

# **Perspectives on Workforce Diversity: A Context-Based Approach to Understanding Diversity and Equality in the Police Service**

## **Authors:**

**Dr Kenisha Linton – Kingston Business School**

**Professor Fiona Moore – Royal Holloway, University of London**

**Professor Mark Exworthy – Birmingham University, UK**

Presented at the

**Global Equality & Diversity Conference, Nov. 2015**

**Canary Wharf, London**

# Today's Session



- Diversity Perspectives
- Diversity Discourse
- The strategic response
- The Diversity and Equality Strategy in the police service
- Key findings
- Diversity diagnosis

# Introduction

- This research paper investigates how employee perspectives on diversity, anchored in a specific work context, shape the organisation's approach to managing diversity.
- **Diversity perspectives** (Ely and Thomas 2001; Dass and Parker 1999)
- **Diversity discourse** (Janssens and Zanoni 2005; Litvin 1997; Zanoni and Janssens, 2007)
- **The strategic response** (Dass and Parker, 1999; Pitts, 2007)

# Data Collection

- 6 months of fieldwork
- Semi-structured interviews with 85 police officers and staff in 4 police boroughs
- Observations
- Documentary analysis



# Diversity Perspectives

- Theories on diversity perspectives have typically illustrated the stages of receptivity of an organisational climate for valuing diversity.

Monolithic → pluralistic → multicultural organisation  
(Cox, 1991)

Resistance → Discrimination-and-Fairness →  
access-and-Legitimacy → Integration-and-Learning  
(Dass and Parker, 1999; Ely and Thomas, 2001)

# Diversity Discourse

- Janssens and Zanoni (2005) demonstrate that employees' socio-demographic differences become **relevant** in a specific productive **context** and so the way in which work is organised strongly affects the discourse of diversity and the organisation's subsequent approach to managing diversity.

# Framework for Implementation

- Simultaneous consideration of pressures, perspectives, and strategy responses (Dass and Parker, 1999).
- The strategic response includes three approaches
  - **Episodic** - few pressures for diversity, limited changes, isolated initiatives.
  - **Freestanding** - moderate pressure, significant but side issue, some formalised initiatives.
  - **Systemic** - high pressure, managers view it as a strategic issue, initiatives are linked with existing systems and core activities.

# The MPS Diversity and Equality Strategy 2009-2013

- Provides a clear articulation of the diversity and equality ambitions of the MPS and how it proposes to achieve them.
  
- **Four strategic themes:**
  - ✓ Fair and responsive service
  - ✓ Community engagement
  - ✓ Workforce and culture
  - ✓ Governance.

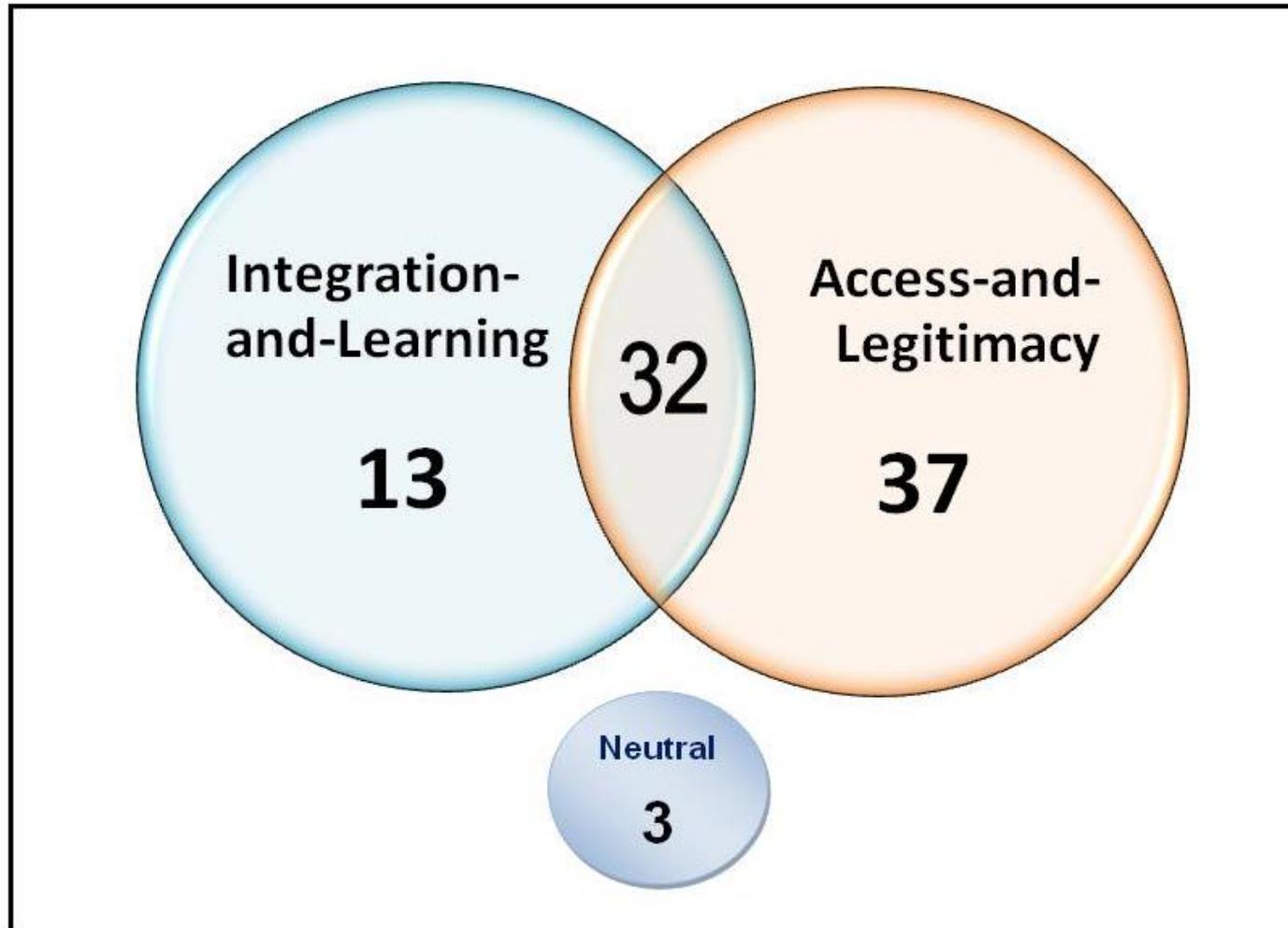
## ***THEME 3: Workforce and Culture***

- Develop a working and organisational culture that is **inclusive** and recognises, respects and values diversity.
- Do more to equip staff so they have the **confidence** to deal with issues of diversity and equality, while acting professionally, treating people fairly and with respect.
- Continue our work to make us more **reflective of the communities** we serve (MPS, 2009).

# Diversity Strategy

- The MPS appears to have adopted a **systemic approach** to managing diversity.
  - **High pressure** for diversity
  - Organisational **leaders** view diversity management as a **strategic imperative**
  - Diversity initiatives are thus linked with existing systems and **core activities**
  - **Monitored** by line organisational positions

# Key Findings: Diversity Perspectives in the MPS



# Discrimination-and-Fairness Perspective

- “We used to get called ‘PLONKs’- *person with little or no knowledge*. It was normally said in a humorous way but it was a word that was used a lot, particularly by the older males when describing female officers. After a while gender wasn’t such a big thing. I would also say that people are changing **and the values are changing** from what the older officers had. They were very much into the notion that ‘**this is a man’s job**’ and women should make the tea and answer the phones. Now it’s just a case on ‘get on with it’ really. **Women are accepted more now**; we are more part of the team. Back then, we sort of felt separate because it was a boy’s club. Now, everyone is treated more equally.”

(Met025 – Inspector, 43, female)

# Access-and-Legitimacy Perspective

- “I think we’ve got to be **reflective of the community we serve**...I’ve seen some of my PCSOs, the one I’m talking about is an Italian speaking Nigerian who just chats away with certain people in the street because they identify with him for those two reasons, **language and culture**. Another incident last week, I went downstairs and one of the station PCSOs who is relatively new, he is quite nervous, quite quiet. He was over the moon that he was taking a CRIS report in some sort of native tongue; I can’t remember which language it was, some kind of Somalia type. The woman who was reporting was just overwhelmed that **the officer spoke her native tongue** and made it so much easier for her to give her report. I think that’s what diversity is about and if people can’t see the value in that, then it’s such a shame.”

(Met013 – Inspector, 38, female)

# Integration-and-Learning Perspective

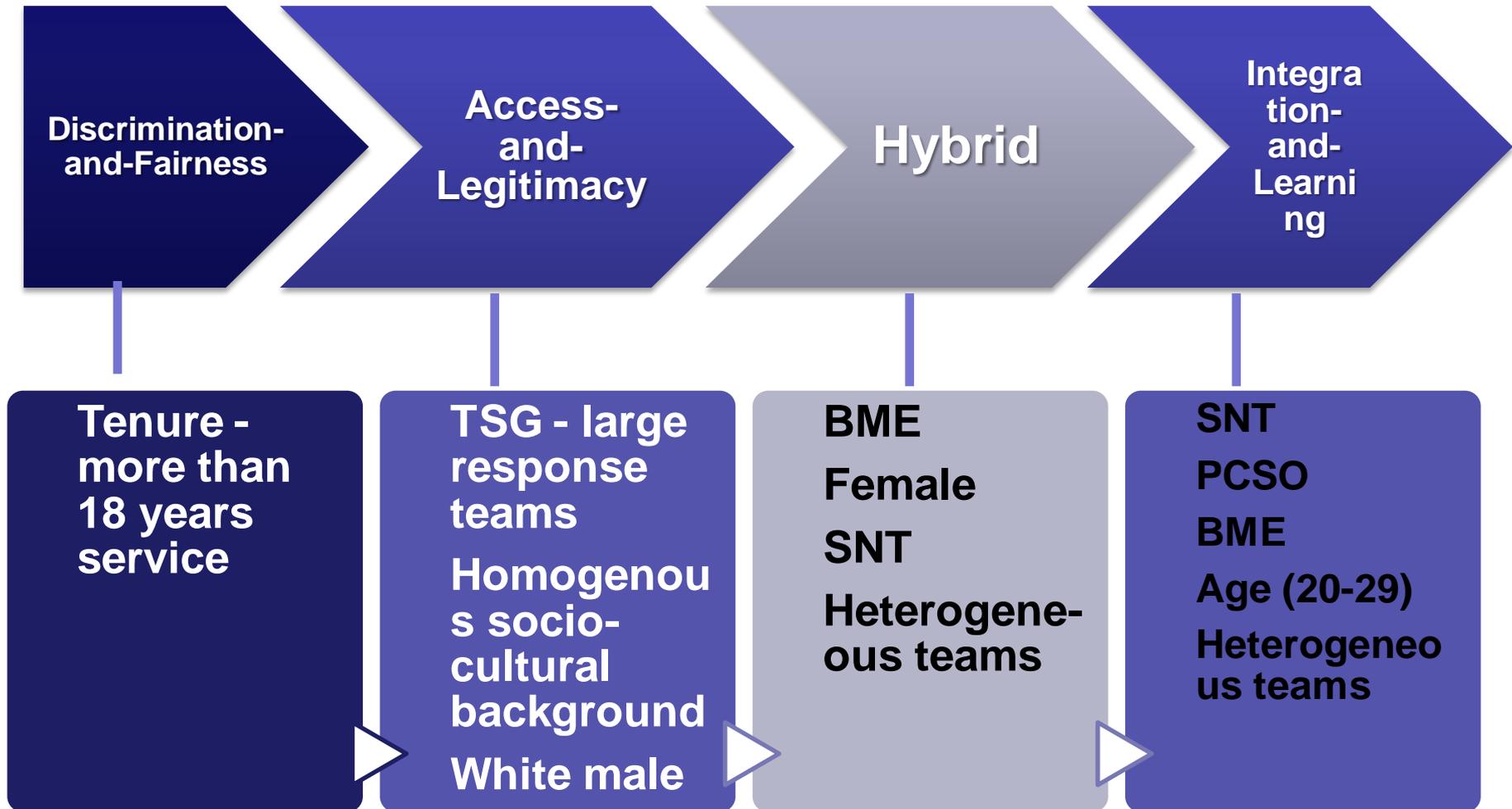
- “In this job, it is very helpful to have colleagues from complete different backgrounds who can **share their knowledge and experiences**. London is a big city and is as diverse as it can get. Whatever happens outside, we always discuss it in the office so that next time a member of the team has to deal with something similar, regardless of their own background and experiences, they will have a pretty good idea what to do based on the experience of others.”

(Met036 – PC, SNT, Female, 48)

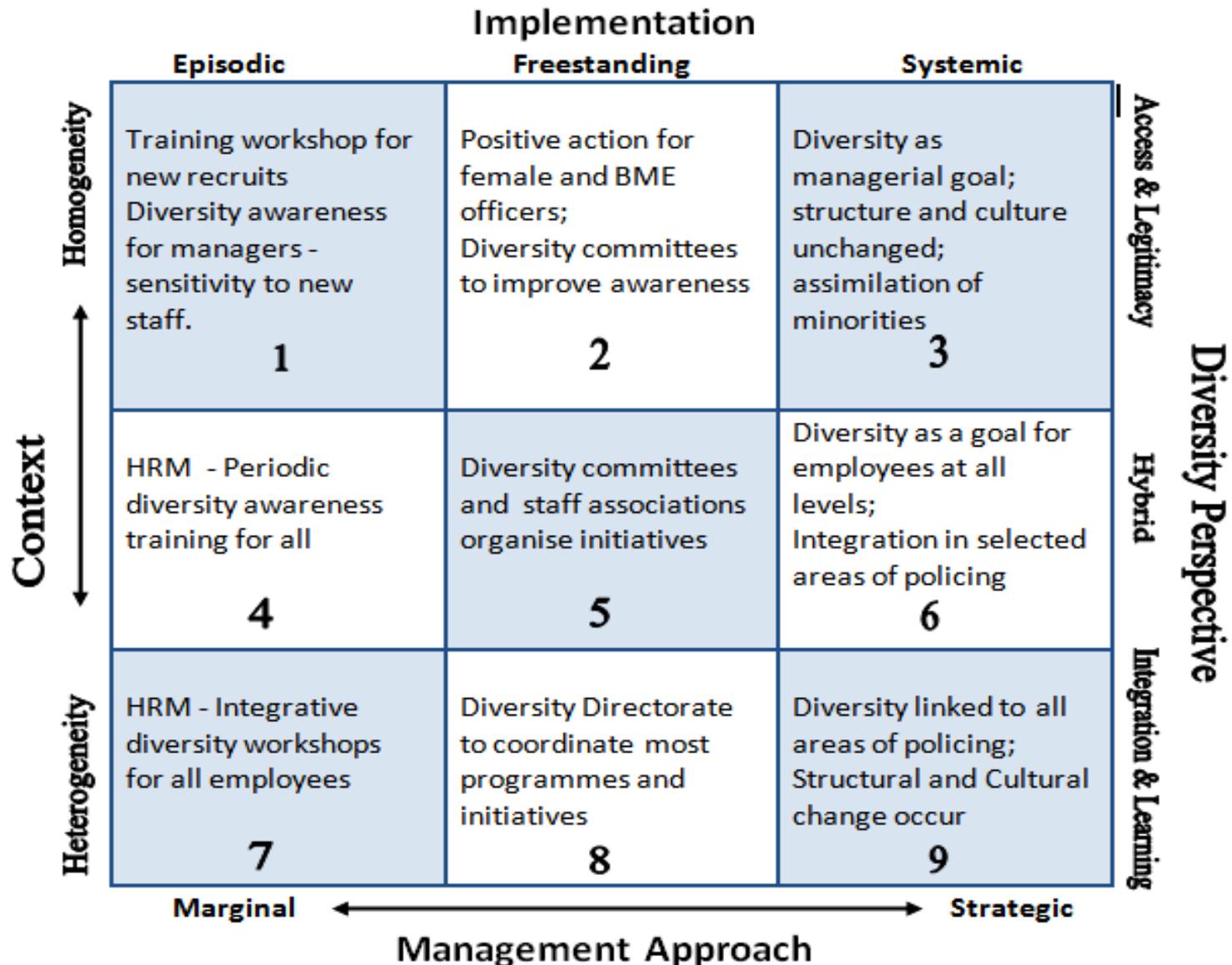
# Hybrid Diversity Perspective

- The analysis revealed dual perspectives on diversity, an indication that the MPS is somehow **wedged in transition** between the access-and-legitimacy perspective and the integration-and-learning perspective.
- 31 respondents torn between the two common perspectives on workforce diversity.

# Some Contextual Mediators of Diversity Perspectives in the MPS



# A model for diversity diagnosis



# Conclusion

- The empirical evidence shows that the **contextualized understandings** of diversity in the MPS imposes a specific discourse of diversity which is plainly anchored in the unique contexts of police work.
- Multiplicity of influences and organisational actors – role of line managers.
- A resulting sedimented police archetype / **subversive value system** emerges and contradicts traditional attitudes and perspectives.