

Abstract – BSA conference

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Despite the growing participation of older workers in the labour market, age discrimination prevails and many employers are prejudiced against older workers (Bowman et al 2017). Several studies have shown that age often intersects with other characteristics such as gender, contributing to 'double' or multiple discrimination.

Using quantitative research and qualitative interviews, our study focused on the topic of discrimination in the UK at the recruitment stage. The experiment was conducted during 2017 whilst the qualitative research is on going. Findings suggest that there is evidence of discrimination based on the characteristics of age, gender and race/ethnicity: older women are more likely to be excluded from job interviews; Black older women experience further difficulties in gaining an interview. Moreover, those selected tend to be shortlisted for lower status jobs.

The paper will engage with theories of intersectionality, as well as 'hard' and 'soft' types of discrimination, in order to explore notions of the 'ideal worker'. There are several implications in the findings. Here we will focus on three main challenges: first, of legislation which does not fully cover 'triple discrimination'; second, for trade unions in dealing with cases of multiple discrimination; and third for policy makers who despite the government encouragement, witness older workers in the labour market excluded during the process of recruitment. The research has been conducted during a period of uncertainty around Brexit and the paper will take this factor into consideration.