Improving gender equality in higher education: Strategy and action plans

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The Wolf of Compassion
The British Psychological Society

– Is responsible for the promotion of excellence and ethical practice in the science, education, and practical applications of the discipline

– Has a commitment to promote equality, diversity and inclusion and to challenge prejudice and discrimination

Gender Inequality in Psychology (1): The British Psychological Society

Student and early career
Associate fellow
Fellow
President
Collaboration in University/Departmental Athena SWAN initiatives
## University focus: Recognise and support intersectionality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic Area</th>
<th>Actions (highlights)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Education</strong></td>
<td><em>Train academics in delivering an inclusive practice (for trans people, intersectionality, all protected characteristics); embed EDI good practice</em></td>
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<td><strong>2. Awareness</strong></td>
<td><em>AS Champions to include intersectionality as normative practice; use high profile launches &amp; events to raise awareness; promote current employees as role models</em></td>
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<td><strong>3. Training and Related Actions</strong></td>
<td><em>Engage all staff in unconscious bias training; actively promote our charter memberships &amp; principles: RECM, AS, IIP, HRERA, Stonewall &amp; Customer First</em></td>
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<td><strong>4. Supporting Trans People</strong></td>
<td><em>Ensure recruitment of transgendered staff is based on best practice; regular consultation with marginalised groups; full access to mentoring opportunities</em></td>
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<td><strong>5. BME Attainment Gap</strong></td>
<td><em>Reduce the attainment gap; adopt HEA principles &amp; good practice from other HEIs; promote mentoring &amp; coaching opportunities for BME students</em></td>
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Faculty of Science and Technology focus:

Disciplinary cultures, stereotypes and unconscious bias
Interdisciplinary practices
Comte’s hierarchy of science & ‘physics envy’

FIELDS ARRANGED BY PURITY

MORE PURE

Sociology is just applied psychology
Psychology is just applied biology.
Biology is just applied chemistry
Which is just applied physics. It's nice to be on top.
Oh, hey, I didn't see you guys all the way over there.

Sociologists  Psychologists  Biologists  Chemists  Physicists  Mathematicians

https://imgs.xkcd.com/comics/purity.png
Departmental focus:

Transparency

Gender-balance
Gender Inequality in Psychology (2): The Psychology Department at Westminster
Research focus in a local context:

Intersectionality and (in)equality: Black and Minority Ethnic undergraduate students’ constructions of identity in higher education

A reflexive researcher’s perspective
**Comparative research background**

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<td>Review indicates shortage of studies on identity development in Black female students: Shorter-Gooden &amp; Washington (1996)</td>
<td>Growing body of qualitative research for BME student experiences (e.g. Hodges &amp; Jobanputra, 2012; Reay et al., 2012; Stevenson, 2012)</td>
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<td>Black female student experiences still not fully explored: Cole (2009)</td>
<td>Less research on experiences of Black female students as context of student diversity</td>
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Current issues in UK higher education

Table 1: Percentage of UK-domiciled FDU qualifiers receiving a first/2:1 by ethnic group (HEFCE, 2013)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Mixed</th>
<th>Other</th>
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<tr>
<td>2003/04</td>
<td>63.1</td>
<td><strong>35.5</strong></td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>51.2</td>
<td>61.2</td>
<td>51.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004/05</td>
<td>63.8</td>
<td><strong>36.2</strong></td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>49.1</td>
<td>60.3</td>
<td>49.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005/06</td>
<td>64.7</td>
<td><strong>35.7</strong></td>
<td>45.7</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td>61.0</td>
<td>49.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006/07</td>
<td>65.5</td>
<td><strong>36.7</strong></td>
<td>46.8</td>
<td>51.8</td>
<td>61.4</td>
<td>51.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007/08</td>
<td>66.4</td>
<td><strong>37.7</strong></td>
<td>48.2</td>
<td>53.1</td>
<td>61.6</td>
<td>54.8</td>
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<td>2008/09</td>
<td>67.2</td>
<td><strong>38.1</strong></td>
<td>50.1</td>
<td>55.4</td>
<td>62.7</td>
<td>53.1</td>
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<td>2009/10</td>
<td>67.9</td>
<td><strong>38.1</strong></td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>56.8</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>54.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010/11</td>
<td>69.5</td>
<td><strong>40.7</strong></td>
<td>52.1</td>
<td>58.7</td>
<td>62.8</td>
<td>54.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011/12</td>
<td>71.5</td>
<td><strong>43.2</strong></td>
<td>55.2</td>
<td>62.7</td>
<td>65.5</td>
<td>57.5</td>
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Poor integration & challenges for BME student experiences (e.g. Boliver, 2013; Morgan, 2014; Tillman, 2012)
Deficit explanations for under-achievement

• Situate problem ‘within’ the student; ignores external structures of power & dominance (Brown, 2012)

• Under-emphasise relevance of BME students’ social, personal & cultural capital as real ‘economy’

• Over-emphasise lack of confidence

• Ignore Eurocentric-influenced curricula

• Fuel student protest movements: “Why is my curriculum White?”; “Why isn’t my professor Black?”
How is intersectionality experienced?

“Can there ever be a full structural critique when we are all so many different things all at the same time?”

Kimberlé Crenshaw
Identity construction in Black female students

Thematic patterns (similarities/dissimilarities) for identity construction

A triangulated account of identity construction

QCA

IPA

Conceptual accounts of identity construction

Phenomenological accounts of identity construction

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Non-Traditional BFSs: ‘Hyphenated’ Selves

1. (Un)belonging Self
2. Efficacious Self
3. Help-seeking Self
4. Interpersonal Self
5. Religious Self
6. Future Self
7. Reflective Self
8. Engaging with pedagogy

Maturity

Help-Seeking
Pastoral Support
Self-Talk
Aspirational
Conflicted

Engaging with Pedagogy
Perceptions

Unbelonging
Clustering
Institution
Communities
Department
Peers
Interpersonal Self
Personal, cultural & social capital
Staff / student interaction
External relationships

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‘Hyphenated’ student voices
(Un)belonging:

”the one year where I had interactions with my fellow students was my first year and I think that’s because everybody was new...the second year most of the mature students dropped out”

“I felt a bit excluded because we were mature students and it took a while to become integrated into university life”

“there was a short time when things were going well, when lectures were enjoyable, you looked forward to coming...that’s when I felt a part of this learning institution”

“...the lecturer will always say hello to one of us (a White student) in the group...but when that person is not in the group...we (Black female students) will be ignored...so, that to me shows that you’re not visible. You’re an invisible student.”
Traditional students - Shifting Selves

- Transitioning Self
- (Un)belonging Self
- Coping Self
- Efficacious Self
- Aspirational Self
Traditional students - Shifting Selves

Responding to deficit perspectives:

“I’d rather feel inadequate because I wasn’t doing really well than be made to feel inadequate because I’m doing average”

The greater danger for most of us lies in not setting our aim too high and falling short: but in setting our aim too low, and achieving our mark.

MICHELANGELO
IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION:
– Life histories
– Pre-university ambitions
– Current university experiences
– Future aspirations

SENSE OF BELONGING:
– Cluster analysis indicates weak ‘sense of belonging’ in non-traditional students (cf What Works? Thomas, 2012)
  – 1st year students (Hoffman et al., 2002)
  – International students (Slaten et al., 2016)
  – Male students (Uwah et al., 2008)
  – Poorly-supported White students (Hausmann et al., 2007)
  – Shared characteristics??
PSYCHOLOGICAL COST:
– maintaining multiple ‘Selves’
– much effort vested in creating ‘spheres of influence’ (Mirza, 1998)
– cultural downplaying (i.e. racial ‘passing’; Ogbu, 2004)

ETHNIC PENALITY FOR IDENTITY:
– Perceptions arise from student cliques/staff behaviours
– identity minimally influenced by perceptions about ethnicity/inequality for traditional students
– strongly indicated for non-traditional students & mixed student groups
Actions:

Higher Education institutions

- Identify systemic challenges
- Ensure policies/practices reflect EDI and social justice orientation
- Learn from student satisfaction measures
- Review academic learning environments for effectiveness
- Engage with UK/international research & scholarship
Student Experience

**Actions:**

- Diverse curricula: inclusive, sensitive, novel, international
- Diverse staff: role models, increased BME representation
- Coping with perceptions of stereotype threat
- Targeted interventions (e.g., mentoring, monitoring sense of belonging)
- Access to the 2 HHs
Acknowledgements:

Professor Graham Megson
Provost (our Sponsor)

Focus:
Research and Knowledge Exchange at the University of Westminster
Creating conditions for compassion

1. Being open-minded and self aware
2. Understand the science of mindful compassion
3. Exposing and illuminating the dark side of university life
4. Insights and concepts from psychodynamic psychology
5. Working together to shift cultural patterns and behaviours at all levels

Collaborations with...
THANK YOU
Women in Hats:

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