"They keep putting me on the race things":
Raceification of Black Brit-ish academics within the EDI industrial complex

"Estão sempre a pôr-me nas coisas da raça":
A racificação de académicos/as negros/as brit-ânicos no complexo industrial EDI

"Ils me mêlent toujours à des affaires de race":
La racification des universitaires brit-anniques noirs dans le complexe industriel de l'EDI

Fezile Joy Sibanda*

School of Education and Social Work, Department of Education, University of Sussex,
Brighton and Hove, East Sussex, United Kingdom.

Abstract

This paper draws on the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) industrial complex, as well as anti-racist and decolonial discourses taking place in Higher Education (HE) in England. It introduces raceification as a process in which Black academics are produced and reproduced as perpetual race experts within HE. This framing occurs through a colonial gaze and hegemonic whiteness, shaping how Black academics and their knowledges are seen. Coloniality in academia is explored through the lived experience of Black Brit-ish academics working in HE in England. Central to this discussion is 'Brit-ish' identities, a hyphenated term, reflecting the complex, tenuous belonging of Black people living within the metropole and working in colonial institutions like universities. I drew on an Ubuntu-inspired methodology and used storytelling to document and analyse the experiences of 19 Black Brit-ish academics. Also drawing on my own experiences as a Black (Zimbabwean Brit-ish) academic using an autoethnographic reflective research journal, making me the 20th contributor within the study. The storytelling sessions took place during November 2022 and April 2023 (mainly online) with Black academics located in England as part of doctoral research at the University of Sussex. This paper will illuminate the key findings from the research; raceification as a colonial reproduction and raceification as a duty and burden affecting Black Brit-ish academics working in the liberal colonial university in England.

Keywords: raceification, EDI, coloniality, higher education, Black academics

Resumo

Este artigo centra-se no complexo industrial da Igualdade, Diversidade e Inclusão (EDI), bem como nos discursos antirracistas e decoloniais que têm lugar no Ensino Superior (ES) em Inglaterra. Introduz a racificação como um processo em que os/as académicos/as negros/as são, em permanência, produzidos/as e reproduzidos/as como peritos/as raciais no ensino superior. Este enquadramento ocorre através de um olhar colonial e de branquitude hegemónica, moldando a forma como os/as académicos/as negros/as e os seus conhecimentos são vistos. A colonialidade no meio académico é explorada através da experiência vivida por académicos/as negros/as brit-ânicos/as que trabalham no ensino superior

---

* *Correspondence: F.sibanda@sussex.ac.uk*

em Inglaterra. No centro desta discussão estão as identidades "brit-ânicas", um termo hifenizado que reflete a pertença complexa e ténue das pessoas negras que vivem na metrópole e trabalham em instituições coloniais como as universidades. Baseei-me numa metodologia inspirada no Ubuntu e utilizei a narração de histórias para documentar e analisar as experiências de 19 académicos/as negros/as brit-ânicos. Também me baseei nas minhas próprias experiências como académica negra (zimbabuana brit-ânica), utilizando um diário de investigação reflexiva autoetnográfica, o que me tornou na 20.ª colaboradora do estudo. As sessões de narração de histórias tiveram lugar durante novembro de 2022 e abril de 2023 (principalmente *online*) com académicos/as negros/as localizados/as em Inglaterra como parte da investigação de doutoramento na Universidade de Sussex. Este artigo refletirá as principais conclusões da pesquisa: a racificação como reprodução colonial e a racificação como um dever e fardo que afeta os/as académicos/as negros/as brit-ânicos/as que trabalham na universidade colonial liberal em Inglaterra.

Palavras-chave: racialização, EDI, colonialidade, ensino superior, académicos/as Negros/as

Résumé

Cet article se concentre sur le complexe industriel de l'égalité, de la diversité et de l'inclusion (EDI), ainsi que sur les discours antiracistes et décoloniaux qui ont cours dans l'enseignement supérieur en Angleterre. Il présente la racialisation comme un processus dans lequel les universitaires noirs sont produits et reproduits en permanence en tant qu'experts raciaux dans l'enseignement supérieur. Ce cadrage se fait à travers un regard colonial et une blancheur hégémonique, façonnant la manière dont les universitaires noirs et leurs connaissances sont perçus. La colonialité dans le monde universitaire est explorée à travers l'expérience vécue par des universitaires britanniques noirs travaillant dans l'enseignement supérieur en Angleterre. Au centre de cette discussion se trouvent les identités « britanniques », un terme à trait d'union qui reflète l'appartenance complexe et ténue des Noirs vivant dans la métropole et travaillant dans des institutions coloniales telles que les universités. Je me suis appuyée sur une méthodologie inspirée de l'Ubuntu et j'ai utilisé la narration pour documenter et analyser les expériences de 19 universitaires britanniques noirs. Je me suis également appuyée sur mes propres expériences en tant qu'universitaire noire (britannique zimbabwéenne), en utilisant un journal de recherche auto-ethnographique réfléchi, ce qui a fait de moi la 20e personne à contribuer à l'étude. Les séances de narration ont eu lieu entre novembre 2022 et avril 2023 (principalement en ligne) avec des universitaires noirs situés en Angleterre dans le cadre d'une recherche doctorale à l'Université du Sussex. Cet article reflètera les principaux résultats de la recherche : la racialisation en tant que reproduction coloniale et la racialisation en tant que devoir et fardeau affectant les universitaires britanniques noirs travaillant dans l'université coloniale libérale en Angleterre.

Mots-clés: raceification, EDI, colonialité, enseignement supérieur, universitaires noirs

Introduction

The analytical framework of this paper pivots on the key concepts of coloniality and the colonial gaze of hegemonic whiteness.[1] These notions serve as both a lens and logic through which to understand the lived experiences of Black academics working in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in England. Currently, within HE in England, there are persisting inequalities affecting Black academics. These include issues of underrepresentation (Higher Education Statistics Agency [HESA], 2024), Institutional racism and microaggressions (Arday & Mirza, 2018), and (gendered) career progression disparities (Gabriel & Tate, 2017; Rollock, 2019). This paper explores current literature on Black Brit-ish academics, identifying a gap in which my research is situated. It draws on anti-colonial scholarship to examine Black Brit-ish experiences within academia in the metropole. Black Brit-ish identity is imperative to consider here (Hirsch, 2018),

---

[1] This research seeks to amplify and centre Black lived experiences. As such, the terms white, whiteness and white privilege have purposefully not been capitalised to disrupt the pervasiveness and dominance of whiteness. The terms Black and Blackness will remain capitalised.

informed by the work of Gilroy (1993), who unpacks the concept of the Black Atlantic. The concept examines how Black diasporic groups' identities are informed by their movement across the Atlantic through colonialism, transatlantic trafficking and migration. Affecting how they are racialised and their understanding of Blackness. The context of the liberal colonial university is also framed in relation to the research. The sections that follow explore raceification (Sibanda, 2020), the EDI industrial complex (Newkirk, 2019) and the anti-racist scholar-activist (Joseph-Salisbury & Connelly, 2021). Chen (2020) and Newkirk (2019) use the term EDI industrial complex to elucidate how equality, diversity and inclusion have been marketised for profitable gains. The EDI industrial complex prioritises capital for institutions rather than being driven by a social justice ethic that challenges structural oppression. Based on these ideas, the research questions are: How do Black Brit-ish academics navigate the liberal colonial university and it's racialised expectations? How does the institutional demand for 'Race work' exploit and/or marginalise Black Brit-ish academics, if at all? The methodology of the research is then explained, touching on what it means to do Ubuntu-inspired research using storytelling and autoethnography. A discussion of key findings from the research follows, analysing raceification as both a reproduction of colonial logics, as well as a duty and burden for Black Brit-ish academics. The paper concludes with reflections on the central finding of raceification.

Literature review

The liberal colonial university

Contemporary scholars focused on race and higher education elucidate the centrality of whiteness, (neo)liberal and colonial dynamics operating within this space (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Bhopal, 2014, 2024). Within the wider educational context, race is a tentative topic in schools, with increased surveillance of Critical Race Theory being taught and terms such as white privilege (Bhopal, 2024). International research on Black academics within South Africa highlights the centrality of coloniality within its context (Belluigi & Thondhlana, 2022; Heleta, 2016). This inspired this research as coloniality is relational; it is important to also consider how coloniality affects Black academics within the metropole.

This research examines the liberal colonial university and how it works to produce Black subjects in deficit positions based on colonial hierarchies and classifications of humanness that place Black people as subordinate (Yancy, 2008). The period of modernity, defined as the period of transatlantic trafficking, Western Enlightenment, colonial imperialism and industrial revolution (Bhambra et al., 2018), was transformative for the Western university as differing forms of knowledges started to be placed within an epistemic hierarchy (Grosfoguel, 2015). Notions of the 'Other' were constructed around the normality of the white, wealthy, able 'bodied' and 'minded', heterosexual, European, Christian man (Yancy, 2008), with this becoming the measure of humanness overtime within the Eurocentric episteme (McKittrick, 2015). A central aspect of the shift during the period of Enlightenment was from subjects no longer being governed by God but being governed by 'Man' (Wynter, 2003). This shift led to knowledge production spaces such

as universities holding the knowledge of Men as central and legitimate, all others outside of it being deemed as epistemically inferior (Grosfoguel, 2015).

Grosfoguel (2011) offers a definition of coloniality as "colonial situations", by which he means:

> The cultural, political, sexual and economic oppression/exploitation of subordinate racialized/ethnic groups by dominant racial/ethnic groups with or without the existence of colonial administrations. (p. 15)

Through this definition, one can see the relevance of patterns of oppression that maintain the subordination of one group and the supremacy of another. A central aspect of how coloniality operates is the notion of the colonial gaze, which Yancy (2008) has explored through how the 'Other' is produced by consistently seeing the Black subject as inferior. Sylvia Wynter (2003) explores subordination through the genres of being human. These genres consist of social categorisations such as gender, class, race, (dis)ability and so on, which Wynter's argues forms understandings of who is seen as human and within that whose existence holds value (McKittrick, 2015; Wynter, 2003). Those racialised as Black fell at the bottom of the hierarchy of humanness. Black intellectuals such as Fanon's (1961/2004, 1952/2008), Rodney's (2018) and Wynter's scholarship interrogate these processes and reproductions of Black subordination and dehumanisation. This universality of humanness based on Eurocentric constructions of the human as 'Man' further demonstrates the importance of exploring sociogenesis as an entanglement, deconstructing how the genres of being human are central to the production of the liberal modern human 'Man' (McKittrick, 2015; Wynter, 2003). Also analysing race, gender, class and (dis)ability as interlocking systems of oppression which are socially constructed categories (The Combahee River Collective, 1977).

It is important to understand coloniality as relational and how these inequalities manifest for Black people within the colonial epicentre (Rodney, 2018). If universities are colonial spaces, then we must explore how race sustains colonial racial hierarchies that shape hegemonic notions of humanness and knowledge informed by modernity/coloniality. This illuminates the importance of looking at Black Brit-ish academics whose complex identities add nuance to discussions of coloniality in academia. Gilroy's (1993) work on the Black Atlantic tackles diasporic formations of identity. Transnationalism views identity beyond nationality but in relation to historical links between continents. Gilroy also draws on Du Bois' (1903) concept of double consciousness, examining how those in the Black Atlantic navigate the world through their own and the dominant groups' perspectives. These ideas provide a lens for examining Black Brit-ish lived experiences within the metropole. Black as an identity marker is associated with coloniality and linked to liberal modernity. When discussing the relation of liberalism to racism, Maldonado-Torres (2016) states that:

> Liberalism is rather a political ideology that facilitates a transition from vulgar legal forms of discrimination to in many cases less vulgar but equally or more discriminatory practices and structures. Liberal institutions in a modern/colonial world aim to advance modernity without realizing that doing so also entails the continuation of coloniality. Universities become centers of command and control, which make them easy to militarize when opposition rises. (p. 5)

Notions of liberalism, such as human rights and democracy, were also part of the modernity project and 'civilising mission' from the *Global North* to the *Global South*. Which continues to influence global systems

today by building on liberal modernity and its interconnectedness with coloniality (Maldonado-Torres, 2016). This critique illuminates the role of liberalism as both a political ideology and a mechanism that sustains coloniality through modernity, especially in institutional settings. Universities embody this dynamic. They co-opt this liberal language of inclusion and progress while failing to acknowledge their embeddedness within the structures of modernity/coloniality. This reproduces dominance for a few and oppression for all who fall outside constructions of humanness.

Based on the historical context of universities, current discourses within HEIs in England (and internationally) acknowledge a need to decolonise the curriculum (Arday & Mirza, 2018; R. Hall et al., 2023; Jivraj, 2020). However, there is limited discussion of the pervasive nature of coloniality and how it operates beyond an overwhelming Eurocentric white male curriculum and academic workforce (Bell, 2018, 2022). This research unmasks coloniality through the lived experiences of Black academics, deconstructing the production of race and colonial racial hierarchies within colonial contexts such as HEIs.

Black academics

Black academics, defined as those from Black African and Caribbean backgrounds, make up around 3% of academic staff in HEIs working in England (HESA, 2024). Within this research, Black Mixed heritage people were also included within the contributor group. However, data from the HESA does not clearly indicate how many Black Mixed heritage academics are currently working in HEIs in England. Black/Mixed here is defined as those who self-identify as being Mixed and having Black heritage/parentage. There is still an underrepresentation of Black academics, including Black Mixed heritage academics compared to their white and Asian counterparts.

Research on Black academics in England, the UK and internationally, has identified persisting inequalities, including issues of; lack of career progression (Sian, 2017), institutional racism and microaggressions (Richards, 2013; Rollock, 2012), salary and contract disparities (University and College Union, 2019), cultural and identity taxation (Hirshfield & Joseph, 2012; Joseph & Hirshfield, 2011), and a lack of a sense of belonging within white-dominated academic spaces (Puwar, 2004). There is also work exploring the mind-body effects of experiencing racism within and outside of academic spaces, with scholars such as Arday (2018), Joseph and Hirshfield (2011) and Quaye et al. (2020) exploring this in terms of mental health, burn-out, and racial battle fatigue. Alleyne (2022) similarly explores racial trauma as the burden of heritage on Black lives and how this can manifest in one's health and well-being.

Currently, there is a lack of research that explores Black academics' experiences within HEIs in England. There is, however, more work that looks at academics of colour in the UK more generally drawing from Critical Race Theory perspectives (Bhopal, 2014, 2015, 2020). There is limited exploration into the nuances affecting different racialised peoples, such as Black groups (Adebisi, 2019a). There is also a significant lack of acknowledgement of coloniality and the colonial histories of university spaces, which might affect the lived experiences of those racialised outside of the dominant group in academia (Bell, 2018), all of which this research aimed to contribute to.

Raceification

I have coined the term *raceification* to describe the process of Black academics being produced as "perpetual race experts" (Sibanda, 2020, n.p.). It is important to highlight the distinction between understandings of raceification and racialisation here too. An example of this distinction is that racialisation would be the way in which Black academics are seen as *Black* academics, marking them as Other within hegemonic whiteness. Raceification, however, focuses on how Black academics, while seen as such, experience racialised expectations (such as working in EDI) that reproduce race and coloniality, as these expectations exist within a colonial gaze. In *Black Skin, White Mask*, Fanon (1952/2008) explores racialisation as a process whereby racial identities are constructed, imposed and internalised within a social, political and cultural context. The term raceification aims to add to Fanon's understanding of racialisation and epidermalisation by analysing this at the micro level and illuminates what is being constructed, imposed and internalised. Raceification seeks to draw more attention to the subjectivity within the process of racialisation. It affords a nuance that is not there in the understanding of racialisation. Raceification attempts to bring the theory of racialisation into context (a colonial context such as HE). When I first defined raceification, I described it as "fixed and forced" (Sibanda, 2020), however, this research has added to its theoretical conceptualising, redefining it as a more discursive process. Stuart Hall (1997) reminds us that race operates as a signifier, a language, and raceification works to explore the meaning-making of that language, tackling the question of what it currently means to be a Black Brit-ish academic working in HEIs in England within the present time and context. As race and its meaning are socially constructed, the meaning of raceification may change from understanding Black subjects as 'perpetual race experts' but exploring this production is what raceification offers to theories of race and racialisation.

> An unprecedented amount of labour has been placed on the shoulders of Black and minority ethnic academic staff since the murder of George Floyd. Universities were quick to respond to the global outcry after his murder with performative measures and interventions. Some utilised the moment as an opportunity to glean positive press – at the expense of those who continue to be oppressed – and ignored the impact it may have on the physical and emotional well-being of people of colour. It's important for White colleagues to also shoulder the burden of this work and not always leave it to staff of colour. (Arday, 2022, para. 3)

There is a laborious nature of doing 'Race work' for Black people which Joseph and Hirshfield (2011) discuss through cultural taxation, and raceification aims to explore how this becomes part of one's identity, which is not easily separated within the colonial gaze (Yancy, 2008). Bhopal (2024) has also explored the burdensome nature of doing 'Race work' within institutions. The above reflection supports the conceptualisation of raceification which consistently places the duty and burden of 'Race work' onto the already underrepresented and underpaid Black academics. Arday (2022) also touched on the nuances of the impact of 2020 Black Lives Matter (BLM) on institutions and the performative anti-racist initiatives that followed. Black academics' anti-racist and social justice work has become co-opted within institutions performative EDI work, and they have been cast in the essentialising, caricatured role of perpetual race expert within the EDI industrial complex.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Industrial Complex

Following the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor by the police in the US, 2020 marked the resurgence of the racial justice movement of Black Lives Matter (BLM) globally. There was a need to show solidarity (performatively or otherwise) to racial injustices' and this manifested in the proliferation of EDI initiatives that take on a more liberal reformist and one-size-fits-all attitude towards challenging oppressive power structures within institutions (Adebisi, 2019b). The EDI industrial complex is a term that explores how equality, diversity and inclusion are co-opted and marketised for profitable gains for institutions rather than being driven by a social justice ethic that challenges structural oppression (Chen, 2020).

The EDI industrial complex illuminates how those selling and buying equality may not be driven by anti-racist or anti-oppressive praxis, as they are commodifying social justice. Universities also continue to benefit reputationally and financially from sanitised engagement with EDI initiatives that do not aim to challenge structural oppression but serve to window dress and performatively engage with initiatives to tokenistically tick boxes (R. Hall et al., 2023). Ahmed's (2006) understanding of the nonperformative nature of EDI work highlights the ways institutions do not take seriously anti-racist/ anti-oppressive social justice, but often devise documents naming their commitments followed by in-action. There are a growing number of critical voices unpacking the current EDI discourse within HEIs (Adebisi, 2019b; Arday, 2022; Bell, 2022; R. Hall et al., 2023; Jivraj, 2020; Mayorga et al., 2022; Osho, 2023). Suggesting that universities' current engagement with EDI work falsely co-opts anti-racism, BLM and decolonial movements (Bell, 2022). Bhopal (2024) and Mayorga et al. (2022) also make a distinction between models of EDI which are rooted in white supremacy as they do not dismantle or even problematise the embeddedness of white supremacy within academia.

Anti-racist scholar-activists

Scholar-activism has been defined as "The dual role occupied by academics who combine scholarship and activism in the pursuit of social justice" (Joseph-Salisbury & Connelly, 2021, p. 11), they suggest that scholar-activism is not something that you are, but rather something that you do. Part of the politicised nature of scholar-activism can be tied to one's identity and might impact decisions one makes academically as to what journals they publish in, what events they attend, the type of research they engage with and even their pedagogical practises. One engaging in scholar-activism might be critical of current (neo)liberal notions of anti-racism in Western HE and the EDI industrial complex.

If Black academics are being produced as perpetual race experts through raceification, they might do work that could be described as scholar-activism, working to challenge the oppressive systems that lead to inequalities. However, if this work is being done exclusively within academic spaces and does not leave the walls of the institutions, there could be a reproduction of the very inequalities and colonial power systems that are being attempted to be challenged (Bell, 2018; Mayorga et al., 2022). This is why I draw a distinction between 'Race work' and (anti-racist) scholar activism here. The 'Race work' that Black academics are

expected to do within institutions typically involves EDI efforts to address issues faced by marginalised groups. Often leading to financial and reputational gains for the institutions (Bhopal, 2024). (Anti-racist) Scholar activism, however, focuses on challenging, naming and dismantling oppressive structures (Joseph-Salisbury & Connelly, 2021). Connected to scholar-activism is the long-standing Black radical intellectual tradition which may contribute to the duty Black academics might feel to engage with anti-racism and other aspects of this intellectual tradition (Andrews, 2018). The call to become part of this intellectual ancestry is worth noting when considering the complexity of the duty and burden of raceification in relation to anti-racist scholar-activism and also to 'Race work'.

The present section has explored classic and contemporary literature in relation to the liberal colonial university, Black academics, raceification, the EDI industrial complex and anti-racist scholar-activism. The following section outlines the methodology of the empirical research, justifying the importance and relevance of an Ubuntu-inspired methodology in research that uses storytelling to explore Black lived experiences.

Methodology

This study used storytelling involving 19 Black academics working in HEIs in England. The storytelling sessions were designed in two parts; The first session was focused on an introduction and storytelling through objects. Contributors were asked to bring an object that symbolised their experiences as a Black Brit-ish academic as a storytelling prompt. The second storytelling session was a reflection of their academic journey and ended with a reflective free writing activity. The criteria for contributors were self-identification as a Black Brit-ish academic with experience in HE in England (teaching or research). Contributors were recruited using an opt-in approach via direct emails, mailing lists and snowballing (Sibanda & Dunne, 2024). Due to underrepresentation and traceability issues, pseudonyms are used, and details regarding disciplines and institution type have been changed or removed to ensure anonymity.

I aimed to decentre Western methodological, epistemological and ontological perspectives within the research (Chilisa, 2019), therefore I opted to draw on my own cultural perspectives of Ubuntu as a Zimbabwean (Ndebele) researcher looking at Black lived experiences. Ubuntu is encapsulated in the saying *I am because we are, and since we are, therefore, I am* (Samkange, 1980). Understanding Ubuntu as relationality became the guiding principle of the research design and informed all methodological and ethical decisions within the research. Tenets of compassion, care and solidarity were central to how I carried out the study (Mucina, 2011; Samkange, 1980). I also used a reflective researcher journal through autoethnography (Hannigan, 2014) to bring my story into interconnectedness with the other 19 Black academics which further illuminated the community ethics of Ubuntu. My research journal became an ongoing conversation and collective narrative between myself and other contributors of the research, and a tool for reflexivity (Sibanda & Dunne, 2024). Drawing on Ubuntu as a methodology allowed me to challenge Eurocentric hegemony within the research design and the method of storytelling is consistent with the importance of orality within Black knowledge(s) production based on lived experiences (Mucina, 2011).

Ubuntu was also used as a rehumanising tool as part of the methodology and attempts to unpack Wynter's question *What does it mean to be human?* (McKittrick, 2015). Sharing laughter, tears and oral affirmations became Ubuntu moments of strong relationality (Sibanda & Dunne, 2024). The importance of drawing on an Ubuntu-inspired methodology when looking at Black lived experience is due to constructions of relationality that are linked to rehumanising within understandings of Ubuntu.

The stories shared have been analysed by drawing on Riessman's (1993) narrative analysis, exploring themes, structure, content and context. Nvivo was used to develop themes from narrative blocks, drawing on Ubuntu as relationality to examine interconnected and conflicting stories. As part of the analysis, I developed a storyboard from key narratives, creating a collective story of Black Brit-ish academics based on 20 versions of our experiences of working in HE (Sibanda & Dunne, 2024). The following section discusses the findings, based on one key aspect of the collective story: raceification.

Discussion of Findings

A central finding from my thesis is that the persisting inequalities experienced by Black academics working in HEIs in England are connected to modernity/coloniality, which manifests as raceification. This finding supports Grosfoguel's (2011) definition of coloniality, reproducing the colonial situations that continue to marginalise and dehumanise those racialised as Black and Other. This discussion of findings outlines the stories from the 19 contributors of this research, also interwoven with my own reflections. Raceification will be discussed in many iterations highlighting the Ubuntu-ness of storytelling (Sibanda & Dunne, 2024), demonstrating the co-construction of new understandings of what it means to be Black within the colonial space of contemporary HEIs in England.

Raceification as a colonial reproduction

> People keep trying to put me on the race things and it's like, actually, no. I need to put it into my work and into my students. I can send you a briefing paper from my research on anti-racism in the funding system, no problem. But I realised, that's the currency that upholds the status quo. (Angiet X Baldwin [They/them], Associate Professor)

While storytelling with Angiet X Baldwin, they highlighted the duty/responsibility they feel to do anti-racism work on their terms. But they also alluded to the power structures that operate around this 'Race work'. There is a desire to engage with anti-racism work with their students and areas they feel are worthwhile, and also external pressure from the colonial institution wanting them to do this work. Angiet X Baldwin's experience resonates with Chen's (2020) provocation of how the EDI industrial complex capitalises on the work of minoritised individuals. The status quo that they are referring to could be the colonial situations that continue to disadvantage those racialised as Black (Grosfoguel, 2011). Here they draw their own distinctions between what they believe to be 'Race work' and anti-racist scholar-activism. Angiet X Baldwin's story consistently referenced times within their academic journey when they were

expected to do 'Race work' such as being on EDI committees or hosting EDI-focused events. Interestingly, they also spoke of the works of Patricia Hill Collins, Stuart Hall, Fred Moten, bell hooks and many other Black thinkers whose intellectual and political work inspires them in many ways, and all who think around issues of race too. The push-pull dynamic within the complexity of duty and burden in what I coin *raceification* is demonstrated within their narrative and this short extract provides a snippet of an internal dialogue Black thinkers contend when doing this work.

Raceification works to reproduce race in ways that sustain coloniality and hegemonic whiteness through the imaginary of a Black subject as homogenous; oppressed, but an expert on their oppression. The manner in which power is exerted within understandings of raceification centres on hegemonic whiteness, meaning Black subjects then fall into a cycle of being oppressed and having to justify, study, intellectualise and ultimately reproduce their oppression through the colonial and social construction of race. I want to reject sentiments that trivialise the study, engagement and expertise of race scholarship. I do, however, want to draw to light how my own fascination and commitment to researching Black racialised lived experiences is often digested through a colonial gaze that centres on hegemonic whiteness and impacts how my work is perceived, engaged with and taken seriously. I am, after all, another Black woman *doing the race stuff* within academia.

Other contributors reflected on times when they have been called upon as a Black academic to speak on particular panels, at events and meetings. This is what I conceptualise as raceification through the colonial gaze, which further feeds into the EDI industrial complex producing Black academics as profitable (to colonial institutions) oppression-based EDI workers (Osho, 2023), caricaturing Blackness within this process.

> I'm really conscious that people in the institution pigeonhole Black academics and imply that the only things that we should or can write about are things related to our identities or related to EDI work. (Blu [She/her], Senior Lecturer)

Blu is highlighting the racialised epistemic hierarchy present within academic spaces (Bell, 2022; Grosfoguel, 2015), drawing more context on how this affects Black academics and how our knowledges are viewed within hegemonic whiteness. To be a Black academic in HE in England is to write certain books and know certain things that fit within the imaginary of the Black scholar. Raceification works not only as a political/cultural colonial reproduction of the Black subject but and epistemic one too, based on what being Black signifies within the colonial space of academia (S. Hall, 1997). This also shapes our scholarship and pedagogy as Black academics, and what is legitimate for us to know. As a PhD Researcher, I often 'speak out' on issues I consider important. My anti-racist and anti-colonial positionality is central to my teaching and research and I have been invited to meetings solely to bring (arguably more palatable parts of) that perspective. At times during these meetings, I sense eyes rolling when I attempt to de-centre hegemonic whiteness and Eurocentrism (Ahmed, 2021), reflecting Du Bois' (1903) notion of double consciousness. I still, however, feel a duty (and burden) to engage. As raceification operates at an institutional level, all those within the institution work to reproduce it, including staff and students within these spaces.

I was invited to speak at an EDI conference. I accepted because I was still doing my PhD and wanted it on my CV. I wasn't really writing in race and education at that time, so retrospectively, it was a bit strange to be invited. I really started to reflect on why I was invited. I think I was the only person of colour in the room. So, I realised that undoubtedly was why I was invited. They kind of panicked last minute, thought we can't have this day on EDI and have all white panels. I'm very certain in my reading of this situation, so it was a really desperate scramble to find a person of colour. (Toto [He/him], Reader)

In Toto's story, he is being reproduced as the race expert and brings a level of tokenistic legitimacy to the conference. While Black lived experiences are an essential part of anti-racism, the co-option of this by institutions attempting to discuss EDI performatively does not work to affectively engage with the richness of lived experiences, but caricatures it. Reflecting on the different ways in which contributors discussed what I understand to be raceification, there is a reproduction of the Black subject within each of their examples. The Black scholar is the race expert and needs to perform and maintain this imaginary to appease the colonial institution. Angiet X Baldwin calls this out through the acknowledgement of certain types of 'Race work' 'upholding the status quo'. This 'Race work' fits within the colonial gaze and maintains the oppressive colonial hierarchies that position Black subjects as subordinate (Yancy, 2008), and here attempting to fight the oppression they are facing. Toto's narrative illuminated the somewhat inevitability of raceification for Black scholars, he mentioned throughout his story that he was not yet focused on race at that stage of his academic journey, but he is now. This might suggest that Black scholars can be drawn into 'Race work' (from internal/personal and external forces). For Black people within colonial institutions, our knowledge is deemed legitimate when it draws on our oppression or Blackness as this reproduces the colonial hierarchy of race, knowledge(s) and labour.

An analysis of raceification as a discursive practice works to unmask the ways in which coloniality operates within institutions, caricaturing Blackness and producing the Black academic as strong, resilient, surviving, oppressed, radical and as the 'Race worker'. Language works to reinforce these colonial dynamics that position Black people as oppressed and continually having to fight, which reflects aspects of our experiences but does not afford us much nuance or complexity. The following section will explore raceification through its complexity as a duty and burden through stories shared.

Raceification as a duty and burden

The Burdensome nature of being a Black academic is something contributors shared in a range of ways. Hirshfield and Joseph (2012) highlight the burden of underrepresentation in the academy. When one of the few Black academics in a department (HESA, 2024), there is greater pressure for pastoral care to support students and staff on issues concerning race and marginalisation (Arday, 2022; Osho, 2023). The interlocking systems of gender and race reveals the nuanced burden of raceification, with Black women being expected to do far more pastoral nurturing work, in addition to teaching and research, to support Black and other underrepresented student groups (Gabriel & Tate, 2017; Rollock, 2019).

It's almost like you're seen as this Auntie, and 100% I can relate to that, I'm thinking of it from a cultural perspective, but that transitions into the workplace. Especially with students of colour that will gravitate towards me. And also a lot of female students from any ethnicity, because of the intersection, and it's exhausting. I will listen, I'm not going to slam the door in your face. It's not been too long that I was in their position. I would have loved to have had a Black scholar, just be like "Oh, my God, you get it! You look like me. The things that I'm interested in, you're not gonna just dismiss it". I understand why they feel like they need to make connections with me. Students cannot understand how much pressure that puts on you, even the microaggressions that come on under that. Because your workload becomes more. Unfortunately, it lies on me to put things in place to kind of either prevent, if not limit [their negative experiences]. (Unique [She/her], Assistant Professor)

There is an expectation of Unique (institutionally and from students) to always be willing to be nurturing (Gabriel & Tate, 2017; Rollock, 2019), which is historically gendered, racialised and classed for Black women. Unique has an awareness that her students, particularly students of colour and women, see her as someone who is approachable within the white, male middle-class academy, she understands this and has a level of empathy as she was also in this position seeking similar support (Hirshfield & Joseph, 2012). She is also aware of some of the complex dynamics and microaggressions that can occur as a Black woman doing this type of nurturing and pastoral work, on top of teaching and research paid responsibilities. Mainly the impact of this on her workload, further suggesting how nurturing (work) is assumed as unpaid labour for Black women (Gabriel & Tate, 2017; Rollock, 2019). Black women are produced in somewhat domestic relations within a public institution that claims to be equal, but profits from this production as Black women are rarely acknowledged or compensated for the additional pastoral support they give. Making clear the burdensome nature of raceification within institutions.

From November through to September, no one knows that you exist until Black History Month comes up and you will get an email. Can you do X or Y? There is this bit of identity taxation. [speaking as the institution] Because you are Black, I'll use you. (Albert [He/him], Head of Department)

Albert is aware of his own subject position of being produced as the race expert during Black History Month (BHM) and the identity or cultural taxation that is placed upon him (Joseph & Hirshfield, 2011), which I explore through raceification within this research. Many of the Black academics in my research highlighted BHM as a busy time within their academic calendar. October BHM (UK) becomes a month where Black narratives are somewhat listened to or given platforms within institutions. There was an understanding that, for the most part, this is the only time Black staff and students can centre Blackness within their events and works and it is more openly received. Within universities BHM is framed as an exciting and progressive time, but if Black academics are only able to centre their Blackness and have people engaging with them only during one month of the year, then this becomes performative, tokenistic and reproduces the problem of race in ways that continues to other Black knowledges. There is also an exploitative dynamic of such 'Race work' which does not acknowledge the emotional labour or effects of doing such work, which has psychological and physical effects on Black people (Alleyne, 2022; Arday, 2018, 2022; Quaye et al., 2020). The *'I will use you'* in Albert's statement is reflective of colonial situations that continue to extract from and exploit Black workers in dehumanising ways for the benefit and advancement of hegemonic whiteness and coloniality.

Outside of BHM when Black academics speak openly about issues of race and marginalisation, we are often made to feel as if we are taking up too much space (Puwar, 2004). Narratives were shared about the eye-rolling, sighing, disinterest and even frustration from colleagues when one speaks about Black lived experience within the institution (Ahmed, 2021). This adds to the burdensome nature of being the only one or one of few and being produced as the perpetual race expert. On one hand, raceification produces perpetual race experts, but the hegemonic whiteness within institutions is uncomfortable with race expertise that falls outside liberalism. Speaking about Blackness in liberatory or counter-hegemonic ways troubles the colonial institution and fosters discomfort.

> People are looking at you as a Black academic feeling that you're taking oxygen out of the room because all we're talking about now is Black people. (Khris [He/him], Professor)

The here-we-go-again attitude we as Black academics are met with when discussing our lived experiences is part of the burden we carry. While this aspect might seem like a less violent aspect of both racialisation and raceification this attitude works to actively delegitimise, undermine and trivialise Black lived experiences. Khris' analogy of oxygen being sucked out of the room highlighted the significance of how Blackness is positioned in relation to hegemonic whiteness within the metropole (Fanon, 1952/2008). For those within the Black Atlantic, breathing has become inextricably linked to racial violence through the last words of George Floyd (and many others) *'I can't breathe'.* Maldonado-Torres (2016) discusses breathlessness as a closeness to death and a permanent condition of modernity/coloniality for those oppressed by this system, further highlighting the potency of Khris' quote. Defined by hegemonic whiteness, which seeks to suffocate all that is constructed Other, this understanding of breathlessness is vital to Black Brit-ish people living in the metropole, within and beyond the academy.

In my researcher journal, I too reflected on my own experiences of breathlessness, through raceification, and the ways it feels suffocating to me. Raceification in operation means being invited to speak, but having to stay on topic, always have an answer, challenge harmful actions, and defend not only myself but my entire race. I am compelled to do the work, some of it feeling as if it runs in my veins as the granddaughter of a political prisoner active in Zimbabwe's anti-colonial struggle. Other aspects of it feel burdensome when asked to justify my humanity and that of all the Black people who have come before and after me. Scholar-activism feels essential to me; however, my capacity to develop boundaries around 'Race work' is difficult and this is the case with so many other Black academics who contributed to this research.

> It was the time of the Black Lives Matter movement, my whole team was white, I was the only Black academic. But I think I got to a point where I thought I can't carry on like this because I'm going to burn myself out. (G-man [He/ him], Head of Department)

G-man's reflection demonstrates the duty and burden of being actively involved in scholar-activism and/or 'Race work'. He had to develop boundaries around the amount of work he was doing, made evermore present by being the only Black academic in his department (Hawkins, 2021; Quaye et al., 2020). The responsibility of engaging with the BLM movement falls on his shoulders. Offering the conceptualisation of raceification is a way of understanding the systems at play that lead to the production of the Black subject

as oppressed but an expert on their oppression. Black people are positioned as responsible for alleviating ourselves from our own plight which does not call into question the reproductive role of institutions in producing these harms.

Conclusion

This research has contributed to a gap within literature concerning the lived experiences of Black Brit-ish academics working in HEIs in England informed by an anti-colonial lens which aimed to elucidate how coloniality affects our experiences within educational spaces within the metropole. This study has specifically addressed the question: *How do Black Brit-ish academics navigate the liberal colonial university and its racialised expectations?* Through an examination of how and why Black academics do 'Race work' and how they differentiate it to what could be called scholar activism. This research has offered the concept of raceification which explores Black subjectivity and how meaning is made about Black racialised experiences within the liberal colonial university, considering the context and role of the institution in this production. Drawing on the logic of coloniality and hegemonic whiteness has allowed an examination of how these productions manifest in ways that maintain oppressive power dynamics which sustain coloniality as colonial situations (Grosfoguel, 2011). Raceification has been analysed as a colonial reproduction focused on how institutions work to use language and other discursive practises to sustain Black subjects as perpetual race experts working within the EDI industrial complex.

The study also addressed the question: *How does the institutional demand for 'Race work' exploit and/or marginalise Black academics, if at all?* The research unpacks the current performative nature of the EDI industrial complex. The co-option and sanitisation of anti-racism and decolonisation for the profitability of the liberal colonial university have been the backdrop through which to understand Black academics (doing 'Race work') positions within academic spaces. Stories have also been explored that expose the nuances of raceification as a duty and burden illuminating the complexity of these dynamics.

Drawing on an Ubuntu-inspired methodology using storytelling and autoethnography valorised the importance of orality in the co-construction of knowledges in research centring on Black lived experiences. To be reproduced as a perpetual race expert has far-reaching effects on Black Brit-ish academics within the liberal colonial university. Including limiting imaginaries placed on Black thinkers and our knowledges, or what is perceived as legitimate for us to know within hegemonic whiteness and coloniality. An exploration of raceification within the field of education is paramount as Black academics scholarship and pedagogical practises are informed by this limited imaginary within a system claiming to be equal, such as the liberal (colonial) university. Raceification has been offered as a way to help understand Black experiences in liberal colonial contexts such as HEIs in England and this analysis might be a provocation for future works that explore the strengths and limitations of considering raceification in these and possibly many other terms.

References

Adebisi, Foluke Ifejola (2019a, July 8). *The only accurate part of 'BAME' is the 'and'….* African Skies.
https://folukeafrica.com/the-only-acceptable-part-of-bame-is-the-and/

Adebisi, Foluke Ifejola (2019b, December 17). *Why I say 'decolonisation is impossible'.* African Skies.
https://folukeafrica.com/why-i-say-decolonisation-is-impossible/

Ahmed, Sara (2006). The nonperformativity of antiracism. *Meridians*, *7*(1), 104–126.
https://doi.org/10.1215/15366936-8565957

Ahmed, Sara (2021). *Complaint!* Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9781478022336

Alleyne, Aileen (2022). *The burden of heritage: Hauntings of generational trauma on Black lives.* Karnac Books.

Andrews, Kehinde (2018). *Back to Black: Retelling Black radicalism for the 21st century.* Bloomsbury.

Arday, Jason (2018). Understanding mental health: What are the issues for Black and ethnic minority students at university? *Social Sciences*, *7*(10), 196. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci7100196

Arday, Jason (2022, February 22). *Fool's gold: Career advice for young, Black academics.* THE Times Higher Education. https://www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/fools-gold-career-advice-young-black-academics

Arday, Jason, & Mirza, Heidi S. (Eds.). (2018). *Dismantling race in higher education: Racism, Whiteness and decolonising the academy.* Springer.

Bell, Deanne (2018). A pedagogical response to decoloniality: Decolonial atmospheres and rising subjectivity. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, *62*(3–4), 250–260.
https://doi.org/10.1002/ajcp.12292

Bell, Deanne (2022). Occupy the classroom radically. *Third World Quarterly*, *43*(8), 2063–2074.
https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2022.2074828

Belluigi, Dina Z., & Thondhlana, Gladman (2022*). "Your skin has to be elastic": The politics of belonging as a selected Black academic at a 'transforming' South African university. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *35*(2), 141–162. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2020.1783469

Bhambra, Gurminder K., Gebrial, Dalia, & Nişancıolu, Kerem (2018). *Decolonising the university.* Pluto Press.

Bhopal, Kalwant (2014). *The experiences of BME academics in higher education: aspirations in the face of inequality.* Leadership Foundation for Higher Education Stimulus Papers.

Bhopal, Kalwant (2015). *The experiences of Black and minority ethnic academics: A comparative study of the unequal academy.* Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315818344

Bhopal, Kalwant (2020). *Success against the odds: The effect of mentoring on the careers of senior Black and minority ethnic academics in the UK.* British Journal of Education Studies, *68*(1),79–95.
https://doi.org/10.1080/00071005.2019.1581127

Bhopal, Kalwant (2024). *Race and education: Reproducing White supremacy in Britain.* Random House.

Chen, Sophia (2020, July 14). *The equity-diversity-inclusion industrial complex gets a makeover: Companies and universities have long relied on seminars to reduce racism, despite lackluster results. Maybe institution leaders can salvage the format.* Wired. https://www.wired.com/story/the-equity-diversity-inclusion-industrial-complex-gets-a-makeover/

Chilisa, Bagele (2019). *Indigenous research methodologies.* SAGE.

Du Bois, William E. B. (1903). *The souls of Black folk: Essays and sketches.* A. C. McClurg.

Fanon, Frantz (2004). *The wretched of the earth.* Grove Press. (Originally published in 1961)

Fanon, Frantz (2008). *Black skin, White masks.* Pluto Press. (Originally published in 1952)

Gabriel, Deborah, & Tate, Shirley A. (2017). *Inside the ivory tower: Narratives of women of colour surviving and thriving in British academia.* Institute of Education Press.

Gilroy, Paul (1993). *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and double consciousness.* Verso.

Grosfoguel, Ramón (2011). *Decolonizing post-colonial studies and paradigms of political-economy: transmodernity, decolonial thinking, and global coloniality. TRANSMODERNITY: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World*, *1*(1). https://doi.org/10.5070/T411000004

Grosfoguel, Ramón (2015). Epistemic racism/sexism, westernized universities and the four genocides/epistemicides of the long sixteenth century. In Marta Araújo & Silvia Rodríguez Maeso (Eds.), *Eurocentrism, racism and knowledge: Debates on history and power in Europe and the Americas* (pp. 23–46). Palgrave Macmillan.

Hall, Richard, Ansley, Lucy, & Connolly, Paris (2023). Decolonising or anti-racism? Exploring the limits of possibility in higher education. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *30*(2), 327–343 https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2023.2201676

Hall, Stuart (1997). Race, the floating signifier: What more is there to say about "race"? In Paul Gilroy, Ruth W. Gilmore, & Stuart Hall (Eds.), *Selected writings on race and difference* (pp. 359–373). Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1hhj1b9.23

Hannigan, Shelley (2014). *Narrative inquiry and auto-ethnography: Interpretive approaches to research.* SAGE.

Hawkins, Darnell F. (2021). A racism burnout: My life as a Black academic. *Race and Justice*, *11*(3), 301–317. https://doi.org/10.1177/2153368720971025

Heleta, Savo (2016). Decolonisation of higher education: Dismantling epistemic violence and Eurocentrism in South Africa. *Transformation in Higher Education*, *1*(1), Article 1. https://doi.org/10.4102/the.v1i1.9

Higher Education Statistics Agency. (2024). *Table 4 - HE academic staff by ethnicity and academic employment function 2014/15 to 2023/24.* https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/staff/table-4

Hirsch, Afua (2018). *Brit (ish): On race, identity and belonging.* Vintage.

Hirshfield, Laura, & Joseph, Tiffany (2012). 'We need a woman, we need a Black woman': Gender, race, and identity taxation in the academy. *Gender and Education*, *24*(2), 213–227. https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2011.606208

Jivraj, Suhraiya (2020). Decolonizing the academy: Between a rock and a hard place. *Interventions*, *22*(4), 552–573. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369801X.2020.1753559

Joseph, Tiffany, & Hirshfield, Laura (2011). 'Why don't you get somebody new to do it?' Race and cultural taxation in the academy. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *34*(1), 121–141. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2010.496489

Joseph-Salisbury, Remi, & Connelly, Laura (2021). *Anti-racist scholar-activism*. Manchester University Press.

Maldonado-Torres, Nelson (2016). *Outline of ten theses on coloniality and decoloniality*. Frantz Fanon Foundation.

Mayorga, Edwin, Cheuk, Tina, Conner, Jerusha, & Quinn, Rand (2022). Afterword: Fugitive praxis and the unsettling of the imperial university. *Peabody Journal of Education*, *97*(5), 631–638. https://doi.org/10.1080/0161956X.2022.2143701

McKittrick, Katherine (2015). *Sylvia Wynter: On being human as praxis*. Duke University Press.

Mucina, Devi D. (2011). Story as research methodology. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, *7*(1), 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1177/117718011100700101

Newkirk, Pamela (2019). *Diversity, Inc.: The failed promise of a billion-dollar business*. PublicAffairs.

Osho, Yaz (2023, May 9). *Backing Black scholars: here's how universities can do better*. THE-Times Higher Education. https://www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/backing-black-scholars-heres-how-universities-can-do-better

Puwar, Nirmal (2004). *Space invaders: Race, gender and bodies out of place*. Berg.

Quaye, Stephen J., Karikari, Shamika N., Carter, Kiaya D., Okello, Wilson K., & Allen, Courtney (2020). 'Why can't I just chill?': The visceral nature of racial battle fatigue. *Journal of College Student Development*, *61*(5), 609–623. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2020.0058

Richards, Nathan (2013, November 6). *Absent from the Academy: The lack of Black academics in the UK limits the wider impact of universities*. LSE Impact Blog. https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2013/11/06/absent-from-the-academy/

Riessman, Catherine K. (1993). *Narrative analysis*. SAGE.

Rodney, Walter (2018). *How Europe underdeveloped Africa*. Verso Books.

Rollock, Nicola (2012). Unspoken rules of engagement: Navigating racial microaggressions in the academic terrain. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *25*(5), 517–532. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2010.543433

Rollock, Nicola (2019). *Staying power: The career experiences and strategies of UK Black female professors*. University of College Union. https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10075/Staying-Power/pdf/UCU_Rollock_February_2019.pdf

Samkange, Stanlake. J. T. (1980). *Hunhuism or ubuntuism: A Zimbabwe indigenous political philosophy*. Graham.

Sian, Katy (2017). Being Black in a White world: Understanding racism in British universities. *Papeles Del CEIC*, *2*, 176–176. https://doi.org/10.1387/pceic.17625

Sibanda, Fezile (2020, October 12). *Taking an Afrocentric perspective of Western imperialism*. Advance HE. https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/news-and-views/Afrocentric-perspective-of-Western-imperialism

Sibanda, Fezile, & Dunne, Máiréad (2024). *Using storytelling in ubuntu-inspired research to explore the experiences of Black Brit-ish academics in England*. SAGE. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781529683684

The Combahee River Collective. (1977). *The Combahee River Collective statement*. Keyword Coalition Readings. https://americanstudies.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/Keyword%20Coalition_Readings.pdf

University and College Union. (2019, October 14). *Black academic staff face double whammy in promotion and pay stakes*. https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/10360/Black-academic-staff-face-double-whammy-in-promotion-and-pay-stakes

Wynter, Sylvia (2003). Unsettling the coloniality of being/power/truth/freedom: Towards the human, after man, its overrepresentation—an argument. *CR: The New Centennial Review*, *3*(3), 257–337. https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/ncr.2004.0015

Yancy, George (2008). Colonial gazing: The production of the body as 'other'. *Western Journal of Black Studies*, *32*(1), 1–15.