



**The British
Psychological Society**
Promoting excellence in psychology

British Psychological Society response to the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) call for evidence

Race and Higher Education

About the Society

The British Psychological Society, incorporated by Royal Charter, is the learned and professional body for psychologists in the United Kingdom. We are a registered charity with a total membership of just over 50,000.

Under its Royal Charter, the objective of the British Psychological Society is "to promote the advancement and diffusion of the knowledge of psychology pure and applied and especially to promote the efficiency and usefulness of members by setting up a high standard of professional education and knowledge". We are committed to providing and disseminating evidence-based expertise and advice, engaging with policy and decision makers, and promoting the highest standards in learning and teaching, professional practice and research.

The British Psychological Society is an examining body granting certificates and diplomas in specialist areas of professional applied psychology.

Publication and Queries

We are content for our response, as well as our name and address, to be made public. We are also content for the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) to contact us in the future in relation to this Call for Evidence. Please direct all queries to:-

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About this Response

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We hope you find our comments useful.

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Race and Higher Education

	<p>Review the response of the higher education sector and their representative groups to known inequalities and differences in experience for minority ethnic staff and students.</p>
<p>1.</p>	<p>Comments:</p> <p>There is an existing body of UK research (Singh, 2011; Berry & Loke, 2011; Higher Education Funding for England, 2010; Equality Challenge Unit & Higher Education Academy, 2008) whose focus is issues considered pertinent to and arising from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) differential student outcomes in higher education such as the attainment gap, and experiences arising from perceptions of inequality and effects of low socio-economic status. Subsequently, a range of interventions for remedying such disparities has been developed [e.g. more inclusive and targeted activities, ‘post-racial’ curriculum initiatives, mentoring]. Yet, where findings are extrapolated to BME students’ experiences in general, their applicability may be constrained, in some cases, by lack of reference to important effects arising from methodological limitations in cultural studies such as limited sampling of students’ experiences, or limited accounts of cultural and ethnic diversity (e.g. Stevenson, 2012; Stuart, Lido & Morgan, 2009).</p> <p>A revised terminology reflects resistance for using essentialist ‘deficiency-type’ ideology to situate and describe experiences of minority students and staff towards a more transformational and experientially-situated discourse (i.e. moving away from representational accounts of student/staff experiences to more ‘feminist-centred’ critical reality discourses; see Edley, 2001) as a way of redefining our understanding of experiences in higher education. Drawing on cultural narratives and demographic histories provide an improved means of understanding the ‘situated subjectivities’ of experiences of inequality and differences in academic settings for minority ethnic staff and students.</p> <p>An important aim of higher education institutions, therefore, is to respond effectively to diversity by delivering academic services within a framework of fairness and equality (Craig & Zinckiewicz, 2010; May & Bridger, 2010; Holley & Oliver, 2009; Bhattacharyya, Ison & Blair, 2003; Henkel, 2000). This is broadly congruent with strategic aims of the ‘widening participation’ agenda (HEFCE, 2009) and ultimately demonstrated through positive outcomes for staff and students’ experiences. With social, political and financial implications, these are further reflected using wider satisfaction measures (e.g. NUS surveys).</p> <p>References:</p> <p>Bhattacharyya, G., Ison, L. & Blair, M. (2003). <i>Minority Ethnic Attainment and Participation in Education and Training: The Evidence. University of Birmingham and Department for Education and Skills.</i> Nottingham: DfES Publications, 2003.</p> <p>Berry, J. & Loke, G. (2011). <i>Improving the degree attainment of Black minority ethnic students. Higher Education Academy Equality Challenge Unit.</i></p> <p>Craig, N. & Zinckiewicz, L. (2010). <i>Inclusive Practice with Psychology Higher Education. Higher Education Academy.</i></p> <p>Edley, N. (2001). Unravelling social constructionism. <i>Theory and Psychology, 11(3),</i></p>

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	<p>Review of minority ethnic student applications and entrants across higher education institutions.</p>
<p>2.</p>	<p>Comments:</p> <p>A specific example of a recent contribution to the existing and extensive literature on the international student experience is detailed below. Brown & Jones (2013) reported on the incidence of racism and religious incidents experienced by international students at a university in the south of England. Out of a survey of 153 international postgraduate students, 49 had experienced some form of abuse. In most cases, this took the form of verbal abuse, though racism manifested physically for nine students. Strong emotional reactions were reported, including sadness, disappointment, homesickness and anger. There was a consequent reluctance to return to the UK as a tourist, or to offer positive word-of-mouth recommendations to future students. This study and the existing literature on the international student experience, suggests that there is a real need for HEIs to give serious consideration to the establishment of appropriate dedicated mechanisms of support and procedures to directly tackle racist and religious incidences as and when they occur.</p> <p>Reference:</p> <p>Brown L & Jones I (2013) Encounters with racism and the international student experience. <i>Studies in Higher education</i> Vol. 38 Issue 7, p1004-1019. 16p.</p>
	<p>Review of recruitment and progression across higher education institutions for minority ethnic academics and lecturers.</p>

3.	<p>Comments:</p> <p>Of particular relevance to the need for the review of the extra work involved in being a minority in the HE sector and the need to establish 'constituency' for support externally to the institution, there is a growing body of research demonstrates that many HEI environments present challenges for black professors, particularly as they face institutional and personal racism. While scholars have linked these experiences to their attrition, a qualitative study by Griffin et al. (2011) explores black professors' larger range of responses to difficult professional environments. Twenty-eight black professors employed at two large public research universities participated in this study. Findings indicate that in addition to institutional departure, black faculty respond to personal and institutional racism through a form of psychological departure and acts of critical agency, specifically forming external networks, aiming to disprove stereotypes and engaging in service activities. Thus, institutions must be mindful of the full range of responses to the racism that black professors face, not assuming the climate is hospitable simply because faculty are not leaving the institution. Rather, campuses must improve their campus environments through ongoing strategic initiatives focused on cultural change. Work by Grant (2012), Tillman (2012) and Shorter-Gooden (2004) has considered the struggle for integration and acceptance of Blacks into academe at Doctoral levels and beyond.</p> <p>There is the opportunity to intervene via supporting the ability to publish through availability of research intensive opportunities for under-represented groups. There are racial disparities in publishing, an activity that is important for career advancement, but this has not been incorporated adequately into the debate on faculty attrition. For example, Hopkins et al. (2013) surveyed a random sample of 1,065 authors who contributed a peer-reviewed journal article indexed in the Web of Science. Hispanics and blacks were under-represented among individuals awarded with doctoral degrees, doctorate recipients employed in academia, and academics publishing in WoS as compared to their representation in the population. Cumulative experiences with discrimination and stereotypes may partly explain higher attrition and lower publication productivity among blacks</p> <p>References:</p> <p>Grant, C.M. (2012). Advancing our legacy: a Black feminist perspective on the significance of mentoring for African-American women in educational leadership. <i>International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education</i>, 25(1), 101-117.</p> <p>Griffin, et al. (2011). (Re)Defining Departure: Exploring Black Professors' Experiences with and Responses to Racism and Racial Climate. <i>American Journal of Education</i>, 117 (4), 495-526</p> <p>Hopkins, et al. (2013) Disparities in publication patterns by gender, race and ethnicity based on a survey of a random sample of authors. <i>Scientometrics</i>, 96 (2), 515-534: Shorter-Gooden, K. (2004). Multiple Resistance Strategies: How African American women cope with racism and sexism, 30, 406-425.</p> <p>Tillman, L.C. (2012). Inventing ourselves: An informed essay for Black female scholars in educational leadership. <i>International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education</i>, 25(1), 119-126.</p>
	<p>Investigate the short and long-term value of a university education to individuals from specific minority ethnic groups.</p>

4.

Comments:

Specific context of diversity: Black female students in higher education

Black female students' experiences have received limited attention in research literature (Williams, Brewley, Reed *et al.*, 2005; Mirza, 1998), and less so for UK Black female students. A web search for the term 'Black female students' reveals that while there is some consideration for their experiences in higher education, this is generally reflected through a homogeneous discourse of tensions and struggles. Research into 'lived' experiences of Black peoples is replete with accounts of negative life events such as discrimination, unemployment and under-achievement in what is coined a 'deficiency-based' perspective (Brown, 2010). While Black women's experiences in general have been problematised (Burman & Chantler, 2003), US Black feminist literature has attempted to re-orientate our understanding using a more positive epistemological framework (see James & Sharpley-Whiting, 2001).

Ongoing research at the University of Westminster (London, UK) explores identity construction during the course of three years of undergraduate study [i.e. a shorter-term exploration with longer-term implications], as reflected by cultural and 'lived' experiences of Black female students to consider ways in which constructs such as self-efficacy and a sense of belonging in academic environments is realised; thus it adopts an idiographic phenomenological approach and incorporates a feminist epistemology that holds that identity constructs are shaped by intersections of factors such as ethnicity, social class and dynamics of power (Buck, Cook, Quigley *et al.*, 2009; Phoenix, 2006).

A complication is that each Black female student navigates or problematises intersections differently. For the observer/researcher, this creates difficulty for interpretation of constructions of a 'self-efficacious' or 'engaged' Black female student based upon expression of her subjective reality. One possible outcome is that Black female students with a positive self-construct will narrate experiences of navigating intersections in more positive terms, and are more likely to be achievement-oriented with a sense of belonging - yet this can only be determined through [subjective] analyses of their cultural stories. In this sense, the pursuit of the reality of Black female experiences requires a degree of resistance to commonly-held and, perhaps, more 'convenient' Eurocentric assertions about constructions of Black female identities (Collins, 2001). This is a challenging assumption forming part of a wider cultural realist/relativist discourse (see Edwards, Ashmore & Potter, 1995).

This type of research, however, opens up a cultural frame of reference and 'gives voice' to individual and collective experiences of Black female students [a potentially marginalised group in UK higher education]. The notion of 'giving voice' or 'telling of the lived life' is an important artefact of constructionism, [Black] feminist thought (Robinson, 2012) and feminist 'standpoint' research (Sarantakos, 2012) that reduces potential for subjectively-constructed 'othering' of experiences (Gergen & Gergen, 2003) and permits reasonable 'inferences' (Small, 2009) about the extent to which academic experiences [positive or negative] contribute to the formation of identities considered desirable for a healthy self-construct.

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	<p>methods study. <i>Journal of Mixed Methods Research</i>, 3, 386-410.</p> <p>Burman, E. & Chantler, K. (2003). Across and between: Reflections on researching 'race' gender and mental health. <i>Feminism and Psychology</i>, 13(3), 302-309.</p> <p>Collins, P.H. (2001). In J. James & T.D. Shapley-Whiting, T.D (Eds). <i>The Black Feminist Reader</i>, pp. 183-207. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers.</p> <p>Edwards, D., Ashmore, M. & Potter, J. (1995). Death and furniture: The rhetoric, politics and theology of bottom line arguments against relativism. <i>History of the Human Sciences</i>, 8, 25-49.</p> <p>Gergen, M. & Gergen K.J. (2003). <i>Social Constructionism: A Reader</i>. London: Sage Publications Ltd.</p> <p>James, J. & Shapley-Whiting, T.D. (Eds) (2001). <i>The Black Feminist Reader</i>. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers.</p> <p>Mirza, H.S. (1998). Black Women in Education: A Collective Movement for Social Change. In Modood, T. & Acland, T. (Eds), <i>Race and Higher Education</i>, pp. 39-47. London, England: Policy Studies Institute.</p> <p>Phoenix, A. (2006). Centring marginality? Otherness, difference and the 'Psychology of Women'. <i>The Psychology of Women Section Review</i>, 8(1), 2-11.</p> <p>Robinson, S.J. (2012). Spoketokensim: Black women talking back about graduate school experiences. <i>Race, Ethnicity and Education</i>, 1-27.</p> <p>Sarantakos, S. (2012). <i>Social Research</i>, 4th ed. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan</p> <p>Small, M.L. (2009). 'How many cases do I need?': On science and the logic of case selection in field-based research. <i>Ethnography</i>, 10(1), 5-38.</p> <p>Williams, M.R., Brewley, D.N., Reed, R.J., White, D.Y. & Davis-Haley, R.T. (2005). Learning to read each other: Black female graduate students share their experiences at a White research I institution. <i>The Urban Review</i>, 37(3), 181-199</p>
	<p>Identify any existing models of good practice in addressing issues affecting minority ethnic students and staff across the HE sector and determine whether and what further interventions are needed.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Comments:</p> <p>Findings from UK cross-institutional research (Pokorny, Chalcraft, Volpe <i>et al.</i>, 2011) into differentiated student experiences and development of a sense of belonging suggest that students from diverse backgrounds value forming strong supporting relationships with staff and their peers, summarised as social interaction that benefits the learning experience. Holding a positive attitude to their studies is also considered an important buffer for dealing with perceived challenges (Chalcraft, Pokorny & Husbands, 2012).</p> <p>Specific interventions (Shoderu, Husbands, Holley & Kane, 2012) to improve belonging and engagement in higher education include:</p> <p>(i) increased opportunities for socialisation among students (particularly important as research shows that students tend to 'cluster' socially by ethnicity, creating pockets of social isolation for students who do not 'fit in': Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Locks, Hurtado, Bowman & Oseguera, 2008);</p> <p>(ii) staff which are aware of their role in establishing equitable relationships between students [facilitated by staff with a sense of belonging];</p>

(iii) increased opportunities for student engagement through involvement in research projects;

(iv) staff appreciation for the personal and financial costs to students making the transition to HE, and

(v) awareness of the impact of administrative failures/lack of empathy on the student experience.

Furthermore, mentoring (Hixenbaugh, Dewart, Drees et al., 2005) and access to [ethnically-similar] role models (de Beer et al., 2009) can offer practical and emotional support.

Concomitantly, student-led solutions echo these findings. Recommendations emanating from the Race for Equality report (2010) - a study commissioned by the National Union of Students - resonate with evidence-based practice for improving student experiences (Thomas, 2012; Zepke & Leach, 2010). In broader terms, interventions that form part of inclusive teaching practices are considered desirable features for a positive experience for students, suggesting additional benefits for staff morale. It follows that teaching practices that are supportive and complimentary to the formation of factors such as self-efficacy, defined as 'an individual's belief in their capabilities to meet situational demands...[and] important for psychological well-being' (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996:208) contribute to students' overall wellbeing and improved sense of belonging (Dru, 2007; Bandura & Edwin, 2003). Development of self-efficacy and a sense of belonging are implicated for positive academic development in BME students (Uwah, McMahon & Furlow, 2008).

In sum, higher education institutions that commit to building on the combined social and cultural capital of students and staff from diverse backgrounds can enable more successful integration and engagement, improved retention and degree outcomes, with more favourable employability prospects (Gavala & Flett, 2005; Barnett & Coate, 2005; McMahon & Portelli, 2004).

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End