



# Women in Social Science

3 April 2019 | 1.30PM | City, University of London

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# Women in Social Science

Women of Colour in the Academy  
Aspirations and achievements  
in the face of inequality

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**#WomeninSocSci**

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# Introduction

- Equality Act (2010); Athena Swan Charter; Race Equality Charter; Equality Policies in HE.
- Inequalities in HE continue to persist despite significant advances in policy making (Bhopal, 2018).
- Racism, exclusion and marginalisation for BME groups in HE (Bhopal and Pitkin, 2018).



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# BME experiences

- More likely to be on fixed term contracts; research only contracts compared to white staff.
- Underrepresented at the highest contract level and overrepresented at the lowest.
- Less likely to be on highest pay spine of £59k or more.
- Less likely to be professors or in senior management roles (Advance HE, 2018).
- Racism and white privilege (Bhopal, 2016; 2018).



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# Exclusion and marginalisation

- Racism (covert and overt) from colleagues and students.
- Lack of BME representation at senior decision making levels and professorial roles reinforced BME academics as the 'other'.
- Acceptance and 'credibility' to colleagues and students.
- Complaints about racism dismissed as a 'clash of personalities'.
- Refusal of existence of racism and racist practices.
- Discourse of denial (Bhopal, 2016).



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# BME academics in the academy

- Outsiders/insiders, not accepted in the ‘white’ space.

Professional persona/presentation of self (dress, language, accent) – notion of ‘credibility’ linked to acceptance in the academy.

Affects how BME academics are judged by colleagues and students (Bhopal, 2016).



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# Support networks

- Colleagues and peers (emotional, academic and instrumental support).
- Inside and outside the academy; different forms (face to face, telephone, skype, social media).
- Academic input (where to publish, reading drafts, applications for funding).
- Successful career trajectories and promotion to senior roles
- 'A network of knowns'/use of gatekeepers rare for BME academics (Bhopal, 2016; 2019).



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# Mentoring

- Importance of mentoring for career progression and support

Formal (developed by the academy) and informal (based on connections e.g. similar research themes or outsider status – race, gender and class).

Timing of mentoring (in relation to specific points on career trajectories).

Respondents themselves wanted to be mentored but also wanted to mentor junior colleagues (beneficial, ‘giving something back’) (Bhopal, 2019).



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# Career promotion and progression

- Career ‘hits the buffers’.
- Prospects limited and promotion ‘an illusion’.
- Lack of transparency – ‘nebulous’ criteria/‘network of knows’.
- Feeling of being judged more harshly than white colleagues/different criteria introduced/‘hyper-surveillance’.
- Work on race/ethnicity seen as a deficit.
- Recognition of research/publications outside the ‘Anglo-American’ world. (Bhopal, 2016).



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# Ways forward?

- Draw upon existing networks of support (including white allies).
- Create new forms of support (e.g. social media).
- Challenge, interrogate and disrupt systems of oppression.
- A failure to acknowledge racism and white privilege results in a failure to act (Bhopal, 2018).



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# THANK YOU!



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