

**The Hidden Narratives of Higher Education Internationalisation:
Can Excellence and Inclusion Cohabit? The case of
East Asian mobile academics in UK Universities**



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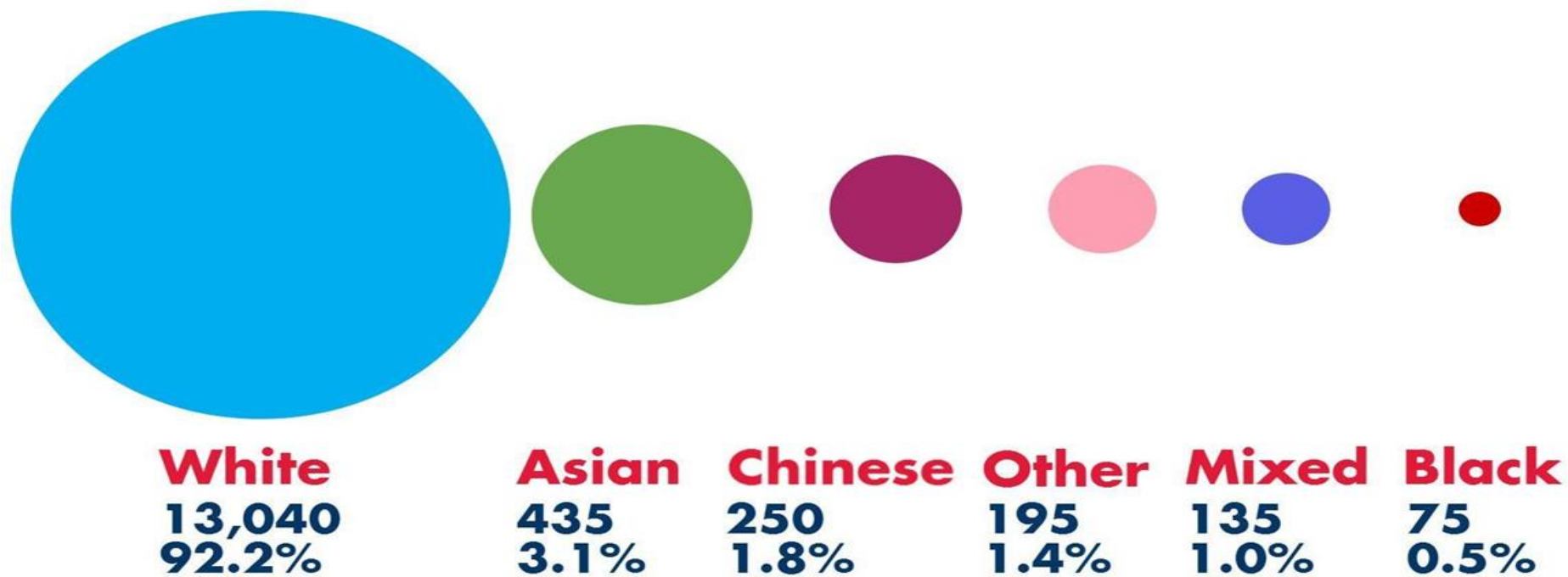
University Presidents (with “BME” backgrounds) in the UK as of 2018



Internationalisation of UK HE Leadership: Foreign Vice-Chancellors (Presidents) in major UK universities



0.5% OF PROFESSORS WERE BLACK



8: UK professors by ethnic group, 2014-15

All individuals have multiple identities, and the intersection of those identities should be considered wherever possible.

PROPORTIONALLY FEWER PROFESSORS WERE BME AND FEMALE

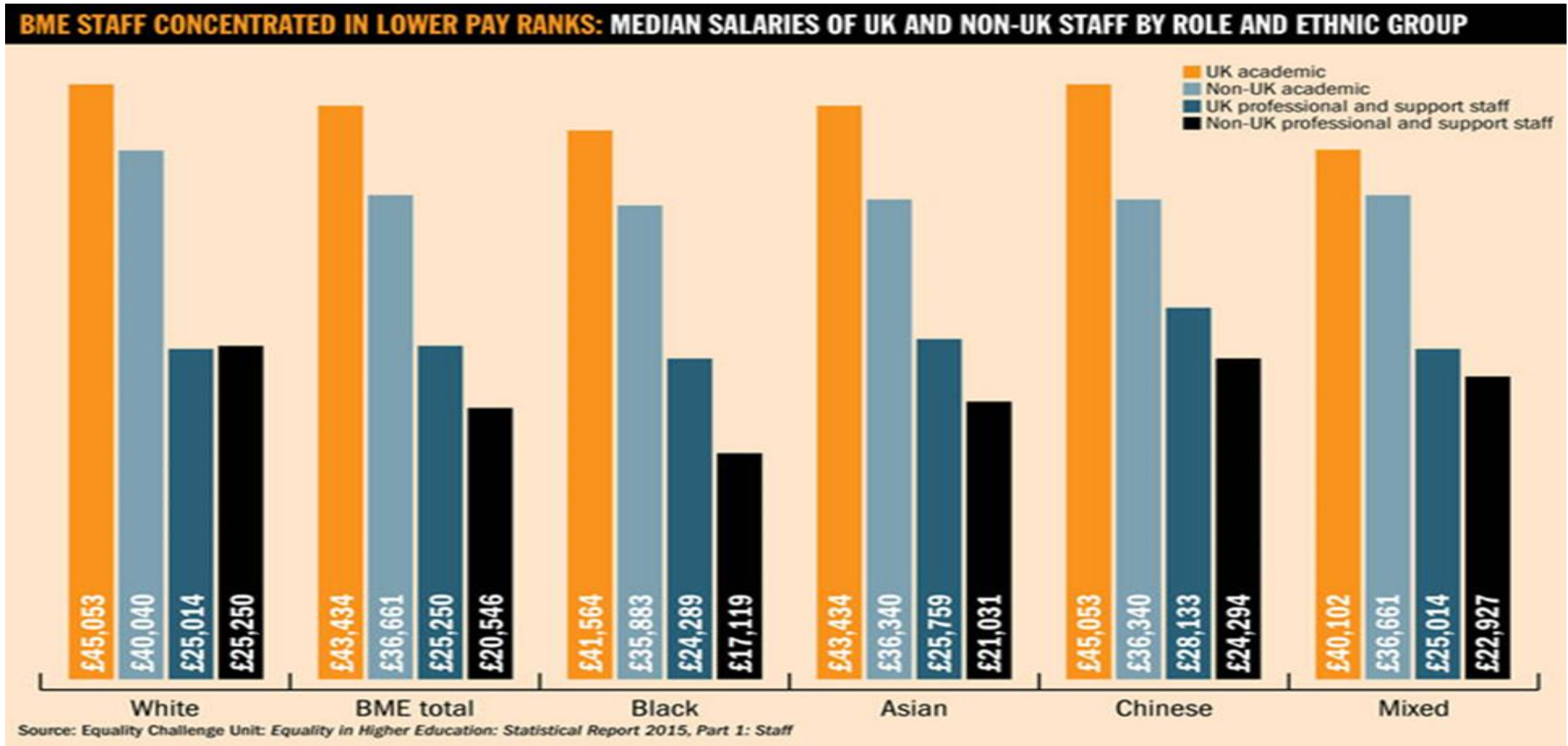
UK professors:

- White male - 9,960 (70.5%)
- White female - 3,080 (21.8%)
- BME male - 860 (6.1%)
- BME female - 230 (1.6%)



9: UK professors by gender and BME/white identity, 2014-15

Chinese or East Asian? UK academic or non-UK academic?

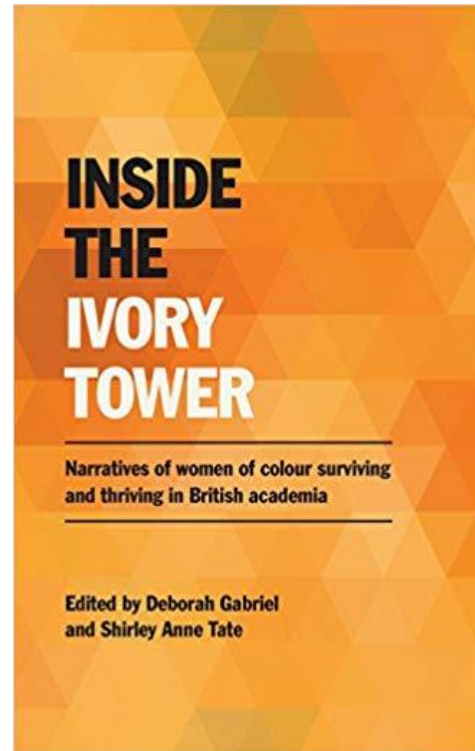


“Racism at university: Inquiry launched by UK's equality body”

BBC
NEWS

“The level [of racial harassment] that we have seen occurring within universities is particularly concerning.”

- David Isaac, Chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission
(BBC report, 4 Dec. 2018)



** Pictures courtesy of Prof. Fiona Ross's ICIS seminar

The 'decolonise' Cambridge row is yet another attack on students of colour

Jason Osamede Okundaye

It's time for universities to make race equality a priority

Valerie Amos

Universities say they are taking steps to promote BAME staff and address the attainment gap, but progress is far too slow



Yellow Peril (and a Model Minority) in Silence

**“East Asians are considered a neoliberal, multicultural success story.”
(BBC, 31 January 2018)**

Identity politics has become a basis of normative research industry and there is a danger of doing self-sustaining advocacy research.

Danger of ‘sanctification of victimisation’ (Chow, 1993)

Given the Racial Equality and Diversity policy framework, East Asian academics are perpetual ‘others’ from within – often voluntarily.

“I don’t think of myself falling into that category because of my upbringing. **I know I am being categorised in the BME group, but I don’t think I am the short end of the stick.**

I am *not* part of repression and discrimination. In my department, there are three non-white academics but **I am the only non-white non-British national. In my workplace, I have never experienced any discrimination.**

The racial equality and diversity policy discourse indicates that the UK is explicitly multicultural. In that regard, I don’t feel I need to work so hard to fit in the UK society.

(Excerpt from an East Asian non-British national /int’l academic’s interview narrative, April 2018)

“When people casually ask if the bullying I experienced in my previous university (before moving to the current one) was due to racism, I strongly deny. I think such attribute is a psychological projection and oversimplifies the complex situation....

.....When BME academics or white British academics with working class backgrounds talk about their experiences of ‘impostor’ syndrome in the traditional academic environment, I feel silenced because I am not one of them. I am very comfortable with traditional academe - due to my family background and upbringing.

.....I appreciate the UK government’s widening participation in HE policy, and I am very proud of my current institution’s strong commitment to fighting for social justice and social change. However, I don’t really define myself in racial, ethnic terms. I don’t have a “chip on my shoulder”, which is the term I actually heard from a fellow ‘BME’ colleague recently. On the contrary, I enjoy being a foreigner here. I find my inside-outsider position useful for my academic work and life in general.”

(Excerpt from an East Asian non-British/int’l academic’s interview narrative, 11/2017)

“Why do I need to be bothered about my ethnicity that is not related to my academic work? I think the BME advocacy policy will make no tangible outcome. I have never experienced racism. I wouldn't be bothered. I don't want to spend time on racial politics. I really don't think the BME policy package based on racial ethnic categories will help my academic career progression. I believe in meritocracy.

The common view of “hard working” is not necessarily the trait of East Asian academics or ethnic minority, and individual work ethics is not related to the ethnic minority position. **There are just individual attributes, individual choices and individual disadvantages.**

I don't benchmark the British or anyone. I am happy to live in limbo. Being categorised as Japanese doesn't help. I like the freedom to define myself. I don't need to follow the game. For the moment, I enjoy not being categorised.”

(Japanese non-British national/int'l academic, Russell Group University, March 2018)

At the same time, she thinks international academics make distinctive contributions to the internationalisation of UK universities and new knowledge creation.

“Yes, these [international] people add the diversity of the university culture. My academic colleagues in my immediate unit are UK, Romanian, Italian, Canadian nationalities... There are so many non-UK colleagues in my department. Sometimes Brits may feel like a minority? I like this diversity of the British HEIs and I do hope this diversity remains after Brexit...”

(A Japanese international academic in a Russell Group University, March 2018).

But they have experienced microaggressions - although they didn't voluntarily articulate them before I specifically asked..

- **There are frequent Misrecognition, infantilisation, and undermining** leadership calibre or academic achievements - as experienced by East Asian female academics:
- **Examples of workplace bullying and/or harassment are defined by UCU as listed here.**
 - ✓ Constantly criticising competent staff, removing their responsibilities, or giving them trivial tasks to do
 - ✓ Shouting at staff
 - ✓ Persistently picking on staff in front of others, or in private
 - ✓ Obstructing professional development/ blocking promotion
 - ✓ Regularly making the same person the butt of jokes
 - ✓ Constantly attacking a member of staff in terms of their professional or personal standing
 - ✓ Seeing a person up to fail by overloading them with work or setting impossible deadlines
 - ✓ Regularly and deliberately ignoring or excluding individuals from work activities – such as the decision making process even though she is involved in the area
 - ✓ Ignoring staff views and opinions
 - ✓ Different rules for different people
 - ✓ Criticism and threats
 - ✓ Excessive monitoring – lack of trust, especially in relation to leadership capacity
 - ✓ Unrealistic expectations

Commonalities of East Asian academics' Perceptions and positionalities

- **Identities - not a victim but a stranger**
- **Pride (no stigma)** - ethnic/ national / cultural/ civilizational entity
- **Resilience and flexibility** in pursuing academic careers in the UK as well as internationally
- **Strong individuality** in their institutions – not joining the BME racial equality and diversity network group but actively engaging in the mainstream networks.
- **Significant international networks** - not necessarily ethnicity-based
- Keeping the “**low profile**” nature of **ambidexterity: socially passive-loyal and yet individually pro-active**

Common attributes identified among the East Asian academics in UK universities

Are they Confucian value-laden?

- **Revering the existing social order**
- **Believing in the meritocracy**
 - Believing that anyone who survived the rigour of study and exams could be upwardly mobile.
 - **A high level of aspiration and attainment**
- **Emphasis on self cultivation to determine one's proper position in the network of social relationships and to behave properly according to one's position**
- **Emphasis on individual accountability, diligence, thrift, cooperation, loyalty to one's group/ organisation**

East Asian academics' self-accountability and strong belief in meritocracy – may be Confucian neoliberal?

“Only after the self is cultivated, can the family be regulated; only after the family is regulated, can the state be governed; and only after the state is governed, can peace be brought to the land” (Confucius, *The great learning & the doctrine of the mean*.

B. Bruya (trans.) (original work traced back to 2,500 years ago).
Beijing: Xiandai Press. 2006: 8).

Thank you

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