrepreneurship accessible to those with disabilities (Papworth Trust, 2018). For example, there is growing evidence of entrepreneurs diagnosed with ADHD and other neuro-diversities who are flourishing and productively contributing to society through their ventures (Antshel, 2018; Wiklund et al., 2018). Moreover, innovations designed for those with disabilities can have spillover effects to the wider population, e.g. the ageing population (Berven and Blanck, 1999).

The majority of studies on entrepreneurial diversity, however, have mainly focused on specific dimensions of diversity, thus underestimating the impact of intersecting categories on entrepreneurial activity (Knight, 2016; Martinez Dy, 2020). For example, studies on ethnic entrepreneurship have historically emphasized ethnic culture collectivism as the main force for communities' engagement - or lack thereof - in entrepreneurship (Romero and Valdez, 2016), while underestimating the experiences of racialized women (Knight, 2016). Studies on women's entrepreneurship have homogenized women entrepreneurs' experiences by focusing on the problems caused by gender inequality amongst "white" middle class women (Pettersson and Lindberg, 2013). Studies adopting an intersectional perspective to understanding the entrepreneurial activity of ethnic minority entrepreneurs or entrepreneurs with disabilities are therefore limited.

Since its inception, intersectionality has been heralded by feminist scholars from different disciplines, theoretical perspectives and political persuasions, as one of the most important contributions to feminist scholarship (Davis, 2008). Although the term 'intersectionality' was originally coined by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw in 1989, the concept of intersectionality has a long history in Black feminism (Carastathis, 2014). Theories of intersectionality were developed by women of colour during the 1960/70s, and focus on the interactions between socio-demographic categories of difference like gender, race, class etc., in individual lives, social practices, cultural ideologies, and institutional arrangements, and the subsequent outcomes of these interactions in terms of power (Davis, 2008; Samuels and Ross-Sheriff, 2008). While there is no consensus on whether to regard intersectionality as a theory, concept, or heuristic device (Davis, 2008), it is agreed that intersectionality either as a research methodology or theoretical framework provides the analytic benefit of capturing the irreducibility of experience to any single category by keeping multiple categories of oppression in play at the same time (Carastathis, 2014). Sensitivity to such differences allows studies to pay greater attention to interlocking privileges and oppressions without imposing hierarchies, and thus maximizes the chances of social change (Atewologun, 2018; Samuels and Ross-Sheriff, 2008).

Intersectionality has also developed as a concern in entrepreneurship scholarship. Studies focused on ethnic minority businesses have highlighted the need for a more integrated approach that recognizes the myriad economic and social relationships in which they are embedded (Edwards et al., 2016; Ram and Jones, 2008). Similarly, studies focused on entrepreneurs with disabilities point to the fact that factors such as education, economic status and societal attitudes can compound the existing barriers to entrepreneurship for this group (Cooney, 2008). Adopting an intersectional perspective therefore allows us to start from the premise that multiple dimensions of identity intersect to create, maintain and reproduce the opportunities of

entrepreneurs sharing similar social positions within a highly stratified society (Valdez, 2016). It recognises that agentic processes and structural forces within wider society and the economy often reproduce a given social group's intersectional positioning, and influence their ability to access and/or mobilize resources for engaging in entrepreneurship (Romero and Valdez, 2016).

Studies adopting an intersectional approach have mainly focused on understanding how the entrepreneurship process is racialized, classed and gendered. These studies find that identity categories such as gender, race and ethnicity intersect and combine with class to shape entrepreneurial processes by influencing access to capital and experiences of discrimination for example amongst Latinx (Agius Vallejo and Canizales, 2016), Mexican (Valdez, 2016), Black American (Gold, 2016; Harvey, 2005; Smith-Hunter and Boyd, 2004; Wingfield and Taylor, 2016), and Afro-Caribbean (Knight, 2016) entrepreneurs. However, despite these processes of differentiation, participants find creative and subversive ways to resist (Knight, 2016). The study by Essers and Benschop (2007) analysing female entrepreneurs of Moroccan or Turkish origin in the Netherlands, illustrates this complexity. The authors examine how women's professional identities are constructed in dialogue with different constituencies and at the intersections of gender, ethnicity and entrepreneurship. These entrepreneurs subvert their alleged disadvantage as migrant women and utilise their intersectional positions to sustain their enterprises (Essers and Benschop, 2007).

Similarly, Wingfield and Taylor (2016) find that social processes characterizing ethnic groups' pathways to entrepreneurship are not necessarily generalizable to racial groups. In addition, Black entrepreneurs use both racial and intersectional counter-frames to problematize issues of race, class or gender in explaining social realities that influence their entrepreneurial activities (Wingfield and Taylor, 2016). While racial counter-frames are used to challenge existing practices and behaviours legitimizing racial hierarchies (Feagin and Elias, 2013),

intersectional counter-frames analyse how social processes, behaviours and institutions reproduce not only racial, but gendered and classed hierarchies (Wingfield and Taylor, 2016).

While intersectionality has emerged as a major paradigm in social research, its impact on entrepreneurship research and policy is still limited (Carter et al., 2015; Wright et al., 2015). We contribute to this limited knowledge by adopting an intersectional approach to explore the complexities faced by ethnic minority entrepreneurs and those with disabilities in addressing multiple disadvantages within a rapidly changing social, political and economic environment.

2.2 Antecedents and outcomes of diversity initiatives

The concept of diversity is broadly defined as any characteristic that is used to differentiate one person from others, and goes beyond demographic variables (e.g. age, sex, race, disability status, etc.) to include differences due to personality types, and educational backgrounds (Fink and Pastore, 1999; Roberson, 2006). Diversity initiatives refer to the implementation of systems or practices to manage diverse workforces, with the aim of improving the experiences and outcomes of groups that face disadvantage in society (Leslie, 2019). The increased recognition of the economic and social benefits to be derived from a diverse workforce (Bouncken, 2004; Carter et al., 2015; Díaz-García et al., 2013), have made such initiatives a common feature in many organisations globally (Yang and Konrad, 2011).

The evolution of diversity management practice and research has mainly focused on corporate organizations, with general business literature as early as 2001 recognizing the importance of using a systemic approach to managing diversity (Kalargyrou and Costen, 2017). Such an approach focuses on exploring power differentials in organizations rather than surface level differences of employees (Kalargyrou and Costen, 2017). As Thomas (1991) argues:

> M*anaging diversity does not seek to give relief from a system's negative consequences by* adding on supplementary efforts. Instead, it begins with taking a hard look at the system

and asking…Why doesn't the system work naturally for every one? What has been done to allow it to do so? (p 26)

However, the effectiveness of diversity initiatives is still debated (Leslie, 2019). The relationship between diversity and outcomes is complex, as is an organization's ability to manage diversity effectively (Yang and Konrad, 2011). Diversity initiatives have been shown to have unintended consequences such as negative goal progress, undesirable effects on outcomes other than diversity, or false progress (i.e. improved metrics without true diversity goal progress) (Leslie, 2019). It has also been argued that diversity initiatives can perpetuate rather than combat inequalities in the workplace to diminish the legacy of discrimination against historically repressed minorities (Lorbiecki and Jack, 2000). In order to be effective, diversity management practices need to go beyond a relational model - with a focus on training, mentoring and teamwork – to adopt a structural model that deals with issues of structural equity and accountability (Wrench, 2005).

Drawing upon institutional theory and resource-based perspectives, Yang and Konrad (2011) review extant literature on diversity management practices and provide a theoretical foundation for understanding the antecedents and outcomes of diversity management practices (see Figure 1 below). The framework shows the antecedents and predicted characteristics of diversity management practices implemented within an organization. It also highlights the legitimacy outcomes that result from both the implementation of diversity management practices and greater diversity of human capital, as predicted by institutional theory perspectives (Yang and Konrad, 2011).

Insert Figure 1 here

Building upon this framework, we develop a conceptual model for policy initiatives aimed at promoting EDI within an entrepreneurial ecosystem, by providing support to a diverse group of potential entrepreneurs engaged in entrepreneurial activities (see Figure 2 below). In this case, policy initiatives focus on selecting for diversity, reducing discrimination and ensuring equality, justice and inclusion within support programmes (Kossek and Pichler, 2007), as well as encouraging engagement with diverse stakeholders.

Insert Figure 2 here

While acknowledging that policy spaces are complex and often chaotic, and that social phenomena cannot be studied in isolation, a conceptual model allows us to establish a picture of what is happening (Castelnovo and Sorrentino, 2018). In this article, the conceptual model helps to provide a visual map of the complex processes and actors involved in promoting EDI within an entrepreneurial ecosystem and wider societal level. It also highlights the interdependencies of the direct (i.e. within an entrepreneurial ecosystem) and indirect (i.e. at societal level) impact of such initiatives.

The societal antecedents are forces that exert pressures on policy initiatives to conform to societal expectations, and include laws and regulations (regulatory), social and professional norms (normative), and culture and ethics (cognitive) (Scott, 2008; Yang and Konrad, 2011). The societal pressures result in policy initiative engagement, driven by the expected economic and social benefits of greater EDI in an entrepreneurial ecosystem (Carter et al., 2015; Díaz-García et al., 2013). Mimetic processes whereby organizations model themselves on peers who are viewed as more legitimate, for example, through the adoption of best practices, also has an influence on policy initiatives during this stage (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983).

EDI implementation involves the adoption of industry best practices (e.g. training programmes, identifying EDI champions etc.), and ensuring substantive organizational change. EDI champions are leaders with enhanced credibility and positional power, e.g. Directors, CEOs, to confer approval and behave in ways that actively promote EDI within the organization (de Vries, 2015). EDI evaluations are carried out on a continuous basis to capture and analyse metrics on diversity of publicly funded applicants, teams, and support initiatives. Lastly, EDI outcomes are evidenced through the increased legitimacy gained both internally (through changes in work attitudes and practices) and externally (with stakeholders).

Through the process of integrating EDI practices in both targeted and mainstream programmes, policy initiatives can have a direct impact on an entrepreneurial ecosystem through formal or informal pressures they might exert on partner institutions and collaborators. These coercive pressures may be felt as force, persuasion or invitations to joint collaboration (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). Policy initiatives can also be seen to have an indirect impact on structural barriers at the societal level through their influence on formal (regulatory, political) and informal (norms, attitudes) institutions.

We use the different stages of the conceptual model to structure our article's inquiry and to understand the context and processes within which stakeholders act. The focus group findings help to establish the societal and environmental drivers for policy initiatives to achieve greater EDI. The model also forms a basis for the semi-structured interview guide used to capture policymakers' perspectives on the policy initiatives awareness phase, and on EDI implementation, evaluation and outcomes within policy initiatives. Having presented the theoretical framework underpinning our study, we discuss the methodological approach adopted in the following section.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design and sample selection

The research design involved the collection of primary data through focus groups and semi-structured interviews. Focus groups are viewed as an appropriate research method for this study owing to their potential to generate rich data and insights into attitudes, beliefs and perceptions through the interaction between participants (Allen, 2017). Focus groups were a key method for drawing out and articulating important, but implicit social antecedents through the lens of a particular identity category. This was especially important as regards certain aspects of complex intersectional identities, which may not have been surfaced by other research methods in other situations. For example, a room full of "disabled entrepreneurs" may not have constituted that identity in a different context. In addition, the focus groups provided an incentive for participating in the study, by enabling participants to extend their networks and share their experiences, knowledge and insights in a mutually supportive environment.

Given our focus on ethnic minority entrepreneurs and those with disabilities participating in entrepreneurial activity, purposeful sampling techniques, including snowball sampling, were used to identify participants to the focus groups. Potential participants were identified with the assistance of an advisory group to the main project, comprising academics, expert practitioners and policy makers. At the end of the selection process, a total of 15 participants (5 females; 10 males) participated in the focus groups for those with disabilities that were held in London, Nottingham and Surrey during the period May to July 2019. A total of 16 participants (5 males; 11 females) participated in the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) focus groups that were held in London, Birmingham and Sheffield during the period June to August 2019.

The focus groups were composed of individuals who were either involved or were interested in entrepreneurship as self-employed, entrepreneurs, or employees. Focus groups

were also diverse in terms of their ethnicity, nationality, disability, gender, age, education, and experience in entrepreneurship. The diverse identities of the focus group participants and their wide-ranging experiences of entrepreneurship, provided a means of investigating multiple viewpoints simultaneously. It also enabled unanticipated issues to emerge through discussion, with participants building upon one another's insights. Each focus group session was facilitated by a team of two researchers and lasted between 90 to 110 minutes. Participation was mainly through face-to-face discussions, but where this was not feasible, participation was facilitated via teleconference.

Supplementary data for the article was also collected through semi-structured interviews with five policymakers who are actively involved in developing strategies within their organizations to achieve greater EDI in research funding and/or the entrepreneurial ecosystem. These expert interviews were used to capture high level perspectives of the policy initiative awareness and implementation stages. The interviews were focused on gaining a better understanding of different policies and strategies aimed at promoting greater EDI within an entrepreneurial ecosystem. The interviews took place in September 2019 and were organized via teleconference. Each interview lasted between 30 to 80 minutes.

3.2 Data analysis

To facilitate the data analysis, the focus groups and semi-structured interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Participants were also assured of confidentiality and anonymity in order to encourage sincere responses. The data analysis was conducted using NVivo coding software and involved the development of a coding framework (Miles et al., 2014). The coding process was carried out separately by at least two of the authors, with discussions being held with the research team at different stages to further redefine the coding framework. An abductive coding process was used in analysing the data, which involved

iteratively analysing codes identified from the data and the theory (Kennedy, 2018). First order codes were inductively identified from the data in order to prioritize participants' voice (Saldaña, 2015). In the next stage, codes were grouped into three main categories related to challenges and barriers, opportunities and/or strategies to overcome challenges, and support needs. The progressive coding cycles were useful in highlighting salient features in the data and in generating second order theoretical themes and aggregations (Miles et al., 2014).

An intersectional lens is adopted in the data analysis to assess how these different identity categories intersect to create added layers of disadvantage. Similar to the study by Wingfield and Taylor (2016), we also analyse the frames and intersectional counter-frames used by focus group participants in order to provide a more nuanced assessment of the everyday behaviours, structures and broader power relations that perpetuate societal hierarchies. A similar abductive coding process was used to analyse the data obtained through the semi-structured interviews.

4. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Our findings reveal that identity categories can intersect to aggravate existing barriers for ethnic minority entrepreneurs and those with disabilities to participate in entrepreneurship. They also determine the types of opportunities and resources that are accessible to entrepreneurs/innovators from the two focal groups. However, we also find the use of various intersectional counter-frames as part of the strategy to achieve greater economic and social advantages, not only at the individual level, but also extending to the wider minority community. Common themes were identified with regards to challenges and barriers faced across both focal communities, such as limited access to finance, liabilities of size or newness, as well as difficulties in achieving a work-life balance.

The different stages of the conceptual framework are used to structure our inquiry. The focus group findings (section 4.1) present four main themes that have been identified - i)

perceptions/experiences of discrimination, ii) access to networks, iii) exposure, visibility and voice, and iv) support needs - and help to establish the societal and environmental drivers for policy initiatives to achieve greater EDI. The policymakers' perspectives on the policy initiative awareness stage, as well as on EDI implementation, evaluation, and outcomes within initiatives, are presented in section 4.2. The article uses extensive excerpts in order to prioritize participants' voices.

4.1 Findings based on focus groups

4.1.1 Perceptions and experiences of discrimination

Perceptions and experiences of discrimination within the system and its impact on the types of opportunities that are accessed, was highlighted by participants. The disadvantage of having a "foreign" sounding name was one of the issues raised in the BAME focus groups, with participants debating the merits of changing one's name in order to better 'fit in' (see Table 1a below).

Table 1a: Excerpts on identity

Focus group	Excerpts
BAME group	*... I've worked in recruitment for many years. I've worked with lots of* different consultants, and *if they couldn't read a name, they…They* wouldn't ring the person, because they didn't know how to pronounce the name (female participant) I have so many recommendations from English people, 'You should change your name and surname. It will be easier for applications and everything. Change it.' I'm glad I never changed, because really, you give a good... It's who I am. My parents, grandparents, you know (female participant) Well, if you're starting at that point, and you're feeling as though you can't be proud of your own name, where do you go from there? Because that is you. That's what you've been called since you were born (female participant) I refuse to do that because that's compromising your sense of identity and integrity. You say people would rather appreciate who you were than having to-, I'm African. Why should I change my name to an English person to be recruited? (male participant)

	It's disappointing. Also, if you change your name and then go through the system, when it comes to face-to-face interview, they're expecting John *Smith, someone… (laughter). There's a lot of people who turn up to* interview because they have an English name. They are expecting maybe a white person, and then it is a black person. They all have to *change…(male participa*nt)

An analysis of this discussion reveals the use of counter-frames that emphasize the racialized misconceptions that affects one's access to opportunities, for example, getting past the initial hurdle of the application system due to not having an "English" sounding name, only to encounter a further hurdle at the face-to-face interviews. In order to overcome this perceived discrimination and accompanying feelings of not measuring up due to one's ethnic identity, participants use counter-frames that link one's name to one's identity, sense of integrity, and to one's community. In this way, they regain their sense of pride and belonging.

Feelings of exclusion or not 'fitting in' also lead to lack of confidence, low self-esteem, and increased levels of self-doubt. These attitudes act as psychological barriers for participants when applying for different opportunities. This process could lead to participants disqualifying themselves, which in effect narrows the talent pool applying for such opportunities. Socialization processes that are aimed at preparing ethnic minorities for the 'real' world could inadvertently result in the normalization of the same hierarchical structures they are trying to address (see Table 1 b below).

Table 1b: Excerpts on psychological barriers

Focus group	**Excerpts**
BAME group	Growing up, we even used to be told by parents, 'You know, you're Black. You're going to have to work. Life's not fair,' and for a lot of children and households and businesses, you know that from the onset, so you always second-*guess yourself when you're applying for stuff… (female* participant) Everybody's got to work for it, but you sometimes have to work that little bit harder and it's the same in the employment world, to be employed. You know, there's a lot of biases that are unconscious. You know, I don't think people are intentionally trying not to give you a job, however, it happens. I was having a conversation with somebody this morning about the same

	thing and I said, 'You know, when I used to apply for jobs, you'd see a job and you'd say, 'Shall I? Do I really think that that company would want to employ me? Would I fit in there? That kind of thing. Whereas, certain other people don*'t have that barrier first straight away….(female* participant)

For those with disabilities, there is an additional psychological burden of trying to assess other people's perceptions of their disability in order to manage any related prejudices (see Table 1c below).

Table 1c: Excerpts on managing others' perceptions

Focus group	**Excerpts**
Disabilities group	*…when I interview [potential employees] they might… positive so they* might try to portray that they can work with me but then once they're employed they might try to patronise me because of my [disability] (male participant) *… I have the same problem because I have met with quite a few companies and… I've experienced when I went to these meetings, they come across* very positive and then at the end of that session I feel like they're not taking me seriously, so again I just need to give a little bit of extra care again compared to other people. (male participant) I regularly contemplate about disclosure to organisations, really kind of feel what's the energy in the organisation. I've had some really weird experiences and I've worked for some of the largest multinationals from both sides of the Atlantic just throughout my career, so I'm very conscious of who am I working with, what are their perceptions on disability, race? (male participant) *…it's a bit more difficult for people with disabilities because if I go to a* bank, they might look at my business plan on paper and I look okay, great, but then they see me they might just make this general, 'Okay, this person, does he have that?' They might measure me or think that I don't have that extra commitment because of my disabilities... (male participant)

Disability and race intersect in this case to impact the individual's social interactions and shape the types of career opportunities that are accessible to them (see Table 1d below). The stigmatisation and social exclusion that are experienced also act as a motivation for engaging in entrepreneurial activity. In this case, participants use a disability counter-frame to make sense

of the barriers and challenges being experienced in the labour market, with an entrepreneurial path being one way that is proposed of dealing with discrimination.

Table 1d: Excerpts on impact of stigmatisation

Focus group	Excerpts
Disabilities group	My own experiences tell me that the type of disabilities that are more stigmatised and are therefore harder to get into the labour market, might be the kind of people who would be more likely to start a business (male participant) I think definitely there is an increase in the number of people of choosing to be an entrepreneur, because they cannot access the workplace in the traditional way. Or, sadly, they did have-, like myself-, a position in the workplace, but fell into the statistical numbers that lose their job within twelve months of having the diagnosis. (female participant) It's also a fear factor of, 'If I employ a disabled person, what does that mean to our business? What does it mean to our colleagues, our staff? What health and safety?' all of that, kind of, thing. (male participant)

4.1.2 Access to networks

Existing homogeneous networks that are not representative of the wider business community limit ethnic minority and disabled entrepreneurs' access to social capital. This limits individuals' ability to learn from each other, for example through sharing experiences, exchanging information etc., limits their voices, and limits their access to relatable role models, mentors or sponsors who can provide advice and guidance. This situation is aggravated when race and class categories intersect, and results in an overall community and information deficit (see Table 2a below).

Table 2a: Excerpts on lack of representation

Focus group	Excerpts
BAME group	... *I* mean that happens a lot and when you go to networks and you see, it's, like, clones, you know, middle class men, white who are talking the same and there's no diversity in business networks (female participant) Yes, I could probably say again, if I think about going into a networking event or doing a pitch to some buyers, it is always a scary experience, because I walk into a room and nobody looks like me. So it is scary, but then as an entrepreneur, it's whether I am prepared to face that or am I

	just going to give up and say, I'm not going to do it because, you know, there's nobody there that does the same thing (female participant) And then there's not enough role models that are BME and also from a low income family. So, a lot of the role models I do meet that are BME are like me, in that they've also gone to a top university, so they have actually then had quite a lot of privileges. But I don't often come across people who are just, like, haven't had some element of privilege to allow them to get where they are, which means that for a lot of young people for whom that is not a path, that is an option, there really is not any role models (female participant)
Disabilities group	I think one thing that I found quite difficult being a disabled person is the lack of role models. I found that both with traditional employment and also entrepreneurship. I kind of feel in some way, I've worked across many sectors and I've found the same kind of issue across many sectors. (male participant). I'm sure there's chief executives or very senior people within banking who have a disability but I can't tell you any, like, off the top of my head (male participant). I think one of the biggest challenges for disabled people of all kinds is there really is no one community. So, like, in the genders area, there's a MeToo movement to create community amongst women, and in black people, there's Black Lives Matter to create community between black and minority ethnic, with their experience particularly of the police. For disabled people, there's no community, and because there's no community, the things that you get from community, like skill-sharing, information, contacts, you don't get. So, disabled people are actually in a, kind of, community deficit, information deficit environment (male participant)

To counter the disadvantages created by a lack of access to social capital, participants use intersectional counter-frames that emphasize solidarity based on categories of age, race, gender and disability (see Table 2b below). They do this by setting up formal or informal intra-racial networks and initiatives that target their respective communities as a way of providing access to these limited social resources.

Table 2b: Excerpts on creating own networks/initiatives

Focus group	**Excerpts**
BAME group	So, I started an initiative called [name] which is about bringing together all African entrepreneurs and businesses within the Midlands to discuss some of the challenges we are faced with in this society and share ideas, marketing sights and perspective and innovative idea, how we can empower so we can become more competitive within there, and also contribute fully within the UK economy (male participant)

	Another thing that we're doing recently that goes to the self-esteem point, and building confidence and resilience is we set up a BME network, so that all of the BME young people that are in the different businesses, that might be the only person that they relate to immediately in their business, because they look and sound like them. We're going to be running, like, discussion forums, debates, motivational speaking sessions, trips, so that they feel they have networks, too (female participant)
Disabilities group	I think that's the point where you get referred into this peer support network that says, 'Look, here are your options. We can explore them with you and then we can signpost you to specialists which you work with them,' and they'll make that connections so that you can then be provided with that specialist support (male participant) I'm mixing with different people now, so I tend to ask questions-, actually I ask ----- quite a hell of a lot, and she knows a lot (laughter), so thank you for that-, but I've fumbled along, like -----. I Google it if I need to know anything, but I don't know that anything's out there, so I just sit here just carrying on doing what I'm doing, thinking I'm not entitled to anything, because I don't know about it (female participant) *... there's lots of stuff that I don't know that I'm hearing toda*y but equally I think, you know, maybe I've got something to contribute as well in terms of just the notion of how you set yourself up to optimise your chances of getting a good support package from [institution]. So, you know, I think a network of disabled entrepreneurs could be incredibly helpful to me (male participant).

4.1.3 Exposure, awareness and identification

Participants also indicate that a limited exposure to, or lack of awareness and/or identification with innovative entrepreneurship are further barriers to engagement. This is especially true when one considers intersecting categories of age, class and disability status. The role of class and age in influencing ethnic minorities' social circles and resulting exposure influences their knowledge and identification with 'innovation' (see Table 3a below).

Table 3a: Excerpts on lack of exposure

Focus group	**Excerpts**
BAME group	*...so a lot of the language that I know now and I feel really confident using,* I only learnt that language in the last six months, whereas when I was younger, I wouldn't feel confident using words like-, I wouldn't have described myself as an 'innovative' person, because I wouldn't have even known language like that. Actually, I think a lot of the time when you're trying to break into sectors like this, a lot of the language is really quite high level, and really quite, like, it's a bit of a club for who knows how to speak like that. People say things like 'impact' and words that actually you just don't really learn, from the communities that I'm from. So, that was a real learning curve, and I feel like now I have command of that language

	I do so much better at things like interviews, and if I was applying for a grant now I would know exactly the right type of buzzwords to use, whereas that's really, really recent for me. I feel like there are probably lots of other people with great ideas or great projects that just don't know about these buzzwords, yes? (female participant)

While there may be plenty of young people from ethnic minority communities with innovative ideas or projects, their lack of identification with current discourses on entrepreneurship and innovation results in them not viewing this as a viable career path. To overcome this, intersectional counter-frames are employed, emphasizing the need for more visible, relatable role models and more accessible routes to innovative entrepreneurship as a way of increasing the exposure of young people from under-represented groups who are disadvantaged either due to their social and economic status and/or abilities (see Table 3b below).

Table 3b: Excerpts on raising awareness & increasing identification

Focus group	**Excerpts**
Disabilities group	If you're not allowing that certain aspect of vulnerability and you're allowing that aspect of vulnerability to enable other people who are vulnerable, you know, to relate, to empathise so they can also-, you're basically helping to empower the future generation. So, I think there does need to be a lot more awareness on this, I think we do need to promote a lot more disabled role models in all industries (male participant) For me, the gap was around getting into disabled people's heads that they could become entrepreneurs. So, the responses always seemed to be, like, there are loads of people with business ideas that are ready to become entrepreneurs rather than that... I think that it goes back to the first thing that you said *[person's name]*, how do we inspire people to want to be entrepreneurs in the first place, to think that it is possible, so how do we get those case studies out and say, you know, 'This person's done this'? (male participant)
BAME group	So, yes, for me it's really just making it clear what the routes are in, and making those routes in really accessible. So, it's not, 'You can only do this programme if you have a degree, if you have this, if you have that,' because then that rules out so many people. It's making it super accessible, and the only thing you need is a willingness to learn and you can do it (female participant) Look at what organisations are we working with, to deliver these workshops, and are there newer ways that we can work with ethnic minority businesses to actually come and provide these workshops, and help out. Even if it's like a schools' programme, could you pair up with-, talk about, or could you pair up with other stuff, to make sure that you're not just giving generic advice, but these young people feel like, you know,

	'I see myself in this person,' or, 'I can relate,' or, 'I feel like I'm understood,' (female participant)

4.1.4 Support needs

Participants from the disabilities group highlight the need for initiatives specifically targeted towards this community (see Table 4a below). This is necessary to overcome the general stigmatization that members face from wider society. This stigmatization leads to exclusion of those with disabilities from wider society, and shapes the type of relationships that can be formed with others not facing similar challenges or barriers.

Table 4a: Excerpts on lack of targeted support

Focus group	**Excerpts**
Disabilities group	*...the truth is many disabled people are* not going to talk about these things with anyone because they're very personal issues. They're very sensitive issues, so, until you've developed that rapport, until that person knows you're another disabled person and you're facing similar issues and similar challenges, a disabled person isn't going to open up to that because, you know, generally, we're vulnerable, generally, we're already being stigmatised by society. So, unless we really know that you have the right intention, that you want to help and support, why are we going to open up more for potential people to attack us even more? (male participant) So, first of all, there's very little business support out there that, actually, is directed at disabled people. The programme that I developed was probably the first that I've seen that looked at the real issue, which is actually promoting health and wellbeing. So, you know, you can go anywhere and get-, you know, show you how to do a painting, blah blah blah, but not actually how you're doing on the day-to-day knowledge. How you're going to be, and how to be productive, and develop, and be successful (female participant).

The lack of sustainable long-term support from business advisors that is provided at the right time and with the right focus was also indicated as another barrier. Initiatives were seen to provide support on the initial business start-up processes, but not in assisting participants in tackling challenges at later stages e.g. finding buyers, accessing networks etc. (see Table 4b below).

Table 4b: Excerpts on short-term & inadequate support

Focus group	Excerpts
Disabilities group	[Organization] only wanted to support people that already had an idea that was very easy to develop. You know, we know they wanted to say, 'We'll show you how to set up a bank account, to write a constitution and job description,' but to take it from, 'I've got this idea in my head, and how do I develop that idea? How do I find somebody who will mentor me and share their experience? (male participant)
BAME group	*... so we've gone through all this process of transformation, but then it* comes to an end. There's no next step. There's no next stage. So, I'm now left to go out at there, and you know, go back to where I was three months ago, still trying to find buyers, still trying to find-, so, that last bit of the support is what is lacking, and nobody provides you-, not *[organization]…nobody, so I'm still, like, yes, I have made a huge* transformation, but I still need that support. So, I'm still emailing, contacting people-, I mean, you can't expect someone to run your business for you, but having that little support to say, 'Okay, we've got a list of *buyers we work with. Let's bring you together. You know, let's give you* an opportunity to come and pitch your product.' There's nothing like that (female participant)

However, while such actions were viewed as important in assisting entrepreneurs and innovators to navigate and make progress in the current system, it was also suggested that there is a need to tackle the institutional and structural discrimination that perpetuates hierarchical systems based on a variety of intersecting categories such as race, age, gender, class, disability status and ethnicity. Counter-frames that focused on changed mind sets and broadened perspectives were used by participants to facilitate the creation of more inclusive spaces for entrepreneurial activities (see Table 4c below).

Table 4c: Excerpts on broadened perspectives & mind-sets

Focus group	Excerpts
BAME group	I think we had a scenario that said that investors, when they look towards investing in a company, sometimes it's not even about the company. They can have a guy pitching to them and you hear things like, 'You know, it wasn't that gre*at, but I see myself in that.' B*ut what will it take for a white, British-raised man from a high-income, high-class household, what does it take for him to look at a young Black girl, who's perhaps starting a business in natural hair, to think, 'You know, I see myself in her.' It's a very different dynamic and the question is, what can be done to change that space and to help those people who know that they're not necessarily-can't relate to the person that they're going to pitch to, but still feel confident enough to know that this is a table that I can actually have a seat at (female participant)

	I think that raises the question of, as much as we can all say that there's a lot of change that needs to be done in order to create that space and encourage people, I think within communities, there's also a lot of change that needs to be had in order to understand how do we blend the two different kinds of environments without one having to become very community based, when it's not a very community based country, but also, how do you go from being very community based to understand that sometimes you do have to venture outside of your community in order to access the resources that you need (female participant)

To achieve this, participants emphasized the need for increased collaboration, not only across different government departments, but also with minority community-led initiatives. Such partnerships would allow policy initiatives to widen their reach amongst minority groups, whilst also creating an atmosphere of trust. They would also enable policy initiatives to gain legitimacy with stakeholders (see Table 4d below).

Table 4d: Excerpts on increased collaboration

Focus group	**Excerpts**
Disabilities group	We recommended that the traditional business support organisations should actually partner with associations of disabled entrepreneurs and disability-led organisations so that they could provide the support, but provide the support through the existing experts. So, we felt that was the right combination, because we wanted impairment-specific advice or information, but they also wanted the general advice about writing business plans or market research. So, they wanted that mix of the specialist advice and the non-specialist advice (male participant)
BAME group	So, like, really partnering with organisations that do have opportunities and routes in and helping them really, kind of, turn the volume up on that voice, so that young people in BME communities do find out about them, because they might have less networks to recommended these opportunities, and things like that. (female participant). And, sometimes, those people, they think we are not scrutinising them, although you might be quiet, but of course you observe their behaviour, their communication, and it's like, 'Okay, we can tell with this person, does he actually believe in all he i*s talking about, or is he just…* So, they talk a lot, 'We're doing this and this and this and this.' Okay, tell me the thought behind it. And then they become silent. So having the people who do these programmes who understand, actually, the objective and who believe in it. It's quite a powerful thing (male participant)

Moreover, we also suggest that for initiatives to have an impact in transforming the system, there needs to be increased accountability and genuine, sustained commitment to achieving this goal.

4.2 Findings based on semi-structured interviews

4.2.1 Policy initiative engagement

Policymakers indicated a number of different drivers for engaging in EDI. These drivers go beyond regulatory requirements, such as the Public Sector Equality Duty that requires public institutions to have regard to EDI. While ensuring greater diversity and inclusion is viewed as the right thing to do, economic and social benefits to be derived from diversity appear to be the main antecedents for implementing EDI practices. Diverse teams are viewed as being more creative, more innovative, better able to handle changing situations, and leading to better outcomes (see Table 5 below).

Table 5: Excerpts on policy initiative antecedents

Themes	Excerpts
Benefits of diversity	We do have more than one driver for working on diversity and inclusion. First of all, it's the law. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires [institution] to give due regard to equality, diversity and inclusion, we have to do it. We think it's the right thing to do, to be just and inclusive for everybody. We believe that diverse teams will be more creative teams and lead to better research outcomes and we need more people doing research and innovation in the UK, we need to have the very best people involved in research and innovation. We don't want anybody to feel that it's not a career path or not something they could get involved in. ... it's a priority for us. Number 1, we believe strongly that a great idea for innovation can come from anywhere and anybody. If we only speak to a certain subset of society and the business community, we are not going to tap into all those great ideas. We need to search and engage far and wide to find those great ideas and those people that have those ideas and those organisations they're working within.... there's lots of research to show that those teams then can be more creative, more innovative, can handle changing situations better...If we promote diversity, then it's going to deliver better outcomes. we're doing this because we believe that it will help us to grow the economy and it will help the businesses that we work with to have a more positive impact on society as a whole, so it's the economic and societal benefits that will flow

4.2.2 EDI implementation

The implementation of EDI within institutions focuses on the provision of training to staff and the appointment of what are generally (in the UK) called EDI champions – designated staff tasked with promoting and supporting EDI. Even though the type and level of training provided is distinct to each institution, providing "unconscious bias" training remains the most common focus. The identification of EDI champions at senior managerial/director level was another common practice. However, to make substantive changes to existing power structures, policymakers point to the need for a cultural change not only within the organization, but also with external partner institutions and collaborators. They identified the need to adopt a holistic approach to promoting inclusivity by ensuring that it is embedded in everyday practices rather than being implemented as isolated or piecemeal initiatives (see Table 6 below).

Table 6: Excerpts on EDI implementation

Themes	**Excerpts**
EDI trainings	Yes. So, within government and [institution] we have unconscious bias training that is mandatory. So, we have to do that and if we don't it could have an effect on, sort of, people's performance reporting. Different constituent parts of [institution] probably have different policies around that. So, for example, the Research Councils at the moment undoubtedly provide training for their peer reviewers, who review applications, and their panel members. Probably it's easier to get to their panel members than it is to get to their peer reviewers, where a lot of the training is online, but they would have training, for example, on things like unconscious bias, etc. We've used unconscious bias understanding in a lot of training and changed our processes to try and make it less likely that either conscious or unconscious bias are affecting the decision-making in peer review. As you can see on our website, there are a lot of changes we've made to the way that we do the peer review. I think everybody does face-to-face training when they first join and then if people become line managers, it'll be included in the line manager training. If they start convening panels to assess proposals or policy-making and things like that, then there'll be other training for them as well. I think, and I haven't actually been on it myself, the other thing is it's not compulsory training, if you would like to do this training you can do. So, how many staff have been through it, I don't know. It's very much focused

	around things like dignity at work, being your whole self at work. It's internal focused, organisational culture stuff. And what we know that we need to do going forward is to think about, what does this mean for staff in terms of the work that we do and the programmes that we deliver and the support we provide for business, which is that embedding piece. If we want people to have the mind-set that in everything we do, in delivering these programmes, they need to consider equality, diversity and inclusion issues, they need to have some training. Training is definitely not the answer to everything but it needs to be part of it.
EDI champions	And then we also have within [institution]we have a diversity champion at senior manager level, director level and so through that race champion that we have at director level. We have communication messages that go out to the rest of the organisation to raise awareness of race matters. We're getting some people who actually are going to be identified as people to lead this agenda for their teams, so they will be the champions *internally. So, [person's name] who is our executive chair is a champion,* and he says he wants to be and he's very supportive. There are other members of the executive management team who are interested in different aspects of this. As I said we will be formalising it in terms of people specifically having this role and it will be put into their objectives, they'll be the go to person. We want everybody to do it, but the problem with embedding and expecting everyone to do it is that nobody does it. I feel there are definitely a lot...diversity and inclusion is very much in vogue now. Everybody wants to be a champion of something, but in terms of what they actually do and accountability, right, over to people's contribution, I think that still needs to be hashed out a bit more.
Need for cultural shift	We're only just beginning to think about the ways in which those environments are exclusive and, as you say, perhaps trying to create schemes that target individuals rather than thinking, actually, more fundamentally about how it works in those environments. Thinking *about…. who designs those opportunities, how are those power structures* set up, how can people access cultural and social capital across the piece. Not simply giving people some mentoring schemes, but how do you help everybody access networks and empower those individuals, whatever background they come from. So I think there is a culture shift, but there is practice we can learn from because there are more than 20 to 30 years of practice within our organisations. trying to change the policy making culture too, you know, tackling the cognitive sciences, making sure that they're tackling unconscious bias, tackling this sort of sense of belonging for out-groups within the policy profession, making sure that people could really bring their whole selves to work, right? And that in itself will foster greater diversity of thought in the work space. but we also have a strong role around working with Government, and working with other policy organisations in order to what you might call use our wider powers as an organisation, whether that's our convening powers, our political influence, our work in partnership with others more directly through funded projects, evidence-building, as I mentioned, in order to influence wider culture change in the environment. So, what we hope to do as strategy is to bring the organisation to be more than the sum of its parts, and that's how we do it

Holistic approach to inclusivity	We want our organisations to think holistically about inclusivity, and not think of this as an initiative. I talked about partnership, and I talked about collaboration, and funders and regulators working together, and I think this is where we need to help the organisations that we fund think holistically, not simply think about, 'Oh, this is how we make sure the [institution] are happy with what we're doing. This is how we make sure that [institution] are happy.' Actually, we want you to do the right thing as an organisation, and how can we, as funders and regulators, help that to happen

4.2.3 EDI evaluation

The collection of data on EDI and evaluation of programmes are key in determining the effectiveness of EDI practices. Policymakers indicated a number of challenges, both in the collection of adequate data as well as in the implementation of programme evaluations. There is still a gap in terms of the type and quality of data being collected, which limits evaluation of the effectiveness of their initiatives. The constant time pressure to set up and harmonize internal processes while ensuring that interventions are running is another challenge. There is also limited capacity to carry out long-term evaluations that would assist in determining the actual impact of different interventions on individuals and on the wider society (see Table 7 below).

Table 7: Excerpts on EDI evaluation

Themes	**Excerpts**
Metrics on EDI	We've got an expert now working with us on this and I think that's really important and that's absolutely what we've got to do, because when we've done our research to look at what's happening internationally in terms of good practice. Actually [institution] have done a review looking at what's happening in the UK, it's very clear that there isn't robust evidence of what works and what doesn't work, because of this gap in data that's been collected and robust evaluation frameworks that are being used. Tricky, because we're intervening in a live real system and it's hard to isolate our interventions. The key thing we do is monitor the data of who's applying to us, how successful are they, who's in our community, how is our community changing, who's on our advisory group, that sort of thing, so as best you can monitor the data. Talking to people and hearing people's experiences So we need to reflect that diversity of policies, processes, data, audiences, partners, and bring that together in a harmonised way. And so, simply collecting the information on what's currently being done, how this has been collected, is a challenging one

Quality of evaluations	And evaluation more generally is poor, poor quality. There are a range of methodologies out there, but there's not a lot of good practice and sharing. There are lots of different definitions, and overall it means that it's very difficult to get at good practice, even within very narrowly-defined areas. And then, of course, we have a bias towards STEM. A lot of interest, historically, in policy terms on STEM areas, but obviously that isn't the *gamut of areas of research and innovation…. So, we have all these kinds* of weaknesses in our existing evidence-base that would enable us to *identify what good practice looks like, and to build from that…* We need a culture that's much more willing to talk about what doesn't work as well as what does work, so trying to address things like the biases we have in evaluation at the moment, where there's a tendency to only report positive findings etc. I've also mentioned that need to evidence-build, so we might need to fund projects that have evaluation built into them, and build the evidence base, because our research to date suggests that evaluation is relatively neglected in this sphere.
Time pressure	We're also going through a process of setting up our own new processes, our own internal application processes for example, so there's a kind of process of in-*flight*… that metaphor of trying to build your aeroplane as you're flying it. We're having to build our processes at the same time as we're keeping things going, making sure that we are still providing funding. Running application processes at the same as we're trying to embed good practice. I think the thing I would say, though, is that the reality of what public policy organisations like [institution] are often facing is increasing time pressure, an increasing focus on getting done very quickly, off the ground very quickly, and I think that does make it more and more difficult to run the sort of evaluations that we know are good practice.
Evaluation of impact	The problem with all of this for us is that we can never ascribe an action *we're taking to an individual's outcome. So, they may attend one of our* mentoring circles or we may put them on the new enterprise allowance scheme but what we don't know is the support because we don't have the capacity to, sort of, follow up with individuals to find out what was the key thing that made the difference for them. You know, did our intervention help or was it just something that would have happened anyway?

Notwithstanding these challenges, most policymakers had a relatively optimistic outlook with regards to the prominence that issues of EDI are gaining. However, they also acknowledged that the challenges to achieving EDI are deep-rooted in society, and that these structural barriers need to be addressed to create a space where diverse groups of talented individuals can flourish.

4.2.4 EDI outcomes

The evaluation of EDI outcomes was more difficult to ascertain given the previous challenges identified by policymakers in determining the effectiveness of EDI practices. However, the implementation of processes/adoption of best practices that are aimed at increasing collaboration with a wider group of stakeholders are highlighted. These focused on increasing community representation and participation in the policy development process (see Table 8 below).

Table 8: Excerpts on EDI outcomes

Themes	**Excerpts**
Collaboration with stakeholders	At the moment, the research and innovation environment is not representative of the wider working population and, when you have a gap, you have a voice gap. I've been at the organisation since March, and I would say that we can do a lot more to involve a wider range of voices in our policy development and policy evaluation, and research and evidence gathering, to help them be part of the process. Rather than me talk to them at specific points. So, we need to build those voices in. ... At the moment I would say we've got more we can do, not to talk about people but involve individuals in the policy development process that reflect the diversity that we want to see embedded in our research and innovation environment. ...Empowering our community is one of the key things that we want to do and I think that's when things really work, rather than us just doing things from [location]. It's when we're working our research and innovation community on the same things together, so it's joined up, people working together on the same things. All the things we've done, peer review, the advisory group changes, they've all been done working with our council but also our advisers and our community, so that people understand what we're doing and why we're doing it. ...*As you can* imagine it's quite fragmented, there are quite a lot of programmes, but there's low visibility of them and the uptake is quite poor, it's about providing a focus and bringing all of that support together in one place so that it's visible and people can make choices and be signposted in the right direction. Again we're going to have some events, but the other thing that's a bit different ... is we want to use those events to provide young people with a platform and a voice to start telling us what they think about the future of business. What their thoughts are about some of the challenges, whether those are economic or societal that we face and putting a regional lens on that as well so it's very relevant to the region.
Adoption of best practice	Remaining open-minded and trying to put aside a defensive mind-set around your approach, and being willing to listen and hear when organisations and individuals that you're intending to support challenge you. Being willing to listen to that. Being willing to co-produce as well,

	rather than do things to people. And again, it's that principle, isn't it, do nothing without them being involved. We as public sector organisations do not have all the answers. We do not even begin to have answers, and our approach should be one of humility, wanting to work with others to understand what the problems are, and to work in partnership and collaboratively and intuitively in order to co-create and co-generate solutions. And being willing to listen and adapt as we go along.

It can be argued that such efforts at increased collaboration would have a positive impact by increasing policy initiatives' legitimacy with external stakeholders. Policy initiatives would also have a direct impact on the entrepreneurial ecosystem through such collaborations. However, the impact of such collaborations is beyond the scope of this article, and would need to be determined by future studies.

5. DISCUSSION

It is not as simple as to suggest that entrepreneurs from diverse backgrounds are either absent or overlooked by public funding; the reality is somewhat more complex. While numerous support initiatives exist in the UK, our findings suggest that the fragmented, short-term nature of some initiatives result in under-represented groups remaining unaware of the support available. Additionally, our article suggests that entrepreneurial engagement is influenced not only by minority status, but by the specific relations to other socio-demographic categories within which that status is embedded. This builds on studies calling for the need to pay greater attention to the impact of intersecting dimensions of entrepreneurial disadvantage (Knight, 2016; Martinez Dy, 2020), by showing how diversity dimensions of minority status and disability intersect with other identity categories to influence entrepreneurial activity.

Our article corroborates previous studies (Agius Vallejo and Canizales, 2016; Gold, 2016; Harvey, 2005; Valdez, 2016) by highlighting the ways in which different identity categories intersect to influence access to opportunities, social capital and financial resources, as well as

identification and engagement with entrepreneurship. These findings support the argument that a more integrated approach is the best way to understand the economic and social relationships in which minority groups are embedded (Edwards et al., 2016; Ram and Jones, 2008), and the subsequent impact on entrepreneurial activity. Moreover, further research is needed to better understand how the psychological burden created by experiences of prejudice, discrimination, exclusion and stigmatisation, impacts entrepreneur well-being. As such, there remain various opportunities for policy initiatives to promote greater EDI and create an entrepreneurial ecosystem that embraces entrepreneurship with and by diverse actors.

Whilst intersecting identities can aggravate challenges, individuals are able to identify ways to mitigate them. Intersections can also present opportunities for entrepreneurial activity. Our findings build on the limited studies analysing how intersectional counter-frames are used to navigate systemic oppressions by providing a way to mitigate detrimental ideologies, perceptions and assumptions (Wingfield and Taylor, 2016). Disability counter-frames address issues of stigmatisation and social exclusion by providing an alternative career path through entrepreneurship. Furthermore, intersectional counter-frames emphasizing solidarity based upon identity categories including race and disability are used to create networks that can provide social capital, relatable role models, and other sources of empowerment to minority communities. Therefore, while previous studies have argued that minority businesses need to move beyond niche markets in order to remain competitive (Kitching et al., 2009), our findings highlight the need to recognize that such a focus may be a rational choice by under-represented entrepreneurs to create value for marginalized groups (Wingfield and Taylor, 2016).

Policy initiatives also have a crucial role to play in facilitating the engagement of under-represented groups in entrepreneurship. A hybrid/blended approach that allows for targeted programmes, while ensuring that EDI practice are embedded in the development and evaluation of mainstream programmes is suggested. Despite the practical and political difficulties that

targeted programmes might face (Carter et al., 2015), we argue that such support is necessary for providing under-represented groups' with resources to navigate the system. However, our findings also emphasize the need for policy initiatives to pay greater attention to the heterogeneity of, and within, under-represented groups (Holck et al., 2016). Interventions need to focus on areas where intersecting socio-demographic categories create particular barriers. Additionally, policy initiatives need to address the structural hierarchies that result in discrimination, inequality and exclusion of under-represented groups from participation in mainstream programmes. Socio-economic injustice rooted in the political-economic structure of society and cultural/symbolic injustice rooted in social patterns of representation, interpretation and communication are both pervasive in contemporary societies and systematically disadvantage some groups vis-à-vis others (Fraser, 1995).

However, transforming existing structures is a slow and complex process that requires long-term and sustained commitment. As Fraser (1995:92) argues, there is a fundamental tension between recognition and redistribution, particularly "when we situate the problem in this larger field of multiple, intersecting struggles against multiple, intersecting injustices." Our findings emphasize the challenges of embedding EDI within programmes. The adoption of good practice has been slow, with a lack of consistency across time and initiatives. This has been compounded by inconsistent and inadequate metrics to evaluate progress in promoting diversity of applicants applying for public funding. The conceptual model, presented in Figure 2, highlights both the process to promote EDI outcomes through targeted interventions, as well as how they relate to and inform the wider entrepreneurial ecosystem and society more broadly.

The implementation of EDI practices is mainly achieved through staff training and identification of EDI champions. While training programmes develop skills in dealing with bias and discrimination (Foster Curtis and Dreachslin, 2008), there is a need to move beyond the current focus on unconscious bias training to addressing institutional and systemic factors that

position unconscious bias as an enabler of "whiteliness" through assertions of ignorance (Tate and Page, 2018). Focusing on changing institutional processes and organizational culture in order to create an inclusive environment also guards against the unintended consequences of increasing diversity without creating a more equitable system (Leslie, 2019; Puritty et al., 2017). Lastly, greater collaboration is needed between government agencies, as well as with community-led initiatives, in order to develop policy initiatives that have increased legitimacy amongst underrepresented communities.

6. CONCLUSION

Our article responds to calls in previous studies to pay greater attention to the intersecting dimensions of entrepreneurial diversity (Knight, 2016; Martinez Dy, 2020), as a step towards embracing the diversity inherent in entrepreneurship (Welter et al., 2017). We build on current entrepreneurial diversity research (Antshel, 2018; Bouncken, 2004; Díaz-García et al., 2013; Ram et al., 2017; Wiklund et al., 2018) by focusing on the diversity dimensions of minority status and disability. We advance this knowledge by analysing how these identity categories intersect with other identity categories to shape entrepreneurial action and experiences. Based on qualitative data from focus groups and semi-structured interviews, we make the following contributions. First, we adopt an intersectional perspective which emphasizes the heterogeneity of entrepreneurs as a group, while at the same time drawing attention to how identity categories can intersect to create added layers of disadvantage for certain groups of entrepreneurs. Secondly, we highlight the different strategies that ethnic minority entrepreneurs and those with disabilities utilize, such as drawing upon various intersectional counter-frames to gain access to resources that are not readily available owing to their ethnic minority or disability status. Thirdly, we develop a conceptual model for promoting EDI within an entrepreneurial ecosystem, and recommend a more holistic approach to achieving inclusive economic growth.

This includes adopting a hybrid/blended approach that combines targeted programmes with mainstream programmes in which EDI practices are embedded from development to assessment. Such an approach also calls for greater collaboration across different government sectors and agencies, as well as increased partnership with minority community-led initiatives.

Our article acknowledges that policy spaces and the entrepreneurship phenomenon are both messy, complex and cannot be studied in isolation, as they are embedded in and affected by the wider environment (Welter et al., 2017). Future studies analysing the public funding of diverse entrepreneurs should therefore adopt a holistic systems based approach, which considers the complex interdependencies and interconnectedness of an entrepreneurial ecosystem (Cairney, 2012; Castelnovo and Sorrentino, 2018). There is also a need for studies that pay greater attention to the broader structural factors (e.g. societal expectations, cultural norms, regulations, politics, place, religion, etc.) that influence activities and processes within entrepreneurial ecosystems (Brush et al., 2019; Coleman et al., 2019; Henry et al., 2017). Longitudinal studies that are better able to capture long-term impact of these macro level factors on under-represented groups' engagement in entrepreneurship would provide valuable insights to our current knowledge. Furthermore, given that our article's findings are specific to the UK context, where under-representation of social groups in entrepreneurship has been a long-standing concern (Carter et al., 2015), future research evaluating the impact of policy initiatives promoting EDI, in different national contexts, would make important contributions to current knowledge on how to achieve greater EDI within entrepreneurial ecosystems, and at a wider societal level.

While our article provides insights into the challenges and support needs of under-represented groups, it also has a number of limitations. One limitation of the focus group approach adopted is the possibility of social desirability bias, which results in participants giving responses that are socially acceptable, or in line with the dominant view within the group,

rather than expressing their true opinions (Allen, 2017). A second limitation is the possibility of hindsight bias that occurs during interviews, when participants recall past experiences and reconstruct their stories in ways that makes sense to them (García and Welter, 2013). While the small sample size limits the generalizability of our findings, the article aims at analytical rather than statistical generalization (Yin, 1994). Future large scale studies targeting under-represented groups in different geographical contexts, would provide useful insights on the representativeness of our findings.

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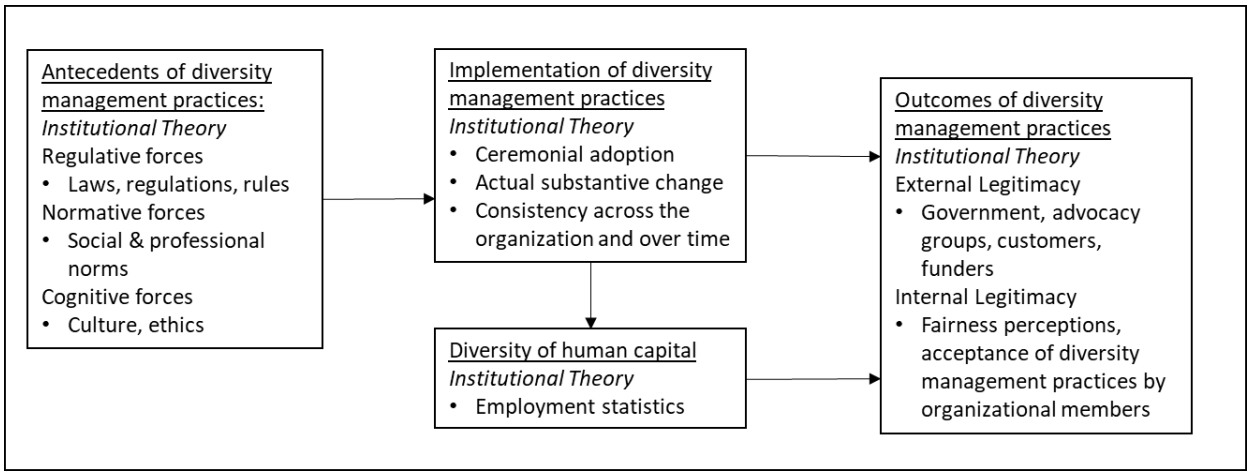
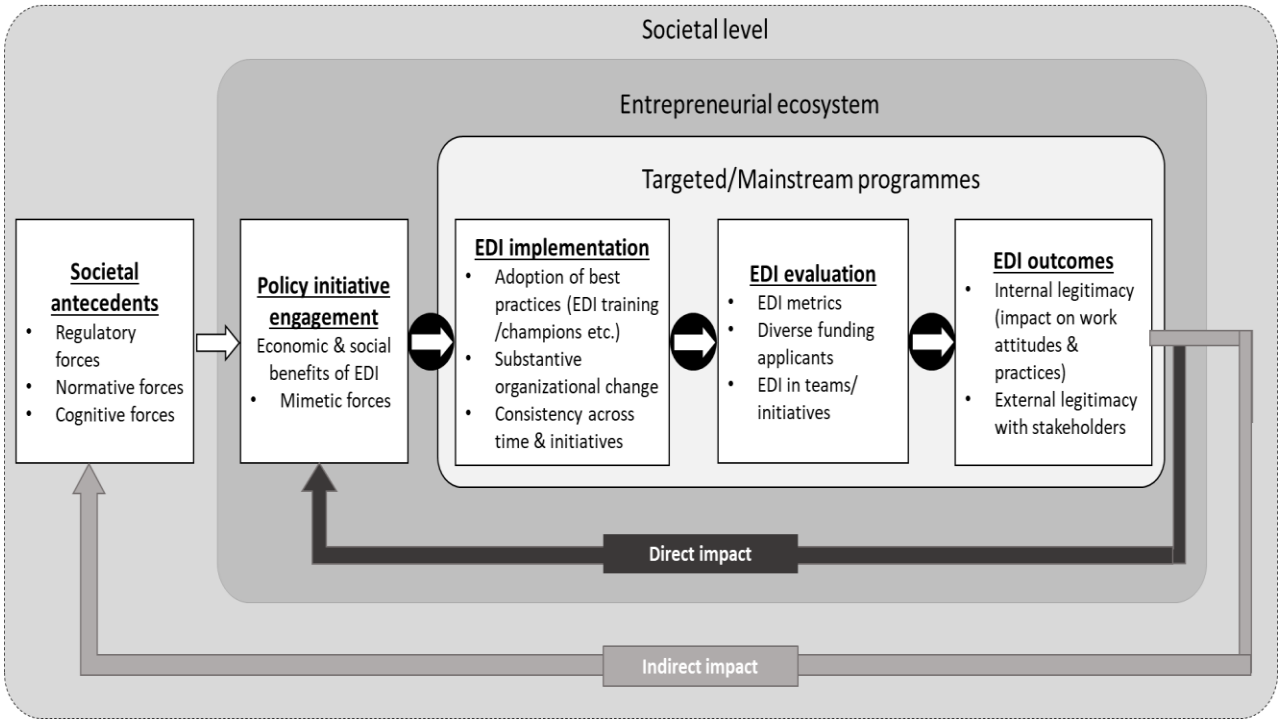
Figure 1: Antecedents and outcomes of diversity management practices



Source: Yang and Konrad (2011)

Figure 2: Conceptual model for promoting equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) within an entrepreneurial ecosystem



Source: Adapted and modified from Yang and Konrad (2011)