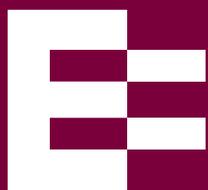


The experience of black and minority ethnic staff working in higher education

Literature review 2009



Equality Challenge Unit

Foreword

Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) commissioned this literature review as part of its Race Forum project, which commenced in December 2008. This project is supported by the HEFCE Leadership, Governance and Management Fund.

The purposes of the project are to:

- = research the experiences of black and minority ethnic (BME) staff working in higher education through direct engagement and consultation with BME staff
- = analyse the process and outcomes of employment functions, including race equality initiatives, in higher education institutions (HEIs) and their impact on BME staff
- = make recommendations and identify a range of possible initiatives to address issues affecting BME staff and to meet race equality duties in the sector, with particular reference to recruitment, retention, promotion and development of BME staff and inclusion in structures of governance
- = develop and review suitable initiatives through piloting projects in HEIs that foster trust and participation among BME staff and create sustainable and positive change across the institution.

The project is overseen by a Race Forum, which comprises BME staff from HEIs and representatives of recognised unions and relevant sector organisations. The project covers and involves BME staff at all levels, including academic, academic-related and support staff on permanent, fixed-term and casual contracts.

This literature review will help shape the future direction of the project by providing an understanding of previous research and gaps in the evidence currently available.

Equality Challenge Unit

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Equality Challenge Unit



Executive summary

The aim of this literature review is to identify baseline data and provide a synopsis of research-based literature on the experiences of black and minority ethnic (BME) staff in higher education. The primary focus is on research related to the UK higher education sector but, where appropriate, some key literature from other countries and sectors has been included.

There is relatively little research-based literature focusing on BME staff working in the higher education sector in the UK, beyond analyses of staff data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA, www.hesa.ac.uk). There are few large-scale studies involving primary data collection. The analysis of BME staff experiences in this review is therefore derived from a relatively small evidence base.

The position of BME staff in higher education

- = BME staff represent 8.6 per cent of higher education academic staff and 6.9 per cent of professional and support staff. The proportion of academic staff from BME groups is 22.3 per cent among non-UK nationals, but 6.1 per cent among UK nationals (HEFCE, 2008, based on 2006–07 HESA data).
- = While the proportion of non-UK national BME staff decreased slightly between, 2003–04 and 2006–07 (–0.9 per cent), the proportion of UK national BME staff showed a small increase (+0.6 per cent) over the same period (AUT, 2005; HEFCE, 2008).
- = There are differences in the levels of representation of different BME groups among higher education staff. The proportion of academics of black, Asian and mixed/‘other’ ethnicity in the academic population is lower than their proportion in the UK working population overall, and lower than their proportion in the UK population of working age qualified to be in academic jobs (those with NVQ level 5 qualifications), with the exception of staff of Chinese ethnicity, who are overrepresented (AUT, 2005, based on HESA 2003–04 data).
- = Similarly, black, Asian and mixed/‘other’ non-academic professional staff are underrepresented in UK higher education when compared with the UK working population, and with the UK population of working age with an NVQ level 4 qualification, with the exception of staff of Chinese ethnicity (AUT, 2005).
- = The proportion of BME academic staff varies considerably across type of institution and subject area (HEFCE, 2008).

Executive summary

- = The proportion of BME staff showed a slow but steady increase in all academic grades between 1995–96 and 2006–07 (HEFCE, 2008). However, the higher the grade, the lower the proportion of BME staff. The proportion of academic staff from a BME background remains lowest at professorial level (HEFCE, 2008); BME academic staff constitute 4.8 per cent of professors and heads of departments, compared with 6.2 per cent at lower level (UK nationals only; Connor, 2008).
- = In general, the data show that conditions of employment of BME staff are less favourable than those of non-BME staff; in particular, BME staff receive lower levels of pay on average, and are less likely to benefit from a permanent/open-ended contract of employment (Institute of Employment Studies, 2005, based on a survey of 5000 staff).

Experiences of BME staff in higher education

- = BME staff in senior positions report feeling that their leadership ability is questioned, and that assumptions are often made that they are in junior positions even when they occupy senior (e.g. professorial) roles (Heward *et al.*, 1997; Wright *et al.*, 2007; Mirza, 2009).
- = BME staff report experiences of invisibility, isolation, marginalisation and racial discrimination in higher education (Carter *et al.*, 1999; Deem *et al.*, 2005; Jones, 2006; Mirza, 2006, 2009; Wright *et al.*, 2007; Maylor, 2009a).
- = BME staff have reported negative assumptions being made about their abilities, assumptions, which they feel are influenced by their ethnicity (e.g. Wright *et al.*, 2007).
- = BME staff report experiencing heavy workloads, disproportionate levels of scrutiny compared with their white counterparts, a lack of mentoring and support for career development, and difficulties in gaining promotion (e.g. Deem *et al.*, 2005; Wright *et al.*, 2007).
- = BME lecturers teaching in the areas of 'race', equality and multiculturalism report that these subjects are often designated as 'low status' when performed by BME staff, yet they appear to acquire higher status when performed by white staff (Wright *et al.*, 2007).
- = Overall, BME staff report having fewer opportunities to develop research capacity and enhance their promotion prospects (Jones, 2006; Wright *et al.*, 2007).

Conclusions

- = The review identified significant gaps in the research on BME staff working in the higher education sector in the UK.
- = There is a particular need for further research investigating the experiences of BME staff in governance, management and leadership roles, of BME professional and support staff at all levels, and of different BME groups across all staff.

1 Introduction

Concerns about the position and experiences of black and minority ethnic (BME) staff in the UK higher education sector were highlighted by research conducted by Carter *et al.* in 1999, the same year that the Macpherson Inquiry (Macpherson, 1999) prompted questions across the public sector about 'institutional racism'. Since then, the higher education sector has witnessed the further development of institutional equity and diversity policies; a toolkit to build an anti-racist university (Turney *et al.*, 2002); and the introduction of the race equality duty in 2002. BME staff, however, remain significantly underrepresented in more senior positions in both the academic and professional/support staff workforces, and report experiences of marginalisation in the higher education sector.

This literature review was commissioned as the first stage in building an evidence base on the position and experiences of BME staff working in higher education. The review is intended to inform a larger project designed to research and develop initiatives to address issues affecting BME staff in the sector and to meet the race equality duty.

2 Aims

The overall aim of the review is to identify baseline data and provide a synopsis of research-based literature on the experiences of BME staff in higher education. Specifically, the objectives are to include data and research literature on:

- = the position and experiences of BME staff in relation to governance, leadership and management in the higher education sector (including both academic and professional/support staff)
- = employment experiences, including conditions of employment, career development and progression, grievances and disciplinary matters, bullying, experiences of marginalisation and/or inclusion, and support mechanisms
- = research and teaching cultures and environments in relation to the experiences of BME staff, workload allocation and distribution, etc.

The review focuses primarily on data and research related to the UK higher education sector for both academic and professional/support staff, but it also draws on key literature from other countries where appropriate, and to a lesser extent on research outside the higher education sector.

3 Methodology

The methodology adopted for this review incorporates elements of two different approaches. The first is a critical and reflexive narrative review (Dixon-Woods, 2002), in which researcher expertise is utilised in a critically informed way to identify and assess the range of work in the field, highlight themes, approaches and evidence, and note any gaps in the field. The second approach is that of a systematic qualitative review (Booth, 2001), which involves purposively sampling the literature relevant to the research questions, and paying attention to studies that challenge other findings and/or that represent minority views. The approach adopted is therefore systematic and transparent, and particularly suited to 'seek an explanation for social and cultural events based upon the perspectives and experiences of people being studied' (Noblit and Hare, 1988: 12).

The review has been conducted as follows.

Stage one: scoping exercise

This was designed to identify the range of potentially relevant literature. It was informed by the aims of the literature review, and undertaken using the following methods.

- Searches of key electronic databases [Academic Search Primer and Education Research Complete (Ebscohost databases), ERIC, Education-line, Google and Google Scholar]. For each of these databases, searches were conducted using combinations of the following key words:
 - Higher education, Staff, Academia, Academics, Faculty, College, Department, University, Ethnicity, Minority ethnic, Race, Racism, Ethnicity, Diversity, Equality, Black, Professors, Administrators, Support staff, Governance, Leadership, Management, Employment, Research culture, Teaching culture.
- Targeted (systematic) searches of key journals (including *Race, Ethnicity and Education; Studies in Higher Education*).
- Web searches, including websites of key organisations including the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), Universities UK, ECU, Equality and Human Rights Commission, and the Universities and Colleges Union.

- = Emails sent to 25 key academics working in the area of 'race' and ethnicity in higher education to identify any relevant ongoing research and/or unpublished research reports. Repeat emails were sent to non-respondents. In total, responses were received from three of those emailed.

Stage two: production of criteria for inclusion in the review

Based on the initial scoping exercise, criteria were established to assess the literature for relevance and quality, and to meet the aims of the review. The key criteria for definite inclusion were:

- = texts specifically on BME staff working in higher education
- = research conducted on the UK higher education sector
- = research dated from 1999
- = research judged to be of methodological and/or theoretical quality.

Because of the difficulty of finding research that met all of these criteria, a decision was then made to include:

- = relevant texts on BME staff in higher education from other countries
- = selected relevant texts from research on other education sectors in the UK where little had been identified specifically related to the higher education sector
- = key texts dated prior to 1998
- = texts that, when assessed together, provided important information, even though individually they may not have met the criteria for methodological and/or theoretical quality.

As Edwards and colleagues (cited by Booth, 2001) have argued, there is a case for balancing methodological rigour with the weight of the message, and including texts where the latter is particularly important or significant. Several texts were identified in this review that were based on individual experiences or accounts and which, on their own, may not be judged as meeting the required standards of methodological rigour. However, the cumulative strength of the message when several of these accounts were assessed together was deemed sufficiently convincing to be relevant to the aims of this review.

Stage three: analysis of literature

Relevant texts identified through the scoping exercise, and meeting the above criteria, were entered into an EndNote database along with accompanying notes. Other references were identified using snowballing methods and more targeted searches where the initial scoping exercise produced few results. This was the case, for example, in relation to research on governance in higher education. An analysis of the literature was then conducted to identify key themes and any gaps in research. In total, 82 references were entered into an EndNote database, although following analysis, not all of these were deemed relevant to include in the final literature review.

In conducting this review, it became clear that there is relatively little research-based literature focusing on BME staff working in the higher education sector in the UK. Much of the literature is either based on secondary analysis of data from HESA (www.hesa.ac.uk) or small-scale qualitative studies often drawing on the personal experiences of the author or data from a small number of respondents. There have been relatively few large-scale studies involving primary data collection on BME staff experiences in UK higher education. The following analysis, particularly in relation to staff experiences, is therefore based on a relatively small evidence base.

4 Baseline data on the position of BME staff in higher education

In this section the level of representation of BME and non-BME staff in higher education is considered, and their distribution across types of position, university and discipline. Although the focus is on the UK, data from other countries are included where appropriate.

Some of the literature does not distinguish between UK national and non-UK national staff, and/or does not state explicitly which group of staff are being referred to. In this review, unless stipulated, data refer to both UK nationals and non-UK nationals.

Some key issues regarding the use of statistical data on staff ethnicity

The use of statistical data relating to staff ethnicity can be problematic, for many reasons. One issue relates to disclosure, when a respondent refuses to give information on their ethnic background. There may be many reasons for this, including resistance to the proposed categories; fear of a breach of confidentiality in the use of monitoring forms and survey/interview data, and of subsequent discrimination in the workplace; views that collecting data on ethnicity is racist *per se* (a view that predominates in some cultures); views that it is a bureaucratic exercise with no effect on organisational practices and policies. While figures usually refer only to those for whom ethnicity is known, evidence suggests that some ethnic groups may be more likely to resist ethnicity disclosure than others, which means that the experience of some groups is more likely to be ignored. In relation to this, the authors of a survey of higher education staff in the UK made the following observations.

A survey at one institution experienced a very low response rate from staff in minority ethnic groups, and few of those who did respond reported any kind of harassment or discrimination experienced or observed, but qualitative evidence suggested that informants abstained from reporting such matters even on supposedly anonymous surveys because of a fear of victimisation. (Institute of Employment Studies, 2005: 28)

Baseline data on the position of BME staff in HE

However, it should be noted that non-disclosure relating to ethnicity usually concerns only a small percentage of respondents to surveys, albeit more particularly those likely to be discriminated against in relation to their ethnic background. In 2006–07, 10.4 per cent of respondents chose not to declare their ethnicity (Connor, 2008).

Another issue relates to the multiple ways of defining and collecting information on the basis of ethnicity, and the possible lack of consistency this may result in. As for social class, this has been the subject of much discussion. Some argue for a self-definition of ethnicity, others for preformatted categories such as those used in the Census and by HESA. Preformatted categories may also vary between surveys. Due to a lack of consistency, or to changes over time in the way the data are collected, issues of comparability may emerge.

A third issue relates to the difficulty of drawing conclusions from categories that are numerically small, such as BME staff in higher education. The low levels of presence, and the many categories incorporated in the ethnicity classification systems in use, mean that survey data are often not statistically significant or produce unsophisticated statistical analyses (being unable to control for variables likely to play a key influence in respondents' answers). Sometimes this difficulty has been avoided by grouping minority groups into a small number of categories, sometimes in binary categories ('white' and 'non-white', 'BME' and 'non-BME'). This can be problematic, as it tends to negate the diversity of minority ethnic groups and to homogenise the experiences of individuals who may have little in common, although one may argue that it is a better option than being unable to analyse ethnicity-based differences at all.

Finally, it is worth noting that there is a 'serious lack of statistics' (Ouali, 2007: 3) in relation to ethnicity. Although it is not the case in the UK, many countries do not collect data at national level on the basis of ethnicity. This was highlighted, for example, in the final report of the Network, Ethnicity, Women, Scientists (NEWS) project on the positions of BME women scientists in research and academic careers in Europe (*ibid.*). As a consequence, international comparisons can be problematic.

BME and non-BME staff in higher education: levels of representation of academic and professional/support staff

According to a recent HEFCE report (2008), the overall proportion of BME academic staff in higher education is 8.6 per cent, and for professional/support staff is 6.9 per cent (data relating to 2006–07). This is a small but steady increase from previous HESA data. However, trends differ depending on whether the focus is on UK or non-UK nationals (see below).

A survey of 5000 academic and non-academic staff working in higher education, conducted by the Institute of Employment Studies (2005), represents another useful source of information regarding the presence of BME staff in higher education. Respondents worked at ten institutions, geographically spread across Great Britain, as well as across types of institution, institutional size and ranking. A random sampling method was used to select staff. The survey found that overall, 6 per cent of respondents were from a BME background, with an equal proportion of men and women. Three per cent identified as being of Asian origin; 1 per cent as black, including black African and black Caribbean; 1 per cent as Chinese or 'other'; and 1 per cent as being of mixed ethnicity. The same survey identified a slightly higher proportion of BME staff among non-academics (6 per cent) compared with academics (5 per cent). This proportion of BME academics is roughly similar to those found in a previous study of UK higher education by Carter *et al.* (1999) (6 per cent).

The Association of University Teachers (AUT, 2005), drawing on the 2003–04 HESA data, highlighted that the proportion of academics of black, Asian and mixed/'other' ethnicity in the academic population is lower than their proportion in the UK working population overall, and even more so if compared with the proportion of the UK population of working age qualified to be in academic jobs (those with NVQ level 5 qualifications). However, academics of Chinese ethnicity are overrepresented in the UK academic population, in comparison both with the UK population of working age with an NVQ level 5 qualification, and with the overall UK working population. However, if the comparison is only of academics of UK nationality, they are slightly underrepresented.

Baseline data on the position of BME staff in HE

Similarly, black, Asian and mixed/'other' ethnicity non-academic professional staff are underrepresented in UK higher education when compared with the working population, and with the working population with an NVQ level 4 qualification, with the exception of staff of Chinese ethnicity (AUT, 2005).

BME and non-BME staff in academic positions

A report by HEFCE (2006) shows that about 8 per cent of permanent academic staff are from BME groups (year 2004–05). About half of these (4 per cent) are of Asian heritage (the majority being Indian or Chinese), and only 1 per cent are of black ethnicity (most often black African and, to a less extent, black Caribbean). The 'other' category represents 2 per cent of all permanent academic staff. A diachronic perspective highlights some changes since the mid-1990s, albeit very small ones. While the proportions of those from 'other' and black ethnicities have remained stable since 1995–96, the proportion of permanent academic staff of Asian ethnicity has slightly increased (from 3 to 4 per cent). This applies to all Asian categories, while the proportion of permanent academic staff of white heritage has decreased very slightly (from 94 per cent in 1995–96 to 92 per cent in 2004–05). Drawing on the HESA 2006–07 data, a 2008 HEFCE report shows that the proportion of permanent academic staff from a BME background has continued to rise steadily, though only very slightly.

Analysis by the University and College Union (UCU, 2007), again referring to the HESA data (up to year 2005–06), distinguishes between academic staff who are teaching-only, research-only, and classified as doing both teaching and research. (Academic staff who have been classified by HESA as 'neither teaching nor research' as their primary academic function have been excluded from the UCU calculations.) The calculations show that, while the profile of those teaching-only and those doing teaching and research are similar, stark differences can be observed between those two categories and those doing research-only. A higher proportion of white staff are in teaching-only compared with research-only positions (91.2 compared with 82.0 per cent). In both cases, the data show an increasing trend in the proportion of BME staff since the mid-1990s.

In relation to the distribution of BME groups across functions, the difference between teaching-only and research-only staff is mainly due to the higher proportion of Asian staff among research-only staff. While the proportion of black

staff remains stable (1.6 per cent for teaching-only, 1.5 per cent for research-only), the proportion of Asian staff is considerably higher in the research-only category (13.4 compared with 4.8 per cent). There are also some variations concerning the 'other' category, which represents 2.4 per cent of teaching-only staff, but 3.1 per cent of research-only staff. There are also important distinctions between BME groups that are usually included in the same category. In particular, the fact that the proportion of Asians is higher in the research-only compared with the teaching-only category is largely due to the higher proportion of Chinese in the former category (Chinese represent 1.4 per cent of teaching-only staff, but 6.4 per cent of research-only staff) (UCU, 2007).

While international comparisons are not always possible, as many countries do not collect data on the basis of ethnicity, evidence from other countries where such data are available is of interest. The *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* (Anon., 2009), quoting, 2007 data from the US Department of Education, notes 'the snail-like progress of Blacks in faculty ranks of higher education'. According to this source, in 2007 black faculty members represented only 5.4 per cent of all full-time faculty at US colleges and universities. This showed a steady improvement since the 1980s, albeit a very small one (in 1981, black faculty members represented 4.2 per cent of all full-time faculty, compared with 4.5 per cent in 1989, 4.7 per cent in 1993, and 4.9 per cent in 1999). However, this remains a small percentage in comparison with the total enrolment of black students in higher education (12 per cent). As highlighted by the authors:

If we project into the future on a straight-line basis the progress of blacks into faculty ranks over the past 26 years, we find that blacks in faculty ranks will not reach parity with the black percentage of the overall American work force for another 140 years. (Anon., 2009)

BME and non-BME staff in non-academic professional/support positions

Although BME staff represent a small proportion of professional and support staff, this proportion is steadily rising, albeit slowly (HEFCE, 2008), as already observed in relation to academic staff. The proportion of UK national BME staff is lower in managerial and professional jobs compared with technical and administrative jobs (5.6 per cent, compared with 8.1 and 7.7 per cent, respectively).

Baseline data on the position of BME staff in HE

Over the period 2003–04 to 2006–07, this represents a slight increase of BME staff for all non-academic levels (+1.4 per cent for administrators; +0.8 per cent for technicians, those in the ‘other’ category – catering, maintenance, etc. – and managers and professionals) (HEFCE, 2008).

Distribution of academic staff by ethnicity and position

Data in HEFCE (2008) suggests some correlation between ethnicity and academic grade. Although there has been an increase in the proportion of staff from BME groups at all academic grades since the 1990s (with, however, a neat diminution between 1995–96 and 1996–97 for all grades, and between 2002–03 and 2003–04 for the senior lecturers/researchers category), the higher the academic grade, the lower the proportion of BME academic staff. Connor (2008) reported that UK national BME academic staff constitute 4.8 per cent of professors and heads of departments, compared with 6.2 per cent of lower-level academic positions. Although the proportion of BME staff remains the lowest among professors, data from HEFCE (2008) suggests that the proportion of individuals from BME groups is increasing slightly more quickly at professorial level.

Similar underrepresentation was found in relation to access to professorships in the USA. In 2005, only 3.2 per cent of full-time full professors at US colleges and universities were identified as black, compared with 6.2 per cent for assistant professors. In addition, women represented only 36.2 per cent of all African-American full professors, but 54.9 per cent of all African-American assistant professors (US Department of Education data: Anon., 2009).

Academic staff, ethnicity and type of institution

According to the survey conducted by the Institute of Employment Studies (2005), the proportion of BME academic staff varies considerably by institution (2–8 per cent). The report by Connor (2008), drawing on HESA returns, highlights some important variations in the proportion of minority ethnic groups (UK nationals only) depending on the type of institution (between 3.6 and 7.4 per cent). This report also notes that the ethnic diversity of the student population is not necessarily associated with a higher level of ethnic diversity among the staff. The gap is particularly striking in the case of institutions that are part of the Million+ group, where over a quarter of UK students (26.6 per cent) are from a minority ethnic background, compared with 6.9 per cent of staff.

The *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* also reports the unequal distribution of black staff across institutions in the USA.

Approximately 60 percent of all full-time faculty at the nation's historically black colleges and universities are black. The fact that there are many thousands of black faculty members at these institutions tends to overstate black success in that it significantly enlarges the African-American percentage of the total faculty in the United States. If the black schools are eliminated from the count, the total percentage of black faculty in the United States declines to about 4 percent. (Anon., 2009)

The same journal noted that most of the USA's 28 highest-ranked universities had no black mathematicians on their faculty. Although these universities employ 930 mathematicians, only four black mathematicians (all men) were identified. This shows little progress from a survey conducted by the same journal in 1994, which identified five black American mathematicians on the faculty of the highest ranking US institutions at that time.

Academic staff, ethnicity and subject

As seen in Table 1, there are some considerable variations in the proportion of BME academic staff, depending on subject area.

While the proportion of UK national BME staff is particularly low in subject areas such as creative arts/design, humanities, veterinary sciences/agriculture-related subjects and education (≤ 4 per cent for each of these subjects), medicine and dentistry and engineering each attract over 10 per cent of BME staff. Subjects with the highest proportion of BME staff are also among those for which the increase has been the highest since 2003–04. The largest increase is for medicine and dentistry (+2.2 per cent), followed by mathematical sciences (+1.6), law (+1.2), engineering (+1.1) and physical sciences (+1.0 per cent). Other subject areas have seen an increase of less than 1.0 per cent. In social/political/economic studies, the proportion of BME academic staff has decreased slightly (–0.1 per cent).

Baseline data on the position of BME staff in HE

Table 1. Permanent academic staff by ethnic background and subject area (percentage BME groups, 2006–07) (UK nationals only)	
Subject area	Percentage BME groups
Biological sciences	4.7
Business/administrative studies	7.3
Computer science/librarianship/information science	8.4
Creative arts/design	3.6
Education	4.0
Engineering	11.4
Humanities	3.8
Languages	4.1
Law	6.6
Mathematical sciences	6.1
Medicine and dentistry	10.4
Physical sciences	4.6
Social/political/economic studies	6.1
Subjects allied to medicine	7.2
Unknown and combined subjects	6.0
Veterinary sciences/agriculture-related subjects	3.4
Total with known ethnic background	6.1
Not known/not given	2635 individuals
Total	56,841 individuals
(Adapted from HEFCE, 2008.)	

Maher and Tetreault argue that new scholarships of diversity are best supported by structures that foster interdisciplinarity:

Rather than forcing faculty members, whether or not they are newcomers, into the moulds of academic disciplines whose boundaries were defined many years ago by male elites, these new niches and bridges create the conditions for new topics of study, seen in new ways [...] If we were to sum up the overall effects of faculty diversity on institutions and on the scholarship they support, we would say that another paradigmatic shift accompanying their inclusion is the move towards interdisciplinarity, both in the ways institutional structures have begun to open up and change and in the nature of the new scholarship produced. (Maher and Tetreault, 2007: 180, 189)

However, while in the USA Black or African-American Studies departments may have provided a niche for some BME groups, these areas of research have not seen any equivalent development in the UK (Wakeling, 2007). It is also worth noting that while the existence of such niches may provide opportunities for BME academics, new, interdisciplinary scholarship may not be given the same value compared with more established subjects (Maher and Tetreault, 2007), which may in turn have a negative impact on those scholars.

It is likely that these broad subject areas disguise important variations, depending on the specialism. While BME academics represent only 6.2 per cent of academics in 'social/political/economic studies', a questionnaire survey of academic economists in the UK, funded by the Royal Economic Society and conducted by the Working Party on the Representation of Ethnic and Other Minorities, found out that in economics, nearly 12 per cent of UK-employed full-time academics were of minority ethnic origin. This is a much larger proportion than in higher education overall (Blackaby and Frank, 2000). Other findings included that only 1 per cent of these were UK-born BME staff.

Academic staff and the Research Assessment Exercise

A study by HEFCE (2006) provides the sole example known to us of a cross-institutional study of the staff entered into the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). The study refers to the penultimate RAE, which concluded in 2001. Among other considerations, the authors of this report tried to assess whether academics from particular ethnic groups were at a disadvantage in terms of being entered into the RAE. Being entered into the RAE is a mark of acknowledgement for an academic, as it identifies them as 'research-active' and may increase their attractiveness to potential employers in a competitive labour market (institutions receive financial

Baseline data on the position of BME staff in HE

rewards on the basis of performance measurement). This study considered two aspects: to what extent given groups of academics were associated with a department that their HEI had decided to submit for assessment; and for staff associated with these 'submitting departments,' whether particular groups were more likely to be submitted for assessment.

The data show that staff of black ethnicity are much less likely to be entered into the RAE compared with other groups: 37 per cent compared with 58–60 per cent for other groups. The authors observe that this lower rate is partly the result of a higher proportion of these staff being employed in departments that did not make an RAE 2001 submission (26 per cent of black academics worked in a non-submitting department, compared with 13–16 per cent of other groups). However, even when only the data for submitting departments were considered, the selection rate of staff of black ethnicity remained lower (50 per cent, compared with 68–69 per cent for other groups). This does not lead to any firm conclusions from the authors, although they suggest that differences may be down to the limits of the statistical models used, rather than to what they describe as 'an unjustifiable bias':

We could not be certain whether this result from the restricted model reflected an unmeasured difference in quality of research, or whether it was evidence of an unjustifiable bias. However, evidence from the bibliometric analysis suggested that it was the former, the weakness of the proxies for research quality, rather than bias in selection. The bibliometric measures of research strength of the selected staff showed no great differences between researchers from different ethnic groups. (HEFCE, 2006: 4)

However, this study does not consider the possibility that criteria for inclusion in the RAE may simply be biased in favour of non-BME staff interests. For example, as noted earlier, while research on equality issues, including race issues, may provide a niche for some BME staff where their presence may be seen, rightly or wrongly, as more legitimate, this type of research may not be judged as valid as others.

Academic staff, ethnicity and nationality

In the context of globalization, it is not so surprising that 'the academic workforce is becoming increasingly multi-national' (HEFCE, 2006: 15). Increased competition between higher education institutions (HEIs), as well as the increased circulation of

individuals and information, have led to a rise in the proportion of staff originating from another country. This is not a new phenomenon, but one that has quickly developed over recent years. Data show a striking increase in the proportion of permanent academic staff coming to the UK from other parts of the world (HEFCE, 2006). Between 1995–96 and 2004–05, the proportion of permanent academic staff who are nationals of an Eastern or Central European country has increased the most (+193 per cent), followed by nationals from Western Europe and Scandinavia (+146 per cent), China, Japan and East Asia (+108 per cent), Australia, USA, Canada and New Zealand (+52 per cent), Middle East and Central Asia (+49 per cent) and from another non-European nationality (+41 per cent). As a result of these phenomena, the lines between ethnicity, nationality and culture are becoming increasingly blurred. In particular subjects, the proportion of staff coming from abroad may be particularly high (e.g. 34 per cent of academic economists working in the UK were born abroad; Blackaby and Frank, 2000).

Considerable differences between UK nationals and non-UK nationals have led some authors to focus on differences between both groups and to analyse the data relating to both these groups separately (e.g. Connor, 2008). In some cases, this has led to considering only data referring to UK nationals unless explicitly stated (e.g. HEFCE, 2008). For the purpose of this report, differentiating between both groups is of particular interest, as striking differences in terms of the proportion of minority ethnic groups can be found between UK nationals and non-UK nationals. A report by HEFCE (2008) shows that nearly a quarter of non-UK nationals are from minority ethnic groups (22.3 per cent), compared with only 6.1 per cent of UK nationals. However, while the proportion of BME groups is tending to increase among UK nationals, the contrary can be observed among non-UK nationals: the proportion of UK nationals from a BME background has increased from 0.6 per cent between 2003 and 2004, and that of non-UK nationals has decreased by 0.9 per cent over the same period (HEFCE, 2008).

In a similar vein, and also drawing on the HESA data, Connor (2008: 9) notes that:

significant differences are apparent in the ethnicity profiles of UK and non-UK nationality staff, especially in the representation of certain minority ethnic groups. The academic staff population includes a substantial number of non-UK nationals, almost 35,000, representing over one-fifth (21.8 per cent) of the total with known nationality, so it is important to consider the UK national and non-UK national populations separately.

Baseline data on the position of BME staff in HE

The strong relationship between ethnicity and national origin is also noted by Blackaby and Frank (2000). In their study, they found that all of the black, Pakistani/Bangladeshi and Chinese economists were born abroad. In total, only 1.2 per cent of academic economists in the study sample were UK-born and from a minority ethnic group. These findings led Blackaby and Frank (2000: 298) to conclude that 'The majority of ethnic minority economists were both born and raised abroad. The most striking feature of our data is the absence of UK-born ethnic minority academic economists.'

Conditions and mode of employment – all staff

The survey of higher education staff conducted by the Institute of Employment Studies (2005)¹ also identified a number of distinctions between the socio-characteristics of BME and non-BME staff. Mainly, it showed that BME staff were:

- = more likely to declare having caring responsibilities compared with non-BME staff (48 per cent compared with 37 per cent of non-BME staff), including a large proportion who cared both for children and adults (12 per cent compared with 2 per cent)
- = less likely to have a qualification which was not a doctorate, but slightly more likely to have a doctorate.

The survey also found differences regarding conditions of employment. It found that BME staff were:

- = less likely to be involved in academic and research work (38 per cent compared with 44 per cent of non-BME staff), but more likely to work in an academic department (77 compared with 67 per cent)
- = less likely to have changed role since joining (40 compared with 49 per cent), something possibly related to a shorter length of service
- = likely to receive a lower level of pay (£21,473 on average for BME staff compared with £28,342 for non-BME staff)
- = less likely to work full-time (79 compared with 83 per cent)

1. This report did not distinguish in a systematic way between academic and professional/support staff.

Baseline data on the position of BME staff in HE

- = less likely to work on a permanent or open-ended contract (57 per cent of BME staff compared with 75 per cent of non-BME staff)
- = less likely to belong to a union (38 compared with 51 per cent).

The pay differential between BME and non-BME groups is also backed by evidence in Blackaby and Frank (2000), in their survey of UK academic economists. They found that once individual and workplace characteristics were controlled for, no statistically significant effect on academic rank was found, although a significant negative earnings effect was identified (BME earned, on average, 13 per cent less, a figure in line with other sectors of the economy). They also found that once the data were adjusted (including in relation to age and 'research productivity', such as publications and research grants gained), BME groups earned 8 per cent less than non-BME groups. Gender is also likely to be a factor here, as women working in higher education routinely earn less than men, including those working as academic economists (Booth *et al.*, 2005). In 2005, the Association of University Teachers (AUT, 2005) found an ethnicity pay gap of 13 per cent in favour of white academics. The same report also noted that for non-academic professionals, the pay gap overall was 7 per cent in favour of white staff, with the exception of Wales. In Wales, the ethnicity pay gap was 1.9 per cent in favour of BME non-academic staff. In England and Scotland it was 7.2 and 5.9 per cent, respectively, in favour of white non-academic professional staff.

In relation to part-time/full-time work, the Association of University Teachers (AUT, 2005), drawing again on the 2003–04 HESA data, reported that BME academics and non-academic professional staff were slightly more likely than their white counterparts to work full-time. They also found that white academics were more likely to have secure conditions of employment: 60.7 per cent of white academics had a permanent/open-ended contract, compared with 52.2 per cent of black academics, 49.3 per cent of those of 'other' and mixed ethnicity, and 35.7 per cent of Asian (including Chinese) academics. Similarly, white non-academic professionals were more likely to have an open-ended or permanent contract than their BME peers. The claim that BME staff, both academic and professional/support, working in higher education tend to have less secure conditions of employment is also echoed by Connor (2008), who notes that a higher proportion of UK national BME staff are on fixed-term contracts compared with white staff (7.2 compared with 5.6 per cent).

Baseline data on the position of BME staff in HE

Some of these findings also echo those of research conducted abroad, for example, in 2007 black academics represented only 4.6 per cent of all tenured faculty in the USA. In the same year, 44.6 per cent of all white full-time faculty members held tenure compared with 35 per cent of all black full-time faculty members (Anon., 2009). The author of the final report of the NEWS project (Ouali, 2007: 6), which covers seven countries (Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and the UK) claims that 'As a rule, BME researchers and academics hold a more unstable position in all the countries investigated'. In particular, the report noted that in Germany, immigrants are not drastically underrepresented among researchers, but they are more likely to be on temporary contracts. However, 'second-generation immigrants' are underrepresented among researchers. In the Netherlands, BME staff are also underrepresented, especially those from Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese and Antillean ethnicities. However, it found that some groups, such as those from Surinamese and Antillean/Aruban descent, were overrepresented in technical and administrative positions. In Belgium, the report noted an overrepresentation of Europeans and non-Europeans among temporary administrative staff.

5 A synopsis of literature on the experiences of BME staff in higher education

5.1 Governance, leadership and management

It is difficult to find academic literature on governance, management and leadership in higher education that addresses equality issues, in particular in relation to ethnicity. In this section, the review therefore draws heavily on research from other sectors of education and other countries.

Governance

A survey of 188 HEIs (to which 126 institutions responded) by Carter *et al.* (1999) found that only 16 per cent of institutions had minority ethnic community representation on their governing bodies. The institutions with a higher proportion of minority ethnic staff, were also more likely to have representatives of minority ethnic groups on their governing bodies.

There are more studies relating to the further education sector. Bhattacharyya *et al.* (2003) reported a small-scale survey which indicated that eight per cent of governors in further education colleges were black, though there was wide variation in their distribution across colleges. Turner (2006: 161) cites studies (e.g. Kedney and Hawkins, 1996; Ellis, 2005; Landman, 2005) which suggest that ‘the dominant profile of college governing bodies remains white and male’. Turner referenced five studies that researched the experiences of BME school governors. One such study, by Brehony, noted that BME governors were ‘typically silent’ when they were in a minority on a governing body and when they were the only non-white governors (Brehony, 1995:165 cited by Turner, 2006: 164). Turner’s (2006) own study of BME college governors and diversity managers in nine further education colleges revealed that where BME governors are represented on governing bodies, they nevertheless remain ‘outsiders’. He also found that some BME governors saw their appointment to governing bodies as part of a ‘quota system’ (which they perceived their colleges were operating) and thus considered themselves ‘lucky to get in’ rather than viewing their appointment as a result of the skills they brought to the governing body (Turner, 2006: 164–65).

Respondents to Turner’s (2006: 165–66) study reported feeling that some further education colleges expect BME governors to be ‘yes people’ and to play a ‘marginal

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role'. Turner pointed to a contradiction in the findings, in that some colleges were assumed to want BME governors to take on the role of representing 'their community', whereas some were thought to be fearful that BME governors would 'only be concerned with issues that affect BME people alone rather than the business of the college'. Respondents to this study argued that BME governors would need 'resilience of character' to stand up for what they believed in:

If you're an ethnic minority governor who has had educational experiences in this country you've experienced within an educational context how groups have been marginalised, how you've been marginalised as a student or a teacher or at higher education, the covert racism that occurs – you know, you don't need to articulate it, you know what it is. You wouldn't dream of becoming a governor for a college if you were not prepared to say, to stand up and say I'm going to have a problem. You would just not take the offer up, you wouldn't respond to the advert. I think you've got to be quite a dynamic person as an ethnic minority to be prepared to put yourself in yet another educational situation where you may feel marginalised. (College Governor 10, quoted by Turner, 2006: 165)

There is also some relevant research from the school sector. In a small study involving interviews with 12 black school governors in the UK, participants reported differing views on the importance of their ethnicity in relation to their role as a school governor, and in some cases other aspects of identity, such as age or social class, appeared to be more important (Rollock, 2006). This highlights the importance of research that recognises the complexity of issues of identity.

In another project (on black teachers in London), the research team found that black teachers were concerned that school governors may hold a general view of black teachers of 'not fitting in', and consequently were less likely to appoint them. This was particularly the case in predominantly white schools (Maylor *et al.*, 2006). This led to the authors making two major recommendations.

School governors in London should be required to undertake race equality training within three months of appointment, including training on 'ethnically blind' appointments, equitable promotion procedures and effective monitoring of applicant ethnicity for all posts, including internally.

Diverse governing bodies, representative of local communities and the pupil population, should be obligatory and part of the inspection regime. This

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would give parents greater confidence that schools are concerned about the education of all children in their care. It would also engender confidence among teachers that schools, and not just those in high density areas, would consider their recruitment applications favourably. (Maylor *et al.*, 2006: 73)

Similarly, a further project (Women Teachers' Careers and Progression) identified equality issues in relation to governors' and headteachers' views of school staff. The project focused on identifying barriers to women's access to school managerial positions (Moreau *et al.*, 2005, 2007, 2008). Fifteen school case studies were conducted in nursery, primary, and secondary English schools. They included interviewing women teachers, as well as those in charge of school governance and of recruiting and promoting staff – in each case study a governor and the headteacher. Although this study had a different focus from this project (gender rather than race, school rather than higher education), it sheds some light on issues of equality among staff in educational settings. In particular, the authors noted that some of the headteachers and governors held stereotyped views of teaching staff, highlighting the importance of increasing the gender and ethnic diversity of those in these positions.

Leadership and management

Very few pieces of research relating specifically to BME staff in higher education leadership and management have been identified in the review.

One study is Essed's (2000) research involving interviews with five African-American professors and one of Caribbean-Dutch background (working in the areas of humanities and the social sciences in mainly white institutions in different countries). Essed suggests that when BME lecturers are appointed to leadership positions, certain 'unwritten presuppositions' are attached to their appointment; presuppositions which are not applied to white teaching staff. These unwritten presuppositions include BME staff being expected to draw on their cultural experiences 'to bring colour to all-white committees' and 'cater for students of colour' (Essed, 2000: 888). According to Essed (2000: 889) these presuppositions are derived from the 'sometimes token, often solitary position of women of colour in university departments'.

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Essed (2000), however, argues that women of colour in leadership academic positions:

motivate students of colour to develop critical understanding of race and other systems of domination, they develop facilities to strengthen competitive skills, they offer understanding and support in the case of discrimination. ... There is a price tag to racial solidarity in the sense that extra activities involved are seldom acknowledged in evaluations and career paths. At the same time, with their inclusive interpretations of leadership, women of colour provide specific support that the university system fails to offer sufficiently to students of colour. (Essed, 2000: 901)

However, where BME women occupy leadership positions and are unable to fulfil all of the expected assumptions that are associated with their perceived role as BME leaders, Essed (2000: 890) suggests that such staff are assumed incompetent if they 'cannot or will not juggle all the responsibilities thrust upon' them. She also suggests that a consequence of this is that BME staff in leadership positions may find themselves struggling to maintain their job and encounter stress.

In relation to the UK, Deem *et al.*'s (2005) study of six higher education institutions reported that some BME senior academics feel they are invariably viewed by their institution as the person who should have responsibility for equality issues within the wider institution. However, this is a role that is often resisted, as the example cited below indicates:

I've become very kind of strategic in terms of my resistance to being put forward as the designated authority. Because I'm now, I became a Reader in, 2003 and so I'm very young to be at that senior position. I'm a woman, I'm a black woman, so I'm an acceptable and a very impressive kind of public face for the university. So I'm frequently approached by the vice chancellor explicitly to represent the university for media purposes, and I have for the most part said no. I've just been, you know, otherwise engaged, because I know what is at work here. (2 Academic, Eastville, Deem *et al.*, 2005: 59)

In addition, although there is insufficient systematic evidence, a small number of UK academics have reported experiencing a questioning of their right to be in senior positions. For example, a respondent in Wright *et al.*'s (2007: 151) small-scale study reported attending board meetings as a senior member of staff, and other board members wanting to know about her qualifications. The respondent noted that she was asked 'where did you study' and 'what's your pedigree?' This example

is supported by Mirza (2009: 127) who recounts, as a professor, being 'mistaken for the coffee lady' in meetings.

According to Mirza (2009: 127), black academic staff in higher education in the UK are subjected to a process of 'infantalisation' whereby black academics are 'seen as less capable of being in authority'. Heward *et al's* (1997: 216) study of professors in law and biology in a pre- and post-1992 university in the UK supports Mirza's claims of BME academics being viewed in 'stereotypical ways which devalue, marginalise and exclude them from routes of power'. An article in *Times Higher Education* reported BME staff feeling that some white academics may hold the view that black academics are only promoted because of their skin colour, as opposed to merit (see Bunting, 2004; Jones, 2006 provides a useful discussion of why such views persist).

Tsikata's (2007) small-scale study of Ghanaian academics suggests that in Ghana, academic ability is dominated by black males, who are also given the most challenging and higher-profile jobs. Decision-making is also dominated by Ghanaian males, who occupy more senior positions. This contrasts with the lack of status conferred on black women academics in Ghanaian academia, which is epitomised by black female academics being called 'Auntie' or 'Mama', while black men were referred to by titles that recognised their academic achievements.

5.2 Employment experiences

The literature review points to BME staff encountering a range of negative employment experiences within higher education, such as those highlighted by Jones (2006: 153):

Black colleagues complain of unfairly receiving poor appraisals; of having been overlooked for promotion; of being unfairly overloaded with administrative responsibilities; of being criticised for not being a team player; of having their presence in certain places challenged ... of receiving lower pay for doing the same work as white colleagues; of white students choosing white tutors in preference to black colleagues; of expectations that they act as informal support and counselling services to black students without receiving extra workload credit; and of having their scholarship, knowledge and ability called into question by white colleagues. Black female colleagues have also complained of rife sexual harassment by male colleagues and students; of being asked to defend cultural and religious practices, such as the wearing of the hijab; of assumptions made about their 'dysfunctional' family lives – the list is endless.

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In the following sections, examples of some of these experiences are highlighted.

(In)visibility and isolation in academia

Research evidence suggests that BME staff in higher education in the UK feel marginalised and in many ways invisible in UK HEIs. For example, Wright *et al.* (2007) examined the experiences of eight black women academics in pre- and post-1992 UK universities. Drawing on the work of Puwar (2004), both Mirza (2006, 2009) and Wright *et al.* (2007) refer to black women academics as 'space invaders' and 'out of place' in higher education, because higher education is traditionally a white space, and one largely regarded as the preserve of white, middle-class males (see also Anderson and Williams, 2001; Jones, 2006). In such spaces, black academics may be seen as 'trespassers' (Puwar, 2004, cited by Mirza, 2006: 105) or 'visitors' (Gay, 2004). Mirza (2009: 120), while concerned about black female academics in the UK being 'out of place' in higher education, suggests that for black women, their existence in higher education 'is not just about physical space', but the 'power to occupy a historical space'.

Wright *et al.* (2007:151) note, however, that black academics have appropriate qualifications and skills, and that they 'articulate and perform in the required discourse and skills of their disciplines' which, they argue, should qualify them as 'insiders'. Nonetheless, the notion of black academics in Britain being 'outsiders' in higher education is repeated in the literature:

The world I inhabit as an academic is a white world ... in this white world I am a fresh water fish that swims in the sea water. I feel the weight of the water on my body. (Simmonds, 1997: 227, cited by Mirza, 2009: 115)

Feelings of being 'out of place' are not confined to academic staff in UK HEIs. Gay (2004: 267) argues that 'professors of color' in predominantly white higher education institutions in the USA have 'similar feelings of isolation'. She also draws on other studies to support this claim (e.g. Padilla and Chavez, 1995; Turner and Myers, 2000; Mabokela and Green, 2001). Of these studies, Turner and Myers' study of 64 faculty staff members of colour (e.g. Asian, African, Latino and Native Americans) is particularly insightful, as their study revealed that:

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At every level of academia a person of color is treated, at best, as a guest in someone else's house ... even when white faculty and administrators greet minority faculty with apparent cordiality, they project the underlying attitude that they are making 'others' feel welcome in 'their' space. (Turner and Myers, 2000: 84, cited by Gay, 2004: 269)

In both the USA and the UK, several authors (e.g. Gay, 2004; Mirza, 2006) have argued that feelings of isolation can have negative emotional effects on BME teaching staff. Importantly for Jones (2006: 152), experience of isolation not only 'breeds insecurity' but makes it difficult for BME staff to challenge racist experiences and 'militates against the formation of supportive and mentoring networks' among BME academics.

Racial discrimination and institutional racism

Evidence from the following studies suggests that the experience of BME academic staff in HEIs in the UK is one conditioned by discrimination, particularly racial discrimination. One of the key findings of Carter *et al.*'s (1999: xii) survey of over 700 academic staff and 150 academic-related staff was that 55 per cent of British and 49 per cent of non-British minority ethnic academic staff indicated that they believed 'greatly or partly that there is discrimination in higher education' employment. This perception of discrimination was further qualified with other findings by Carter *et al.* (1999: 38), which revealed that 26 per cent of respondents stated that they had experienced racial discrimination in their employment and 15 per cent in relation to promotion. The study revealed that minority ethnic experience of discrimination in promotion and of racial harassment increased with age and length of service. And 29.5 per cent of non-British compared with 23 per cent of British minority ethnic staff reported having experienced discrimination in job applications, while 12.2 per cent of non-British and 17.6 per cent of British respondents reported discrimination in relation to promotion. Where minority ethnic staff from overseas required work permits, they reported experiencing discrimination, and it was argued that non-British minorities were 'more disadvantaged than those of British minorities, especially in relation to permanent contracts' (Carter *et al.*, 1999: 65). The study also found that 18 per cent of non-British and 20 per cent of British minority ethnic staff had experienced racial harassment from staff or students, with 'a quarter of minority women' intimating that they 'had experienced racial harassment'. Carter *et al.*'s data additionally suggest that minority ethnic staff were more likely to report experiencing 'discrimination and/or racial harassment in the

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post-1992 sector than in the pre-1992 sector' (Carter *et al.*, 1999: 46). Importantly, Carter *et al.* (1999: 39) found that while respondents attributed some of their negative experiences to gender, nationality and religion, 'racial or ethnic factors were overwhelmingly dominant'.

Unlike the respondents in Carter *et al.* (1999), the respondents in Deem *et al.*'s (2005) study of six HEIs in the UK claimed not to have directly experienced any overt racial discrimination or racist remarks. However, the data derived from one of the case study institutions included in Deem *et al.*'s study suggests that for some BME staff, the racial discrimination they consider they encounter is much more subtle, and is sometimes concentrated at departmental level. The authors were particularly concerned at the experiences of racial discrimination recounted by the black and Asian staff they interviewed at the HEI in question, because of all the case study HEIs, this one had the largest representation of BME staff in academic (16 per cent) and non-academic (23 per cent) staff categories. The institution was also noted as having 'a comprehensive set of policies on ethnicity, 'race' and diversity (Deem *et al.*, 2005: 124). The interviewees in academic positions made reference to experiences of racial discrimination in relation to the academic 'scrutiny' and 'micro-management' they felt they encountered, and a lack of career progression. Some academics likened the perceived lack of transparency of appointment procedures for senior appointments to one of institutional racism (see academic career development section below). For Deem *et al.* (2005: 66), the experiences the staff reported were particularly worrying because they stated 'such an environment, irrespective of whether the claims are 'true' or not, is a potential breeding ground for cynicism and distrust, and the opposite of a harmonious multi-ethnic, multi-cultural work place'.

Similarly, a survey by Blackaby and Frank (2000) found that 41 per cent of minority ethnic staff in economics departments in UK HEIs reported experiencing discrimination, with 91 per cent attributing the discrimination they encountered to race, ethnic origin or nationality. According to Jones (2006: 146–49), 'BME women continue to experience exclusion from, and disadvantage and discrimination within higher education' and 'the levels of racism, disadvantage and discrimination experienced by [BME academics] remains high'. She also suggests that equality policies 'have done little to disrupt the quotidian racism within the sector' (Jones, 2006: 149), and she is particularly concerned that not just the 'existence of racism' in

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higher education is acknowledged, but the 'different forms of racism' (Jones, 2006: 155) that BME staff (especially Muslim communities) experience.

The term 'institutional racism', as defined by Macpherson (1999), has been used to describe the experiences of some BME staff in higher education (e.g. AUT, 2002; Bunting, 2004; Law *et al.*, 2004; Phillips, 2004; Garner, 2005; Mirza, 2006, 2009; Wright *et al.*, 2007). Following the Macpherson Inquiry, the University of Leeds conducted a review of equal opportunity action plans on race equality in its own academic departments and administrative units. The review was 'part of a HEFCE-funded Innovations project looking at the question of institutional racism in higher education' (Turney *et al.*, 2002: 7). The review included a questionnaire survey (distributed to 20 sample departments) and in-depth interviews with the sample departmental heads and other staff responsible for equal opportunities, as well as an email survey of student attitudes, experiences and perceptions. The authors concluded that 'the concept of institutional racism is central in trying to consider the varying ways in which the policies, practices and "culture" of an organisation (such as a higher education institution) operate in ways that disadvantage BME staff and students' (*ibid.*: 17), leading them to develop an 'institutional racism toolkit'.

An independent review of bullying and racism at the University of Bradford concluded that there was 'a systemic, institutional failure to confront bullying, harassment and racism' against BME staff within the division of nursing over a six-year period (Newman, 2009). Out of 12 disciplinary proceedings, 10 were initiated against BME staff. BME staff at the University of Bradford saw themselves as 'the most likely to be treated unfairly', and at the same time they observed that the university's 'equality champions' had little impact on equality (Newman, 2009).

Deem *et al.* (2005), in their research into equal opportunities policy and practice, found that BME staff, in particular, had reservations about the ability of HEIs to address inequalities. Carter *et al.* (1999: 39) noted that where minority ethnic academic staff reported experiences of racial harassment, they were less likely to take out grievance procedures because 'they believed that formal proceedings seldom led to a satisfactory outcome for the complainant'. Similarly, Jones (2006: 149) reported that some BME staff might be less likely to report instances of racism for fear of being further victimised, and observes 'disillusionment with the mechanisms for reporting and addressing such practices prevents many from

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taking action to redress grievances'. Jones (2006: 149) further argues that 'the pervasive reluctance of academics to discuss the lived realities of race and racism ... serves to exert pressure on black academics to remain silent about institutional racism and discrimination', and that 'the under-presentation of BME groups within the powerful decision-making senior administrative and governance structures merely serves to exacerbate the problem'.

Carter *et al.* (1999) suggested that stereotyped assumptions (underpinned by racism) perceived to be held by some white staff about BME cultures seemed to account for the marginalisation that some minority ethnic staff may experience in higher education (Carter *et al.*, 1999). Maher and Tetreault's (2007: 103) study of HEIs in the USA identified one such assumption as an 'unconscious association of excellence with whiteness' and 'maleness'. The location of 'excellence' with white males and perceptions of academia being for white staff appears to underpin black female academics experiences of unwitting/'apologetic' racism (Wright *et al.*, 2007). One respondent in Wright *et al.*'s study explained what she meant by apologetic racism:

I wouldn't say I've experienced direct racism ... but it's the sort of indirect almost apologetic racism that one experiences, so you know that members of staff think that you are someone from the admin department or students might think that you're not really the lecturer, you might be another student or some other person who just wandered into the space, so that's the way it manifests itself. (Veronica, pseudonym, in Wright *et al.*, 2007: 151)

Suggestions of black academics being 'out of place' in UK HEIs are further exemplified by students doing a 'double-take' when they realise that the black person standing at the front of the room is 'the social theory lecturer' (Mirza, 2009: 127).

Maylor's (2009a) experiences of working as a researcher in higher education support the contention that black academic staff may feel invisible, and that their academic status is rarely acknowledged (see also Rassool, 1995). Moreover, her own experiences led her to conclude that where black academic staff identities are recognised, they are invariably made to feel inadequate, incapable, a 'helper' and somewhat 'devalued' as human beings.

Academic scrutiny/surveillance

Like black school teachers in the UK (Osler, 1997; Maylor *et al.*, 2006), black academic staff in English HEIs report feeling that their work is overly scrutinised and their ability doubted, which results in them having to prove themselves in a way that they feel white staff are not expected to (Wright *et al.*, 2007). One of the respondents in Wright *et al.*'s study associated the scrutiny she encountered with black people being kept 'in their place'. As she explained:

I've never worked as hard as I have in my life ... this constantly being set up to fail ... somebody is telling you that you haven't met deadlines ...for example, my manager thinks that the way of managing me is to keep asking me if I've done tasks and if I haven't done them it means that I can't do them whereas I might be prioritising something different. ... I find myself in a position now where I am being watched. I'm being policed, I have to be seen to be doing things and if I don't show them what I've done I've obviously not done it. There is a lack of trust, they don't seem to have the confidence in me even though I've been appointed ... It is a 'race' thing because if you deem yourself better than another 'race' and actually see that they are better than you, how do you cope with that? ... You have to find mechanisms to keep them in their place. (Vera, pseudonym, in Wright *et al.*, 2007: 153)

The quote above infers that scrutiny of black senior academic staff is underpinned by a lack of confidence in black staff to perform required tasks well and meet deadlines. Ingrained in these behaviours, however, is a perception of black staff as 'incapable' and 'incompetent', and so in need of extra scrutiny or 'micro-management' (see e.g. Deem *et al.*, 2005; Rassool, 1995; Maylor, 2009a). A respondent in Deem *et al.*'s (2005) study of six HEIs provides a further example:

You don't issue instructions, you don't micro-manage your black staff, criticise them and investigating every little thing they do, looking, fault-finding, or pretending that well you're just checking up but really what you're doing is you're saying that you're in the post but you're only there because you're black, you're not really able to do the job, I'm going to have to do everything, and of course there's the exasperation and the annoyance that goes with that. When somebody feels that they have to constantly be checking your work, they let you know that they're angry about it because they're thinking I've got to do extra work because I've got this black person sitting here. (Deem *et al.*, 2005: 63)

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Mabolela and Mawila's (2004) study of South African black female academics also seems to suggest that although black women feel they constantly have to prove themselves capable, a lack of confidence in their own abilities is rooted in unequal social relations and structures of inequality in South Africa.

The notion of black staff being 'kept in their place' resonates with the work of Collins (1998: 20 cited by Mirza, 2009: 124), a black American academic who talks of 'surveillance' strategies being used to 'control', 'silence' and keep black staff 'powerless' when they enter white 'centers of power'. An example, cited by Mirza (2009: 124), illustrates how even black female professors can be scrutinised to such an extent that they are rendered powerless.

A Black female professor related [that] when she was first appointed [that] ... although it was not her job, in the first week she had to publicly present a detailed plan for delivering equal opportunities and race equality for the next five years to the senior managers and executives of the university. By three months she had been required to write five reports on her targets, attainments and strategies, and also found herself accountable to three different line managers (as it could not be decided to whom she should report: the executive, academic area, or the faculty). ... She received no real support for her academic research and teaching. Finally she became ill. No other professor had received this exhausting and intense level of scrutiny or expectation over such a short space of time.

Mirza (2009: 128) cites an example from her own experiences as a professor of being 'sent an email by a senior White male academic' about an application received from someone described as 'a not very credible Indian' for 'the appointment of a chair in a prestigious university' – an account which further suggests that some white staff may not accept BME staff as 'credible' academics. Mirza also contends that in addition to doubts about black staff's skills and intellectual capabilities, black academic staff have to bear a 'burden of invisibility' because they are few in number. This 'burden of invisibility' is played out with black staff being 'viewed suspiciously and any mistakes [being] picked up and seen as a sign of misplaced authority'. She further suggests that black staff have to 'work harder for recognition outside of the confines of stereotypical expectations, and may suffer disciplinary measures and disappointment if [they] do not meet expectations in [their] work performance' (Mirza, 2009: 127).

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Drawing on some other American studies, Gay (2004: 283) argues that professors of colour 'have to be better than their European American peers to survive and flourish in academia' and that in order to do this, professors of color need to 'master skills of perseverance and resistance, [...] navigating the nuances of marginality'.

Academic career development and progression

The statistical data point to BME staff tending to occupy lower level positions. Research suggests that BME staff regard difficulties in gaining promotion as a key issue. For example, three focus group discussions with eight minority ethnic academic staff (from a range of disciplines) in a pre- and a post-1992 university and in a medical school led Carter *et al.* (1999: 53) to note that:

The difficulties that ethnic minority people experienced in getting promoted was the single most important complaint that emerged in the discussions and achieved the most consensus. The participants argued that for ethnic minority candidates to be considered for promotion it was necessary for them to acquire twice as many publications, qualifications and experience as their peers.

Within their study of equal opportunity policies and staff experiences of equality practice, Deem *et al.* (2005) drew attention to the promotion experiences of BME academic staff at one of the six HEIs where they had conducted their research.

Four members of staff whom we interviewed reported (either in the interview or on the critical incident forms after the interviews) having been discriminated against in the promotion procedure and in appointments to middle-managerial positions on this basis. Their claim about discriminatory practices and career progression denied to them was made on the grounds that they felt their academic profiles better met the stated promotion criteria than those of the ethnic majority staff who eventually obtained the promotion. What reinforces the perception of racial discrimination is what was characterised as a recurrent pattern of ethnic minority staff failing to get promotion. Three of our respondents, all lecturers, adduced the example of a recent promotion round where ethnic minority members of staff who, based on the stated promotion criteria, stood a very good chance of getting promoted were not even shortlisted. (Deem *et al.*, 2005: 63–64)

As the above quote illustrates, the BME staff who took part in the study argued that they had been denied access to progression owing to their ethnicity. They were

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also of the opinion that where BME staff were shortlisted, they were 'the ones who did not have a realistic chance of getting promoted' (Deem *et al.*, 2005: 65).

Deem *et al.* also cited a BME respondent (at the same institution) who was near to retirement, who claimed that his ethnicity had been used to prevent him from furthering his academic career. It is worth noting that this respondent was unsure if his age had 'worked against' him being promoted. Nonetheless, he felt that he had spent the 'last 24 years on the top of senior lecturer scale ... and [had] got nowhere' (*ibid.*: 64), despite being research-active. According to Deem *et al.* (*ibid.*: 65) 'what may reinforce [BME staff] feeling of racially motivated exclusion is the absence of ethnic minority staff in managerial and middle-managerial staff across the institution'. The study also suggests that what BME staff (with relevant qualifications) at this particular HEI found equally problematic was the alleged absence of transparent procedures for senior appointments, as illustrated by the following excerpt.

Why wasn't it (middle-managerial post) advertised, here was an opportunity now for the university to appoint an ethnic minority person at that level, it was not advertised, it was just given to him ... there's not a single ethnic minority staff above the course tutorship here. Above this level there are course directors. Not a single ethnic minority person ... None of them, they're all English people. And moreover, none of them have got a PhD. Down here, course tutors ... we're all ethnic minority people with PhDs. ... The management, yes, the school, head of school, perhaps endorsed by the pro-VC ... so this is institutional racism. (Deem *et al.*, 2005: 65)

Wright *et al.* (2007: 158) also noted that the women in their study 'felt generally overlooked [for progression] and devalued' by white academics. They also note that the types of task undertaken by black female academics, and the level of responsibilities they have, serve to undermine their progression opportunities and ability to be perceived as legitimate academics with 'academic authority'. Wright *et al.* found that black female academics reported being 'kept busy on mundane tasks and/or being given 'excessive responsibilities' (Wright *et al.*, 2007: 154). They argued that both of these had a negative impact on black women's career progression in higher education, because where staff are overworked they have less time and reduced opportunities for self-development, and mundane tasks not only carry less privilege and power, but are less likely to attract support and encouragement to progress as they suggest a lesser ability. Not being party to 'institutional capital'

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also means that black female academics are not necessarily made aware of the best ways of achieving desired career progression goals and/or have 'career paths developed for them' (Wright *et al.*, 2007: 157) in the way that white staff appear to have. These experiences suggest that some black academics lack access to appropriate mentors (see also Tsikata, 2007) and are not actively encouraged or supported to advance their careers. Saliently, not having access to and/or not being mentored is likely to have a negative impact on black women who are not familiar with 'the rules of the game', which are necessary if one wants to go for promotion (Mabolela and Mawila, 2004).

American studies of BME staff in medical departments (Palepu *et al.*, 1998; Fang *et al.*, 2000) and mathematics departments (Anon., 1999) suggest that, as in the UK, BME staff are less likely than white staff to hold senior positions. Daley *et al.* (2006) cite Cohen (1998) who identified three factors for the lack of progression of minority ethnic staff in medical schools:

- 1) Comparative isolation within the academic community;
- 2) Minority faculty often feel disproportionately obliged to serve on time-consuming committees, to mentor students with complicated non-academic problems and to engage in community service activities that are not typically career advancing;
- 3) Many subtle, largely unconscious social conventions, falling far short of overt discrimination, have evolved over time. [This creates] a complex tangle of obstacles, not one of which is particularly noticeable, but that in the aggregate constitutes a monumental hurdle for those who threaten the status quo.
(Cohen, 1998, cited by Daley *et al.*, 2006: 1439)

Evidence from UK studies presented in this literature review point to factors 2 and 3 in particular having wider relevance outside medical departments in the USA. Daley *et al.*'s (2006) own findings suggest that where institutional provisions are made to address the concerns highlighted above, they are likely to improve the underrepresentation of senior minority ethnic academic staff. Carter *et al.* (1999: 70) also recommended that 'staff involved in recruitment and promotions including senior managers are properly trained in selection and assessment procedures, in institutional policies and in awareness of how unconscious negative stereotyping can bias decisions'.

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Exclusion/retention

A lack of perceived career progression opportunities and opportunities to further their research interests in 'race' and equality areas appear to be responsible for some UK black academics (including black PhD students) feeling excluded from UK academia, and opting to work in North America (Garner, 2005).

Reported experiences of scrutiny and marginalisation have led to some black female academics not being retained in higher education (Wright *et al.*, 2007). Daley *et al.* (2006) note that a lack of mentoring and perceived career progression opportunities have led to some BME staff leaving academic medicine in the USA.

5.3 Research and teaching environment

Occupying and teaching 'lesser' knowledge spaces

According to Jones (2006: 152), 'suppositions of White intellectual superiority place immense pressure on BME women academics to 'prove' their intellectual credentials ... and to prove the worthiness of their scholarship, especially when race forms the subject matter of [their teaching and] research'. Wright *et al.* (2007) contend that one reason for black female academics not being considered to have academic authority relates to the subjects some teach (e.g. 'race', diversity and equality issues), which are generally regarded (by white academia) as lower status because it is believed that such subjects are based on a 'committed interest rather than an objective and serious academic pursuit' (Wright *et al.*, 2007: 152). However, where such subjects are delivered by white academics, these subjects appear to acquire a higher status. This differential status accorded to 'race', diversity and equality subjects taught by black and white staff led Wright *et al.* (2007) to conclude that black women were being offered a 'lesser space' in academia. But rather than viewing her subject area (racial equality) as inferior, Mirza (2009) suggests that some white colleagues consider the subject 'threatening' (see also Garner, 2005). Arguably, such perceptions possibly account for a professorship in racial equality studies (held by a black female) not being awarded the same value, and also some HEIs providing black academics with a limited access to a multicultural curriculum, with the subsequent effect that black academics seek employment outside the UK (Christian, 2005).

The juxtaposition of teaching 'race'-related curricula as 'lesser' on the one hand, and 'threatening' on the other, is interesting as it illustrates the dilemmas that BME

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lecturers have to engage with if they choose to follow this particular curriculum path. Such dilemmas are further complicated by the fact that BME staff working in these areas often see the subject they teach, and their commitment to becoming an expert in that field, tied up with their own individual identity. This is exemplified by a professor who, in describing himself as 'Cherokee and Irish American and a multicultural literature specialist' (Gercken-Hawkins, 2003: 1), was concerned that his 'authenticity' to teach his subject was questioned by students, rather than his ability as an academic. This concern was, however, tempered by the tendency of his university to ethnically 'match' lecturers with the subject they are delivering. As he explained:

I enjoy the often unquestioned authority my Indian identity gives me as a teacher of Native American literature, yet I am troubled by the knowledge that my graduate school training in American ethnic literatures, the education that enables me – and indeed qualifies me – to do my job well, is, for many, a secondary consideration. I understand the politics behind many departments' desire to have their professors of ethnic literatures 'match' their area of specialty, to have that cultural connection to the material they study. I also know we cannot completely discount the value – professional, political, and emotional – that such a connection offers, but I do wonder what we are teaching our students by reinforcing this 'match' model through hiring practices. How outraged can I get at students who look for that authority of experience when I know the universities that looked to hire me searched for the very same? (Gercken-Hawkins, 2003: 2)

Researchers in the UK have critiqued similar expectations of ethnic 'matching' in school teaching (Carrington and Skelton, 2003; Maylor, 2009b).

Wright *et al.* (2007) have argued that in occupying supposed 'lesser' knowledge spaces, black women academics have reduced opportunities to access 'institutional capital' (e.g. patronage, support and networks) and other career opportunities. For example, some of the respondents in Wright *et al.*'s (2007: 155) study claimed to have been 'denied research opportunities because their area of scholarship was considered ineligible for the RAE'. Perceptions of 'RAE ineligibility' seem to be underpinned by a 'research agenda that marginalises race or casts doubt on its legitimacy as a field' (Phillips, 2004: 1; see also Christian, 2005). Interestingly, 'race'-related research not only acquires legitimacy, but becomes 'imminently respectable when it is conducted by White researchers, who are,

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arguably, disproportionately represented among the major recipients of major funding for “race” research’ (Jones, 2006: 152).

Tsikata (2007) interviewed four men and four women academics/administrators at a Ghanaian university, and suggests that some subjects (e.g. medicine, law and business administration) have a higher status than others, and that women were more likely to be teaching gender courses, which were generally associated with a lower status. There are comparisons here with the UK. Ghanaian female academics tend to be overwhelmingly located in lower ranks, and their experiences are known to be varied depending on the subject area they teach in, and the number of staff in the department. Like black women academics in the UK, there are instances of Ghanaian women academics being mistaken for secretaries, which suggests that such associations are more than associations of ‘race’.

Maher and Tetreault’s (2007) study of three HEIs in the USA (top-ranked private, comprehensive urban, major public university) found that faculty members of colour spend more time teaching, on average, than white faculty staff, and that they have different scholarly interests which may be deemed less valid or prestigious. These findings resonate with UK studies (Wright *et al.*, 2007; Mirza, 2009). Maher and Tetreault (2007) also suggest that little value is given to issues of race and ethnicity in the HEIs in their study, and that staff of colour experience isolation in academia and difficulties in getting tenure. Consequently, it is argued that people of colour need faculty support. Surveys of staff in two of the universities also revealed that women of colour were the least satisfied group of staff.

Mabolela and Mawila (2004) note that black women academics in South Africa have a heavy teaching load, which makes it difficult for them to complete their PhD studies and/or undertake other research. It is important to recognise, however, that historically black universities (where half of the women were located) were originally established as teaching institutions, and it is likely that this partly accounts for the emphasis given to teaching.

‘Ethnic responsibility’

Expectations of BME staff supporting BME students also seem to be fuelled within BME communities, where successful BME staff are expected to support other group members, and BME students in turn see supporting BME students as the responsibility of BME lecturers.

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Essed (2000: 888–89) recounts examples from her own teaching experiences, where BME students have demanded to be supported in ways which she argues they ‘would never have approached a White teacher’. She suggests that such demands were made possible owing to ‘shared positioning in society in terms of gender and colour’, and that this ‘shared positioning’ results in BME lecturers ‘engag[ing] in activities to promote social justice (e.g. making grant applications, providing research and financial support, challenging White staff racism), above and beyond office hours, without any acknowledgement within the university system’ and which in some instances extends to ‘mothering’. Arguably, such demands are experienced as more pressurising where the BME lecturer is ‘the only one’ teaching in the area in question, and the BME staff leader is wholly committed to redressing the social justice balance. Gay references Epps (1989: 25, cited by Gay, 2004: 268), who notes that ‘no matter how committed’ minority ethnic professors are, ‘there simply are not enough of them to meet the needs of all current and potential students’.

While not discounting the existence of the presuppositions identified by Essed, accounts by Jones (2006) and Richards (1996) of teaching in predominantly white institutions in the UK and the USA, respectively, indicate that some black lecturers (men and women) regard their support of black students as an ‘implicit’ part of their existence in higher education (Richards, 1996: 100). In some respects, it might be argued that the desire of black staff to support black students is necessitated by their own experiences and understandings of being ‘outsiders’ within academia.

6 Conclusions

This review has revealed concerns about the underrepresentation of BME staff at more senior levels in higher education (Carter *et al.*, 1999; Jones, 2006; Wright *et al.*, 2007). BME staff have also reported isolation and marginalisation; challenges to their status, authority and scholarship; high levels of scrutiny and surveillance of their work; and difficulties in gaining promotion (Heward *et al.*, 1997; Deem *et al.*, 2005; Jones, 2006; Mirza, 2006, 2009; Wright *et al.*, 2007). Wright *et al.* (2007) have argued that the relative lack of black staff in senior positions, and their experiences in those positions, provide evidence of institutional racism in the sector (see also Law *et al.*, 2004). Jones (2006: 149) also notes the ‘failure of equal opportunity policies to increase the representation of BME academics and [to] put into place effective strategies through which racial equity may be achieved’.

The review also revealed the absence of a significant body of research that focuses on BME staff working in the higher education sector in the UK. In particular, there is a lack of research relating to BME governance, management and leadership in the higher education sector. Many of the UK studies were small-scale, with a number of the papers written by individual academics reflecting on their own experiences as a BME person, or reporting the results of interviews with a small number of academics. These publications often do not appear to stem from a funded research project, something that may reflect a lack of funding for research in this field. However, there is even less research about non-academic staff, e.g. staff in professional roles or technical, support or catering staff.

Far more research was found from the USA, where research about race and education is much more prominent and institutionally recognised. In comparison, it is sometimes difficult to find any work on this topic (in English) in other countries, in terms of both statistical and qualitative data.

Many of the UK studies highlight experiences of black (as opposed to BME) staff experiences in higher education, and in particular of black women. With the exception of literature written by some women BME academics, which also considers issues of gender, there is a tendency in much of the work to homogenise BME groups, with little attention paid to issues of gender, social class and other social identities and inequalities. This remains a problem with many statistical data sources as well as quantitative and qualitative studies.

There is therefore a need for further research that specifically investigates the experiences of BME staff in governance, management and leadership roles, of BME professional and support staff at all levels, and of different BME groups across all staff. Research that also examines the experiences and perceptions of white staff would provide a useful comparison. Finally, such research needs to adopt an intersectional approach that encompasses differences related to gender, social class and other social identities.

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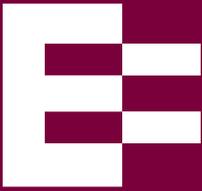
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