

# SEXISM AND INTERSECTIONALITY

**Considering relational safety in the workplace**

# WHO AM I? OR, WHEN AM I WHO I AM?

- **Kuljit Bhogal – British Punjabi LGBT+ man**
- **Kuljit Singh – the Open Minds Project**  
([www.theopenmindsproject.org](http://www.theopenmindsproject.org))
- **Dr Kuljit Singh Bhogal – Consultant Psychiatrist PWLD**
- **Kuch Bhogal – Inter-disciplinary artist**
- **Pronouns he/him/his**

# WHY ME AND WHY NOW?

- **I am a man who looks like a man**
- **Sexism has not directly limited my options in life**
- **I wanted to think with you about the cultures that sexism may thrive in and so will be making space to consider masculinity and how it might operate in the work place**
- **Although masculine cultures give me great amounts of privilege – as a gay man they also profoundly shape my life and restrict what I can and can't do**
- **My perspective and experiences will be different to most people here**
- **The aim of the talk is to give you a different lens on some of the topics coming up today**

# OUTLINE

- **50 minute session**
- **Opportunity to reflect on wider implications of identity and how it plays out in our environments**
- **We'll visit the term intersectionality**
- **We'll use the idea of masculine work cultures to consider what might be driving some of our workplace cultures**

# **RELATIONAL SAFETY IN THIS ROOM**

- Agreeing and setting ground rules can be a very effective way of healthy work culture**
- I am here to talk you through this topic and support you with your reflections on a few key ideas that I think are important**
- Talking about identities can feel or be risky sometimes but remember this is just a conversation**
- Be mindful of how much you're speaking - make time for others**
- Don't feel pressured to disclose experiences which are tough or emotional for you but if you do, make sure you take time to decompress**



**RELATIONAL SAFETY IN THIS ROOM?**

# **ATTENDING TO THE RELATIONAL SAFETY IN THIS ROOM**

- **Say hello to the person next to you (ideally someone you don't know)**
- **Tell them where you work**
- **Do you have a favourite food, drink or smell?**

# INTERSECTIONALITY

- **We are all labelled with identities**
- **Some of these we choose, and many are chosen for us**
- **These identities are not all in operation in all spaces**
- **When you are asleep, in your bedroom, most will be 'turned off'**
- **When you walk into a room, a lot will be turned on by the interaction of your body in relation to other bodies and spaces**
- **These interactions *intersect* differently depending on where you are and what you are doing**

**THESE INTERSECTIONS CREATE SHIFTING  
OPPORTUNITIES AND OBSTRUCTIONS FOR US AS WE  
MOVE THROUGH THE WORLD  
= INTERSECTIONALITY.**



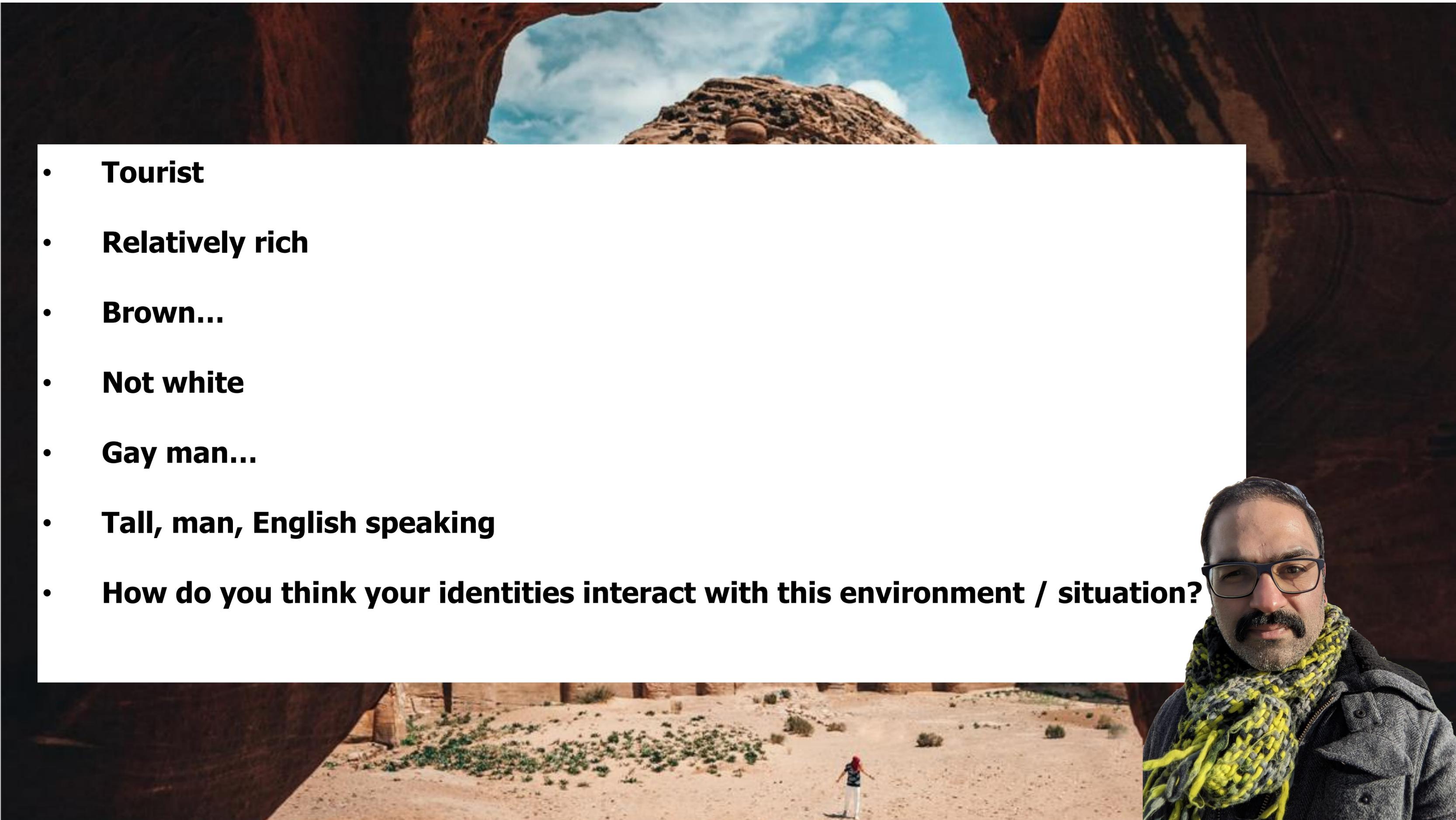
# **INTERSECTIONALITY AND SEXISM?**

- **'isms' are experienced differently depending on how your identities interact in the socio-cultural situation that you are in**
- **Sexism looks and feels different depending on what your other identities are**
- **But overall, being a woman is still a marker of disparity, disadvantage and threat in many work environments**

# 5 MIN EXERCISE - LIST YOUR KEY IDENTITIES

- **Body characteristics:** height, weight, skin colour, hair colour, age, sex/gender, external markers of illness or differential ability
- **Social markers of status:** wealth, speech / languages, qualifications, titles, car you drive, relationship status, sexuality
- **Hidden identities:** things that people don't know about you unless you tell them...
- **Don't overthink it - you won't have to share these lists**
- **This is not about blame or guilt, it is about taking a more careful look at how others may see and respond to you**

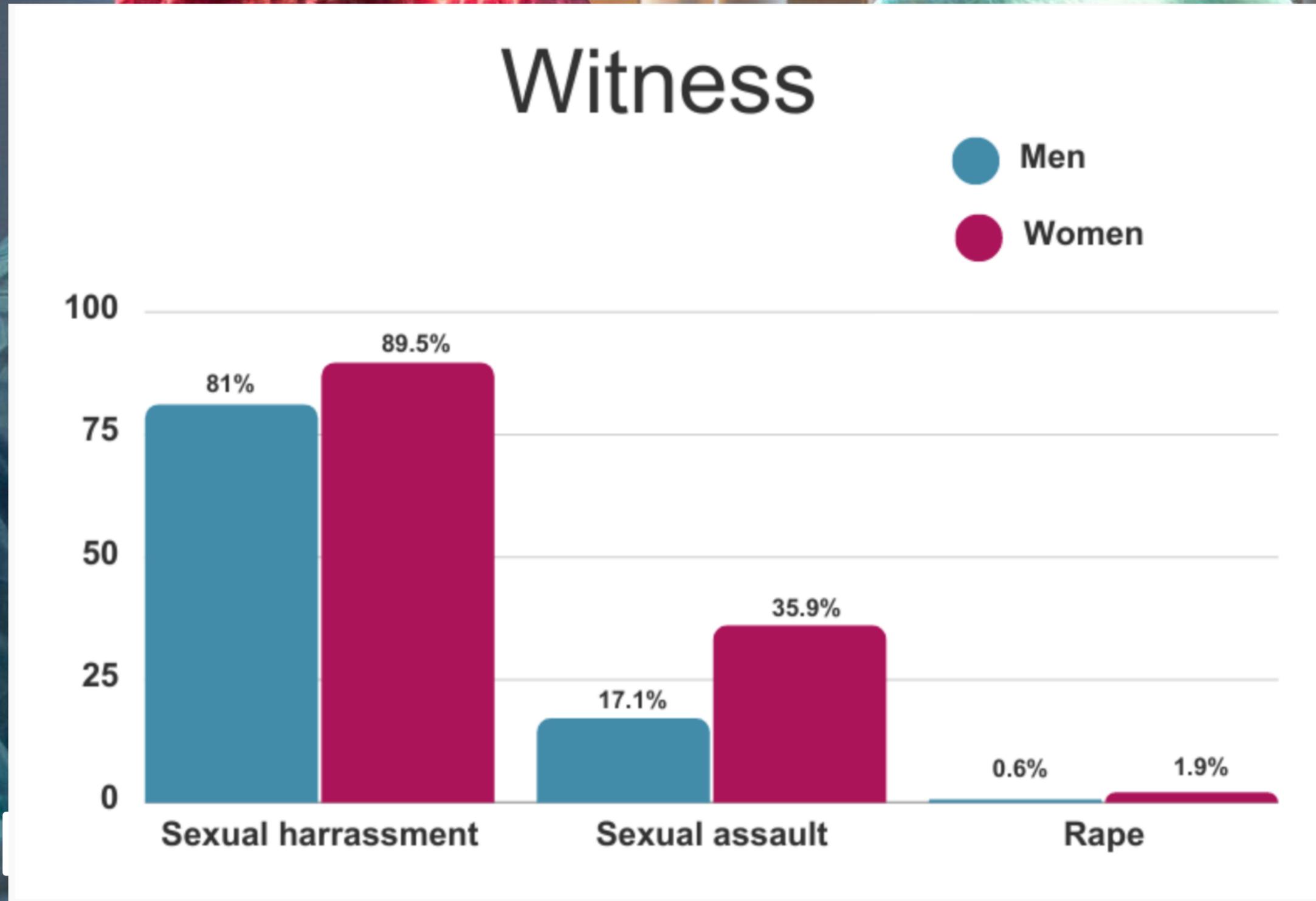
- **Tourist**
- **Relatively rich**
- **Brown...**
- **Not white**
- **Gay man...**
- **Tall, man, English speaking**
- **How do you think your identities interact with this environment / situation?**



- **Brown skinned, tall, English speaking doctor**
- **Son of migrants who experienced significant racism in white spaces**
- **23 years old, working in a firm where the seniors refuse to learn your name, motivate you through fear / shame and where your mistakes could end up with someone dying**
- **What should / could / does relational safety look here?**
- **Do your identities make it easier or harder to navigate these spaces?**



# BREAKING THE SILENCE - SEXUAL MISCONDUCT IN SURGERY REPORT (2023)



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# **WHY DOES RELATIONAL SAFETY AT WORK MATTER?**

- **We are an industry about people and heavily reliant on people**
- **People are much more complicated than their professional roles**
- **An environment which is relationally unsafe may not hear safety concerns, be open to innovation, may not retain staff and all of the above can impact on patient safety**
- **Environments which are already interpersonally unsafe are prime spaces for 'difficult' people to take advantage of power / dominance and this can result in bullying, harassment and more serious abuse**

**WIDENING THE LENS -  
CONSIDERING MASCULINITY  
AND RELATIONAL SAFETY IN  
OUR WORK PLACES**

# **MASCULINITY IS NOT JUST ABOUT / FOR MEN...**

- **Here in the UK we all have to engage with, respond to and take part in maintaining / pushing against masculinities**
- **We will use the idea of masculinities in the workplace to think about intersectionality, sexism and power through a specific lens**
- **Men in the room may feel sensitive to the word masculinities but here we are considering it as a systemic pressure rather than from an individual perspective**

**WORDS THAT YOU THINK  
REPRESENT MASCULINITY?**

# THE PAPERS INFORMING THIS PART OF THE DISCUSSION

**Journal of Social Issues Vol 74 No. 3. 2018**

- ***Thoughts on the Workplace as a Masculinity Contest (Ely and Kimmel)***
- ***Work as a Masculinity Contest (Berdahl et al)***
- ***Development and Validation of the Masculinity Context Cultural Scale (Glick et al)***

# MASCULINITIES

- **Social structures create and reinforce gendered behaviours**
- **In most places, men have higher status, more power, more privileges than woman (or less masculine men)**
- **The idea that men become real men through dominance and to not be dominant is to become less like a real man**
- **Masculine values change over time and in different cultures**



# WORKPLACES

- **On paper our jobs are about rational decision making using well defined processes and procedures that are evidence based**
- **In reality, our day to day behaviours are also motivated by internal and interpersonal dynamics, organisational politics and huge variability in motivation and ability**
- **The argument = organisations reward those that perform masculinity and outperform others in masculinity...**
- **Remember, masculinities are not just for men just as feminities are not just about women**

# QUEER IDENTITIES AND MEDICAL TRAINING

- **18 years ago working as a trainee with a consultant who was homophobic**
- **I was 'not out' as gay at work or home and had to listen to several homophobic outbursts in meetings in front of other staff**
- **HE was an older, otherwise EXCELLENT CLINICIAN and although he was KNOWN TO BE RUDE AND AGGRESSIVE everyone was prepared to put up with his behaviour**
- **Combination of power, personality, masculine ideals**
- **I had to minimise indicators of my non-standard masculinities and could not reveal my sexuality**
- **I was 30% present at work but still able to do a good job - what would this have looked like after 5 years of working in the same team?**

# **DO YOU RECOGNISE ANY OF THESE MASCULINE IDEALS?**

- **Show no weakness**
- **Be strong and have high stamina**
- **Put work first**
- **It's 'dog eat dog'**
- **Work is a contest of who can outdo each other**
- **This is dangerous in medicine because we have an endless stream of work that is high stake and high risk and hierarchies are the norm - it provides the right material for masculine ideals to thrive**
- **Imagine what happens when you add toxic leadership into the mix...**

# **MASCULINITIES DO NOT LIKE CHALLENGE**

- **These are the norm in lots of places it can feel very dangerous to raise concerns or issues**
- **The culture of silence allows behaviours to persist and further reinforce their acceptability**
- **“Boys will be boys”**
- **“Surgeons need to be like that - it’s a high stress job”**
- **“I had to learn how to use banter - it was the only way I could fit in”**
- **Masculinity is achieved through performance and must be achieved over and over again to maintain it’s status**

# **WHAT MIGHT A MASCULINE CONTEST CULTURE LOOK LIKE?**

- **“masculine norms emphasize enacting agency and dominance and avoiding weakness and vulnerability.**
- **An MCC exists when an individual’s or group’s status and power within an organization is associated with the insistent display of masculinity and winning masculinity contests against others.”**

**“WOMEN AND MEN FROM MARGINALISED GROUPS,  
AND THOSE WHOSE VALUES STRONGLY REJECT  
RUTHLESS DOMINANCE COMPETITIONS,  
TYPICALLY DO NOT “WIN” IN MCC”.**



**RELATIONAL SAFETY IN THIS ROOM?**

# 10 MIN SMALL GROUP CHATS

**WHAT IS THE GENDER MIX IN YOUR WORKPLACE?**

**WHO EARNS THE BIGGEST SALARY?**

**WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF YOU WORE A SKIRT TO WORK?**

**WHAT DO YOU THINK A RELATIONALLY SAFE WORKPLACE**

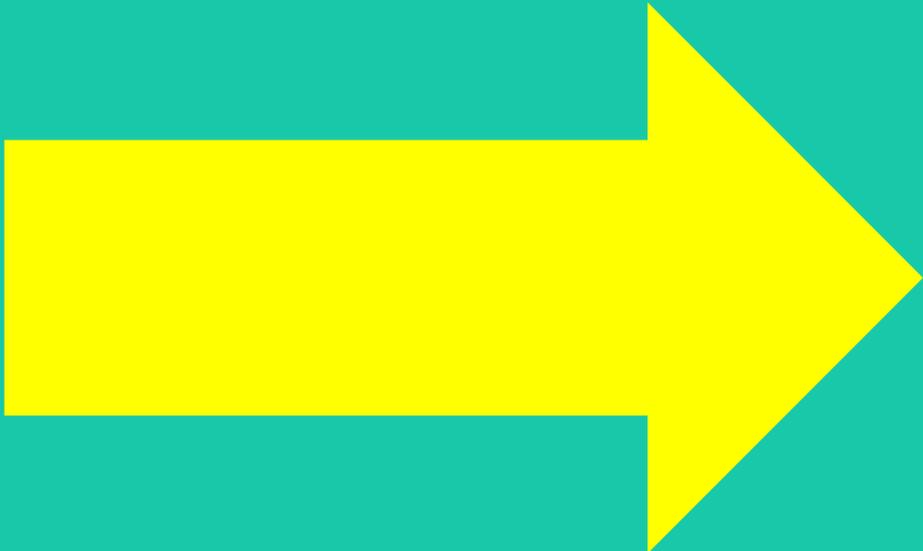
**COULD LOOK LIKE AND DO YOU THINK IT IS ACHIEVABLE?**

# **GROUP FEEDBACK AND THOUGHTS**

**CONCLUSIONS**

**OTHER HIDDEN  
CULTURAL NORMS**

**OTHER  
INTERSECTIONAL  
IDENTITIES**



**PROBLEMS...**

**QUESTIONS**



**THANKS**

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