Exploring the Wellbeing of Black and Minority Ethnic Academics: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

A thesis submitted to the University of Manchester for the degree of Doctor of Counselling Psychology in the Faculty of Humanities.

2021

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Word Count: 48,893 (excluding tables)

Abstract

Introduction: Experiences of racism, particularly those which occur every day, such as microaggressions, are associated with poorer wellbeing. Research indicates that Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) academics frequently experience racism in the UK and internationally. However, there is a lack of research looking at the wellbeing of BME academics in UK higher education (HE). **Research Question:** How do BME academics experience working in UK HE to influence their wellbeing? **Methods:** The study used a qualitative design and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to understand the wellbeing of BME academics. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with six BME academics at various universities across England in different academic disciplines. Five of the participants were employed at Russell Group universities. Interviews were conducted via Zoom due to COVID-19 restrictions and the national lockdown. **Findings:** Analysis of the interviews led to three inter-related superordinate themes: *"All my life experiences are racialised and gendered"*; *Hyper performance*; *"I can protect myself"*. Participants referred to experiences as students and outside HE when making sense of their wellbeing as academics. Perceptions of wellbeing were shaped by racism intersecting with other forms of discrimination, most notably Islamophobia and sexism. Experiences of discrimination and the culture of competition in HE led participants to describe a pressure to perform professionally and socially. The participants described the hyper performance as negatively influencing wellbeing in the long term. Participants discussed the importance of social relationships and finding their "team" to mitigate the wellbeing challenges of academic life. Additionally, participants strategically changed their engagement with HE and reframed what it meant to be a BME academic. **Discussion:** Working in HE was perceived to influence wellbeing in nuanced ways and was experienced in an intersectional manner. Consequently, future interventions for the wellbeing of BME academics must also be intersectional. It is suggested that fostering an anti-racist culture will improve the wellbeing of BME students and academics.

Keywords: interpretative phenomenological analysis, wellbeing, ethnic minority, higher education, counselling psychology, academics

1. Introduction

1.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter begins by providing background information for the project and situating it within the current socio-political context. I then describe the research problem and state why it is relevant to the profession of counselling psychology. I will also introduce some of the key terms and their working definitions in this study. I follow this by considering my positioning as a researcher on this topic. Finally, I present a brief outline of the thesis structure. This first chapter introduces critical ideas and concepts that will be expanded upon further in later chapters.

1.2 Background and Introduction to the Research Project

This research focuses on the wellbeing of BME academics within higher education (HE). It is not possible to explore this without considering the broader socio-political context. In HE, there has been an increasing shift towards neoliberalism and knowledge capitalism (Olssen & Peters, 2007). Knowledge capitalism refers to the shift from physical resources towards knowledge and skills as the essential components for global economies (Olseen, 2006). Burton-Jones (2003, p. 144) argues that "in the new knowledge-intensive economy, individuals and firms must focus on nurturing and enhancing their biggest asset: their knowledge capital". In modern society, university degrees are increasingly viewed as commodities to be sold and traded (Tilak, 2008). Universities like Oxford and Cambridge, and to a lesser extent, the other members of the Russell Group, are symbols of social status in the United Kingdom (UK) (Boliver, 2015). However, the social status associated with attending elite universities is an international phenomenon (Marginson, 2006). Global

university rankings are published each year (e.g., World University Rankings, 2021) and serve as marketing materials for potential students (customers). Globalisation and the financial benefit of enrolling international students, results in a system where UK universities compete with other universities across the world (Marginson, 2014).

In many ways, a culture of competition now permeates throughout the HE system. Audit tools such as the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) have been introduced to measure the performance of academics and to ensure value for money for students (Neary, 2016). Publish or perish is a long-standing aphorism that reflects the pressure within HE to succeed as an academic (De Rond & Miller, 2005). The pressure to publish within UK academia is partly related to the Research Excellence Framework (REF). The REF is an auditing system used to evaluate research in UK HE (Martin, 2011; Penfield et al., 2014; Watermeyer & Chubb, 2019). The REF website states that its purposes are to provide accountability for public funding of research, provide benchmarking information for HE and the public, and inform the allocation of research funding (REF, 2021). Although questions about the utility of impact have perhaps garnered most of the attention in recent years, research impact is not the only focus of the REF. The REF grades submissions according to three criteria: outputs, impact, and environment (Torrance, 2019). A consequence of the REF is that research funding has become increasingly concentrated in the London universities, Cambridge, and Oxford (Torrance, 2019). The competition necessitated by the REF and its international equivalents is part of what Naidoo (2018) refers to as a fetish of competition within HE.

While academics compete for research funding, students must also compete for university admissions. Student competition occurs first at the undergraduate level, where the top-scoring students can study their preferred subject at their desired university (Marginson, 2006). The

competition continues at the postgraduate level as doctoral candidates apply for finite funding from universities and research councils (Caretta et al., 2018). HE's neoliberal competition naturally leads to the production of "winners and non-winners" (Berg et al., 2016, p.172). However, despite the notion that success is colour blind and is determined by hard work and merit, it is those who already possess power and privilege that benefit the most from the neoliberal model (Hall et al., 2013). For example, privately educated children are much more likely to attend prestigious Russell Group universities than children who attend state schools (Hemsley-Brown, 2015). Other inequalities are observed for different groups, and there is an emerging literature base looking specifically at race/ethnicity and racism within HE (e.g., Arday, 2021).

Research on racism within HE has traditionally focused on the outcomes for Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) students. Examples include, looking at the attainment gap in academic grades between ethnic groups (Richardson, 2015), racial harassment experienced by students (Brown & Jones, 2011), and racial equalities in admission to Russell Group universities (Boliver, 2016). Furthermore, at any university, various staff contribute to the day-to-day functioning of the institute. The different job roles include administrators, estates, and information technology staff which can be described as *professional staff* (Arday, 2021). Due to the differences in working conditions and the types of job stressors they experience, it has been recommended that researchers should study academic staff separately from other professional staff in HE (Wray & Kinman, 2020). For example, comparisons with professional staff in HE indicates that academic staff report better physical health but poorer work-life balance (Johnson et al., 2019). Therefore, this study focuses solely on the wellbeing of BME academic staff.

While acknowledging that all academics experience work-related challenges, research suggests that BME academics face additional challenges due to racism (e.g., Arday, 2018a; Bhopal et al., 2015; Rollock, 2019). It is argued that gender has been privileged over ethnicity when addressing inequality in HE (Bhopal & Henderson, 2019). Racial inequality can be observed in the low levels of representation at the senior levels (senior lecturer, reader, professor) within academia (Bhopal & Jackson, 2013). Alongside this, more direct evidence of racism is found in the accounts provided by BME staff. A recent survey with 571 HE staff found that over half reported experiencing racial harassment in their workplace (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2019). Despite this, the limited studies on the wellbeing of academics have not considered ethnicity as a potential variable (Fetherstone, 2020; Kinman, 1998; Kinman & Wray, 2008; Kinman & Wray, 2014).

Poor mental health among academics has been described as an epidemic (Morrish, 2019). However, a gap in understanding the wellbeing of academic staff persists. As stated by Guthrie et al. (2018, p. 14), "the existing literature offers little insight into what sets the research environment apart from other workplaces, or into how mental health, stress, and wellbeing are defined in this context". The literature indicates BME academics experience racism in their workplace (e.g., Bhopal, 2014). Alongside this, research shows that experiencing racism is associated with poorer wellbeing (de Frietas et al., 2018; Carter et al., 2018; Priest et al., 2013; Williams et al., 2019). Despite this, there is a gap in the literature concerning the wellbeing of BME academics.

While limited studies have looked at the wellbeing of academics in the UK and internationally, these have favoured a positivist approach with quantitative methods such as surveys (e.g., Darabi et al., 2017; Fetherstone et al., 2020; Kinman & Wray, 2014; Wilson &

Strevens, 2018). Research on the wellbeing of academics has also tended to focus on the construct of workplace stress (Guthrie et al., 2018). Additionally, researchers have not explored how wellbeing varies between ethnic groups in academia. Furthermore, while qualitative methods have been used to understand the experiences of BME academics, these have focused on the lack of career progression and the strategies used to develop an academic career (Arday, 2018b; Bhopal et al., 2016; Rollock, 2021).

The present study aims to fill a gap by producing an in-depth exploration of how six BME academics experience their wellbeing in the context of working within HE. It also considers how working in HE shapes wellbeing inside and outside the workplace. In essence, this study is interested in all the aspects of wellbeing that a counselling psychologist might explore with a client during therapy. In Chapter Two, a comprehensive and critical review of the existing literature is provided.

The main research question that guides the research is:

How do BME academics experience working in UK HE to influence their wellbeing?

1.3 A Brief Introduction to the Research Methodology

The research project employs Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to address the research aims and questions. It is a qualitative approach to research that has its roots in health psychology (Shineborne, 2011). An IPA approach allows the researcher and participants to co-create data via interviews and line by line analysis of transcripts. I chose IPA as I believed it would best enable access to the wellbeing narratives of BME academics. In 2020, the UK entered a national lockdown in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The introduction of

social distancing guidelines meant that in-person interviews were no longer possible. Therefore, I collected data via one-hour interviews conducted over video conferencing software. A more detailed discussion of the research methodology, and the changes necessitated by COVID-19, can be found in Chapter Four. I also reflect on how COVID-19 may have influenced the findings in Chapter Five.

1.4 Relevance of This Topic for Counselling Psychology

Counselling psychology is now a well-established field of applied psychology in the UK (Jones Nielsen & Nicholas, 2016). A defining aspect of the profession has been a drive to present a more humanistic understanding of mental health than the dominant medicalised model (Strawbridge, 2016). There have been calls for counselling psychologists to reengage with social justice in the UK and the United States (US) (Cutts, 2013; Hage et al., 2020). Definitions of social justice typically refer to equal opportunities for all individuals to thrive in their personal and professionals lives free from discrimination (Cutts, 2013; Goodman et al., 2004; Speight & Vera, 2004). A social justice perspective acknowledges that an individual's wellbeing is influenced by their economic, social, and political circumstances (Arthur & Collins, 2014). Therefore, while social justice work can occur at the individual level, for example, within-session with a client, there is an increasing acknowledgement that counselling psychologists should engage with societal and systemic issues (Bell & Tribe, 2018; Kennedy & Arthur, 2014; Vera & Speight, 2013).

If counselling psychology is genuinely committed to social justice, then this research project is highly relevant. On this point, the American Psychological Association (2021b) felt it was necessary to prioritise racism over other aspects of discrimination in their recent attempts to align the organisation with social justice. Alongside understanding the implications of racism

on wellbeing, the project offers the opportunity to understand better how an individual's job shapes their perceptions of wellbeing. The present research is also timely as "we have clear and consistent evidence of entrenched discrimination against ethnic minority communities and individuals at a time of public and political hostility not seen since the 1970s" (Byrne et al., 2020, pg. 10).

1.5 Locating and Defining Key Terms

In this section, I provide an overview of some of the key terms discussed in the thesis. Discussion of key terms is necessary as concepts like racism and wellbeing could have different meanings depending on the context in which they are used.

1.5.1 Racism and Racialisation

A thorough analysis of racism goes beyond the scope of this section as it will be discussed further in Chapter Two. However, it is worth noting that the word "racism" can be highly emotive, and it will have different meanings and implications for different individuals. In a widely cited paper, racism is defined as "A societal system in which actors are divided into 'races', with power unevenly distributed (or produced) based on these racial classifications" (Paradies, 2006b, p.145). The definition draws attention to how power is distributed in ways that benefit some groups and disadvantages others. The definition also suggests that race is a social construct rather than a biological reality.

Race as a biological construct is relatively new and emerged during the 15th Century to justify European colonialism (Fernando, 2017). In many ancient societies it was common to observe heterogeneity in physical characteristics, such as skin colour and hair texture, without social notions of the other applied to these characteristics (Smedley & Smedley, 2005).

Historically, some prominent psychologists have played a role in advancing the biological perspective on race via the use and interpretation of cognitive tests (e.g., Eysenck, 1971; Herrnstein & Murray, 1994; Jensen, 1969; Rushton & Jensen, 2005). To this point, the American Psychological Association (2021a) recently published a review documenting the legacy of racism within mainstream psychology. The APA review highlighted the role of psychological research in legitimising racist policies and maintaining the belief that BME individuals were inherently inferior (American Psychological Association, 2021a). However, this study adopts a social construction perspective in line with Omi and Winant's (1994) theory of *racial formation* which suggests historical, political, social, and economic factors shape racial/ethnic categories.

Contemporary public discourse on racism in the UK has been dominated by Brexit and the vote to leave the European Union (Mintchev, 2021). During the COVID-19 pandemic, health inequalities were observed for individuals from ethnic minority groups. A Public Health England (2020) report suggested racism and discrimination contributed to the increased risk of being infected and dying from COVID-19 for BME individuals in the UK. A week before the first participant interview, a video emerged from the US of George Floyd, a black man being murdered by a White police officer. The video quickly went viral, and like many, I was heartbroken by the news. There had been many recorded incidents in the US where police officers had killed unarmed black individuals, so the video did not shock me. What was surprising was the swelling of frustration towards the continued racism throughout society. The murder of George Floyd brought attention back to the Black Lives Matter movement, and protests emerged across the globe.

In the weeks following George Floyd's murder, professional footballers knelt before matches, and HE institutes sent out emails professing their commitment to eliminating racism for students and academics. However, while some members of society believe that racism is an everyday reality, at least performatively, others favour a narrow definition of racism where only the most blatant acts are considered racist (West et al., 2021). For example, the Macpherson report concluded that *institutional racism* was the primary cause of police failures following the murder of Stephen Lawrence (Lea, 2000). In the report, institutional racism was defined as the everyday practices and policies within an institution that disadvantage racialised groups (Fernando, 2017). However, in 2021, the widely criticised Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities (CRED; 2021) report declared that institutional racism no longer existed in Britain. The authors argued that while "impediments and disparities do exist, they are varied, and ironically very few of them are directly to do with racism" (CRED, 2021, pg. 8).

Despite being a social construction, race has meaningful and tangible implications for an individual's wellbeing and other aspects of their lived experience (Suyemoto et al., 2020). Some authors have argued that while race and ethnicity are similar, they should be conceptualised as two separate terms (Omi & Winant, 1994). Race stratifies individuals according to their physical appearance and creates an unequal distribution of power and privilege (Suyemoto et al., 2020). Ethnicity is also a social construction but refers to cultural similarities in a group of individuals with geographical or historical links (Suyemoto et al., 2020). However, while acknowledging that the two terms are conceptually different, it may be helpful for researchers to consider both race and ethnicity rather than focusing on only one (Quintana, 2007; Umaña -Taylor et al., 2014; Valdez & Golash-Boza, 2017b).

Race and ethnicity can explain different aspects of inequality, and considering the implications of both can produce a more nuanced analysis (Valdez & Golash-Boza, 2017a). For example, discrimination based on physical features may be central to a Black British academic's experience of racism. In contrast, a Nigerian born Black academic's experience of racism may be shaped by aspects of ethnicity, such as their accent or wearing traditional Nigerian clothing, in addition to their physical features. Therefore, when discussing racism, I will be referring to a process of social exclusion that encompasses both the culture (ethnicity) and the physical appearance (race) of the participants.

A closely related term to racism is *racialisation*. Racialisation further highlights how racism is more nuanced than simply a bias against another person's skin colour. Islamophobia, and the prejudice against markers of Muslimness, is an example of racialisation that can even occur in relation to White individuals in British society (Moosvai, 2015). On this point, The All-Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims (2017, p.11) states that "Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness". Similarly, the Runnymede Trust defines Islamophobia as "anti-Muslim racism" (Elahi & Khan, 2017, p.1). However, others advocate an intersectional lens that distinguishes religious and racial discrimination of Muslims as two distinct but overlapping forms of discrimination (Gholami, 2021). In this study, I treat Islamophobia as religious discrimination that intersects with racism.

Due to the proliferation of definitions within the literature I have chosen to use a bespoke definition of racism informed by available research (e.g., Omi & Winant, 1994; Paradies, 2006; Smedley & Smedley, 2005). I define racism as

Racism is a social process of allocating power according to physical characteristics and culture, among other markers of difference. Racism can be observed in the words and actions of individuals towards racialised others. Expressions of racism can be subtle or overt, but both impact the lives of the recipient. While the process of racism is focused on "race" and "ethnicity", the experience for the individual will intersect with other axes of identity such as gender, religion, and class.

1.5.2 BME, BAME and Other (un)Helpful Acronyms

One of the few tangible recommendations from the CRED report was that the terms BME (Black and minority ethnic groups) and BAME (Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups) should be dropped (CRED, 2021). BME gained popularity in the 1980s but has now been eclipsed in frequency by BAME (Aspinall, 2020). During the pandemic, BAME has frequently been used to discuss different outcomes observed in COVID-19 cases and deaths and later when documenting the uptake of the vaccine. Despite their widespread use by the government and the media, BME and BAME are not well understood. Research by the Race Disparity Unit found that only 1% of 300 respondents from the public could accurately define BME and BAME (Bunglawala, 2019). The term risks portraying BME/BAME as a homogenous group despite the meaningful differences in various outcomes between ethnic minority groups (Johnson, 2015). It has also been suggested that using the terms directs the conversation away from racism (Richardson, 2015).

On a personal level, I can resonate with these criticisms of BME/BAME. I never typically refer to myself or others as BME or BAME. One memorable exception occurred when the professional delivering my vaccination suggested I encourage others to get vaccinated in my "BAME community". Similarly, when I asked the participants how they self-identified at the

beginning of the interviews, none referred to themselves as BME or BAME. I briefly considered using the term "non-White academics", but it could be regarded as offensive (Aspinall, 2020). I believe non-White defines people by what they are not, rather than what they are. I also reflected on how it resonated when applying "non" to other personal characteristics—describing female academics as non-male felt ridiculous and demeaning.

I also considered Person of Colour (POC) and Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) as potential terms for the thesis. BIPOC is often used in US-based higher education research (e.g., Watson-Singleton, 2021). However, there are several reasons why I have chosen not to use POC or BIPOC. Firstly, as noted by previous authors, POC and BIPOC are more US-specific terms (e.g., Grady, 2020). While indigenous make sense in the US context due to the genocide of Native Americans, it makes less sense as a term in the UK. POC may also exclude people who experience race-based discrimination despite passing as White, for example, individuals with a mixed-race heritage (Cousins, 2019). POC/BIPOC also run the risk of conflating the experiences of different ethnic groups in a similar way to BME/BAME. Finally, POC/BIPOC are not terms that I use in everyday life, and I felt less authentic adopting those terms for the thesis.

Despite the problems discussed above, this thesis uses the term BME to describe the ethnic identity of the participants. In a similar vein to Cousins (2019), after reviewing the advantages and disadvantages of different terms, I have returned to the BME acronym. Like all the other acronyms, BME is an inadequate but indicative placeholder for the many forms of racialisation currently at work in the UK. There are also practical reasons for using the term; BME was used on materials provided to participants before taking part. Before completing the write up of the dissertation, I was unaware of the critiques of the term. I

naively assumed that it was the default term in academic research, and I used it in the materials provided to participants. Therefore, I could argue that by agreeing to take part, the participants were tacitly endorsing the use of BME. I also rationalised using the term when reflecting on my clinical practice. For example, I occasionally used diagnostic language when communicating with medics in health care settings, and the BME term has similar practical benefits. For example, much of the research cited in the literature review uses the BME acronym (e.g., Bhopal, 2018). However, the term is used begrudgingly, and I recognise some readers may find its use problematic. I also use racialised minorities and racially minoritised at different points in the thesis to highlight the social construction of "race".

1.6 Wellbeing or Well-Being?

Wellbeing is a complex concept without consensus agreement on measuring, defining, and even spelling the concept in the academic literature (Dodge et al., 2012). The emergence of the term can be traced back to a World Health Organisation publication that defined health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (Parran & Boudreau, 1946, pg. 1267). Historically, wellbeing research focused on two distinct types *eudemonic* and *hedonic* (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Eudemonic wellbeing refers to an individual's sense of purpose, mastery and satisfaction with their life. Hedonic wellbeing refers to an individual's happiness and the accumulation of positive emotions. There are also bodies of work related to subjective wellbeing (Diener et al., 1999), which shares similarities with hedonic wellbeing, and psychological wellbeing, which is said to consist of six factors, including personal relationships and life mastery (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). *Employee wellbeing* is another term in the literature and interrelates wellbeing with job and work-life satisfaction (Renee Baptiste, 2008). It is argued that research on wellbeing is rooted in a positivist epistemology (Carlise et al., 2009; La Placa & Knight, 2017). Others

have also argued that eudemonic and hedonic wellbeing are distinctly Western concepts that

may not apply to individuals from different ethnic backgrounds (Cristopher, 1999).

The proliferation of terms discussed so far highlights how "the concept of wellbeing is

nebulous and contested" (La Placa & Knight, 2017, pg. 2). Despite the challenges of defining

what it is, focusing on wellbeing has enabled psychologists to move away from a medicalised

view of health (Dodge et al., 2012). Earlier work on wellbeing by Bradburn (1969)

represented a shift from popular psychological research. He was interested in how everyday

people managed their lives instead of focusing on psychiatric diagnoses. Similarly, this study

is not concerned with identifying diagnosable mental health issues in the participants. Due to

the numerous types of wellbeing in the literature, I believed it would be helpful to clearly

outline what I mean when referring to the participants wellbeing. Therefore, in this research, I

have adopted McNaught's (2011) definitional framework of wellbeing. McNaught (2011, pg.

11) defines wellbeing as

"A dynamic process that gives people a sense of how their lives are going, through the

interaction between their circumstances, activities and psychological resources, and includes

their interpersonal interactions with significant social formations (the family and their

community)"

The definitional framework proposes that wellbeing is a macro concept that includes societal,

community, familial and individual wellbeing. Individual wellbeing is said to consist of

psychological, physical, social, and spiritual aspects. While the focus of this study is on

personal wellbeing, I find it helpful that the framework acknowledges that an individual's

sense of their wellbeing is understood within a broader context (family, community, and

society). McNaught's (2011) framework also highlights the role of social justice in the development of wellbeing, which is aligned with my values and motivations to conduct the research.

1.7 Insider or Outsider? – Reflexivity and Considering my Positioning

Reflexivity is essential in qualitative methods due to the authors influence on the presented findings (Berger, 2015; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Reflexivity has been defined as "a form of critical thinking which aims to articulate the contexts that shape the processes of doing research and subsequently the knowledge produced" (Lazard & McAvoy, 2020, pg. 2). It is argued that when researchers reflect on their beliefs and values, the credibility of qualitative research is enhanced (Darawsheh, 2014; Liao & Hitchcock, 2018). Reflexivity is also encouraged in best practice guidelines for qualitative research, such as the COREQ checklist (Tong et al., 2007).

Positionality refers to the researcher's experiences and identity, and it also plays a vital role throughout the research process (Bourke, 2014). A hotly debated aspect of positionality concerns the insider or outsider status of the researcher (Holmes, 2020). An insider perspective typically refers to a researcher having some lived experience of the phenomenon being studied. It may also apply when the researcher shares the same characteristics, for example, gender, with their participants (Mercer, 2007). In contrast, an outsider perspective refers to researchers without lived experience of their research topics and was historically considered as an objective perspective (Kirpitchenko & Voloder, 2014).

As a black mixed-race, heterosexual, working-class, cisgender male postgraduate researcher I share some experiences with my participants and could be argued to have an insider position.

I have experienced microaggressions throughout my time in HE. Despite this, I am very much an outsider regarding specific academic experiences, such as receiving student feedback on teaching. Similarly, it has been argued that the insider-outsider debate for researcher positionality is more of a fluid continuum (Breen, 2007). In some ways, this research project was motivated by a desire to understand better what it would be like to work in academia after completing the doctorate. I have long been inspired to pursue an academic career and conduct social justice orientated research. Due to the interpretative nature of IPA, reflexivity is particularly relevant to this thesis. Therefore, I will discuss reflexivity and positionality in greater detail in Chapter Three and Chapter Five.

1.8 Outline of the Thesis

The thesis is organised into the following six chapters.

Chapter One provides an overview of the research project. This includes a narrative of how the research questions developed the aims and purpose of the research. Key terms are defined and located within the current socio-political context. This chapter also describes the researcher's position and briefly outlines the methodology adopted.

Chapter Two presents a comprehensive review of the relevant literature. This includes research from the fields of counselling psychology, higher education, and wellbeing.

Chapter Three outlines the epistemology, axiology, and rhetorical structure of the research paradigm. This is followed by justifying the use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis and a qualitative design.

Chapter Four presents the findings of the research. Three superordinate themes emerged from the analysis of the transcribed interviews. Anonymised extracts from the interviews are used extensively to ensure the participant's narratives remain central. The analysis shows that despite areas of divergence, there are common experiences for the six BME academics.

Chapter Five is a discussion of the superordinate themes presented in the previous chapter. The discussion focuses on how the research findings fit in with the existing literature. It considers the practical implications and the potential limitations of the research. I also present a final reflexive section in this chapter.

Chapter Six concludes this thesis and presents the final remarks for the research project.

1.9 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have introduced the research project and provided relevant background information. I have briefly introduced the methodology and the use of IPA. I have argued that due to the emphasis on social justice within the profession, this research is particularly relevant for counselling psychology. I then discussed and defined some of the key terms, such as racism and wellbeing. Next, I discussed my positionality and considered how I might hold both an insider and outsider perspective for the research phenomenon. Finally, I presented an outline for the remaining chapters in this thesis.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Chapter Introduction

In this chapter, I present a comprehensive review of the literature relevant to the research project. The literature comes from various disciplines, including sociology, education, psychology, and physical health research. The research methodologies include quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods designs. There is also a diversity in the sources used, including peer-reviewed articles, unpublished doctoral theses, media publications, government reports, and books. I begin by briefly discussing Critical Race Theory (CRT), intersectionality and microaggressions. I then move on to the literature looking at the wellbeing consequences of experiencing overt and covert forms of racism. I then review the literature on the experiences of BME students and staff in HE. I suggest that by combining the research on BME students and staff, we can gain a longitudinal understanding of the experience of BME academics. Finally, I state the gaps in the literature that this study aims to fill.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

CRT, intersectionality and microaggressions are incorporated as a theoretical framework for the research topic:

1. CRT provides an understanding of how race is socially constructed at a macro level.
2. Intersectionality highlights the importance of considering other aspects of identities such as gender in understanding the experiences of individuals.

3. Microaggressions provide a psychological perspective of how racism operates between individuals in a socio-political environment where overt racism is no longer socially acceptable.

I will explore each theory in more detail in the following sections.

2.2.1 Critical Race Theory

Research in HE has historically focused on solving practical problems instead of using theories to understand why the problems occur (Tight, 2012). A glaring exception to this has been the use of CRT in HE (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2016). Typically confined to academic settings, CRT has recently gained prominence as a target of government officials on both sides of the Atlantic. For example, Donald Trump, the 45th US president, stated that CRT was "toxic propaganda" that taught people to be racist (Lang, 2020, para. 3). A similar perspective has been adopted in the UK with the Equalities Minister stating that "CRT is an ideology that sees my 'blackness' as victimhood and their 'whiteness' as oppression. We are absolutely clear that the government stands unequivocally against Critical Race Theory" (House of Commons, 2020, para 1012). However, before discussing the relevance of CRT for UK HE, it will be helpful first to discuss what exactly CRT is.

CRT is a framework used to analyse issues related to race, such as disparities in how different ethnic groups are treated within the legal system (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Rollock & Gillborn, 2011). The impetus for the development of CRT was that legal scholars argued that a colour-blind approach had not resulted in fair legal outcomes for ethnic minorities. After establishing itself in legal studies, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) wrote a seminal paper arguing that CRT could be used to understand racism in education. Since that time, an

increasing number of authors have used CRT to understand the experiences of BME staff and students in HE (e.g., Aguirre, 2010; Joseph-Salisbury, 2019). It has been stated that CRT in HE has six core principles which I have summarised below and adopted in this research project (Carbado, 2011; Dixson & Rosseau Anderson, 2017).

1. The competition in HE inherently leads to racial inequality.
2. The policy and practices within HE perpetuate racial inequality.
3. CRT rejects the dominant narrative of a deficit model for BME students and staff.
4. The current system of HE cannot be disentangled from its colonial roots.
5. There needs to be a focus on advocating for change as opposed to merely documenting inequalities.

An essential contribution of CRT research, particularly as it relates to HE, is the idea of *interest convergence*. Interest convergence proposes that actions that appear to align with social justice for ethnic minorities only occur when they converge with the interests of those in policy-making positions (Bell, 2004). Interest convergence would argue that initiatives for the wellbeing of BME academics will only occur when HE institutions benefit somehow. Interest convergence argues that both racism and anti-racism serve to advance the interests of those already in power rather than BME individuals (Harpalani, 2021). Aguirre (2010) explored how the diversity agenda and increasing the representation of ethnic minority staff could be viewed as interest convergence in HE. Similarly, Bhopal and Pitkin (2020) argue that policies such as the Race Equality Charter are examples of interest convergence that have been introduced to address the perceptions of racism rather than racism itself. Such initiatives allow universities to market themselves as anti-racist, which may help entice customers from the lucrative international student market to the benefit of universities (Cantwell, 2015).

Interest convergence argues that policies to reduce racial inequalities only occur when it is less harmful to the interests of the dominant groups than taking no action at all towards racism (Gillborn, 2013). Interest convergence also proposes that both racist and anti-racist practices typically advance the interests of those already in power rather than BME individuals (Harpalani, 2021). However, critics have pointed that interest convergence is less helpful for analysing racially minoritised groups outside of the US (Singh, 2020). Furthermore, academics like Guinier (2004) and Gillborn (2013) have also stressed the importance of *interest divergence*. Interest divergence refers to policies that have an explicit focus on increasing racial inequities. Gillborn argued that contemporary interest divergence represents "a period where White power-holders perceived an advantage in even greater race inequity" (Gillborn, 2013, pg. 478). Recent attempts to ban the teaching of CRT are one example of current efforts to portray society as racist towards white individuals. The furore against CRT is symptomatic of interest divergence towards policies that benefit white interests when viewed within the larger context of so-called white working-class underachievement (e.g., Adjogarse & Miedema, 2021).

Another significant CRT contribution is the idea that the lived experiences and narratives provided by ethnic minorities are valid and instructive (Chapman & Bhopal, 2013; Cook & Dixson, 2013; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Solórzano and Yosso (2002) argue that counternarratives, the telling of stories that outline experiences of racism, is *the* methodology of CRT in education research. Often this is done by providing fictional and composite accounts that challenge the dominant narratives of racial equality in HE (Doharty et al., 2020; Joseph-Salisbury, 2019). Counternarratives are most effective when combined with other CRT aspects like interest convergence and intersectionality (Dixson & Rousseau Anderson,

2017). I believe that counselling psychology can engage with the ethos of counternarratives by using qualitative methods of inquiry. Interviewing BME academics provides an opportunity for different perspectives to enter the academic literature. In the present study, the transcribed accounts of participants are viewed as legitimate data that can contribute to the understanding of wellbeing in BME academics.

Despite the increasing popularity of CRT, it has received strong opposition within UK academia since the first CRT paper was presented at the British Educational Research Association (BERA) conference over ten years ago (Warmington, 2020). Criticism has been levied that CRT fails to acknowledge the role of class as the underlying cause of inequality within society (Cole, 2017). Class is related to material differences in experiences, while race, as CRT theorists would agree, is a social construction (Hill, 2009). The implication is that because race is a social construction, racism should not result in inequalities that are not first explained by class differences. Within this debate of class versus race, the disempowerment of those exposed to racism and classism, which should be a point of agreement, is arguably ignored.

A CRT perspective has been incorporated in this study because it provides a framework for understanding racism at the macro-level. Given the emphasis on economic production within HE, interest convergence has particular utility in educational research and the diversity discourse (e.g., Castagno & Lee, 2007). Additionally, adopting a CRT perspective encourages the researcher to understand data in a broader socio-political context (Graham et al., 2011). The importance of context applies to the data collected from interviewed participants and the literature reviewed throughout this chapter. CRT recognises individual narratives as legitimate forms of data (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), which fits with the

methodology used in this research project. CRT is also complementary to social justice, an area of interest of counselling psychology in the UK (Cutts, 2013). Finally, adopting a CRT perspective can help researchers consider the role of race and racism on wellbeing (Yoo et al., 2018).

2.2.2 Intersectionality

Despite the centrality of race in its name, CRT emphasises the need to consider other aspects of identity when researching racism. Perhaps more than any other component of CRT, intersectionalit*y* has garnered interest as a theoretical lens to investigate mental health phenomenon (Cole, 2009; Granzka et al., 2017; Rosenthal, 2016). However, it has been argued that Counselling Psychology's engagement with intersectionality typically results in simplistic analysis on multiple identities without the activist element intended by the original authors (Grzanka et al., 2017; Shin et al., 2017). Researchers who claim to incorporate intersectionality often fail to cite the work of Black feminist activists who have developed the concept (Cole, 2020; Grzanka, 2020). Recognising the work of BME academics is particularly important given the nature of this research project. Therefore, I will briefly outline the origins of intersectionality before discussing its relevance to this study. Intersectionality is widely credited to Kimberle Crenshaw (1990), who discussed how the intersections of racism and sexism resulted in discrimination for Black women that was different to Black men or White women. I should also note that other Black female academics discussed similar concepts around that time, such as Philomena Essed's (1991) *gendered racism* and Patricia Hill Collins's (1990) *matrix of domination*.

Crenshaw (1990) outlined three types of intersectionality: *structural intersectionality, political intersectionality*, and *representative intersectionality*. Structural intersectionality

refers to the intersecting forms of structural oppression, for example, racism and sexism, that may shape the experiences of an individual. Political intersectionality highlights how separating individuals by specific social categories, for example, disabled and black, can marginalise individuals with intersecting identities. Finally, representational intersectionality refers to how marginalised individuals are often represented in stereotypical ways in public discourse.

Counselling psychology research has typically focused on structural intersectionality, particularly the role of social identities (Grzanka, 2020). However, focusing solely on identity can reify social constructs as variables while detaching identities from their associated forms of discrimination. Therefore, when using intersectionality, authors have encouraged psychologists to analyse the systems of discrimination associated with each identity (Cole, 2020; Dill & Kohnman, 2012; Moradi & Grzanka, 2017). So, to give an example of how this relates to this research, I will use the example of a male, Muslim, Black academic. In this research, the intersectional lens would not only apply to his gender, religion, and race per se. Instead, an intersectional lens would consider the intersections of sexism, Islamophobia, and racism. Furthermore, intersectionality does not only apply to those who experience social oppression and should be used to explore simultaneous oppression and privilege (Moradi & Grzanka, 2017; Grzanka, 2020).

Crenshaw (1990) noted that intersectionality might be used to advance group politics and identify similarities between seemingly distinct groups. Similarly, Cole (2008; 2020) has argued that researchers should use intersectionality to identify similarities across groups and build coalitions. The often-neglected coalition-building in intersectionality is particularly helpful for this research given the differences in experiences and outcomes for individuals

from different ethnic groups under the "BME" category. However, coalitions need to be based on shared interests and not just shared identities (Cole, 2008). So, to relate coalitions to this research project, the coalition between academics from different ethnic minority groups would be based on shared experiences of structural racism (and other forms of discrimination) and not simply shared membership of the BME social construct.

This study adopts an intersectional perspective to consider how other aspects of identity intersect with race and ethnicity to influence the wellbeing of BME academics. The American Psychological Association (2021c) argued that failing to acknowledge the presence of intersectional identities is a form of systemic racism. While the framework provides a way to understand the influence of identities on wellbeing, it is vital to combine this with an analysis of structural discrimination. Therefore, an intersectional lens is used for the participant's identities and the systemic causes of inequality such as racism, xenophobia, and sexism. Furthermore, adopting an intersectional lens also allows this research to consider how systems of discrimination and social identities intersect with employment contracts, academic discipline, or job title in the wellbeing of participants. Finally, intersectionality is also adopted as it may be beneficial in generating policy recommendations that recognise multiple forms of discrimination in HE (Nichols & Stahl, 2019).

2.2.3 Microaggressions

When asked to define racism, individuals often describe overt examples, such as someone shouting racial slurs in an angry manner (Walton et al., 2013). However, it is no longer socially acceptable to hold racist beliefs or define oneself as a racist within most societies, and contemporary racism is often more covert. Colour blindness, the idea that anything but race contributes to an observed inequality, is one expression of covert racism (Bonilla-Silva,

2002). Coates (2007) suggests covert racism has always existed, although it is now more prominent than overt racism in the current socio-political climate. Some have argued that the intention behind a behaviour or communication determines whether an act is racist or not (Cantu & Jissim, 2021). However, research has increasingly paid interest to more ambiguous forms of racism, such as banter related to racial stereotypes (e.g., Burdsey, 2011).

To highlight that racism is often expressed and experienced in subtle and covert ways, authors have increasingly focused on *microaggressions* (e.g., Cousins & Diamond, 2021). The term was initially used by Pierce (1970) to describe racialised communication which occurred automatically and had the effect of putting down ethnic minorities. It is essential to state that the micro refers to the everyday nature of microaggressions rather than the level of distress they may cause for the recipient (Pierce, 1970; Sue et al., 2019). It should also be noted that although the authors did not use the term, microaggressions shares similarities with the work of Fanon (1967) and even earlier work by Du Bois (1903). The term microaggressions has increasingly been used following a seminal counselling psychology paper by Sue et al. (2007). Racial microaggressions are a specific type of microaggressions which was defined by Rollock (2012, p. 517) as:

> brief, everyday interactions that send denigrating messages to [people of colour] because they belong to a racially minoritized group. Compared to more overt forms of racism, racial microaggressions are subtle and insidious, often leaving the victim confused, distressed and frustrated and the perpetrator oblivious of the offense they have caused

I find this definition helpful for the present study because, (a) the definition is provided by a Black academic with lived experience of the phenomenon in a UK HE context, (b) it highlights that these interactions are subtle and occur in everyday interactions, and (c) it acknowledges that the perpetrator of the microaggression may be oblivious to the offence that occurred. The third point is worth considering in the context of UK HE. It is well known that academia skews to the left politically, and most academics are unlikely to define themselves as racist. However, this context arguably makes HE a uniquely helpful workplace to explore how racism shapes an employee's wellbeing.

The harmful impact of microaggressions is also related to the historical context within which they are understood. To borrow an example from Rini (2018), being insulted for attending the University of Manchester could not be considered a microaggression because there is no historical legacy of oppression for students attending this university. However, there is a legacy of racism and colonialism within British society. Therefore, "ongoing attempts to study race without racism are unlikely to lead to racial equity and more complete understandings of minoritized populations in postsecondary contexts" (Harper, 2012, p.15). I acknowledge that studying racism is subjective and difficult to prove, but so is anxiety and many other concepts that counselling psychologists regularly explore in their research and practice.

Sue et al. (2007) suggest that microaggressions can be further outlined in three classifications: *microassaults*, *microinvalidations* and *microinsults*. A microassault is an explicit racial slur, for example, referring to a BME academic as a darkie. A microinvalidation is an act that invalidates the experiences of a BME academic, for example, suggesting that a new member of staff is a "diversity hire". Finally, a microinsult refers to

communication that minimises a person ethnic background, for example, complimenting a British born BME academic on how well they speak English. Sue (2010) later suggested that microinsults could be the most damaging to wellbeing as a person's ethnic identity, which could be a source of pride, is denigrated.

The debate around the usefulness of microaggressions as a concept has focused on; (1) how well microaggressions are operationally defined, (2) debate as to whether microaggressions are only perceived by minoritized groups, (3) are microaggressions reflective of racism, (4) disagreement on whether they can be validly assessed, (5) questioning if they are associated with adverse mental health outcomes (Lilienfeld, 2017a; Lilienfeld, 2017b; Ong & Burrow; Williams, 2019). Despite the critiques listed above, there is research available that indicates that microaggressions can be agreed upon by both White and BME individuals. For example, Michaels et al. (2018), in a US sample of 64 college students, showed that when presented with a scenario, White and BME participants shared a similar understanding of when a racial microaggression had occurred. Additionally, as I will describe in greater detail below, there is a growing body of literature documenting the relationship between experiences of microaggressions and poorer wellbeing.

Criticisms have also been levied at the individuals who report experiencing microaggressions in their lives. Lilienfeld (2017b) suggests that recipients of microaggressions should ignore an isolated insult and give the benefit of the doubt to the perceived perpetrator. However, focusing on the intention masks the impact on those who experience microaggressions. For example, in my clinical work with clients, while a client's friends and family may not have *intended* to contribute to poor wellbeing, the impact on my client is experienced, nonetheless. It has also been argued that those claiming to have experienced

microaggressions are adopting a victimhood mentality because it benefits them socially (Campbell & Manning, 2016). However, choosing to respond to a microaggression can often result in more social harm for the individual (Sue et al., 2007). Friedlaender (2018) also argued that the victimhood critique is a form of *gaslighting*, which could be considered a microaggression by itself.

2.3 Racism and Wellbeing

Multiple authors have proposed models and frameworks for how experiences of racism may impact the wellbeing of racialised minorities (Paradies, 2006). These include the bio-psycho-social model (Clark et al., 1999), racism-related stress (Harrell, 2000), eco-social theory (Krieger, 2003, 2012), race-based traumatic stress (Carter, 2007), and racial battle fatigue (Smith et al., 2011). It goes beyond the scope of this section to review all models in depth. However, synthesising points of emphasis across the models may help attempts to understand the effects of racism on wellbeing. The importance of the wider environment is often emphasised in theoretical explanations of racism. For instance, Smith et al.'s (2011) model of racial battle fatigue emphasises the impact of the university environment on Black students and staff. The importance of the social environment is also stressed across time. The eco-social model emphasises the influence of historical context (Krieger, 2003). For instance, Jim Crow laws in the 1960's are reported to negatively affect gene expression in Black Americans today (Krieger, 2019). To put this in perspective, the socio-political context today will influence the wellbeing of BME academics 60 years from now. The models also conceptualise racism as a stressor that can be acute, or chronic. For example, building upon the work of Lazarus and Folkman (1984), Harrell (2000) conceptualised racism as an environmental stressor. Furthermore, Carter (2007) also conceptualised racism as a traumatic stressor.

Systematic reviews and meta-analyses have repeatedly documented a link between experiences of racism and poorer wellbeing (Carter et al., 2018; de Freitas et al., 2018; Paradies, 2006b; Williams et al., 2019). In addition, meta-analyses consistently report that racism effects mental health more than physical health (Carter et al., 2019; Paradies, 2006; Paradies et al., 2015; Schmitt et al., 2014; Williams et al., 2019). However, statistically significant relationships have been reported between racism and poorer physical health (Paradies et al., 2015; Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009) and unhealthy behaviours such as substance use (Carter et al., 2018). Pascoe and Smart Richman (2009) suggest racism impacts wellbeing in two ways. Firstly, racism is associated with increased stress, and stress is independently associated with poorer health outcomes. Secondly, experiencing racism makes the individual more likely to engage with unhealthy behaviours such as social isolation or smoking.

An intersectional lens highlights variations in the experiences of racism for different individuals. Meta-analyses have explored other types of discrimination alongside racism (Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009; Schmitt et al., 2014). For example, Schmitt et al. (2014) reported other forms of discrimination, such as those based on sexual orientation or mental health, had a stronger relationship with poorer wellbeing than racism. Individuals with multiple identities that experience discrimination, such as a Black queer Muslim, may consequently experience even poorer wellbeing. An intersectional lens can also highlight nuances of how racism is experienced. For instance, UK based studies have indicated that workplace racism is the most impactful setting to experience racial discrimination (Karlsen et al., 2005). In contrast, a recent US meta-analysis concluded that racism experienced in

healthcare settings was more impactful than racism in educational or workplace settings (Carter et al., 2018).

Looking at racism between minority ethnic groups produces inconclusive results but suggests further nuances in how individuals experience racism. For example, Black individuals are most likely to have experienced racial harassment in UK studies on the general population (Hatch et al., 2016; Karlsen et al., 2005). However, a US meta-analyses reported that the impact of racism on wellbeing is most impactful on Native Americans and least impactful on Black Americans (Carter et al., 2018). Furthermore, different types of racial discrimination may relate to specific aspects of wellbeing. For example, everyday discrimination is significantly associated with depression, while anticipated discrimination was significantly associated with depression and anxiety scores (Hatch et al., 2016). Researchers have also looked at differences in the experiences of racism between men and women. Again, however, the literature is inconclusive. For example, a European meta-analysis reported men had worse poorer wellbeing (de Freitas et al., 2018), while a US-based meta-analysis indicated women had poorer wellbeing after experiencing racism (Carter et al., 2018).

Research indicates that everyday events such as microaggressions, have a more significant adverse impact on wellbeing than major racist events (Carter et al., 2018; Williams & Mohammed, 2009). Additionally, repeated exposure to racism appears to be more harmful than single experiences of racism (Schmitt et al., 2014; Williams et al., 2019). Microaggressions are experienced more often than significant discriminatory events, which may explain their greater impact on wellbeing. The increased harm of everyday racist experiences may also be related to the self-questioning and evaluation that occurs for the recipient (Sue et al., 2019). After an ambiguous racist experience, the evaluation process can

be emotionally and cognitively taxing as an individual attempts to understand what has happened (Partow et al., 2021). Finally, the unclear nature of everyday instances of discrimination can lead to uncertainty regarding what coping strategy should be used (Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009).

Research with the US general population suggests that different ethnic groups experience microaggressions at similar rates, albeit in different ways (Nadal et al., 2014). For instance, Asians reported being exoticised more than other ethnic groups in one study (Nadal et al., 2014). However, there are also intersectional differences in the way in which microaggressions are experienced. For example, US research on work-based microaggressions has indicated that Black men experience hypervisibility, while Black women reported feeling invisible at work (Holder et al., 2015; Pitcan et al., 2018). There is a limited amount of microaggressions research published in the UK. One exception is a doctoral dissertation by Pardiwalla (2020), which explored the experiences of British Asians with microaggressions. Notably, participants discussed a sense of working harder to overcome microaggressions in the workplace.

Researchers have explored what coping strategies are used after experiencing racism. One of the key findings is that social support is often reported as a coping strategy, although the evidence is mixed regarding the effectiveness of social support for buffering against poorer wellbeing (Brondolo et al., 2009; Centat et al., 2021, Paradies, 2006). A recent literature review of coping strategies after experiencing racism noted that 90% of the research was conducted in the US (Partow et al., 2021). The relative lack of research outside the US represents a limitation in our understanding as copings strategies are culturally influenced (Carter et al., 2018). There are meaningful differences in the way racism manifests in the US

compared with other contexts. For example, it has been suggested that European discrimination intersects with xenophobia to a greater extent than racism in the US (de Freitas et al., 2018). Therefore, given the cultural differences between the UK and the US, it is likely that coping strategies in response to racism will also vary between the UK and other countries. However, I should also note that while this line of research can highlight the resourcefulness of individuals, caution should be applied not to suggest that individuals need to learn to cope better with racism.

2.4 Overview of HE and the Wellbeing of Academics

In 2019 and 2020, HE staff who were members of the University and College Union (UCU) went on strike amid a dispute over changes to their pension and working conditions (UCU, 2020). The strikes occurred against a backdrop of increasing managerialism and neoliberalism which have come to define academia. HE's neoliberal turn is well documented in the literature, and students are now seen as potential customers that universities must compete for (Jarvis, 2014; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Raaper, 2016). In the 2019/2020 academic year, the total income in HE was £41.9 billion. The £21.5 billion generated from student tuition fees and education contracts are by far the largest source of income with the next largest source being "other income" at £7.3 billion (Higher Education Statistics Office, 2020a). In 2018/2019, the total expenditure was £38.4 billion and £19.8 billion was spent on staff costs (Higher Education Statistics Office, 2020). Given the amount of money concentrated in the sector, it is perhaps unsurprising that a culture of competition and accountability has come to define HE. Take, for example, the REF and TEF which were introduced as a means of demonstrating value for money in HE.

Despite the introduction of tuition fees and subsequent increases over the past twenty years, students continue to be drawn to HE. In the academic year 2019/2020, 223,996 academic staff were employed, and 2,532,385 students were enrolled at a HE institution (Higher Education Statistics Office, 2020b). It has been suggested that neoliberalism has exacerbated inequalities, and the system requires there to be academic winners and losers (Berg et al., 2016). Data from HESA indicates that nearly half of academics were engaged in both teaching and research activities (Higher Education Statics Office, 2020b). Another half were employed in only teaching or research capacities, with a small minority having neither teaching nor research responsibilities (Higher Education Statics Office, 2020b). Those on teaching only contracts were far more likely to be employed part-time than those with research only or research and teaching contracts (Higher Education Statics Office, 2020b). Prioritising research staff makes sense from a neoliberal perspective as they generate more income than teaching only positions (Kwiek, 2019).

The data collection, analysis, and write up of this project have taken place during the COVID-19 pandemic and research suggests this has negatively impacted the lives of academics. Early career researchers were already likely to be on short, fixed-term contracts, and the financial impact of COVID-19 has exacerbated the precarious nature of this type of employment (Kınıkoğlu & Can, 2021). Academics have reported increased workloads due to the digitisation of teaching and the time taken to prepare online material for students (Watermeyer et al., 2020). It has been suggested that neoliberalism and managerialism have reduced the freedom of academics, which contributes to low wellbeing (Ferris, 2021). There has also been an increasing shift to temporary contracts, particularly for early career researchers (Loveday, 2018). The increase in temporary contact is noteworthy as job insecurity was previously identified as the most significant cause of stress for academic staff

(Tytherleigh et al., 2005). On this point, a survey by Morrish (2019) found that over a third of those on temporary contracts say their job status negatively impacts their mental health. However, the available literature suggests that all academics experience working in HE to influence their wellbeing negatively.

Kinman (1998) conducted one of the first large scale surveys and gathered responses from 2000 academics working in HE. 70% of respondents stated that they found their job stressful, while 62% of participants said their job negatively impacted their social life (Kinman, 1998). Given the COVID-19 related changes over the past year, it is noteworthy that changes to their job were identified as a source of stress in Kinman (1998). The study did not look at ethnicity but found that male academics had less job satisfaction which suggested differences in the way different groups of academics experienced HE. Similarly, academics over the age of 50 reported better levels of wellbeing as measured on the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ; Goldberg & Williams, 1988). Kinman (1998) also noted that levels of wellbeing on the GHQ were lower than GHQ scores from the general population.

Fifteen years after the Kinman (1998) survey, a follow-up survey was conducted by Kinman and Wray (2014) with a larger sample of 5000 academics. In this sample, the percentage of academics meeting the clinical threshold for mental health difficulties matched the 1998 study at roughly 50% of respondents. Another finding that stayed consistent was that academics had relatively low levels of wellbeing compared to other professions in the UK and the general population (Kinman & Wray, 2014). This may have been related to the finding that many academic staff worked more than 48 hours each week. Together, the two studies indicated that the wellbeing of academic staff had not improved. Instead, on many measures, it had decreased. For example, more respondents in the Kinman and Wray (2014)

study stated they had considered leaving their job. The two studies above matched findings by Winefield et al. (2008), who reported that Australian academics were three times more likely to meet caseness for mental health difficulties than the general Australian population.

Fetherston (2020) conducted a more recent study with 313 HE academics from the UK and 605 from Australia. The study used the Short Warwick Edinburgh Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS) to assess levels of wellbeing. The findings indicated that in addition to being an international phenomenon, poor levels of wellbeing had stayed consistent over the past twenty years. Scores on SWEMWBS for academic staff were again lower than scores in the general population in the UK (Fetherston, 2020). A common finding in the available studies is that academics struggled to create boundaries between their personal and professional lives. While academics report valuing the flexibility in how they complete work hours, for some, this may result in poorer wellbeing as work time and personal time become permeable (Kinman & Jones, 2014). It has been suggested that academic wellbeing may also be negatively impacted by intra-role and inter-role conflict (Kinman & Wray, 2019). Intra-role conflict arises from the multiple professional requirements such as teaching, research, funding applications, and pastoral care. Inter-role conflict arises from the increasingly blurred boundaries between personal and work domains (Kinman & Wray, 2019). In addition to teaching and research activities, academics also complete extensive administrative responsibilities. For example, an Australian study revealed academics received over 48 emails per day on average, and self-reported stress was positively associated with a greater volume of emails (Jerejian et al., 2013).

Comparisons with other professions suggest that academic work is particularly harmful for wellbeing. Wray and Kinman (2020) used the Health and Safety Executive (HSE)

Management Standards Indicator Tool (MacKay et al., 2004) to assess the psychosocial risks of working in HE. The researchers analysed three sets of data from 2008, 2012, and 2014 with a combined sample of over 16,000 academic staff in the UK. The psychosocial risks increased over time, and HE scored lower than other job sectors on the same benchmark (Wray & Kinman, 2020). However, a limitation of the study is that the study included only permanent staff. This is relevant because research suggests that those on a temporary contract experience greater levels of stress than their peers on a permanent contract in the UK (Fontinha et al., 2016), and lower levels of job satisfaction than permanent staff across Europe (Castellacci & Vinas, 2021). Furthermore, reported levels of stress are positively correlated with the length of time in a temporary contract pointing to a cumulative toll on wellbeing (Fontinha et al., 2016).

A qualitative study was conducted by O'Brien and Guiney (2018) with 25 academics from various institutions in the UK. Using a grounded theory approach, they identified that relationships, positive management, and professional acknowledgement contributed to positive wellbeing. Conversely, poor management, the student as a consumer model, and social isolation were identified as contributing to poor wellbeing. However, the authors did not consider how wellbeing might vary between different groups of academics. Although the available literature is limited, two literature reviews have been conducted recently. The first literature review looked at UK academics wellbeing and mental health (Guthrie et al., 2018). The review noted that spending more time on research appeared to reduce stress levels compared with academics in teaching roles. Even more recently, Urbina-Garcia (2020) reviewed 28 international studies on the mental health of academics. The review concluded that working in HE contributed to poor levels of wellbeing. Urbina-Garcia (2020) also noted

that there is limited research on the wellbeing of academics, and there is almost no literature documenting the coping strategies that they use.

In summary, the available research indicates that poor levels of wellbeing among academics have been a persistent issue for over twenty years (Kinman, 1998; Kinman & Wray, 2014; Fetherstone, 2020). Additionally, international comparisons indicate that UK academics report lower job satisfaction that academic staff in other European countries (Teichler & Hohle, 2013). Most of the research on wellbeing in HE uses a quantitative approach focused primarily on the concept of stress and burnout in academic staff rather than a holistic perspective of what constitutes wellbeing (Urbina-Garcia, 2020). Woods (2010) suggested that the research base would be improved if there was a more explicit focus on the emotions and physiological responses experienced by academics. Finally, while some of the quantitative studies consider gender as a variable, the literature looking at the differences in wellbeing between academics based on their ethnicity is non-existent (Guthrie et al., 2018; Urbina-Garcia, 2020). The lack of research on the wellbeing of BME academics is surprising as there is a growing body of literature documenting specific challenges experienced by racialised minorities in HE.

2.5 The Experiences of BME Individuals in HE

In the previous section, I discussed some of the challenges experienced by all academics in HE. In this section, I explore some of the additional difficulties experienced by BME academics. Although the focus of this research project is on academic staff, there is a wealth of literature that has looked at BME students. This is perhaps understandable as there are significantly more BME students (496,265) than BME academics (36,775) in the UK (Higher Education Statistics Office, 2020a). The sharp decline in the numbers of BME individuals

who progress from student to academic may be indicative of the so called *leaky pipeline* initially used in reference to female academics (e.g., Clark Blickenstaff, 2005). When race/ethnicity and gender intersect, it can result in a broken rather than leaky pipeline (Holmes & Menachemi, 2017; Liu et al., 2019). Before working as employed staff, BME academics experience the environment of HE for at least 3-6 years as undergraduate and postgraduate students. Therefore, research on BME students is included in the literature review to provide additional insight into the experiences of BME academics.

Despite being overrepresented in HE, BME students are less likely to gain acceptance to Russell Group universities (Boliver, 2016). A striking example was a previous Runnymede report that found more Black Caribbean students at London Metropolitan University than all 24 Russell Group universities combined (Sims, 2007). Race intersects with class, and those from working-class backgrounds are less likely to apply to elite universities, particularly Bangladeshi and Pakistani working-class students (Shiner & Noden, 2015). However, there are divergences in the experiences of the various ethnic groups that fall under the BME category. For example, Chinese students tend to apply to elite British universities regardless of the social class of their parents (Shiner & Noden, 2015). Furthermore, when students from poor or BME backgrounds graduate, they tend to find employment in roles for which they are overqualified (Rafferty, 2012).

One of the more researched aspects of racial inequality has been the attainment gap in UK HE (Bunce et al., 2021; Cotton et al., 2016). In the academic year 2019-2020, there was an 18.3% difference between the proportion of White and Black students getting a 1st or 2:1 degree classification (Office for Students, 2021). The disparity has prompted the Office for Students to set a deadline of 2024-2025 for all HE institutions to eliminate the unexplained

attainment gap between White and Black and minority ethnic students (Office for Students, 2018). The gap is described as unexplained because it persists even when variables such as prior attainment, age, gender, and academic discipline are controlled (Cotton et al., 2016; McDuff et al., 2018). The attainment also varies from subject to subject and between universities. For example, the attainment gap in Geography is lower than the average across subjects, and the attainment gap in Geography is smaller at Russell Group universities compared to post-1992 universities (Desai, 2017).

It has been suggested that the attainment gap may be due to differences in behaviours between White and BME students, such as commuting to university (Smith, 2018). BME students report concerns that White academics cannot relate to their lived experiences in written assignments, resulting in lower marks (Bunce et al., 2021). Interviews with academic staff indicated that some believed the attainment gap reflected flawed statistical analysis, while others suggested a skills gap between ethnic groups (Austen et al., 2017). However, others have argued that racial discrimination is the leading cause of differences in degree attainment (Mahmud & Gagnon, 2020). Racial discrimination may also impact the wellbeing of students, and poorer wellbeing may independently contribute to the attainment gap (Arday, 2018a). Support for discrimination contributing to the attainment gap may be observed when looking at the attainment gap between Muslim students and other religious groups (Gholami, 2021). The attainment gap for Muslim students is more significant at universities with smaller Muslim populations, which suggests a social component to the difference in awarded degrees (Cordiroli McMaster, 2020).

Alongside attempts to reduce the attainment gap, there have been movements to decolonise universities and the curriculum they teach. While it sometimes may be used as a buzzword,

decolonial thinking aims to challenge the "Eurocentric process of expansion of modes of knowing, being, and representation (Shahjahan et al., pg. 52). Student-led decolonial movements such as Why is My Curriculum White? have brought attention to how the curriculum has largely ignored the contributions of Black and Brown scholars and perpetuated the normalcy of whiteness (Peters, 2015). However, beyond the curriculum, researchers have sought to articulate what antiracism in education might entail. Scholars have advocated for a shift away from buzzwords in promotional materials and increased representation of BME staff in HE (Doharty et al., 2021). Authors have also highlighted the role of language, and a particular type of English, in maintaining Whiteness in HE (Sterzuk, 2014). Decolonial thinking also advocates against an ahistorical understanding of education (e.g., Burman, 2019). Decolonial movements such as Rhodes Must Fall have also sought to pressure universities to acknowledge the relationship between colonialism and the founding of prestigious universities like the University of Oxford (Chigudu, 2020).

A recent survey indicated that 24% of students from an ethnic minority group had experienced racial harassment at university (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2019). Their findings are consistent with earlier research that found 16% of Black students had experienced racism in HE (NUS, 2011). Racial stereotypes vary across groups under the BME umbrella. For example, some Asian students are positioned as hardworking (Assalone & Fann, 2016), while Black students experience stereotypes about having less academic potential (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007). Although the type of stereotypes may differ between ethnic groups, it is suggested that they can exacerbate mental health difficulties for BME individuals in HE (Arday & Mirza, 2018). It is also worth noting that many international students will be racialised as BME when they progress into UK HE (Madriaga & McCaig,

2019). Unsurprisingly, research indicates that international BME students also experience similar levels of racism to British born BME students (Brown & Jones, 2011).

Perhaps more concerningly is that research indicates a level of acceptance of racism within HE among BME students. For example, research by Bhopal et al. (2020) reported that due to the consistency of racism in other areas of their life, BME students expected to experience racism when they attended university. Similar expectations of discrimination have been reported by Muslim students in HE (Islam & Mercer-Mapstone, 2021). However, the ease at which minoritised groups identify experiences of covert discrimination suggests that "covert" refers to the everyday nature of such incidents rather than being hard to remember or identify (Bhopal et al., 2020).

As they progress up the academic pipeline, BME students will interact with fewer and fewer other BME students. Only 1.2% of the 19,851 PhD studentships awarded by UKRI research councils went to Black or Black mixed students (Leading Routes, 2019). Furthermore, the few BME individuals who do progress onto doctoral studies are subjected to racist microaggressions and other forms of discrimination (Arday, 2020). Discrimination at the doctoral level is not a UK only phenomenon, as research by Bourabain (2020) found 47 out of 50 PhD students and post-doctoral researchers reported experiencing racism and sexism within European universities. The situation does not improve when BME individuals progress into employment within UK HE. For example, BME academics are less likely to be in senior academic roles (Bhopal & Henderson, 2019), and only 0.6% of all professors identified as being Black (Advance HE, 2018). The intersection of race and gender highlights only 25 Black female professors in the UK (Rollock, 2019). BME academics earn 9% less than their White colleagues, with the pay gap rising to 14% if looking specifically at academics who

self-identify as Black (UCU, 2019a; Weale, 2019). BME academics are also more likely to be on a fixed-term or hourly paid contract (UCU, 2019b). The overrepresentation of BME academics in fixed-term employment is noteworthy as 71% of 4000 academics stated that their mental health was impacted by insecure contracts (UCU, 2019b).

In addition to limited career progression, a UCU (2016) report found that 69% of BME academics had experienced racist bullying from colleagues. Perhaps even more concerning, 72% reported that they had experienced racist bullying from their managers (UCU, 2016). The reports of bullying from senior staff are worrisome. In theory, managers should be an initial source of institutional support following experiences of racism. However, if managers also engage in racist bullying, BME academics will be less likely to report their experiences. A more recent survey found that 3 in 20 BME academics had considered quitting their jobs due to racial harassment at work (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2019). The findings above may partly explain why previous research found that BME academics were more likely to consider working abroad due to their experiences in UK HE (Bhopal et al., 2015).

It has been suggested that the culture of UK HE is dominated by White, middle-class values (Bhopal, 2014). Cultural norms in academia, such as after-work drinks, are distinctly Eurocentric social practices (Sian, 2019). BME academics' cultural or religious beliefs may prohibit alcohol consumption, and the chosen venues for social events may not cater to Halal or Kosher food requirements (Cleary, 2011). Beyond facilitating a sense of inclusion among colleagues, socialising is often the source of relevant information for career development. Wingfield (2010) argues that specific emotions are accepted as part of the White middle-class culture observed in Western workplaces. Feelings such as pleasantness and amicability are

deemed socially acceptable. However, perceived expressions of anger and frustration, even in response to racism, can be socially deleterious for BME academics (Harlow, 2003).

BME academics may also experience paranoia and fear of being labelled as using the race card after a racist incident (Sian, 2017). More broadly, BME academics report a sense of being viewed as outsiders by their colleagues (Bhopal, 2014). Puwar (2004) described this outsider status as a *space invader* where the bodies of racialised minorities are marked as different. Although there was not an explicit focus on wellbeing, Sian (2019) notes that BME academics experience a psychological strain in HE. A more recent study was conducted by Arday (2021), who explored the barriers to accessing mental health services following experiences of racism in the workplace. BME academics reported a fear of being stigmatised by colleagues and healthcare professionals if they talked about their mental health difficulties (Arday, 2021).

BME academics feel pressure to prove their scholarly legitimacy to students and colleagues (Bhopal & Jackson, 2013). As a result, BME academics report that their engagement with race equality initiatives is judged less favourably than White colleagues performing the same duties (Wright et al., 2007). There is also a paradox where BME academics are often positioned as only having authority on race issues (Joseph & Hirshfield, 2011). Yet, the engagement from BME academics with critical perspectives on race is viewed as less scholarly and objective than when their White colleagues conduct similar research (Smith & Lander, 2012). The everyday nature of racism within HE also makes it difficult to challenge (Dar & Ibrahim, 2019). Furthermore, BME academics with other marginalised identities, for example, disability, can find themselves excluded from discussions due to their intersectional experiences (Bhakta, 2020).

Researchers have looked at the intersections of gender and race in UK HE (Doharty, 2020; Rollock, 2019; Wright et al., 2018). Rollock (2019) interviewed 20 of the 25 Black female professors in the UK. Despite reaching the upper levels of the academic pipeline, participants described cultures of racist stereotypes and frequent racial microaggressions at their universities. While the focus was on career progression, participants also noted that work demands made developing and maintaining intimate relationships complicated (Rollock, 2019). Research on gendered racism in UK HE has also documented simultaneous invisibility and hyper visibility (Wright et al., 2018). When considering the intersections of gender and race, Doharty (2020) argues that Black women are given a social script that only permits the emotional expression of stoicism or anger.

However, research has also conceptualised political identities as a further intersection that influences the experiences of BME academics. Sang (2016) reported that feminism was an aspect of identity that provided a sense of community and facilitated opportunities outside of academia for female BME academics. However, participants also felt an external pressure to choose between an identity as a race academic or a feminist researcher (Sang, 2016). Further aspects such as the university's size, its geographical location, and the academic department can shape the experiences for BME academics within HE (Henry & Tator, 2012). For example, research by Desai (2017) shows that underrepresentation of BME students and staff is more pronounced in Geography relative to sector-wide averages. In environments with less representation of specific groups, tokenism is likely to be more pronounced (Kanter, 1977).

Despite most research pointing to racial inequities within HE, there are issues with assuming that all BME academics experience racism. For example, Kim and Ng (2019) suggest the

traditional BME-CRT discourse fails to account for the experiences of East Asian academics. In their research, East Asian academics felt their inclusion as BME was contrived, and many stated they had not experienced racism in HE (Kim & Ng, 2019). However, an intersectional perspective may help interpret their findings. The authors note that the participants were foreign-born, and many attended elite British boarding schools. The social capital accrued from their schooling may have helped to navigate the middle-class culture of HE. Additionally, their understanding of racism would have been shaped by their childhood in countries where Asians were the ethnic majority.

Kim (2021) suggests that East Asian academics reject the conceptualisation of microaggressions as racism. Instead, some described the notion of racial discrimination within HE as a psychological projection by other BME colleagues. However, while it is encouraging to hear accounts where racism has not featured in a minoritised group's experiences, it is worth considering the possible role of colourism. Colourism is a process that privileges light-skinned people of colour over darker-skinned individuals, even within the same ethnic/racial group (Hunter, 2007). Hall (2018) suggests that due to increasing ethnic diversity in Western countries, the focus of social analysis will need to be skin colour and not on race or ethnicity. In contrast, I agree with Bettache (2020), who proposes that research should consider skin colour as an aspect of identity that intersects with race, gender and other social stratifications.

CRT and intersectionality have also been used to highlight the privileging of gender over race within UK HE policymaking (Bhopal, 2020b; Bhopal & Henderson, 2019). Policies such as the Athena SWAN and Race Equality Charter Marks have been introduced to reduce gendered and racialised discrimination. However, it is argued that policies have benefited

mainly White middle-class women (Bhopal, 2018). At a basic level, this can be observed in the uptake of different initiatives at universities. For example, there are many more universities that are Athena SWAN members (159) compared to the Race Equality Charter (48) (Bhopal & Henderson, 2018). The situation is made even starker when considering the uptake of other accreditations within HE. One striking example is that three times as many universities have an award from the Hedgehog Friendly Initiative than the Race Equality Charter (Moosvai, 2021).

The enactment of such policies may remove the incentive to tackle racial inequality as universities can state they have achieved a bronze, silver or gold charter status (Bhopal & Pitkin, 2020). BME staff report that diversity policies can sometimes be enacted as simple tick-box exercises (Bhopal, 2019). Furthermore, focusing on diversity rather than racism manages the discourse without tackling racial discrimination (Ahmed, 2007; Ahmed, 2009; Dar & Ibrahim, 2019). Similarly, the emphasis on unconscious bias training when discussing racial inequalities can normalise racist stereotypes and reduce the sense of belonging for BME students (Tate & Page, 2018; Universities UK, 2019). There is also little evidence that unconscious bias training impacts behaviours in a meaningful way (Atewologun et al., 2018). It is also argued that the audit culture of HE allows racism to be concealed behind performance metrics and institutional procedures (Mohamed & Beagan, 2019).

Teaching evaluations exemplify the culture of competition found within academia. For example, some universities set the satisfactory evaluation score above the average of all teachers in their university (Stark & Freishtat, 2014). However, doing so means that no matter the overall score, there will always be half of the academics seen to be underperforming on evaluation measures (Heffernan, 2021). An extensive body of literature

has explored racial and gendered bias in teaching evaluations in North American HE (Boring & Ottoboni, 2016; Mohamed & Begam, 2019; Reid, 2010; Rodriguez et al., 2020). Nevertheless, this appears to be an international issue. For example, female academics are more likely than male academics to receive negative teaching evaluations at European universities (Mengel et al., 2018; Özgümüs et al., 2020). In addition, Fan et al. (2019) also reported gendered and racial bias in teaching evaluations at an Australian university. Teaching evaluations have been critiqued for being influenced by factors unrelated to teaching quality (Hornstein, 2017; Lawrence, 2018). Furthermore, some metrics in the TEF, such as graduate salaries, are not directly influenced by the quality of teaching provided (Moorish, 2019). The issues with teaching evaluations prompted Rodriguez et al. (2020) to liken student evaluations to modern phrenology as a pseudo-science that reinforces racial and gender inequality.

Internationally, concerns have also been raised about the impact of research excellence frameworks on minoritised groups (Yarrow, 2018). An independent audit concluded that the REF disproportionately impacted women and scholars from an ethnic minority group (Stern, 2016). Some BME academics felt that the REF viewed research on race and ethnicity less favourably than other research areas (Bhopal & Jackson, 2015). Obasi (2021) notes that even when looking at the Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel for the REF 2021, the voices of racially minoritised academics are minimised. Seven of the nine academics are White, two are Asian, and none are Black (Research Excellence Framework, 2021). In addition, competition necessitated by the REF is reported to have left BME academics feeling disadvantaged without support networks within their institutions (Bhopal, 2014).

The growing literature base indicates that racially minoritised individuals experience racism as students and as academics. However, to date, studies looking at the experiences of BME academics have not focused on their wellbeing. If wellbeing is discussed, it is typically in the context of limited career progression or social exclusion related to racism (Bhopal et al., 2015; Rollock, 2019). Additionally, discussions of wellbeing only make brief references to the emotions and psychological responses associated with racism (e.g., Sian, 2017). Consequently, investigating physical and spiritual wellbeing is absent in the literature, as is the investigation of wellbeing outside the workplace. Therefore, this study aims to address the gap by exploring how BME academics experience working in HE to influence their holistic wellbeing, inside and outside the workplace.

2.6 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have reviewed the literature on wellbeing in HE, the experiences of BME academics, and the links between racism and wellbeing. The literature indicates that academics of all ethnicities experience poor levels of wellbeing, and neoliberalism is suggested to have exacerbated this in recent years. However, HE is not experienced equally and numerous studies document covert and overt racism towards BME academics (e.g., Rollock, 2019). CRT, intersectionality, and microaggressions, have been outlined as helpful frameworks in understanding contemporary racism and I will return to these frameworks when discussing the findings. Research looking at the experience of racism suggests it has numerous poor wellbeing consequences. However, quantitative approaches have been the dominant methodology even though wellbeing as a concept, and what aspects of life contribute to wellbeing, will vary from person to person (Diener, 2009; Proctor & Tweed, 2016). Therefore, a phenomenological approach that investigates the lived experience may be particularly suited to the study of wellbeing of BME academics.

In identifying the gap in the literature, a systematic review on the mental health of academics by Urbina-Garcia (2020, p. 569) articulated it helpfully:

> A striking finding is that there are virtually no studies (only two found in this review that investigate the lived experiences and perceptions of staff from a phenomenological perspective, whereas most of the evidence analysed places an important emphasis on investigating two specific psychological constructs—namely, stress and burnout—and, to a lesser extent, wellbeing from a positivist perspective.

Of the two studies mentioned above, one looked exclusively at language teachers from the USA, Japan, Austria, which may not share much in common with the experiences of BME academics in UK HE (Talbot & Mercer, 2018). The second study was conducted in the UK; however, it utilised a quantitative design that did not consider the ethnicity of academics alongside gender and age (Darabi et al., 2017). Most of the research looking at racism and wellbeing has looked at interpersonal experiences of racial discrimination without focusing on cultural or institutional forms of racism (Yoo et al., 2018). Therefore, the present study addresses multiple gaps in the literature by exploring the wellbeing of BME academics in UK HE.

In summary the literature review has identified that ther e is a lack of research on the wellbeing of academics, particularly from a qualitative research paradigm. Relatedly, research on academic wellbeing typically focuses on burnout and stress. Studies on wellbeing typically approach academics as a homogenous group outside of gender differences.

However, qualitative studies on the experiences of BME academics highlights the presence of racism and limited career progression.

With that in mind, the main research question for this research project is:

1. How do BME academics experience working in UK HE to influence their wellbeing?

3. Methodology

3.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter will outline the methodology and methods employed in the research project. This chapter aims to be transparent about the iterative process and the dilemmas I faced in designing the research. I will position myself philosophically and theoretically and consider how both aspects have shaped the research project. This chapter will discuss the mechanical aspects of the research, such as recruitment, data collection, and data analysis. I will also introduce the participants while providing relevant background information for the reader. I will also consider the ethical aspects of the research and the steps I have taken to complete an ethically sound project. I conclude by discussing the trustworthiness of the project.

3.2 Paradigm Positioning

Initially, I placed the research questions as the first section of this chapter as it informed my choice of data analysis. However, the underlying philosophy of a researcher will inform the questions that they seek to understand (Huff, 2008). Therefore, I will first outline my research paradigm, building upon Guba's (1990, p.17) definition of a paradigm as "a basic set of beliefs that guide action". Denzin and Lincoln (2011) suggest that a research paradigm consists of ontology, epistemology and axiology. However, when completing my literature review, I found Ponterotto's (2005) discussion of rhetorical structure useful regarding the style of communication, so I have also incorporated the concept into my paradigm. I discuss ontology, epistemology, axiology, and rhetorical structure in turn in the following sections.

Lincoln et al. (2011) argue that multiple positions often influence research, and the distinction between different paradigms is increasingly blurred. Ellingson (2011) goes further

and invites the researcher to embrace different viewpoints along the qualitative research continuum. Therefore, it may be more helpful to identify similarities and differences between paradigms, rather than to suggest one is superior to another for understanding a phenomenon. In this fashion, I am drawn to both interpretative and critical paradigms. There are similarities between the two paradigms, such as the inclusion of values and the co-creation of findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). However, each paradigm has points of emphasis that I have found helpful in understanding the research phenomenon. I will now outline how both paradigms have influenced the research process.

3.2.1 Ontological Position

Ontology refers to the nature of reality and how reality is understood. This research project rejects the positivist view that there is an objective reality that can be understood, or even manipulated, through experimentation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Neuman, 2003). My counselling psychology training has exposed me to the pluralistic approach to psychotherapy (Cooper & Mcleod, 2007). When working with clients, I recognise that different, sometimes conflicting, therapeutic approaches will be helpful for different clients at different times. Similarly, authors have talked about the benefits of methodological pluralism in research (Hanley & Winter, 2016). A pluralistic approach aligns well with the interpretative perspectives which argue that reality is socially constructed by, and between people (Raskin, 2002). This viewpoint is particularly useful if we accept that race, and by extension the term BME, are also social constructs. Working with clients has also highlighted the role that the socio-political context has on an individual's wellbeing. Therefore, I was drawn to critical perspectives that encourage the researcher to consider the presence of systemic discrimination and oppression (Tracy, 2019). A critical perspective acknowledges that while

there may be multiple realities, power and oppression will be a consistent theme across these realities (Morrow, 2007).

3.2.2 Epistemological Position

Epistemology refers to the nature of knowledge and how research can obtain knowledge. I adopt an interpretative paradigm where knowledge is believed to be co-created between individuals (Tracy, 2019). For example, the data generated from an interview is influenced by the social interaction between the researcher and participant (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). An interpretative paradigm also recognises that knowledge is subjective and value-laden (Tracy, 2019). As such I acknowledge that my prior life experiences will influence my responses to the participant and how the participant responds to me.

A critical perspective also recognises that knowledge is subjective and value-laden; however, there is a more explicit consideration of the socio-political and historical contexts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). There is also a recognition that knowledge is concealed, modified and produced through power relations (Tracy, 2019). A critical perspective also adopts the position that knowledge is not fixed but can be changed by the actions and perceptions of society.

3.2.3 Axiological Position

Axiology refers to the values of the researcher, and these can influence the chosen research phenomenon, the data collection, and the subsequent analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The research process can never be value-free; research will either challenge social injustice or perpetuate it (Fassinger & Morrow, 2013). While interpretative researchers aim to bracket

their values, this does not mean they remove values entirely (Ponterotto, 2005). However, by bracketing, I attempted to separate my values from that of my participants. For example, I endeavoured not to impose social justice values on participants during the interview. A critical perspective has also influenced my understanding of the values and ethics of the research project. Research in critical perspectives is "ethically motivated by a desire to improve institutions and problematise the treatment of those within" (Tracy, 2019, p.54). Similarly, it is hoped that by drawing on the narratives of BME academics, the research can contribute to the improvement of HE institutions. I will discuss my values further in the reflective section of this chapter.

3.2.4 Rhetorical Structure Position

The rhetorical structure refers to the style of language used by the researcher to connect with the reader (Ponterotto, 2005). Interpretative and critical paradigms advocate for reflexivity and insight into the author's experience of the research process. In both paradigms, the researcher is recognised as a co-constructor of the data and is "unapologetically political in purpose" (Morrow, 2005, p.254). Reflexivity aims to outline the researcher's prior assumptions, motivations, and experiences in a transparent way (Harrison et al., 2001). Reflexivity can help the reader understand how the researcher's beliefs may have influenced the analysis. Creswell (2013) suggests that the researcher should first describe their own experience with the phenomenon they are studying. By doing this before analysing the data, the researcher will at least be aware of what they are aiming to bracket off. In practice, this meant I continually reflected on my experiences in HE and considering how HE influenced my wellbeing. I have attempted to minimise the influence of my experiences detailed below. I should also note that I present further reflective statements in other sections of this thesis.

I have been a student in HE for eight out of the past nine years. The remaining year I was employed as a research assistant and worked closely with academics. My prolonged status as a student makes it difficult for me to imagine the extent to which HE continues to shape my life. However, there are certainly ways in which HE contributes to my wellbeing positively. For example, the HE environment provides opportunities to read and write about topics that I find intellectually stimulating. I also value the social interactions and the relationships that I have built with other students and staff over the years. Finally, while I am reluctant to admit it, the constant evaluation via university assignments has provided a sense of achievement when things have gone well.

There are, of course, ways in which I have experienced HE to influence my wellbeing negatively. The research process can be all-consuming, and relationships with friends and family have been neglected at times. On many occasions, I have prioritised academic achievement over other areas of my life. Anxiety over producing good work has had an emotional and physical toll that has only been exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic. I have also been acutely aware of how racism manifests within HE. I have seen fewer BME students as I progressed from my undergraduate degree to my MSc and now a professional doctorate. I have experienced microaggressions within the classroom and overt racial harassment in more informal settings. However, I recognise that my experiences are just that, *my* experiences.

3.3 Research Question

Developing the research questions was an iterative process, and I initially started with the following three questions:

1. How do BME academics perceive working in higher education to impact on their overall wellbeing?

2. In what ways, if any, does discrimination impact on the emotional wellbeing of BME academics?

3. What are the barriers to accessing wellbeing support for BME academics?

However, it has been suggested that qualitative research should consist of one or two central questions to allow space for the varied experiences of participants to be explored (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Additionally, I felt the second and third questions were too restrictive and were loaded with assumptions about BME academics. The questions assume that (a) academics will have experienced discrimination within their workplace and (b) academics will seek out support for their wellbeing. I also considered that the questions risked further restricting the number of eligible participants that I could recruit. Therefore, prior to the first interview I settled on the following main research questions.

1. How do BME academics experience working in UK HE to influence their wellbeing?

3.4 Adopting a Qualitative Approach

Early in the research process, I determined that the research phenomenon would be more suited to a qualitative methodology compared to quantitative. Quantitative research is well suited to establishing cause and effect between two variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). However, the current study was more exploratory and treating the participants as an expert was a necessity due to the limited prior research on the wellbeing of BME academics in the UK. Recognising the participants as experts on their experiences was also important ethically.

Qualitative methods can also better represent the experiences of marginalised groups and align well with a social justice ethos (Fassinger & Morrow, 2013; Grzanka & Moradi, 2021; Rubin et al., 2018). Adopting a qualitative design was also influenced by my prior experience as a research assistant in the NHS. In my role, I was part of a team looking at long term rehabilitation following a stroke. Some of the measures used were walking speed, grip strength and the timed up and go test. However, I was conscious that the quantitative measures used told me very little about the *experience* of rehabilitation after stroke.

As Yardley (2000) notes, qualitative methods share similarities with the interaction between clinician and client. By documenting processes of marginalisation, qualitative research can play an advocacy role (Larkin et al., 2018). I also believed that a qualitative approach offered a better chance to avoid the deficit-based model that is often characteristic of psychological research on minoritised groups (Buchanan & Wiklund, 2020). For example, consider a quantitative exploration of wellbeing in HE where White academics score higher on wellbeing outcome measures than Black academics. One interpretation could view race/ethnicity as a variable that leads to poorer wellbeing. However, this type of interpretation fails to consider the role of racism and other forms of discrimination (Teo, 2008). After deciding to adopt a qualitative approach, the next step was determining what type of analysis I would use.

3.5 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

I chose to employ an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) design. IPA was chosen as it was better suited to the goals of this research project relative to other approaches like Grounded Theory (Glaser et al., 1968). The research question is concerned with understanding *how* BME academics experience their wellbeing in the context of working in

HE. IPA is particularly suited to studying accounts of sense-making (Braun & Clarke, 2020). Rather than generalising and building theories, IPA facilitates the descriptions of the *lived experience* of a phenomenon. As a counselling psychologist, the parallels between IPA and therapeutic practice were obvious, particularly as I was completing a predominantly CBT based placement. Smith (2011, p.10) states that "IPA wants to learn about the participant's cognitive and affective reactions to what is happening to them". The psychological influence is so evident in IPA that Van Manen (2018) argues that Interpretive *Psychological* Analysis is a more accurate description of the approach.

Smith and Osborn (2014, pg. 41) suggest that IPA "is especially valuable when examining topics which are complex, ambiguous, and emotionally laden". Wellbeing and race certainly meet that description as topics. IPA was developed in response to a desire for a qualitative approach which was grounded in psychology as opposed to approaches like a grounded theory which had roots in sociology (Smith et al., 2009). It was helpful to have a psychological approach due to the studies interest in wellbeing, which has psychological dimensions (McNaught, 2011). I also hoped that the psychological underpinnings of IPA might better facilitate creating recommendations for applied psychologists inside and outside the therapy room. For example, Smith (2019) talks about the identification of hot cognitions when analysing transcripts in IPA. Hot cognitions are similar to the discussion of hot thoughts that might occur in a CBT therapy session (e.g., Bennett-Levy, 2003).

Smith et al. (2009) state that phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography are the three greatest philosophical influences on IPA. I will briefly outline the three strands of philosophy below.

3.5.1 Phenomenology

In phenomenology, the aim is to understand how individuals make sense of their experiences (Miller et al., 2018). According to Neubauer et al. (2019), there are two main schools of phenomenology. Transcendental phenomenology, which is associated with Husserl, and hermeneutic phenomenology associated which is associated with Heidegger. IPA is influenced by Husserl and Heidegger and incorporates aspects from both phenomenological approaches (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). One of the most significant points of contention between Husserl and Heidegger relates to bracketing (Barton, 2020). In transcendental phenomenology, the researcher aims to bracket their prior assumptions and arrive as a blank slate. Therefore, the researcher should minimise the use of hypotheses or theories in their analysis.

In contrast to Husserl's focus on description, Heidegger argued that description was impossible without interpretation (Mackey, 2005). Similarly, in IPA, the researcher attempts to interpret what the discussed experiences *mean* for the participant (Noon, 2018). Therefore, attempts to interpret their participant's accounts will inevitably be constrained by the researcher's preconceptions (Smith et al., 1999). My application of bracketing in this study is more closely aligned with the hermeneutic phenomenology. I recognise that the presented findings are influenced by my status as the researcher (Miller et al., 2018). Accordingly, I refer to my prior assumptions and beliefs to help the reader determine how this may influence my interpretations.

3.5.2 Hermeneutics

As I began to discuss above, hermeneutics refers to the process of interpreting written text and trying to understand the meaning. Hermeneutics was initially applied in the interpretation of legal documents and religious scriptures (Rennie, 2012). Alongside Heidegger, the work of Schleiermacher is relevant to the application of IPA. Schleiermacher emphasised the psychological interpretation of a written text (Smith et al., 2009). This requires the researcher to understand the words in the context of who the writer was. This moves interpretation into the realms of art, and the researcher will have to use creativity and intuition when entering the participant's internal world. The psychological interpretation described by Schleiermacher aligns well with the ethos of counselling psychology. It reminds me of a lecturer describing counselling psychology as either the most scientific art or the most artistic science.

The work of Gadamer clarifies the influence of the researcher's preconceptions on the interpretation. Gadamer believed that the relationship between interpretation and preconceptions was dynamic; the preconceptions will influence the interpretation (Laverty, 2003). However, the process of interpreting the text will also lead to the modification of preconceptions, and prior understanding may even be replaced entirely by new explanations (Smith et al., 2009). In IPA the researcher engages in a double hermeneutic where they make sense of the participant making sense of their experiences (Nizza et al., 2021). Rather than attempt to bracket off prior assumptions, the researcher is encouraged to use their prior experiences and attempts to understand how this may influence their interpretation (Smith et al., 2009). This is achieved by attending closely to the words used, but also the tone used by the participants to express themselves (Smith, 2019).

3.5.3 Idiography

An *idiographic* approach is one that emphasises the unique characteristics of an individual, while a *nomothetic* approach which attempts to discover generalisable conclusions across individual cases (Runyan, 1983). However, the nomothetic and idiographic approaches do not need to be conceptualised as mutually exclusive opposites; rather, there is a "generality in uniqueness" (Salvatore & Valsiner, 2010, p.4). Similarly, I believe that observing similarities across participants does not imply that each participant's experience will not be unique to their specific circumstances. Smith and Osborn (2014, p.41) state that an idiographic approach is evident in IPA by "examining the detailed experience of each case in turn, prior to the move to more general claims". The quote suggests that nomothetic claims may be made in an IPA study provided that the individual experiences are first explored in detail.

Due to the idiographic commitment, IPA studies typically employ small sample sizes, and single case studies have been suggested (Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011). The idiographic commitment in IPA requires the research to pay close attention to the participant's words in the transcript (Nizza et al., 2021). Therefore, direct quotes are used to ground the findings in the participant's accounts. However, Smith (2019) argues that direct quotes are not enough, and that the analyst should progress to a deeper level of interpretation in the presented findings. Attention to metaphors can clarify the underlying meaning of what has been implied without being said (Braun & Clarke, 2020). Additionally, the extent to which the researcher needs to interpret will vary from quote to quote. Some quotes may be straightforward to interpret, while others will require more "detective work" from the researcher (Smith, 2019, p. 7).

3.6 Considering Other Approaches

While I ultimately decided to use IPA to answer the research questions, I considered other approaches for this project. In this section, I briefly discuss grounded theory and mixed methods and present reasons for why I chose not to adopt them.

3.6.1 Considering Grounded Theory

Grounded theory has developed and diverged since its inception, and it would be inaccurate to say that it is restricted to any philosophical theory (Ralph et al., 2015). While the original work by Glaser et al. (1968) was informed by post-positivism, grounded theory has also been articulated by Charmaz (2000) in a way that aligns with social constructivism. In grounded theory, the researcher aims to analyses data without a preconceived theory or hypothesis (Glaser et al., 1968). The goal of the analysis is to generate "theory that accounts for a pattern of behaviour which is relevant and problematic for those involved" (Glaser, 1978. p. 93). Developing a theory for how working in HE impacts wellbeing had inherent appeal to me as a clinician. Theoretical models of racism, such as Racial Battle Fatigue (Smith, 2004) and Race based Traumatic Stress (Carter, 2007), have been created in the US. However, to my best knowledge, there is not a similar theoretical model for the UK context. I am not suggesting a quantitative difference in that racism in the UK is less or more impactful than racism in other contexts. However, there may be a qualitative difference in that those experiences of racism manifest in a different way in the UK context. Therefore, using grounded theory to develop a model sensitive to the UK's idiosyncrasies would be helpful for counselling psychologists and HE stakeholders.

In both epistemological versions of grounded theory, the use of theoretical sampling is recommended (Glaser et al., 1968; Charmaz, 2000). Questions that remain unanswered by the available data inform future recruitment of participants (Breckenridge & Jones, 2009). I was

concerned that if for example, there were gaps in developing a theory regarding the influence of academic discipline, I would need to recruit academics in specific fields. Given the underrepresentation of BME staff, this would be a significant obstacle to overcome. Ultimately as this study was exploratory, the goal was not to generate a theory that would apply to all BME academics. Therefore, I chose not to conduct a grounded theory study. However, it is possible that future research, with larger sample sizes, may benefit from a grounded theory approach.

3.6.2 Considering Mixed Methods

Consideration was also given to a mixed-method approach, where I could combine qualitative methods such as interviews, with quantitative measures like questionnaires. Scholars have advocated for mixed methods approaches on the basis that it leads to *data triangulation* (Mertens & Hesse-Biber, 2012). Denzin (1978) suggested that methodological triangulation could lead to a more objective and valid understanding of a research phenomenon. In clinical work, it could be argued that I adopt methodological triangulation when trying to understand a client's difficulties. For example, when working with clients in therapy, I often start sessions by asking the client to complete an outcome measure such as the Patient Health Questionnaire (Lowe et al., 2004). The questionnaire scores provide a useful summary of the client's mood during the past week. The questionnaire is followed by a qualitative discussion of the scores with the client. Combining both the questionnaire with a verbal discussion can result in a greater shared understanding of their current difficulties and goals.

Ultimately, I struggled to integrate the positivist epistemology of quantitative research, with the interpretative and critical epistemology I outlined earlier. Sale et al. (2002) argues that attempts to mix methods may diminish the effectiveness of each approach. Giddings and Grant (2007) go further and suggest that mixed methods research is simply a modern restatement of the positivist research that used to dominate the social sciences. Furthermore, adopting a mixed-methods approach suggests that the qualitative research generated from interviews was not enough and needed to be verified with additional quantitative data. Finally, there were also practical considerations against using a mixed methods design. Using mixed methods would likely require additional time and resources for data collection and analysis.

3.7 Positioning Myself Theoretically

Alongside the philosophical influence, theories have also influenced the research project. Given Husserl's view on bracketing, it could be argued that theory should not be used in phenomenological inquiry. However, the use of bracketing does not mean that theoretical knowledge cannot be used at all points of the research process (Charmaz, 1990). I share a similar view with LeVassuer (2003) who describes bracketing as briefly suspending prior assumptions a way to foster curiosity. Others have emphasised that bracketing is most important during the interview process (Smith et al., 2009; Alase, 2017). In practice, this meant I attempted to ignore theoretical assumptions during the data collection and data analysis. I did this by asking open ended questions that did not refer to theoretical frameworks during the interviews. I also tried to ground my interpretations in the participant's words rather than prior research on CRT, intersectionality, or microaggressions. However, I do draw upon theoretical knowledge in the discussion presented in Chapter Five.

Creswell (2013) suggests that the researcher must first decide whether theory will be used within qualitative research. Others have argued that it is an illusion of choice; there will always be a theoretical influence on the research (Sandelowski, 1993). Anfara and Mertz (2014) identified three perspectives on the use of theory in qualitative research. a) theory has no place in qualitative research b) the use of theory should be limited to the methodology and epistemology and c) the use of theory may be broad and is relevant throughout the research process. In the current research project, theory is used to contextualise the participants findings within the broader academic literature on contemporary racism. Therefore, to increase the transparency within the research, the theoretical influences have been CRT, intersectionality and microaggressions which I discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

3.8 Recruitment and Participants

It has been argued that sampling in qualitative research is always purposive and criteria based (Morrow, 2005). This study was no exception, and purposive sampling was used to identify participants who met the inclusion and exclusion criteria presented in Table 1. There were no exclusion criteria related to gender, class, sexual orientation, and other social categories.

Table 1

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Employed at a higher education provider	Employed in a further education or other educational provider
Self-identify as belonging to an ethnic minority group	Do not self-identify as belonging to an ethnic minority group

Currently employed in UK higher education	Currently employed in higher education outside of the UK
Employed as an academic	Working in HE in other capacities such as estates or administrative roles
	Postgraduate students such as PhD or MSc researchers

In line with other IPA studies, the aim was to create a homogenous sample, who had the shared experiences of currently being employed within higher education and self-identify as belonging to an ethnic minority. IPA scholars have encouraged researchers to embrace a less is more approach when it comes to the number of participants (Reid et al., 2005). Smith et al. (2009) suggest four to ten participants for an IPA study completed for a professional doctorate thesis. This study wanted depth more than breadth. Therefore, the initial goal was to recruit six to eight participants. Opportunity sampling was used, and five of the participants were suggested to me by friends and family. It is possible that the participants may have shared similar beliefs and values to me due to the use of friends and family for identifying participants. It is reasonable to assume that shared interests I have with friends may also exist between my friends and the participants that they recommended. However, I should note that I did not have any prior relationships with any of the participants. I also asked participants if they knew any other academics who may be interested which led to the recruitment of my sixth and final participant.

3.9 Procedure and Data Collection

After choosing a qualitative design, the next choice was to decide how to collect the data. The two most common forms of data collection are focus groups and individual interviews (Gill et

al., 2008). I chose interviews as they provided an opportunity to engage in-depth with one individual, consistent with the idiographic aspects of IPA (Miller et al., 2018). Additionally, I felt it would be easier to establish rapport with one individual versus several participants in a focus group. There were also practical benefits to using individual interviews over focus groups. It was relatively difficult to recruit participants due to the limited number of BME academics in UK HE. Due to the work demands and time pressure on academics, it would have been even more challenging to arrange a time when several academics would all be available. However, interviews are imperfect and do not inherently produce more valid ecological responses than other methods (Grzanka & Moradi, 2021). The discussion I had with participants was still artificial to the extent that I was in control of the questions. Therefore, the reader should understand the data collected within the context of a one-to-one research interview conducted over the internet.

When deciding how to conduct the interviews, I was drawn to Kvale's (1996) conceptualisation of two types of interviewers: the miner and the traveller. The miner asks questions to dig for facts. The miner believes that asking the right questions will lead to a discovery of the truth. In contrast, the traveller views the interview as a shared journey with the participant. I would argue that the traveller metaphor fits well with IPA. The participant is reconceptualising the story when telling it to others, and the story told to the interviewer may not be the same story told in different contexts to different people. After reflecting on my views of the interview process, the next step was to choose how to conduct the interviews. Fontana and Frey (2005) suggest that interviews vary according to how structured they are and can be categorised as structured, unstructured, or semi-structured.

3.9.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

Despite the possible benefits of unstructured interviews, it has been suggested that novice IPA researchers should employ semi-structured interviews (Smith et al., 2009). I was concerned that using an unstructured approach could lead to the interviews becoming unfocused. I had a limited amount of time with participants, 45-60 minutes, and I wanted to ensure that important topics were not missed. Furthermore, it has been argued that interviews conducted without preparation beforehand constitute a wasted opportunity (Hannabuss, 1996).

Ultimately, I chose to employ semi-structured interviews after considering structured and unstructured interviews. Semi-structured interviews sit in between the two extremes above and are the most used type of interview (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). While the interview is flexible, the interviewer is somewhat prepared and may create an interview schedule with prompts (Smith et al., 2009). Qu and Dumay (2011) suggest that while structured interviews are more suitable for studying facts, unstructured interviews are more suitable for focusing on meaning, while semi-structured interviews are more suitable for the social construction of accounts. As an interpretative paradigm informed the research, semi-structured interviews had inherent appeal. In a semi-structured interview, the participants can lead the discussion in different directions based on their unique experiences.

Semi-structured interviews also fit well with my therapeutic style as a counselling psychologist. I had accumulated over 150 hours of Cognitive-behaviourally informed clinical hours. CBT mirrors a semi-structured interview as there an overall structure that can be used flexibly within the therapy room. There is an inherent power imbalance in all interviews

(Kvale, 2008) and even the label of *researcher* conveys professional power and will influence the flow of the interview (Corbin & Morse, 2003). However, although I had power with the questions I asked, participants also had power with their responses. There was also the dynamic where the participants were academics, and I was a student. In HE academics will be placed above students in the academic hierarchy, and it is possible that this may have influenced their responses, or the follow up questions that I asked.

It is essential to match the interview questions to the methodology and aims of the research project (Roberts, 2020). It has been suggested that IPA research should avoid extensive and detailed interview schedules (Hefferon & Gil-Rodrigeuz, 2011). The research should also use open-ended questions about *how* or *what*, rather than *why* (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). The interview protocol (Appendix 8.3) included questions that touched on different aspects of the research question. For example, one of the questions was, "How would you describe the impact of working in higher education on your wellbeing?". Prompts followed this up to ask about wellbeing at work and wellbeing outside of work. Castillo-Montoya (2016) recommends that researchers receive feedback on their interview protocols. I sent a first draft of interview questions to my research supervisor, who recommended some changes around the wording of the questions. I then sent back a final draft to my research supervisor, which I used for the six interviews.

Ideally, I would have liked to have conducted a pilot interview with a BME academic. However, I struggled to recruit participants for the study, so this was not possible. While I had the structure of the interview protocol, I attempted to be flexible in how I used it. For example, if the participant had discussed some of the challenges of working in, HE, I would not repeat the same question that I had in my protocol asking about the challenges in HE. In

this example, I would also follow up with prompts such as "could you tell me a bit more about that?" or "Is there a specific example that comes to mind?".

3.9.2 Considering Structured Interviews

Structured interviews require all participants to be provided with the same questions in the same order. In structured interviews, there is the belief that the interview provides access to facts, and often this type of interview produces quantitative data (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006). One of the proposed benefits of a structured interview is that by standardising the procedure, any difference in their responses will be reflective of the differences between participants, rather than differences in the questions (Gorden, 1975). Therefore, structured interviews can be helpful when the goal is to produce generalisable findings across participants (Qu & Dumay, 2011).

I chose not to employ structured interviews as I wanted to provide some flexibility to my participants and let them take greater ownership of the interviews. Furthermore, I did not believe I would be able to recruit many participants for repeat interviews. As the research on the wellbeing of BME academics is limited, designing correct questions from the existing literature would not be possible. Finally, structured interviews are associated with a neo-positivist view of concrete facts which did not align well with the previously described research paradigm.

3.9.3 Considering Unstructured Interviews

Smith et al. (2009) state that the unstructured interview may be the greatest expression of IPAs commitment to an inductive ethos. My clinical practice has also highlighted the benefits of approaching human interaction without a predetermined agenda. During the writing of this chapter, I was working in the third sector delivering person-centred counselling. Rogers (1961, p.11) stated that "it is the client who knows what hurts, what directions to go, what problems are crucial, what experiences have been deeply buried". If *the client* is replaced with *the participant*, we can see the benefits of a person-centred approach to interviews.

3.9.4 Interviewing During the COVID-19 Pandemic

My initial plan was to conduct face-to-face interviews in a quiet and private space. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing guidelines, it was necessary to conduct my interviews remotely via Zoom. I have previously acknowledged an interpretative position, so the change to remote interviews will have changed the co-construction of data. However, assessing the degree to which the interviews were influenced by COVID-19 is difficult to know. Therapists have commented that it has been challenging to detect non-verbal responses from clients when delivering therapy remotely (McBeath et al., 2020). Given the parallels between therapy and research interviews, I may have also missed non-verbal cues from my participants. However, Gray and colleagues (2020) reported that some participants might feel more comfortable discussing sensitive topics in a space that they have chosen themselves. Furthermore, researchers have commented that rapport was built quicker with participants online compared to face-to-face interviews (Jenner & Myers, 2019; Deakin & Wakefield, 2014.

The interviews lasted between 40 and 60 minutes and all were conducted between May and July 2020. I used headphones and a microphone in a private room in my flat while participants were able to choose a setting that they felt comfortable responding to my questions. All the participants chose to complete the interviews in their homes. It is important to build rapport with participants in an IPA interview (Alase, 2017). I attempted to do this by explaining who I was. For example, stating that I was a trainee counselling psychologist in my second year of studies. I also asked participants if they had any questions before we began the interview process. I had a copy of my preliminary interview schedule (Appendix 8.3) on my desk to ensure that I stayed focused during the interviews. However, in line with the ethos of semi-structured interviews, I used the structure in a flexible manner. The interviews were recorded via an encrypted audio-recorder and were transcribed verbatim for the analysis. I stored the data on an encrypted student drive as recommended by the University of Manchester.

3.10 Ethics

This section discusses the procedures employed to conduct an ethically sound research project. Before conducting the research, I discussed the proposed research with my supervisor and explored the ethical considerations. Before attempting to recruit participants, I received ethical approval from the University of Manchester's Ethics Committee. I received ethical approval in November 2019 (Appendix 8.1), and the study was rated as low risk. I followed the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR, 2018) when managing the data. For all files, I used password encryption to add a further layer of security. Throughout the research process, I adhered to relevant guidelines such as the British Psychological Society's Code of Human Research Ethics (BPS, 2018) and the Health Care and Professions Council's Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics (HCPC, 2016).

My training as a counselling psychologist had the potential to result in unethical research. As Bondi (2013) notes, therapy and research are similar in that both involve making meaning. Some have suggested that similarities make therapists better positioned to conduct ethical interviews (Finlay, 2011; Georgiadou, 2016). However, perhaps the most significant difference relates to the aims of the two activities. The research is focused on wellbeing, so I will use wellbeing to highlight the differences. In therapy, the aim might be to support the client's wellbeing in some way. I could achieve this by providing empathy and space to reflect or through more structured interventions such as challenging hot thoughts. However, in research, the goal is to understand how participants make sense of their experiences without providing interventions. Exploring the participant's experiences from a therapeutic perspective would be unethical and would detract from the aim of answering the research questions (Georgiadou, 2016). Therefore, I refrained from making therapeutic interventions during the interviews.

3.10.1 Informed Consent

All participants were sent an information sheet (Appendix 8.4) and consent form (Appendix 8.5) by email and were given time to consider the study and ask questions beforehand. Participants were told that their participation was voluntary and that they could stop the interview if required at any point. If they agreed to take part, participants which signed and returned the consent form by email. Before each interview I explained the nature of the interviews and asked if there were any questions that they would like to have answered before beginning the interview. I explained how the data would be stored on an encrypted device and that I would anonymise their interviews and remove any identifiable information.

I also asked each participant to verbally consent to taking part before I asked questions from the interview schedule (Appendix 8.3). At the end of the interview, I asked participants if they still wished to have their data used in the project. I also asked if there were any specific parts of the interview they would like to have removed. For example, Participant 5 asked to have one section of our interview removed as he was concerned it would be identifiable by colleagues at his institution. I also notified participants that they were able to contact me and withdraw their data before the write up began in September 2020.

3.10.2 Power and Harm

Consideration should be paid to the power dynamics in qualitative research. A power imbalance is evident in the researcher choosing the questions but also in the subsequent analysis. My prior assumptions and even the choice of theoretical frameworks may result in the participant being misrepresented in the final analysis (Richards & Schwartz, 2002). Qualitative research probes a participant's inner world and talking about painful experiences may cause harm. An interview can be distressing to the participant (Allmark et al., 2009). I wonder if this is especially true for trainee counselling psychologists who support clients during varying levels of distress. The British Psychological Society (2018) suggests that researchers should minimise the potential harm to participants, such as impacting their employment. The participants discussed their employers, and it could be argued that professional "harm" could be inflicted on participants if their identity was revealed. Professional harm is particularly relevant as participants talked about experiencing racism from colleagues and senior management at their university.

3.10.3 Confidentiality and Anonymity

Confidentiality concerns the steps taken to ensure that identifiable information is not disclosed without permission, deliberately or accidentally (Wiles et al., 2008). This is another area where therapeutic work shares aspects with the research process. When working with clients, it is discussed that confidentiality will not be broken unless there is a risk to themselves or someone we have discussed. As none of the interviews discussed risk, confidentiality was mainly concerned with ensuring that the participants would not be identifiable in the write-up. However, I paid attention to possible risk disclosures throughout the six interviews.

Concealing the participant's identity encourages the participant to speak freely in the knowledge that their words will not be traced back to them. My participants are speaking about their employer and how they experience their job to impact on their wellbeing. Due to the relatively small number of BME academics, it may be possible to guess a participant's identity if I provided the name of the university or their academic discipline. I did not want any of my participant's employers to be aware that they took part in the study. Therefore, a balance must be struck between providing the reader details which may provide additional context with the responsibility to ensure anonymity. The BPS (2018) Code of Human Research Ethics outlines the participants rights to both confidentiality and anonymity. Data management was also informed by the GDPR (2018). For example, I ensured that I stored data on a secure student drive and password protected the transcripts. I also removed any identifiable information from the transcripts.

3.11 The Participants

I had to strike a balance between maintaining anonymity and including information that could provide context to the reader (Bickford & Nisker, 2015). Presenting more information about the participants may have resulted in a *thick description* (Ponterotto, 2015). However, the benefits of thick description needed to be balanced with ethical motivations to conceal the participant's identities. One of the main ways to ensure that participants would not be identifiable is to anonymise information and use pseudonyms. However, researchers have conceded that the complete anonymity of participants may not be possible (Saunders et al., 2014). Furthermore, pseudonyms by themselves do not guarantee anonymity as included quotes or phrases of speech may be recognisable to people who know the participants (Damianakis & Woodford, 2012).

Despite its potential to reveal the participant's identity, with the benefit of hindsight, I would have asked participants which pseudonym they would like me to use. However, some participants had left their jobs, and I did not have their new contact details while writing up the research project. Therefore, I have simply presented it as Academic (number) with a number denoting which order the interview took place. For example, Academic 3 was the third interview that I conducted. After discussing what information could be included with my supervisory team, general information about the participants is presented in Table 2 below. Describing the ethical concerns that arose during research can often shed insight into the social processes being studied (Levitt et al., 2017). To this point, my hesitation to reveal the participant's identities reflects the reality of BME academics being relatively small in HE and the repercussions for those who voice experiences of discrimination in the workplace.

Table 2

Summary of Relevant Participant Information

Participant	Gender	Subject Area	University	Self-identified as	Contracted Role
Academic 1	Male	Social Sciences	Russell Group	Black Mixed Race	Teaching and research
Academic 2	Male	Social Sciences	Russell Group	African	Teaching and research
Academic 3	Female	Humanities	Russell Group	Pakistani	Teaching and research
Academic 4	Male	Medical Research	Russell Group	Pakistani	Teaching and research
Academic 5	Male	Social Sciences	Post 1992	Arab	Teaching and research
Academic 6	Female	Social Sciences	Russell Group	Indian	Teaching and research

While it was not an aim of the recruitment, five academics were born outside the UK. However, intersectionality highlights that being born outside the UK may be experienced as a source of privilege or disadvantage depending on other aspects of identity (Turner, 2021). BME academics born outside the UK may face additional forms of discrimination related to their accent and language proficiency (Giminez & Morgan, 2017). Having grown up in

countries where they would have been the ethnic majority, working in HE may have contrasted sharply with their experiences in HE, where their ethnicity would be a statical minority, perhaps for the first time. However, there are also aspects of privilege as five of the six participants worked at a Russell Group university. Previous research has suggested that academics at Russell Group universities enjoy better working conditions than academics at post-1992 universities (Fontinha et al., 2016). Therefore, the participant demographics provide context to consider when interpreting the findings in the following chapter.

A further issue for the current research is what Van Den Hoonand (2003) describes as the "small population problem". Although Van Den Hoonand was referring to ethnographic studies on small geographic areas, there are similar issues that arise when researching with BME academics. I mitigated this issue by removing the mention of specific universities and concealing other identifiable information. A fictional example is provided below:

Original Text
It is difficult working here at Neoliberal West University as the psychology department has historically had few academics of colour and I was the first Nigerian born academic to work here.

Quoted text presented in findings
It is difficult working at this university as my department has historically had few academic of colour and I was the first African born academic to work here.

3.12 Summaries of the Participants

In this section I present a summary of the participants and my perception of them during our interviews. I acknowledge that these are subjective perceptions, but I have tried to rely only on the accounts they provided during the interviews. I also wrote drafts of these summaries immediately after their respective interviews, so it reflects my original thoughts. Academic 2 knew Academic 6, although they worked in different departments, and recommended her as a potential participant. To the best of my knowledge, this was the only relationship between participants in this study and were the only two participants working at the same university. The four other participants were working in different universities to each other at the time of interviews.

3.12.1 Academic 1

Academic 1 was the first participant I contacted and was eager to share his views. He explores racism in his academic work, and it was clear that he was consciously aware of how race manifested in his job. He believed working in HE had many benefits and enjoyed his job overall. However, he felt that there was a culture of surveillance for BME academics. He also drew attention to the intersections of race and talked about how others, for example, Muslim women, experienced even more challenges relative to himself. He was employed on a research and teaching contract and worked in the social sciences. He was one of the few BME academics in his department.

3.12.2 Academic 2

Academic 2 worked in another industry before completing his PhD. He talked about the positive role senior BME academics had played in his career, in terms of receiving mentoring

and social support. He talked feeling a responsibility of being a role model for future Black academics. He felt it was essential to connect with BME students and show that it was possible to enter academia after their studies. He talked about how being a minority within the university was initially jarring. However, he has now reconceptualised being a statistical minority as a source of pride for what he has achieved in his career. He worked in an ethnically diverse social sciences department, and he completed research and teaching activities.

3.12.3 Academic 3

Academic 3 was a senior academic and had worked many decades within HE in the humanities. Of all participants, she was perhaps the most explicit in linking her job, and by extension, racism, with adverse wellbeing outcomes. She had recently sought psychological treatment following workplace bullying that she felt was directly related to racism. She also felt that there was additional discrimination due to her gender and being born outside the UK. She expressed that some male academics struggled with the idea of having a female manager. She was one of the few BME academics in her department.

3.12.4 Academic 4

Academic 4 talked about experiencing racism in his role from more senior academics; however, for him being a Muslim was a more frequent source of discrimination. Despite this he loved his job and talked about the sense of purpose he derived from his research. Academic 4 discussed the empathy he felt towards a mentor who had experienced overt racism during the 1990s and 2000s. He believed that spirituality, regular exercise, and

support from his wife allowed him to thrive in academia. He worked in the life sciences and stated that his department was ethnically diverse.

3.12.5 Academic 5

Academic 5 was relatively new to his current role and cautioned me that his views on the topic would likely change over the years. He had worked in HE in different countries and felt that racism in UK HE was less overt than in other countries. He talked about how the racism he experienced in HE paled in comparison to the racism he experienced in the streets of his local area. He felt that it was necessary to not link too much of his sense of worth to his job. Additionally, he talked about the importance of having a community of BME academics with whom he was in regular contact with and received emotional support from these relationships. He worked in the social sciences and was employed on a teaching and research contract. He was one of the few BME academics in his department.

3.12.6 Academic 6

Academic 6 was the only academic on a temporary contract, and she openly discussed the precarious nature of her current employment. Academic 6 went as far as to warn me of the potential anxiety I may face if I pursued a career in academia. She also expressed concern that working in academia had forced her to marginalise other aspects of life. I got the sense that she did not want to reveal too much, almost as if potential employers would be aware of what she disclosed. She was employed on a teaching and research contract. She stated that her department was currently ethnically diverse and had been so historically.

3.13 Transcription and Data Analysis

Although IPA is a flexible approach, Smith et al. (2009) recommend a six-step process for novice IPA researchers. I built upon their suggestions and conceptualised the transcription as an additional Step 0. I outline the process that I used for the transcription and data analysis in detail below.

Step 0: Transcriptions exist on a continuum as either *naturalised* or *denaturalised* (Azevedo et al., 2017). In a naturalised transcription, non-verbal communication such as laughter is presented in the transcript to provide greater context. In contrast, denaturalised transcriptions remove non-verbal communication in favour of presenting a polished presentation of the interview. As much as possible, I utilised a naturalised transcription with the six interviews. After conducting each interview, I transcribed each interview verbatim from the audio recording without the use of any transcription software. At this stage, I anonymised potentially identifiable information, and for one interview, I removed a section lasting 2 minutes at the participant's request (Academic 5). I was motivated to transcribe the recordings immediately after each interview; however, this was not always possible. I found that the interviews could be emotionally draining, and on two occasions, I transcribed the interviews the following day (Academic 1 and Academic 4). While the process was time-consuming as I paused, replayed, and reread the transcript, it was invaluable to the data analysis. I began reflecting on the interviews and considering possible themes during the initial transcription process.

Step 1: After I had transcribed an interview I attempted to become deeply immersed with each interview. Smith and colleagues (2009) refer to this step as reading and re-reading and

new insights emerged after read through. I began Step 1 after my first interview as this allowed me to identify areas I could improve as an interviewer. However, there appeared to be a good flow to the first interview, and I decided not to amend my initial interview protocol (Appendix 8.3) after discussing this with my supervisor. Surprisingly, there was a richness in the data that I was unaware of while conducting the first interview. I had similar realisations after each interview which reinforced the benefits of recording and transcribing the data.

Reflexivity and self-awareness were important in the initial step of familiarising myself with the data. I am aware that I tend to skim read papers, perhaps a consequence of having extensive suggested reading before lectures each week as doctoral student. Therefore, to avoid a shallow analysis of the text I felt that it would be beneficial to create a routine for immersing myself in the data. So, for example, I endeavoured to read the transcripts at the beginning of the day when I was freshest. If it was not possible to read the transcripts early in the day, I avoided reading the transcripts on days where I had completed clinical work with clients. My rationale for separating "therapy" and "research" days was that I did not want my clinical work to invertedly influence my interpretation of the interviews.

Step 2: The second step was to create a three-column table with emergent themes, the original transcript, and exploratory comments. An example is provided below in Table 3. I was free to comment on whatever seemed relevant before focusing on descriptive, *linguistic*, and <u>conceptual</u> comments. I continued to listen to the audio while transcribing to enable me to draw upon the way things were said, in addition to what was said. I then began recording comments in the table.

Table 3

Three Table Adapted from Smith et al. (2009)

Emergent Themes	Original Transcript	Exploratory comments
	"I was doing my PhD at the time, and I was flattered to be invited because it was quite a nice conference. I didn't know why I've been invited and why it was so last minute, but when I got there, I stood in the room, I knew exactly why straightaway (laughs) I was the only person of colour…and people there also remarked that there was only one person of colour across a whole day of events"	Range of emotions experienced
		Initially unsure but assumed the others had good intentions
		I knew straightaway
		Incongruent laugh?
		Tails off into long pause
		How does it feel when others remark he is only person of colour? positioned as different?
		Discusses student experiences

Step 3: At step 3, I tentatively began developing emergent themes from my exploratory comments. My initial comments were exhaustive, so the goal was to identify the most salient points at different stages of the interview, and from the interview overall. I acknowledge that this was more art than science when identifying salient points. However, I did note why I

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thought a particular passage was important in the comments. So, for example, in the passage included in Table 3, I noted that it was important due to the incongruent laugh, which was followed by a long pause. The passage also captures a range of emotions that were associated with being invited to the conference. In the beginning, the participant was flattered; however, this is replaced by a sense of being used by others. This is where the double hermeneutic became evident as the themes were a product of the direct words from the participant combined with my interpretations of what those words meant. As presented in Table 4, I began to develop emergent themes from the comments and not the transcript itself

Table 4

Three Table Analyses Adapted from Smith et al. (2009) Continued

Emergent Themes	Original Transcript	Exploratory comments
Student experiences	"I was doing my PhD at the time, and I was flattered to be invited because it was	Initially unsure but assumed the others had good
Used as a commodity	quite a nice conference. I	intentions
Doubting others	didn't know why I've been invited and why it was so	*I knew straightaway*
Tokenistic	last minute, but when I got there, I stood in the room, I	*Incongruent laugh?* *Tails off*
Sense of being watched	knew exactly why straightaway (laughs) I was the only person of colour…and people there also remarked that there was	How does it feel when others remark he is only person of colour? positioned as different?

only one person of colour
across a whole day of
events"

Step 4: The fourth step was to look for patterns in the emergent themes, which I ordered chronologically, and began organising similar themes together. An illustrative example is presented below in Table 5. For example, "Changing social group/friendships" was conceptually similar to "Finding my tribe" and was therefore grouped together.

Table 5

Illustrative Example of Grouping Emergent Themes

Academic 1
<u>Emergent themes</u>
Changing social group/friendships
Finding my tribe
Colleagues don't get it
Benefits of mentors
Finding myself over time
Combined theme: Finding community

Step 5: The next step was to repeat step 1-4 for the remaining five interviews and transcripts.

Step 6: Finally, once I had produced a set of themes for each interview, I compared them and looked for patterns across all six interviews. During this process, I dropped some emergent themes as they lost relevance when compared across the six accounts. In contrast, some themes became more apparent as they repeatedly came up, albeit in slightly different ways

for each participant. For example, in Table 6, we can see that I drew on similarities, such as "Finding community" and "Supportive colleagues" and differences, such as "Finding my cocoon of safety" and "University can't help" when grouping themes across the six participants.

Finalising the description for a theme was an iterative process and continued into the write-up stage. At times I used direct quotes to ensure that the development of themes was grounded in the participant's words. To this point, I named many of the final themes after direct quotes that I felt captured the essence of a theme. For example, the eventual theme "You've got to get with the (right) team" is an adaptation of a direct quote from one of the participants. In addition, I attempted to create an interesting narrative across the themes in line with IPA recommendations (Nizza et al., 2021).

Table 6

Illustrative Example of Grouping Emergent Themes Across Participants

Academic 1	Academic 2	Academic 3	Academic 4	Academic 5	Academic 6
Finding community	Finding my cocoon of safety	University can't help	Limitations of university support	"You've got to get with the team"	Supportive colleagues
Combined theme: "You've got to get with the (right) team"					

3.14 Validity and Trustworthiness

This section concerns how readers can evaluate the research project in terms of trustworthiness. In quantitative research, trustworthiness may be understood as reliability and validity in quantitative studies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Morrow (2005) outlines four criteria

for assessing the trustworthiness of qualitative research, which transcends paradigms. These are social validity, subjectivity and reflexivity, adequacy of data, and adequacy of interpretation. Yardley (2000; 2016) suggests that qualitative research should be evaluated on; sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, transparency and coherence, and impact and importance.

I was drawn to Morrow's (2005) criteria, as the author writes explicitly from a counselling psychology perspective. However, I adopted Yardley's criteria as I found them more accessible and easier to understand than Morrow's. Additionally, Yardley's criteria are recommended in the key IPA text (Smith et al., 2009). I have outlined the criteria briefly below.

3.14.1 Sensitivity to Context

Yardley (2000) notes that sensitivity to context is a multi-faceted criterion that refers to the context surrounding the research. I have considered the context of the study in different ways, starting with the choice of interpretative and critical paradigms. Combining the two paradigms has highlighted my commitment to acknowledging the socio-political context and the importance of power relations. Furthermore, in this section, I discussed the change to remote interviews due to COVID-19 and reflected on how this may have influenced the data collection. Additionally, I have presented relevant information on the participants, such as the type of university they work at, to provide additional context for the reader. Sensitivity to context is also evidenced in the choice of data analysis. It has been argued that IPA is particularly suited to demonstrating sensitivity to context (Smith et al., 2009). The IPA researcher is encouraged to conduct a literature review before interviewing participants. Additionally, the inclusion of verbatim quotes and an idiographic focus are two further

examples of IPA's sensitivity to context. I have also considered how my experience and identity has shaped the research process, for example, in the reflexive section presented in Chapter Five.

3.14.2 Commitment and Rigour

This criterion concerns the comprehensiveness of the data collection, analysis, and write-up (Yardley, 2016). I have evidenced commitment to the research by completing this project across a three-year professional doctorate. Using six in-depth interviews of up to an hour with a homogenous sample is one example of rigour in the current study. I also transcribed the interviews verbatim, which was a lengthy process. Rigour is also evident in the analysis as IPA is a systematic approach that requires prolonged engagement with the participants' accounts. Additionally, the presented findings aim to move from surface-level descriptions towards a more in-depth interpretation of the participants' meaning-making (Smith et al., 2009). Finally, I have produced several iterations of this thesis, and I have utilised feedback from my supervisors to improve the rigour of my arguments presented.

3.14.3 Transparency and Coherence

Coherence can be seen in the match between the research questions on the participant's experiences and an IPA approach. Transparency has been demonstrated by clearly outlining the research process in detail. Yardley (2000) talks about reflexivity and how owning one's perspective can enhance transparency. Throughout the write-up, I have acknowledged my perspective by including reflections throughout the thesis. Finally, in a transparent research project, the reader can see how the interpretation came from the data (Yardley, 2017). To this

point, direct quotes have been provided to help the reader understand the interpretation process. In Chapter Five, I also evidence transparency in the research by discussing the potential limitations of this study. I have also attempted to increase coherence by focusing on depth rather than breadth as previously recommended for IPA research (e.g., Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011). In practice, I achieved this by using a relatively small sample size, limiting the number of questions in the interview schedule, and presenting a limited number of integrated themes.

3.14.4 Impact and Importance

The final criterion refers to the ability of the research to be helpful for the reader and other potential stakeholders. Yardley (2000) argues that this may be the most vital criteria for any research. I agree with Yardley's assertion, and an explicit aim of the research project was to challenge perceived discrimination within HE. I hope to increase the impact of the research by disseminating findings at conferences and engaging with senior equality and diversity staff at my university and beyond. Additionally, in Chapter Five, I discuss the implications of this research and provide recommendations for clinical practice and future research. Furthermore, due to the lack of research on the wellbeing of BME academics, this study makes an important contribution to the existing literature.

3.15 Chapter Summary

I began this chapter by outlining the paradigm for this study which draws upon critical and interpretative perspectives. I then argued that a qualitative approach was best suited to answer this study's research questions and aims. Furthermore, I suggest that IPA is particularly suited to answer the research question due to the focus on participants lived experienced. Next, this

chapter detailed how I recruited participants, collected the data, and discussed the adjustments made in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. I then described the potential ethical issues and the steps taken to mitigate these. Following this, I outlined the steps for data analysis and provided summaries of the participant's backgrounds. Finally, I concluded this chapter by discussing the validity of the project considering Yardley's (2000) criteria.

4. Findings

4.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter outlines the findings after applying an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to the interviews with six BME academics. The purpose of the analysis was to answer the following research question

1. How do BME academics experience working in UK HE to influence their wellbeing?

The chapter is separated into three main sections ordered around the three main themes: *"All my life experiences are racialised and gendered", Hyper performance*, and *I can protect myself.* Two of the themes had two further sub-themes, which I will discuss in further detail below. For each theme, I begin by introducing and summarising the main takeaways from the theme. I also present a simple table to illustrate how many of the participants contributed to the sub-theme. There were no pre-determined criteria for how many participants had to experience the essence of a theme. However, all participants contributed to the three main themes, and at least five contributed to each presented sub-theme.

The first superordinate theme of *"All my experiences are racialised and gendered"* refers to how participants perceived their wellbeing to be shaped by other forms of discrimination such as sexism, colourism, and Islamophobia in addition to racism. Furthermore, they drew

from their experiences as students and outside HE when making sense of their wellbeing as academics.

The second superordinate theme, *Hyper performance,* details the pressure that participants experienced to succeed as academics. The first sub-theme, *academic performance*, refers to how participants pushed themselves to succeed in the various roles that an academic fulfils. The metaphor of a game illustrates how participants perceived a need to be high scoring academics. The second sub-theme, *social performance*, details the participants' experiences of the social dynamics within HE and how this influenced their wellbeing. I utilise the metaphor of a theatrical performance to highlight the different actors and scripts in UK HE. In both sub-themes, the drive to perform was influenced by the perception of widespread discrimination and stereotypes within HE.

Finally, the third superordinate theme "*I can protect myself",* details the strategies participants used to navigate HE and positively support their wellbeing. The first sub-theme, "*You've got to get with the (right) team"*, refers to participants connecting with others and how this contributed to their wellbeing. The second sub-theme, *"I'm no longer playing the(ir) game",* details how participants consciously redefined their engagement with the game and theatre of academia to support their wellbeing.

Across the three themes, the participants discussed how working in HE influenced their social, spiritual, physical, and psychological wellbeing. The analysis suggests that the influence of working in HE on wellbeing is nuanced and is determined by the context of experiences. For example, while participants discussed social support as positively contributing to wellbeing, connecting with others could also cause further distress. Similarly,

somewhat paradoxically, experiences of racism led to a greater sense of connection with their faith for some of the participants. A summary of the themes and sub-themes is presented below.

Table 7

Summary of Themes

Superordinate themes	Subthemes
"All my life experiences are racialised and gendered"	
Hyper performance	• Academic performance
	• Social performance
"I can protect myself	• "You've got to get with the (right) team"
	• "I'm no longer playing the(ir) game

4.2 "All My Life Experiences Are Racialised and Gendered"

Table 8

Summary of Participants Who Contributed to the Development of Theme

Theme	Academic 1	Academic 2	Academic 3	Academic 4	Academic 5	Academic 6
All my life experiences are racialised and gendered	X	X	X	X	X	X

The first theme refers to the idiographic ways in which the six participants experienced wellbeing in HE. As detailed in the table above, all six participants contributed to this theme. This theme highlights how the participants' shared experience of discrimination diverged in meaningful ways based on their social identities and the associated forms of discrimination in HE. The essence of the first theme is captured in the quote below:

All my life experiences are racialised and gendered in some way. So do I feel discriminated against in academia explicitly? No, I wouldn't say that…. but I have, there have been situations…

(Academic 6, 212-214)

The quote above highlights two of the key points discussed in this theme. Firstly, racism and sexism have been a part of Academic 6's life before working as an academic. Therefore, experiencing discrimination is not "explicitly" a HE phenomenon. Secondly, she also draws attention to how her experiences are both racialised and gendered. It is not possible to understand her experiences of racism without simultaneously acknowledging sexism. All six participants discussed how other forms of discrimination, most frequently Islamophobia and sexism, intersected with racism. All the participants also referred to experiences outside their role as academics when making sense of their wellbeing. Their past experiences as students were particularly influential and formative in how they currently understood the HE environment as academics.

In this theme, participants experienced multiple forms of discrimination which intersected with racism. Academic 3 described racialised and gendered experiences in HE:

One particular person who was a male…. would be aggressive and he would bully a lot of women in the department…. and I felt that it was also a race thing.

(Academic 3, 115-117)

Academic 3 highlights how the intersection of gender and race manifests. She notes that the gendered discrimination she experienced was "also a race thing". The style of communication that male colleagues used with Academic 3 and 6 was repeatedly described by both participants:

Men have often taken a tone in professional settings and in exchanges where I don't think they would have spoken to me that way if I were a White man.

(Academic 6, 230-231)

Academic 6 believes that the communication she receives from colleagues is influenced by her status as a racialised minority in addition to her being a female. However, she was hesitant to label this as explicitly discriminatory and uses the words "I don't think". Further intersections emerged between race/ethnicity and religion for three of the participants:

You feel out of place. They will have a get together with colleagues and you won't be invited because they would have assumed that because you're a Muslim you won't come. So I think a lot of it comes from the religion, not race…. because equally, you would have other people who are non-Muslim, that will be invited to things or in a discussion but you'll be left out of it…

(Academic 4, 299-303)

In the passage above, Academic 4 perceives those preconceptions from others about what it means to be a Muslim lead to him feeling socially excluded by his colleagues. Additionally, he perceives his exclusion as being based on his faith rather than skin colour, as other BME colleagues are included socially. His repeated use of "you" instead of "I" could be interpreted as an attempt to create some emotional distance from his experiences. Academic 4's experiences of feeling "out of place" due to his religion were repeated by two other participants:

You're made to feel like an alien just because you're different, you know… I'm a Muslim… I don't wear a Hijab, but that doesn't mean I am going to allow people to ridicule women who do.

(Academic 3, 503-505)

Academic 3 discusses the impact of vicarious Islamophobia as she recounts colleagues making disparaging remarks about Muslim women. While the comments were not directly aimed at her, it appeared to still have impacted her wellbeing. She is made to "feel like an alien", and comments directed at other individuals communicate that she is also "out of place" in HE. She also spoke about how social exclusion was also tied to her identity as a foreign born academic:

People would make derisive comments about me and I wouldn't know…like when you're new to a country you don't understand all the customs…

(Academic 3, 118-119)

She later repeated the sense of feeling excluded by colleagues due to her identity as a foreign born academic:

When you move to a new country, it's kind of a levelling experience, you don't have the same kind of social capital that people around you here have. And so that itself is stressful enough, but then when you go into a workplace and you have all these issues to deal with, where people are not accepting you, because you are different…

(Academic 3, 261-264)

While Academic 3 and 4 experienced feeling "out of place" because of social exclusion, Academic 5 encountered religious-based exclusion through his academic work:

We know extremism and counter extremism has always been weaponised in such a manner. I really feel that myself, as a Muslim academic. I can't just write…I have to be hypervigilant of how I write.

(Academic 5, 553-556)

Academic 5 is "hypervigilant" about what he writes due to concerns that he will be viewed as a radical academic. He can't "just write" like his other colleagues in HE, and he perceives this to be a privilege reserved for academics with different religious beliefs. As a result, Islamophobia negatively impacts his wellbeing, and he is left with continuous anxiety over how his research could be perceived by others. While the intersectional nature of their experiences emerged repeatedly across the interviews, it was in idiographic ways for each participant. For example, Academic 1 discussed the intersection between racism and colourism:

I think especially as a mixed-race person, light skin, big hair, I can kind of be the acceptable face of it as well… in some ways, exactly what the university would want in the marketing stuff. Not too dark but got enough afro hair to symbolise diversity for them (laughs).

(Academic 1, 395-397)

Academic 1's experience suggests the plethora of discrimination in HE can result in both oppression and privilege. Academic 1 noted that he experiences privilege as his skin colour allows him to be "the acceptable face" of diversity. However, this is not to suggest that he experienced this as enhancing his wellbeing. Instead, there was a sense of unease as he described this to me. He did not value being an "acceptable face" and did not want to play this role for his university. Additionally, his laugh at the end appeared to be in response to the frequency with which such experiences occurred. Earlier on in our interview, he talked about the unfairness he perceived for colleagues who experience multiple forms of discrimination:

Think about all those forms of student feedback as something that provides a measure on how well we're doing in our profession. There's an irrefutable body of evidence to suggest that they are impacted by gender and ethnicity. And there's not as much evidence on this, but it looks like religion as well. So, for example, an Asian woman who wears a hijab is likely to get less positive feedback than a White man. And, of course, that's negative in and of itself, but that means that that member of staff becomes under even more surveillance. It becomes a perpetual cycle of them needing to be watched.

(Academic 1, 155-163)

Academic 1 experienced student feedback evaluation as a perpetual cycle that disadvantages BME academics. He also perceived an intersection between gender, ethnicity, and religion,

and how they produce unfavourable evaluations for those who experience multiple forms of discrimination. While I have discussed the intersections that can arise relating to social identities, other intersections were perceived by participants based on their terms of employment:

For those of us who don't have permanent contracts, you're doing all of this and then you're also simultaneously constantly looking for jobs. So that's an added source of pressure. So all of that just leads to quite a lot of emotional stress and worry.

(Academic 6, 508-512)

In the passage above, Academic 6 described the precarious nature of working in HE and the anxiety experienced by academics on temporary contracts. She experienced stress related to the day-to-day tasks of an academic alongside the added uncertainty due to the fixed-term contract on which she was employed. She further described the pressure that those on fixed-term contracts experience:

Not all of it is just sort of existential vanity. Some of it is also just very real in terms of needing to have a permanent position in academia. I think with a permanent position some of the restlessness might decrease…

(Academic 6, 642-645)

She highlighted that her desire for a secure position in HE was not only related to her emotional health or "existential vanity". Instead, she hoped that some of the restlessness that she experienced might reduce if she was employed on a permanent contract. However, the

experiences shared by Academic 2 suggest that her unease may not subside when she secures a permanent position:

I've gone from being this precariously employed lecturer to then having a permanent job at a top university…. so that felt both amazing but also overwhelming.

(Academic 2, 247-251)

In the passage above, the nature of the pressure changed as he transitioned to a permanent position. While the security of a permanent position enhanced his wellbeing, there were specific challenges related to a permanent contract that felt "overwhelming" and adversely influenced his wellbeing. Comparing Academic 2 and 6's quotes suggest that it is not a negative-wellbeing, positive-wellbeing binary between temporary and permanent employment contracts in HE. In addition to the divergences in experiences based on employment contracts, Academic 1 discussed the intersections between social identities and political identities:

I feel like there's more surveillance on those of us who are academics of colour, particularly if we have anti-racist politics. If our politics go against the grain as well as our ethnicity, then I think we're subject to surveillance.

(Academic 1, 127-129)

BME academics put themselves under greater scrutiny if they hold anti-racist views in addition to being racially minoritised. Academic 1 perceived anti-racism to be a political choice where academics can decide their position. His use of "against the grain" suggests that he did not experience anti-racism as a shared priority amongst his colleagues.

The multiple forms of discrimination within HE had substantial wellbeing consequences for some of the participants. Academic 3 was perhaps most explicit in how workplace bullying adversely affected her wellbeing:

It started affecting my health….I went into a nervous breakdown because in that one meeting, I just felt that my nerves had become… and I could actually see my palpitations and I said to him, look, I'm not feeling well, let's just finish this meeting here…He then realised what was happening he saw that I was perspiring profusely and just not coping with that level of aggression…

(Academic 3,179-184)

It appeared that Academic 3 was describing a panic attack after receiving abuse from her colleague. The experience was so intense and traumatic for her that it was as if she could "actually see" her heart palpitations. While she experienced short-term consequences in the form of a panic attack, she later discussed the long-term impact such experiences had on her wellbeing:

That was my experience and it really affected me, I mean, I became sick. I'm a heart patient and developed diabetes because of the stress…. I would say 70% of it is because of race, 30% was because of gender.

(Academic 3, 214-216)

Academic 3 detailed how working in HE resulted in long-term changes to her physical wellbeing. She "became sick" and attributed her experiences to the intersections of racism

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and sexism within HE. However, her experiences also had adverse consequences for her psychological wellbeing:

I've lost all my confidence because I'm constantly being told I'm not good enough, I'm not good enough, I'm not good enough…

(Academic 3, 229-230)

The loss of confidence detailed in the quote above fits with a larger narrative Academic 3 discussed in our interviews. In addition to physical health difficulties, she experienced a change in her identity and how she viewed herself. During our interview, she stated that her experiences with bullying led her to view herself as a victim for the first time in her life. However, the change in identity is understandable given the frequency in which she experienced negative comments on her academic performance in managing staff. Her use of "constantly" followed by the repetition of "not good enough" indicates that rather than being an isolated experience, Academic 3 was persistently exposed to negative comments in HE.

Within this theme, participants also discussed the importance of experiences outside their roles as academics. Several of the participants referred to previous student experiences when making sense of their time in HE:

I was doing my PhD at the time, and I was flattered to be invited because it was quite a nice conference. I didn't know why I'd been invited and why it was so last minute, but when I got there, I stood in the room, I knew exactly why straightaway (laughs) I was the only person of colour…and people there also remarked that there was only one person of colour across a whole day of events.

The quote above highlights the importance of context when understanding wellbeing in HE.
Initially, Academic 1 was happy when he perceived his invitation to be based on recognition
for his research. However, this changes "straightaway" when he perceived it as a tokenistic
invitation based on race and ethnicity. While he laughed as he recounted this event, I did not
sense that this was a funny experience for Academic 1. Instead, I perceived it as an
incongruent laugh where Academic 1 used humour to create distance from a painful memory.
The use of humour was employed by several participants during the interviews in similar
ways. Additionally, prior student experiences appeared to be important in forming their sense
of self within HE:

As a student I was constantly in this tension of how I make sense of my identity as a Black
man. As a Black man in this context where it's so prevalently White, that people either try to
read you or appropriate you into Whiteness… classmates would say things like, because I
was articulate, they would say, "Oh you're the Whitest Black man I know". And I don't need
to explain why that's problematic.

As a student, he struggled to understand his identity in an environment where he was
constantly exposed to racial stereotypes. "Whiteness" was the norm at his institution, and
those who were not White are either outright rejected or appropriated in some way into
Whiteness. His course mates appeared to believe that calling him "the Whitest Black man"
was a compliment. In essence they are saying that 'to be White is to be right' in HE.
However, he experienced the comment as so brazenly inappropriate that he did not feel it was
necessary to explain why it was problematic for his wellbeing. Furthermore, his use of "in
this context" suggests that while he was no longer a student, he experienced the context of

HE in similar ways even as an academic. He later elaborated on some of his past experiences as a student:

It's people constantly mispronouncing your name or what my students would now call microaggressions. Yeah, at that time it was just thorough. I'm not even sure you can call them micro it was just full time.

(Academic 2, 184-187)

In some ways, "micro" does a disservice to the impact these daily interactions had on the wellbeing of Academic 2. He described the microaggressions as constant, thorough, and full time, which suggests that they were an integral part of his experience in HE.

As discussed earlier, Islamophobia was a core component of the experience for several of the participants. For Academic 4, his initial encounters with faith-based discrimination in HE occurred as a student:

I had a professor who used to see me praying in the lab in my free time and then, he particularly documented on my reference letter that I was a misfit in society. Those were his words, so according to him, me praying was not fitting into society.

(Academic 4, 180-182)

Praying in the workplace was viewed negatively by his professor and ultimately led to a poor reference letter. In terms of how this affected his wellbeing, the negative perceptions from others were life changing. He was eventually rejected for an overseas visa to continue his studies due to the poor reference letter. He later experienced similar Islamophobia when applying for a research grant as a postgraduate student:

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I clearly remember I went for a grant to work for someone who asked me, 'so why do you want to do research in this area?', and my answer was because I think God, or the creator Allah, has given the cure to every disease so you have to find the cure. So he clearly said to me, I can't work with you because you believe in God. So I said that's fine. I'll find someone who would appreciate my ideas but, at least you can have a look at what I'm proposing to do in my research.

(Academic 4, 484-489)

Being rejected for a grant based on his religious beliefs left a lasting impact, and he remembers the experience over a decade later in our interview. The repeated use of the word "clearly" suggests that he can recall this experience with clarity. In some ways, he was not surprised by Islamophobia. Instead, it was more painful not even to be allowed to finish his proposal. While several participants discussed student experiences, others referred to experiences outside HE when making sense of their wellbeing in academia:

I've been attacked on the street, for example, you know, like walking on the street… I've also had people come up to me and say get out of my country.

(Academic 5, 230-231)

One might expect that being attacked on the street would be more distressing than the microaggressions in academia, however this was not the case:

It's not a great experience. But it didn't even compare in terms of its effect on me as it did with all these managerial acrobatics. I'm not getting the respect… just a decent level of

respect that we all we all deserve. You know, yourself, myself, everyone included… I felt like

ultimately that would get to me much more than any verbal or physical attacks that have ever

happened to me.

<div align="right">(Academic 5, 234-240)</div>

Academic 5 perceived the ambiguously racist experiences at work to negatively influence wellbeing more than more overt racial discrimination outside work. Earlier on in our interview, he discussed how experiences within HE can influence wellbeing outside the workplace:

You're just constantly being overlooked in many different ways, and it led to some serious

issues which I won't go into right now…. like in terms of my relationship…. but I always

constantly felt like I was being mistreated, or mismanaged.

<div align="right">(Academic 5, 218-221)</div>

There was a sense of frustration as he described the impact experiences at work had on his relationship. A related issue was that it was difficult to prove that experiences in HE were definitively racist:

I wouldn't necessarily have that sort of proof to say like, Okay, this was a racist experience

and then be able to prove it, you know what I mean?

<div align="right">(Academic 5, 278-279)</div>

Part of what made such experiences so deleterious for wellbeing, was Academic 5's perceived inability to prove racism had even occurred. Without proof, he was unable to seek

out support within the workplace. However, other academics highlighted how definitively

racist events could also negatively influence their wellbeing:

I received an awful lot of racist abuse around that time, and I didn't think it was really

affecting me but my partner said that I was miserable for a few weeks… and I think it made

her miserable for a while as well.

(Academic 1, 294-296)

In the quote above, Academic 1 described his experience of writing an opinion piece and

receiving racist abuse online. Despite the different contexts, there were similarities between

Academic 5 and Academic 1. Their relationships with loved ones were adversely affected by

experiences of racism. This quote also indicates that the boundaries between wellbeing at

work and wellbeing outside work were often permeable for BME academics.

4.3 Hyper Performance

The second superordinate theme, *Hyper performance*, details the pressure to "perform" that

BME academics experienced while working in HE. The essence of this theme is captured by

Academic 2:

The performance can become so pervasive that you internalise it as the thing you need to do

to survive.

(Academic 2, 389-390)

While the "performance" was a strategy that allowed participants to survive the HE

environment, there were unintended consequences to maintaining their performances. The

sub-theme *Academic performance* details the pressure academics experienced to perform well in all aspects of their jobs. In this sub-theme, academia is perceived as a game in which participants felt pressured to score well. The second sub-theme, *Social performance*, highlights how the pressure to perform was also experienced socially. In the second sub-theme, HE is experienced akin to a theatre production with different actors and scripts. In the social performance, the participants were often given limiting and constrictive roles to act out. In both sub-themes, participants discussed experiencing a toll on their wellbeing due to the demands to perform.

Table 9

Summary of Participants Who Contributed to the Development of Sub Themes

Subordinate theme	Academic 1	Academic 2	Academic 3	Academic 4	Academic 5	Academic 6
Academic Performance	X	X	X	X	X	X
Social Performance	X	X	X		X	X

4.3.1 Academic Performance

In this first sub-theme, participants talked about the pressure they experienced from themselves and others to perform professionally. Academic performance influenced the wellbeing of all six participants, albeit in idiosyncratic ways. For some participants, the demands of academic performance manifested in anxiety over the quality and quantity of their research output:

There's just constant anxiety, to be publishing, to be making interventions in your field of research…

The anxiety that Academic 6 experienced was relentless regarding publishing her research. However, it was not enough to consistently publish research. She believed that her research needed to be innovative. Academic 6 talked about this anxiety as a universal pressure that all academics experienced regardless of their social identities. However, other academics perceived this pressure to be intrinsically linked to their ethnic backgrounds. For example, Academic 2 talked about his experiences of developing confidence as a Black academic:

As a Black scholar here, the level of internal struggle and self confidence that you need to build up in order to feel comfortable in your position and research is substantially, both quantitatively and qualitatively, greater than my work colleagues.

(Academic 2, 406-408)

Academic 2 experienced HE as an environment where racism required him to develop more confidence and a different type of confidence compared to White academics. Developing this confidence was not straightforward, and he referred to how this has been a struggle over the years. However, the perceived pressure to work harder to overcome racism was not unique to Academic 2 and was repeated by other participants:

The adage Black communities have told each other for decades in the UK and centuries globally, that you have to work twice as hard to protect yourself… I feel that I need to reach a certain level… I have to perhaps do a little bit more, my work has to be really, really tight to protect me… to insulate me from the precarity that academics of colour feel at a higher level than their White counterparts…so I think it adds pressure.

Academic 1 perceived his status as an academic to be fluid and precarious due to racism. If his work was not beyond question, he believes that his identity makes him an easier target than his White colleagues. However, his belief of needing to work harder was not only informed by his experiences from UK HE. Instead, he described it as cultural knowledge that had been passed on from one generation to the next, among racialised minorities. The experience of working harder to overcome negative stereotypes was repeated almost verbatim by other participants. However, differences between participants were observed in how racism intersected with other forms of discrimination:

I've seen that in a lot of research groups they try to find people that would fit within their group. I think that's why you have to work extra hard to show that you would add value to the institution, despite what you believe in…

(Academic 4, 497-500)

While Academic 1 and Academic 2 experienced a need to work harder driven by racism, Academic 4 discussed the impact of Islamophobia on his experiences. He described that by working harder and proving his merits, others may choose to work with him "despite" his religious beliefs. There was a noticeable lack of emotion as he described this experience to me. It was as if Islamophobia was just an accepted everyday aspect of working in academia. Further divergences in the shared experience of working harder to overcome discrimination, were observed for other participants. For example, the perception that she needed to work harder for Academic 3, was related to xenophobia and her status as a foreign-born academic:

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I guess all immigrants are the same, you know, when you're new to a country, you work harder and you push yourself harder.

(Academic 3, 107-108)

Like Academic 4, Academic 3 described this need to work harder as a standard requirement of working in HE for BME academics. Finally, Academic 2 drew attention to the intersectional nature of working harder for BME women in academia:

There is this sort of aphorism that Black people have to be twice as… to work twice as hard to earn half as much... even more so as Black women.

(Academic 2, 503-504)

In the passage above, Academic 2 experienced working harder as somewhat futile and unrewarded by HE. He perceived the eventual outcome to be one where BME individuals still earned less than their White colleagues. Nevertheless, the constant drive to perform had enabled the academics to progress in their career despite experiencing discrimination. However, participants also talked about the wellbeing consequences of working harder to overcome stereotypes in HE:

I never dreamed that I'd ever get into a place like this to begin with, let alone to be looking back on it and having achieved all of the success... if you showed me a vision of the future when I was applying (to study) I wouldn't have believed it… but it was achieved because I just worked insanely hard…. and I neglected exercise and my physical health a lot.

(Academic 2, 378-382)

Academic 2 described a conflicted sense of what he had sacrificed to achieve his current position. He perceived that his career success was only achieved due to compromising other aspects of wellbeing. He went on to explain how this prioritisation of his career had occurred:

I think when you're constantly performing all of the time, but you're also performing at a really high level, all of the time... Self-care is an easy thing to subordinate.

(Academic 2, 387-388)

Here, Academic 2 described academic performance as a perpetual cycle whereby high-performance leads to recognition and status. The performance was described as having an addictive quality to it, where higher and higher levels of performance were required to feel satisfied. However, maintaining this performance came at the expense of other areas in the participants' lives. Other academics also described a similar process of prioritising academic performance over other activities that could positively contribute to wellbeing:

It certainly impacts my personal life… and what happens as a result is that I prioritise work… things that are associated with leisure or downtime gets side-lined to keep up with work.

(Academic 6, 466-468)

To keep up with the demands of her job, Academic 6 felt that she had to minimise other aspects of her life to keep up with the demands of HE. If we continue the metaphor of the game of academia, leisure and self-care have no place on the playing field and are "side-lined". Earlier on in our interview, Academic 6 explained how publishing research also requires adherence to the rules of the game:

You just feel a lot of pressure to be attracting grants…the need to be doing cutting edge research, whatever that means… and it keeps changing from year to year depending on the demands of funding…

<div align="right">(Academic 6, 502-505)</div>

Here Academic 6 talks about the pressure academics face to produce research that generates income for their employers. However, as indicated by "whatever that means", Academic 6 perceived the requirements as somewhat ambiguous. Moreover, in her experience, the goalposts for what constitutes grant worthy research keeps changing.

In conclusion, participants in this study experienced pressure to maintain high levels of academic performance. It was perceived as a necessary strategy to survive HE and life in the UK as racialised minorities. Some participants described this pressure as relating mainly to racism. However, for other participants, the drive to perform intersected with other forms of discrimination, such as Islamophobia and sexism. In addition, participants experienced the pressure to perform well at different seniority levels and on different employment contracts. The academic performance had a toll on wellbeing and culminated in anxiety and uncertainty. Additionally, the time spent on maintaining academic performance resulted in reduced engagement with self-care. Perhaps the wellbeing consequences were best summarised by Academic 2:

I think that that's the trap… the hyper performance, the hyper achieving persona that's there all of the time can just consume you…

<div align="right">(Academic 2, 499-501)</div>

There are benefits to maintaining high levels of academic performance such as facilitating career progression. However, it can also become a trap. Academic 2's reference to being consumed by this hyper performance suggests that he lost a sense of his identity and other vital areas of his life, such as maintaining good health. Therefore, it appears that in this study, participants experienced academic performance as something that negatively influenced their wellbeing to a great extent.

4.3.2 Social Performance

In the second sub-theme, *Social performance*, participants describe how HE required them to present themselves in a particular way. Using the analogy of a theatre or film production, participants experienced HE as an environment where their actions had to be aligned with the script of the producer (senior management). They described an awareness of racist stereotypes, most notably around aggression, that required them to censor their emotions. The participants also experienced their identity as something that could be used as a commodity by their employer and perceived their HE institutions to be engaging in a social performance where diversity is desired without necessarily creating equality. Two of the male participants described a fear of confirming racist stereotypes that portrayed BME men as angry and hostile:

You worry about being the angry Arab or the angry racialised minority…

(Academic 5, 290-291)

You're like performing the role of the erudite scholar, never the angry Black man… So you can't communicate in the language of emotion…You can't be like, yo, it's just really fucked up.

<div align="right">(Academic 2, 357-359)</div>

In the two passages above, we can see how participants censored themselves and performed a role that they perceived would be acceptable in the workplace environment. Both academics perceived anger to be an emotion that BME academics must avoid. Expressing anger, or actions that would be perceived as angry, risked confirming racist stereotypes about Black or Arab men. Academic 2 highlights how the "erudite scholar" is not allowed to communicate with their emotions. He perceived that it was impossible to express anger as a Black man and simultaneously be viewed as a scholar in HE. Academic 2 was aware that this performance was something he had developed as a student and academic in HE:

It's a performance I've honed but it can also feel quite exhausting… burdensome and just like totalising as well, because I don't mind doing a performance some of the time, we all do… but you need to have something else… being articulate is the main currency here.

<div align="right">(Academic 2, 362-365)</div>

Performing can become an exhausting emotional burden. Academic 2 expressed wanting to escape from the constant need to socially perform. Academic 2's statement that "being articulate is the main currency" suggest that there is a deliberate and planned use of language during performances. Other participants experienced the pressure of performing socially beyond the physical, or virtual walls of the workplace:

There is a very real pressure of performing which just seems to be expanding. I'm not on Twitter or any of that, but I know that a lot of academics also feel constant pressure to engage in those kinds of debates. So that pressure just keeps increasing in terms of the outer-facing public-facing persona that you have to have, but also be producing very deep insightful publications.

(Academic 6, 492-498)

Despite not having any social media accounts herself, Academic 6 perceived social media to be another stage where academics need to deliver a captivating social performance. Furthermore, Academic 6 perceived social performance as interlinked with publications and academic performance, as discussed in the previous sub-theme. She perceived that to succeed in academia, she must master social and academic performances.

Some of the participants talked about how their legitimacy as academics was questioned by others. This was experienced by Academic 1 before delivering a lecture when another member of staff asked if he had the right to be in a staff meeting room:

This is all hard to measure but thinking back, by virtue of this person questioning whether I'm supposed to be here, I'm aware that people are not perceiving me as a so called legitimate academic... and then I've got to go and stand in front of a classroom and somehow command the respect of students.

(Academic 1, 233-236)

The above passage highlights many of the key concepts described by participants in this sub-theme. Academic 1 could not definitively confirm that the experience was racist as it was

"hard to measure". However, he was aware that others held a specific image of a "legitimate" academic. We can also see how this had a knock-on effect on Academic 1 as the questioning from others led him to question himself. He wondered if he could "somehow" deliver a convincing social performance that would engender respect from his students. Other participants also questioned if others perceived them as legitimate academics:

The fact that I am teaching, and I think this is pretty intersectional. It's not just being Indian, but I think it's the thought of being an Indian woman… I feel the need to, particularly in establishing a voice of authority, I feel it does not come very naturally. So, I feel very conscious of being precise in my language.

(Academic 6, 317-321)

Academic 6 drew attention to the intersectional nature of her experiences. She perceived her experiences to be intrinsically tied to being an "Indian woman" in HE. She was conscious of how precise language was needed to convey the appearance of an authoritative academic. Her experiences shared similarities with Academic 2's perception of needing to portray the "erudite scholar". Interestingly, I perceived that she was attempting to be precise in her language as she described the experience of needing to be precise with language within HE. In the following passage, Academic 2 discusses the wellbeing consequences of constantly delivering a social performance:

The overwhelming part was not unrelated to race. Because you know, we joke and we say hashtag Black excellence, but it also makes you hyper visible…and it comes with a burden of representation…. a group of students used to joke that I was the residential Black excellence…. it's funny, and it's sweet, but internally you're like, shit, I've got to keep this up.

The passage above details how Academic 6 experienced "Black excellence" as a script placed on him in academia. In some ways, it may be preferable to some of the other social scripts he had to contend with, such as the "angry Black man." However, Black excellence can also be a source of pressure and there is an internal drive to keep performing this role. Academic 2 later discussed how he perceived the "burden of representation" to be unique to Black academics in comparison to other BME academics:

People call it a Black tax, and it can be tremendously burdensome. One of the things that I didn't know then, that I know now is that none of your White colleagues warn you or advise you, not even your South Asian ones… particularly because they just have a bit more of a community while as a Black person you are sort of on your own… and you really got to figure out quick how to deal with that stuff. Because if you don't, it'll totally undo you.

(Academic 2, 468-472)

While "Black tax" is often used to refer to financial burdens, I believe Academic 2 refers to an emotional tax in this context. He experienced a duty to positively represent Blackness in an environment where Whiteness is the status quo. This quote also highlights how while there are convergences in the experience of BME academics, there are divergences between ethnic groups. The sense of responsibility to deliver a positive social performance was central to his experience in academia. However, this had positive and negative implications for his wellbeing as he later explained:

I have to be a standard for other Black people, but I also have to let Black students know through example, through mentorship, through my public presence, that they have every right to be here as any other student in this university and that they can make it their own, and that's a lot to have. It can feel very burdensome and it can feel very overwhelming…. it can also feel very privileged. So, there's just a lot of dissonance, like all the time dealing with this range of emotions.

(Academic 2, 258-263)

The script of academia also led some participants to be wary of engaging in discussions of racism within HE. Academic 1 explained this process:

There will be eye rolling in meetings when you raise a question about race. And of course, that eye rolling is irritating because it should be everyone's responsibility to raise the questions about race and ethnicity. Often your colleagues are not seeing it... and when you do raise it, you are the person of colour with a chip on their shoulder.

(Academic 1, 175-178)

In the passage above, Academic 1 perceived highlighting issues related to race and ethnicity to be dismissed by his colleagues. He was aware that others disagreed with his views on racism which was evidenced through their "eye-rolling". Such non-verbal acts are subtle enough that he would be unable to challenge them. However, he still experienced the intended message. If Academic 1 challenged the status quo, he risked being labelled with another undesirable social script such as "the person of colour with a chip on their shoulder".

While participants talked about the social performance they were required to deliver, they also discussed the social performance they perceived others to be acting out. For example,

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Academic 1 discussed how senior colleagues used his identity to convey the image of diversity:

I've been put on panels because they're all White and they need a person of colour.

<div align="right">(Academic 1, 418)</div>

In some ways, having BME academics was beneficial to the image that the institution wants to portray to potential students:

When I started at this university, they were very, very, very, very keen to get my staff picture up because the department here has been incredibly White. And so, they want us to address that (laughs) straightaway.

<div align="right">(Academic 1, 383-385)</div>

As also noted earlier, Academic 1 used humour again while discussing his discomfort at his ethnicity being used by his employer to fulfil their social performance. A consequence of being positioned in this way was that it could cause academics to question the motives behind awards or recognition that they received in their careers:

This is one of the doubts I think can really affect your career. It's played on my mind at times. Sometimes I wonder if I've got positions and things have gone well for me because uhh, (hesitant pause) I want to be careful of how I say it but… being used by others as a token…

<div align="right">(Academic 1, 405-408)</div>

This passage highlights the emotional uncertainty that BME academics may experience within HE. When things had gone well for Academic 1, he could not fully enjoy the achievements because "It's played on my mind". He was hesitant to reveal his inner thoughts but conveyed his concerns that some of his success may be due to tokenisation. Other academics also reiterated the experience of feeling tokenised:

I got hired at this position and they started immediately tagging me as oh, cool, man... You can teach diversity, right?

<div align="right">(Academic 5, 62-65)</div>

Academic 5 stated that due to his ethnicity he was positioned as an academic that should deliver diversity related courses. It highlights how the tokenisation process is one of the first experiences that Academic 5 distinctly remembers at his current employer as it happened "immediately". Being tokenised in academia had a toll on his wellbeing:

I feel I think a little suffocated afterwards... because I obviously I feel like I have a lot more to say as an academic.

<div align="right">(Academic 5, 111-112)</div>

The use of "suffocated" conjures images of Academic 5 experiencing the loss of his authentic self in HE. In a sense, his social performance was limited by the script offered to him in academia. He later elaborated on how he experienced being positioned by others:

They see me as a potential of, oh, you can provide colour to x,y,z models which already exist.

<div align="right">(Academic 5, 120-121)</div>

The prescribed social performance does not allow BME academics to flourish and demonstrate their full potential. In Academic 5's experience, his expected role was to "provide colour" to the existing social performance. Rather than being merely produced through interpersonal relationships, Academic 3 experienced tokenism as built into the structure of HE:

We know that there is a lot of tokenism in academia. It is like you have to have a token Black person in all the organisations and in all departments… and they like to hire people in administrative roles but not in the more cushy senior roles.

(Academic 3, 426-428)

Academic 3 perceived that the social performance from universities only requires BME individuals in supporting roles. Drawing on over twenty years of experience within HE, her perception was that the starring roles at senior levels are often out of reach for BME academics. For academic 2, the perceived commodification of his identity negatively influenced his wellbeing:

I think that was one of the things that almost tipped me over to what I was calling that nervous breakdown…I realised that I'm in a really privileged position, but I'm valued not only as a scholar, but what I represent within academia… and how that can make others more money.

(Academic 2, 462-465)

At times, participants experienced their employers to be using their ethnicity as a commodity. In the passage above, we can see that the pressures of socially performing adversely

influences wellbeing. For academic 2, awareness of how he perceived others to value him almost led to a "nervous breakdown". In the broader script for HE, the available roles for BME academics are perceived to be limiting. As Academic 6 noted earlier, they can be "suffocating". Academic 2 also talked about how his age shaped his experience of social performance alongside race/ethnicity:

University is an intensely social space facilitated by multiple seminars and dinners and drinks receptions. But it can also feel quite isolating. And it can be very hard to disentangle that from your life stage but also your racial or ethnic identity. So that kind of plays into this constant tension between isolation and social intimacy… I think the running theme is constantly feeling dissonant in one way or another or divided in two… or more than two.

(Academic 2, 267-279)

His sense of social connectedness was constantly shifting from one interaction to the next. He experienced multiple aspects of identity, and he was "divided in two or more than two". There was also an intersection with his age, and he was unsure to what extent his racial or ethnic identity shaped his experience.

When participants rose to senior positions, they perceived a sense of resentment for their colleagues:

Working in HE is extremely stressful, especially for a BME person like myself because you know, the perceptions that people have? I mean, no matter what they say, on the surface of it, there is a certain level of mistrust or resentment for people taking positions that they think it's their birth right.

(Academic 3, 102-105)

The quote above highlights the competition inherent within HE. Academic 3 perceived that her White colleagues felt that the starring roles were destined for themselves and not BME academics within the social performance. The end result is that working in HE can negatively influence the wellbeing of academics, "especially for a BME person".

4.4 I Can Protect Myself

The final superordinate theme, *I can protect myself,* details the strategies academics employed to positively influence their wellbeing inside and outside the workplace. The HE environment posed threats to the participants' wellbeing as discussed in the previous two superordinate themes. In response to these threats, the participants developed ways to manage and thrive in their workplace. As one participant explained:

I want to develop a thick skin so that I don't feel what I'm subjected to…. So that I don't feel it, and that I can retaliate and protect myself.

(Academic 3, 234-235)

Working within HE was experienced as a threat to wellbeing that required retaliation from BME academics. The retaliation is not physical or verbal aggression but refers to developing ways to combat the HE environment. The word retaliation is indicative of the strong emotional distress described by all the participants in this study. Additionally, Academic 3's use of "thick skin" conveys images of being protected against experiences that could be damaging if they penetrated the participant's defences. She later described making changes to her physical environment:

I have actually put posters on my door in my office about racism, and bullying, and harassment in the workplace… so that people are reminded of it all the time.

(Academic 3, 135-136)

In the passage above, the posters become part of her armour as she tries to protect herself. Some of the protection strategies described by participants were consciously applied to improve their wellbeing. Other strategies developed organically and were only recognised as helpful for wellbeing as participants reflected on their experiences. There are two sub-themes included in this superordinate theme, *"You got to get with the (right) team",* and *"I'm no longer playing the(ir) game".*

In the first sub-theme, *"You've got to get with the (right) team",* participants detail the importance of social relationships inside and outside HE in managing the demands of working in academia. However, participants also described how connecting with the wrong team could result in further distress if others dismissed their experiences. The second sub-theme, *"I'm no longer playing the(ir) game",* provides insight into the various strategies participants employed to find purpose and meaning in their job despite the challenges within HE. In this sub-theme, some participants made a conscious decision to change their narratives of being an outsider in academia. For other participants, it was essential to broaden their sense of worth beyond their performances in HE.

Table 10

Summary of Participants Who Contributed to the Development of Sub Themes

Subordinate theme	Academic 1	Academic 2	Academic 3	Academic 4	Academic 5	Academic 6
"You've got to get with the (right) team"	X	X	X	X	X	X

"I'm no longer playing the(ir) game"	X	X	X		X	X

4.4.1. "You've Got to Get With the (Right) Team"

The first sub-theme details how social support and engaging with others contributed positively to the wellbeing of all six of the participants. Participants described the importance of sharing their experiences with others and how they valued these relationships. Academic 5 captures the essence of this sub-theme as he describes his response to racism within HE:

When students come to me or anyone who experiences this sort of issue, we always tell them… you've got to get with the team… don't bear that burden on your shoulders alone… that's how we drown.

(Academic 5, 274-276)

Receiving social support and practical advice helped Academic 5 carry the burden of racism. Without social support the weight of racism was too heavy, and Academic 5 perceived it as an existential drowning. After learning the importance of social support from his own experiences, he felt that it was important to share this knowledge with BME students. His use of "we" suggests that he understands his experiences of navigating racism within the context of relationships with others. For some of the participants, finding their team happened slowly over time:

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I've started to find pockets of people who share my politics and my ideas on what work we should be doing. I think that has insulated me a little bit from some of the negative repercussions of racism.

<div align="right">(Academic 1, 110-112)</div>

Like Academic 3's earlier reference to developing a thick skin, Academic 1 talked about insulating himself from the harmful effects of racism. However, finding like-minded and supportive colleagues only offers "a little bit" of protection from racism in HE. He later talked about the importance of having support from senior colleagues:

In my job now, there is a very, very high-profile professor of colour who has a lot of influence in the university, a lot of influence in the department. She's been a very, very good friend, mentor, and support mechanism.

<div align="right">(Academic 1, 318-320)</div>

In this passage, he drew attention to the importance of support from senior colleagues who possess "a lot of influence" in the workplace. Alongside empathy and a sense that racism was a shared experience, communicating with supportive colleagues also ensured access to practical advice and support:

One of the ways I protect myself is that if I do write an email or if I do make a move…. I have others who check and proofread it and my wife has been great supporting that… If I'm ever angry, I'm like, look, I'm just going to write out this email and then let's edit it down…. I have friends and colleagues, other lecturers, other academics who do the same… and we do that continuously.

<div align="center">136</div>

I interpreted this passage in positive and negative ways regarding Academic 5's wellbeing. On the one hand, it illustrates that social support positively contributes to his wellbeing. But conversely, it also highlights his perception that he needs to be protecting himself *continuously*. He later added that:

You find a huge sense of relief even if nothing comes out of it you know… I never bottled it in… I think that's just one of the ways it doesn't necessarily affect me so much.

<div align="right">(Academic 5, 300-302)</div>

Notably, Academic 5 found connecting with others as helpful regardless of the eventual outcome. Many of the participants found support from relationships outside of academia. Support from friends and family was valued and seen as an essential contributor to good wellbeing:

I think you also need good family support…and you also need someone who can show you what you're doing wrong or right so you can balance these things… Otherwise I've seen people who continue to be in one direction, and it comes to a point where they lose it.

<div align="right">(Academic 4, 122-124)</div>

Throughout our interview, it was clear that Academic 4 did not want his job to be all-consuming. Connecting with family allowed him to get a different perspective on life and gain a sense of balance. However, participants also experienced social support as nuanced, and not everyone could provide the empathy they needed. In the passage below, Academic 1

<div align="center">137</div>

describes how over time, his friendship group has changed to allow him to receive the help that he needs when discussing experiences of racism:

I've had friends in the past that probably wouldn't be my friends now, because from their side, they would think I've got a chip on my shoulder. From my side, I would not feel that they were capable of offering me the support and understanding that I would need… and so I think it does impact on your friendships…but maybe I'm at an age where my friendship groups have started to change.

<div align="right">(Academic 1, 297-303)</div>

Academic 1 perceived that he could not receive the support and understanding that he needed for his wellbeing from previous friendships. He questioned how much of the change in relationships was due to his experiences with racism or his age.

Many of the participants recalled experiences in which seeking support and connecting with others led to unexpected wellbeing challenges. Some of the participants were dismissed by their management when they sought help after experiencing racism:

I wrote an email in which I recounted that entire incident, and I asked my senior management to help me because I said it is affecting my health…Interestingly, the management turned the tables back on me and said that I am incapable of managing him.

<div align="right">(Academic 3, 185-189)</div>

When Academic 3 detailed her experiences of racism, her employer framed it as an inability to manage effectively. In the next passage, we can see how she experienced this as more distressing than the initial incident:

That was more threatening. So then I went to the union and I went to HR to complain…but I didn't take out a grievance against my boss, because I was too chicken hearted to do that.

<div align="right">(Academic 3, 190-192)</div>

Coming to terms and realising that management would not support her was threatening, and she questioned her job security. Her use of "chicken hearted" highlights how she was frustrated at her response at the time. It illustrates how experiencing racism from others resulted in Academic 3 criticising herself. The sense of frustration also emerged as she described another experience with a colleague where she had sought support after experiencing racism at work:

She said to me don't play the race card and she was very dismissive about it. Don't use that… and then I didn't because I believed in her sincerity… I think just my broaching the topic made her uncomfortable.

<div align="right">(Academic 3, 471-477)</div>

At the time, Academic 3 believed that her colleague had her best intentions in mind. After time had passed, she perceived the mention of the "race card" by her colleague as a strategy to manage the discomfort that discussing racism had caused. There was a palpable sense of disappointment as she described the experience.

For some of the participants connecting with the (right) team extended beyond relationships inside and outside the workplace. For example, Academic 4 talked about how his faith and connecting with God contributed positively to his wellbeing:

This is a job, and you want to do research and academia… But again, I think the purpose of life is to serve people and to serve God, so I think for me spirituality really helps gives me a broader perspective.

(Academic 4, 357-359)

While Academic 4 enjoys his job, he perceived his ultimate purpose to be serving God and doing good in the world. His spirituality allowed him to look beyond his experiences in HE and focus on what was most important to him. Spirituality was also crucial for Academic 5 in managing the challenges work placed on his wellbeing:

I also firmly believe that God is going to be the judge of them… It's something that I think is a difficult sort of realisation, or maybe a difficult sort of conclusion for many of us…that there is some form of transcendental justice for things that can't ever be really shown or proven… But I think faith had a big role in sort of negating that experience.

(Academic 5, 278-285)

Academic 4 and 5 both perceived their faith to be a source of new helpful perspectives. Academic 5 believed that even if he experienced challenges in the physical realm, justice would eventually be served, particularly for experiences that are difficult to prove. His belief in God supported his wellbeing and prevented his negative experiences from becoming all-consuming.

While some academics discussed the benefits of spirituality for broadening their perspective, Academic 2 was able to gain a different perspective by exploring other aspects of his personality. In the passage below he talks about how attending Black cultural events contributed positively to his wellbeing:

But it's these like little arenas in which you feel that you're not pretending anymore... You know you're not putting on an act…. You're just… there's like a freedom there is an escape where I feel very, very authentic.

(Academic 2, 328-330)

Outside of academia, Academic 2 can experience a more authentic and congruent version of himself. His smile and enthusiasm were evident during the interview as he described instances where he no longer felt restricted by the HE environment. His use of "freedom" highlighted the emotional release when he no longer had to maintain the hyper performance detailed in the previous theme. The interview itself seemed to drive home the importance of connecting with others for Academic 6:

Today I'm having this conversation with you very openly, but I'm quite a private person… it's not that I would be able even to articulate some of these anxieties very freely… I recognise how important it is to have someone with whom you can have an honest conversation and candid conversation.

(Academic 6, 584-587)

In line with the study's aims, the interview provided an opportunity for Academic 6 to speak candidly about the anxieties she experiences in HE. In that moment, it appeared that she realised that sharing her experiences with others may be beneficial for her wellbeing. While the interview and discussing her experiences was a novel experience for Academic 6, other participants were more accustomed to reflecting on their difficulties in the workplace. Academic 3 spoke about how therapy provided a different perspective on interpersonal difficulties with a colleague work:

My manager seems to be an extremely competitive person, so I now know why she does this. She believes that she has to put me down to feel good about herself... but I arrived at that conclusion long after I'd suffered and suffered.... and it was because of the CBT sessions that I truly arrived at the conclusion that the fault is not with me...

(Academic 3, 241-244)

Through therapy, Academic 3 was able to realise that her negative experiences at work did not indicate some personal fault within her. However, this realisation was still painful to recognise. Academic 3 perceived that if she had understood the rules of the game and the personality of her manager earlier, she might not have had to "suffer" so much. Academic 2 also shared that he turned to therapy to improve his wellbeing:

I eventually did start to see a therapist, but it wasn't because I had symptoms of mood disorder or anxiety or anything like that... It was because there were certain things in my life that I just felt weren't quite adding up... and I felt like I'd reached my capacity to figure it out by myself.

(Academic 2, 393-395)

In the passage above, Academic 2 describes turning to therapy as a last resort. Notably, he conveyed that it was not a diagnosable disorder that led him to seek a therapist. Instead, it was a sense that his experiences did not make sense, and he needed a space to explore his experiences as racialised minority working in academia. His reference to no longer being able to solve things "by myself" highlights the importance of external support that all six participants expressed, albeit in slightly different ways.

One notable nuance to this sub-theme was described by Academic 2 when he listened to other academics share their experiences of racism within HE:

Suddenly you become like a repository for all of these stories about race and racism and Whiteness and it was just it was so overwhelming... and then when the whole thing was done, I went back to the (university accommodation) that I was staying at, just wired, totally buzzed, and unable to sleep.

(Academic 2, 452-455)

Overall receiving support from others helped mitigate the challenges of working within HE for the participants. However, the passage above suggests that those providing support to other BME academics might find that it impacts their wellbeing. In the example above, Academic 2 notes how he internalised the emotional burden of other academics' stories of racism and ultimately, his ability to sleep was affected.

4.4.2. "I'm No Longer Playing The(ir) Game"

This second sub-theme details how five of the participants described redefining their participation in the game and theatre of HE. It was necessary first to understand how academia worked, and the participants talked about how this process happened over time. The "game" remained uneven, but with increased knowledge, participants could consciously choose if, how, and when to play the game. Academic 2 discussed how he has come to understand the academic game:

The place is kind of demystified and I understand how it works. It's like I'm no longer playing the game… I can see past the university pageantry, and I can see past its internal hierarchies… therefore, I can kind of make it my own.

(Academic 2, 338-340)

Once Academic 2 was able to see past the "pageantry", he defined his engagement with the game. He later added that:

The playing field is so uneven, but you survive once you've mastered the terrain.

(Academic 2, 425-426)

The metaphor of the game of academia is continued in the quote above and Academic 2 experiences the game to be unequal for BME academics relative to his White colleagues. However, surviving the challenges to wellbeing was not tied to the game becoming equal. Instead, Academic 2 perceived survival to be possible when BME academics come to understand *how* the game is unequal. Other participants also described making sense of the academic game:

I didn't even tell her that I was going for a promotion… if I did, she would have said to me, oh, why don't you do it next year?... she plays me like that… and I understand her very well now.

<div align="right">(Academic 3, 343-345)</div>

After over 2 decades of working within UK HE, Academic 3 was able to master the game. In this specific example, she perceived that her manager would dissuade her from applying for a promotion. Using therapy as a space to explore her experiences in HE allowed Academic 3 to play the game on her terms. This is highlighted in the exchange below:

I know the game… I can push back if needed… and that's only thanks to the CBT sessions.

<div align="right">(Academic 3 351-352)</div>

Other participants echoed the process of understanding the game of HE. Mastering the game allowed Academic 5 to be detached from the assumptions of his colleagues. Academic 5 uses the metaphor of waiting for a bus to arrive to help me understand how he experienced being positioned differently due to his ethnicity within HE:

It's almost like when you see the bus coming… at a certain time, the bus is supposed to come at 10:10… and then the bus shows up at 10:10 you're not going to think twice about it, because that's sort of what you expected… I think it's become so natural to think that I'm a racialised minority and I'm going to be positioned as such that I don't think about it twice.

<div align="right">(Academic 5, 103-107)</div>

The excerpt above details how Academic 5 perceives racism in HE to be as consistent and predictable as a bus timetable. Much like how knowledge of the bus schedule allows one to plan their journeys, Academic 5 uses his awareness of racism to plan his career in academia. Understanding how his colleagues might position him allowed him to dictate the terms with which he engaged with the game:

There's no way I want to play in any way, shape, or form… like I draw a horrible, hard moral boundary there… if I'm going to get fired, because I'm not playing that token role, then so be it.

(Academic 5, 86-88)

With an understanding of the game, Academic 5 established clear boundaries for what was and wasn't acceptable for him to experience within HE. He was unwilling to play a token role, and if that meant working at his current employer would not be possible in the future, he had accepted it and made peace with it. Other participants used time away from academia to develop boundaries for how they wanted to play the game:

I sort of came back and I was like, Okay, I'm going to reorient myself to this place…and so the strategies have been, different ways of managing the job better, but also picking my battles a lot more judiciously… cutting down on talking about race on social media that's a big factor.

(Academic 2, 290-293)

Academic 2 felt that attempting to eradicate discrimination within HE by himself was a losing battle. More recently, he had been picking his battles to preserve his wellbeing. After

returning from a sabbatical, he had a new perspective on how to confront racism in his workplace:

I can't individually decolonise this place. So let me produce the very best work that I can as a scholar… Let me be a mentor to my students when I can… And when it's really important, I'll lend my voice to some of the debates on race and inclusivity and so on… but I can't let that be my life because I'll just be torn up under by it.

(Academic 2, 299-303)

Academic 2's repeated use of "I" highlights the importance of locating his identity outside of the workplace discourses of racism. Throughout our interview, he discussed his commitment to anti-racism. However, this commitment to anti-racism had to be balanced with recognising that constantly confronting racism was emotionally taxing and could become all-consuming. Without finding this balance, Academic 2 risked being engulfed by these experiences, which he conveyed by his use of "torn up under".

While five of the participants were similar in that they developed an understanding of the game, they all developed this understanding in distinctive ways. For example, while Academic 3 developed knowledge of the game through her experiences in therapy, Academic 1 understood the game differently:

I'm an academic, who I think experiences racism in university… But I write about that, I teach about that, I study that… So, I'm aware of it and I'm very conscious of it and that has allowed me to develop a sense of confidence in my own work that isn't easily undermined by microaggressions.

Academic 1 perceived his research background to prepare him better to understand the racialised game being played in UK HE. Understanding racism through the lens of a researcher enabled Academic 1 to understand his lived experiences at a theoretical level. He explains that the process of understanding the game developed over time:

Two or three years ago, I think it was still undermining my confidence quite a lot. Now I feel like I just see it for what it is. I know that it's an articulation of racism, I know that it's not a reflection of my work... This has been bolstered by me having published my work and having positive responses from people that I admire.

In the quote above, Academic 1 perceived racism as being inherent within HE. This awareness allowed him to adopt a narrative where his experiences no longer undermined his confidence. However, adopting this narrative was only possible after receiving positive feedback from other academics whose opinions he valued. Other academics described a similar process of evolving narratives of what it meant for them to work in HE as a racialised minority:

I kind of started to recreate my internal narrative about being a Black scholar at this university, where I've gone from saying like, Oh, my God, there are only x Black professors here to being like… how amazing is it that I'm one of the x Black professors here.

The creation or recreation of a narrative that positively contributed to his wellbeing was a conscious process for Academic 2. In line with the statistics discussed in the literature review, Academic 2 is one of the few Black professors at his university. However, he chose to reframe his minority status as a source of pride and empowerment. In the passage below, we can see how Black culture within the UK has also helped shape this new narrative:

There's this Stormzy lyric on his last album, on superheroes, where he says, 'what a flipping time to be a Black Brit' so, I tried to consciously like re-appropriate that sentiment and apply it to my own life just so that I'm not seeing it through the prism of a White gaze or of pressure.

<div align="right">(Academic 2, 493-495)</div>

In this passage, we see how he resists pressure from the White gaze and defines his identity on his terms. He perceived being a statistical minority as a shared journey with other Black individuals in different professional fields. He refuses to comply with the deficit narrative that often surrounds Black individuals in the UK as he quotes the song lyrics. He later talked about how he experienced HE differently since adopting this evolved narrative:

Being in this position means that I am hyper visible, I get invited to talk about my work or to launch my book in different parts of the world. And I can actually use this position and the visibility it confers to be my ticket to having an interesting and hopefully meaningful life… So I think that's kind of like how I tried to flip the script and use it to my advantage.

<div align="right">(Academic 2, 505-509)</div>

Academic 2 consciously chose "to flip the script" and hoped to use the hypervisibility in a way that enriched his wellbeing. While being a statistical minority brings challenges within academia, Academic 2 rejected the idea that he was merely a passive agent being subjected to trauma in his job:

I think that there is a way about talking about the Black experience that can leave you dwelling on trauma and substance, and it's not to say that trauma isn't there, and it isn't real, and we don't need to deal with it… but it's not the totality of the experience… There's also a way of trying to inject it with pride and I think that that matters an awful lot.

(Academic 2, 516-520)

For other participants reframing the narrative involved a shift in how they evaluated themselves and their lives. Academic 3 felt that shifting away from evaluating herself solely based on her work was a key step in better managing her wellbeing:

I began focusing on myself and also saying that, you know, this is not the end all and be all of everything… there is life beyond work.

(Academic 3, 333-335)

Academic 6 shared a similar perspective and over time, came to evaluate herself and her wellbeing in multiple areas in her life:

I feel that there are multiple ways in which I can prove myself. There are multiple opportunities that I have, the multiple facets of my life where I am able to prove myself and I

will have opportunities to get my voice out there… when I was younger I felt that this was the
one forum where I have to absolutely make an impression.

<div align="right">(Academic 6, 266-269)</div>

By broadening the areas of her life through which she evaluated herself, Academic 6 felt less pressure to prove her worth to others. The quote also draws attention to a further intersection with age as her perceptions were different when she was younger. She further discussed the intersections of her experiences in the passage below

I was told this very early on…. we were both women of colour. So it was, I suppose, an
intersection in that sense but this other academic said don't feel thankful or grateful for the
position that you're in… It takes us a long time to realise that we have earned it…and I
always I try to remind myself of that.

<div align="right">(Academic 6, 331-334)</div>

In the passage above, we can see how Academic 6's narrative has shifted over time. She came to recognise that she had earned her place within UK HE and that her position was based on merit rather than tokenism. However, Academic 6's experience also indicates that self-doubt is an ongoing experience within HE for some BME academics. Academic 5 spoke about rejecting the narrative that he must define himself by his job:

I know in liberal capitalist societies we're supposed to define ourselves completely by
professions. I don't really, I'm very mindful of that… for me, it's not about the job. It's about
what I'm accomplishing or what I'm doing. If I can be of benefit to the community, and I see
opportunities to be of benefit to myself and others I'll take it.

Academic 5 explained how his profession did not solely define his identity. This recognition allowed him to focus on what he perceived as more meaningful and beneficial to his life, such as making a positive contribution to local communities and society. In addition, defining himself as more than an academic brought a level of satisfaction he may not have otherwise got from working in UK HE. Alongside reframing his identity beyond academia, he also talked about reframing his understanding of the emotions he experiences while confronting racism in HE:

I also believe in righteous anger, and I do believe that there's legitimacy to it…. when I feel angry, or upset, you know, it serves a purpose…One of the ways I protect myself in doing that is by saying okay, this was a racist experience, I don't feel so great... I feel anger... I'm not going to bottle it in.

(Academic 5, 284-286)

He perceived his emotions, including anger, as legitimate responses to his experiences in HE. His use of the word "righteous" evokes a sense of overcoming existential challenges. By recognising that his emotions served a purpose, validating his feelings without judgment became a coping strategy. While he previously discussed the importance of not bottling things up and talking with the team, he also perceived being honest with himself as another vital wellbeing strategy.

4.5 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have presented the findings after analysing the interviews with 6 BME academics. The analysis led to the creation of three superordinate themes. These findings illustrate the nuanced ways in which academics perceive working within HE to influence their wellbeing. A key finding is the importance of social relationships and how they influence wellbeing negatively and positively. The findings also illustrate how racism intersects with other forms of discrimination to influence and shape the wellbeing of BME academics. Despite this, over time, all academics were able to develop strategies that positively contributed to their wellbeing. As one would expect, there were areas where the participants' experiences converged and diverged. In the next chapter, I will discuss these findings and explore how they support and challenge prior research.

5. Discussion

5.1 Chapter Introduction

In this chapter, I begin by returning to the research question and consider how the question has been answered. I then discuss the findings and explore how this thesis supports and contradicts prior research. I also summarise the research's contributions to understanding the wellbeing of BME academics in the UK. Next, I discuss the implications of this research for stakeholders within the field of counselling psychology, UK HE, and beyond. In this chapter, I also discuss the strengths and limitations of this qualitative study. Finally, I reflect on the research process and consider how this study has shaped my identity as a counselling psychologist.

5.2 Returning to the Research Question

The literature review indicated a gap existed concerning the wellbeing of academics in HE, particularly from a qualitative perspective (Guthrie et al., 2018; Urbina-Garcia, 2020). Furthermore, while there is a growing body on the experiences of BME academics, these have tended to focus on career progression (e.g., Bhopal, 2020; Rollock, 2019). Therefore, this research employed a qualitative design with 6 BME academics to answer the following research question:

1. How do BME academics experience working in UK HE to influence their wellbeing?

This study indicates that participants experienced HE as a competitive environment that required hyper performance. There were two aspects to successfully performing within HE. There was the game of academia in which BME academics perceived a need to work twice as hard as their White colleagues. There was also the theatre of academia which was perceived

as requiring a particular social performance for BME academics. Prior student experiences often informed the participants' understanding of the game and theatre of HE as academics. They also used experiences outside academia to make sense of their wellbeing. This study adopted McNaught's (2011) definition of wellbeing, which proposes that individual wellbeing consists of physical, psychological, social, and spiritual wellbeing. Across the three superordinate themes, the participants talked about how working in HE negatively impacted their physical and psychological wellbeing. While the six academics valued social relationships with others in HE, participants discussed relationships in the context of mitigating the adverse effects of racism and other forms of discrimination. Some of the participants discussed their spiritual wellbeing, but again this was discussed as a protective factor against negative experiences in HE. Overall, working in HE was perceived by participants as negatively influencing their wellbeing inside and outside of the workplace. Notably, in line with recent research on the experiences of students (Bhopal et al., 2020; Islam & Mercer-Mapstone, 2021), the participants in this study also described discrimination as an expected reality of HE.

In the literature review, I discussed CRT (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017), intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1990) and microaggressions (Sue et al., 2007). I will unpack this further in the following sections, but it is worth stating that aspects of all three theories are featured in the participants' accounts. For example, the CRT concept of interest convergence (Aguirre, 2010) is arguably featured in the participants' perceptions of their employers' social performances. Academic 1 discussed how he experienced being tokenised as an "acceptable face" for his predominantly White department's marketing materials. Additionally, the terms intersectionality and microaggressions were explicitly used by participants when describing their wellbeing.

5.3 Returning to CRT, Intersectionality and Microaggressions

In this section I briefly consider how CRT, intersectionality, and microaggressions can be used to contextualise the findings that were generated.

5.3.1 Returning to CRT

CRT draws attention to how racism is influenced by the historic and current socio-political context (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). At the time of the interviews, race and racism featured heavily in public discourse following the murder of George Floyd and the international Black Lives Matter movement. It is likely that this will have also influenced the participants' understanding of their experiences of discrimination within UK HE. Some participants also talked about how they experienced being positioned within their employer's social performance and subsequently felt tokenised (e.g., Kanter, 1977). I would argue that the participants' tokenised experiences align with CRT's interest convergence concept (e.g., Gillborn, 2013). One example that comes to mind is Academic 1's discussion of his employers' eagerness to use his physical body in online promotional material. His experience supports prior research, which suggested HE institutions overly focus on their public-facing appearance in terms of racism (Bhopal & Henderson, 2019).

Previous research has also drawn on CRT to critique the discourses on diversity in HE (e.g., Aguirre, 2010). Academic 5 was vocal about his reluctance to become the diversity teacher while Academic 1 was wary about symbolising diversity. Their experiences align with prior research, which has noted the performative nature of focusing on diversity rather than racism (Ahmed, 2007; 2009; 2012; Bhopal, 2019; Rollock, 2018). The findings suggest that focusing

solely on diversity may not improve the wellbeing of BME academics without a simultaneous commitment to anti-racism.

5.3.2 Returning to Intersectionality

Intersectionality as a concept draws attention to multiple forms of discrimination and how this shapes an individual's experiences (Grzanka, 2020). Similarly, the six participants' wellbeing was influenced by experiences where racism intersected with other forms of discrimination. The participants discussed gendered racism and how this could be observed in institutional procedures such as teaching evaluations. Academic 1 discussed how he was privileged within HE compared to his BME colleagues who faced other forms of discrimination alongside racism. For example, Academic 3, 4 and 5 felt that Islamophobia was central to how they experienced HE to influence their wellbeing. Their experiences would appear to support the notion that while there are overlaps between Islamophobia and racism, they are conceptually distinct (Lauwers, 2019).

Previous authors have criticised the focus on identities within counselling psychology research (e.g., Shin et al., 2017). However, I would argue that some aspects of the participants' wellbeing were influenced by their identity outside of associated forms of discrimination. For instance, several participants talked about how they felt more confident as they aged, which was not discussed in relation to age-based discrimination. Additionally, some of the participants' coping strategies were shaped by their religious beliefs. Others, such as Academic 2, talked about how connecting with Black culture and music was a conscious strategy to enhance his wellbeing. The participants also discussed the influence of intersecting identities concerning political beliefs and personal values. For example, Academic 1 noted how being vocal about anti-racism left him under more scrutiny than some

of his BME colleagues, who were less overtly anti-racist. Finally, race/ethnicity intersected with employment contracts in how participants experienced wellbeing. For example, Academic 6 described an additional sense of anxiety that she experienced concerning job insecurity on a fixed-term contract.

5.3.3 Returning to Microaggressions

Many of the participants' experiences of racism within HE aligned with the conceptualisation of microaggressions (Sue et al., 2007). To this point, some of the participants explicitly referenced microaggressions when reflecting on how working within HE influenced their wellbeing. For example, Academic 2 discussed how "micro" did not adequately describe the impact of microaggressions on his wellbeing as a student. Similarly, Academic 5 stated that the daily microaggressions he experienced in HE were more impactful than being racially attacked on the streets. His experiences echo the findings of previous research, which suggest that everyday instances of racism are more averse to wellbeing than major racist events (e.g., Carter et al., 2018). The participants' accounts also challenge claims by some who question whether microaggressions are harmful to wellbeing (Lilienfeld, 2017; 2019).

Sue et al. (2007) proposed a taxonomy in which microaggressions can be classed as micro invalidations, micro insults, or micro assaults. Across the six interviews, micro invalidation and micro insults were most discussed by the participants. For example, Academic 2 discussed being described as "the Whitest Black guy", which could be classified as a micro insult or micro invalidation. Academic 3 experienced micro invalidations when colleagues dismissed her experiences as "playing the race card". It is suggested that micro assaults are conscious racist acts which makes them different to micro insults and micro invalidations (Sue et al., 2008). Therefore, the lesser frequency of micro assaults discussed in this study

could be argued to reflect less conscious racism in the HE environment. Alternatively, as Sian (2017) suggests, it may be that racism in HE is simply more sophisticated. Therefore, individuals within HE can commit micro insults and micro invalidations as they know they will be harder to prove as racist. Overall, the findings in this study build upon prior research documenting the prevalence of racial microaggressions within UK academia (Arday, 2018; Joseph-Salisbury, 2019; Rollock, 2012). The findings also build on previous research that suggests microaggressions are harmful to an individual's wellbeing (e.g., Nadal et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2011).

5.4 Wellbeing Consequences

Working in HE was experienced by academics as influencing their wellbeing inside and outside of their jobs. Key to this was the participants' social relationships, which contributed positively and negatively to their wellbeing. Previous research points to a reciprocal relationship between wellbeing at work and wellbeing in everyday life. Positive social connections at work are associated with positive social connections outside the workplace (Weziak-Bialowolska, 2020). Conversely, participants in this study felt that experiencing racism and social exclusion at work negatively affected their relationships outside academia. The findings support Brondolo et al. (2012), who posits that individuals experience anxiety and depression in response to racism which impacts their social relationships. For example, an individual experiencing depression following a racist incident will have less energy to devote to their relationships. Unfortunately, this may start a vicious cycle as limited social support is associated with higher levels of self-reported depression (Santini et al., 2015).

Meta-analyses have consistently reported that the experience of racism is most impactful on mental health versus physical health (Carter et al., 2019; Paradies, 2006; Paradies et al., 2015;

Schmitt et al., 2014; Williams et al., 2019). Similarly, the participants most frequently

discussed how racism had influenced their psychological wellbeing. Working within HE

influenced how the participants understood their identities. All the participants spoke of

understanding themselves through the lens of other peoples' perceptions. W.E.B Dubois and

Frantz Fanon both describe this as *double consciousness*, whereby an individual experiences

their identity not only from their perspective but how they are positioned by others as

racialised minorities (Black, 2007). Cousins (2019) suggests that identity switching is a

necessary aspect of the identity of BME individuals that allows them to adapt to the different

racialised situations they may experience. Academic 2 was explicit in how he felt his identity

was split in two, or possibly more than two ways. The findings in this study support previous

research by Johnson (2020), who suggests that Black Muslim academics utilise double

consciousness to navigate being positioned as the Other in HE.

Perceived social exclusion by their colleagues influenced the wellbeing of participants. The

findings in this study support previous research pointing to BME academics feeling excluded

by their colleagues (Bhopal et al., 2016; Bhopal, 2020). Sian (2019) discusses how the pub

culture in HE is one that many racialised minorities may not feel comfortable socialising in.

However, Academic 4 noted that he was never invited to such events as he felt colleagues

incorrectly assumed he would not want to attend. Therefore, while acknowledging that some

BME academics may not want to participate in pub culture, the findings in this study suggest

some BME academics wish to participate but are excluded. In addition to the negative

influence on wellbeing, social exclusion may reduce the opportunities for BME academics to

receive mentoring, which can promote career progression (Bhopal, 2020). A practical

example of the impact of discrimination on career progression was evidenced by Academic 4,

whose research proposal for a grant was dismissed based on his faith in Islam. Previous

research has suggested that social exclusion leads to *academic flight*, with BME academics choosing to work in HE in other countries (Bhopal et al., 2015). However, in this study, five participants were motivated to remain in UK HE, while only Academic 5 expressed ambivalence to staying employed in HE.

Some participants talked about feeling hyper-visible in this study which had positive and negative implications for wellbeing. Academic 1 spoke about the hyper-visibility that comes with being a statistical minority. The findings support previous research indicating ethnic minority academics experience hypervisibility in the workplace (Settles et al., 2018). Additionally, previous research suggests that experiencing hyper-visibility has a psychological toll on individuals in HE (Chaudry, 2020). Hyper-visibility can have positive connotations, such as being recognised for outstanding achievements and performance in an organisation. Academic 2 referred to this when describing how hyper-visibility could contribute positively to his wellbeing via opportunities outside of academia. Hyper-visibility can also have perceived negative connotations, for example, Academic 1 described how he sometimes questioned the legitimacy of being recognised for his achievements. Furthermore, for individuals who belong to minority groups, hyper-visibility can also result in being positioned as deviant and feeds into negative stereotypes (Buchanan & Settles, 2019).

Hyper-visibility was also described as a "burden of representation" by Academic 2. Kanter (1977) called this performance pressure where the individual feels a burden to represent all members of that tokenised group. The findings of this study support those of Settles et al. (2019), who found faculty of colour felt an extra burden to perform on behalf of other racialised minorities in academia. However, the findings in this study also point to a more nuanced understanding of hyper-visibility and performance pressure. Despite the "burden of

representation", Academic 2 also talked about the benefits of being hyper-visible, and in some ways, he felt it benefited his academic career. Hyper-visibility facilitated the connection with other BME academics in his field, which supports previous research indicating hyper-visibility can lead to social support (Wingfield & Wingfield, 2014).

Buchan and Settles (2019) suggest that hyper-visibility could lead to increased surveillance, whereby real or perceived mistakes could exacerbate feelings of hypervisibility. Participants in this study also discussed the relationship between hyper-visibility and extra surveillance. Notably, the participants discussed surveillance concerning specific procedures within HE. For example, Academic 1 spoke of extra surveillance being tied to performance on teaching metrics. As he noted, a substantial body of evidence suggested that teaching evaluations are biased against women and BME individuals (Boring & Ottoboni, 2016; Gatwiri et al., 2021; Hornstein, 2017). In a similar vein, Academic 5 spoke of the anxiety and perceived surveillance he experiences as a Muslim academic. He felt that writing and producing critical research as a Muslim academic left him vulnerable to accusations of being radical or extremist. His experiences echo the findings of previous research on PREVENT in the UK (e.g., Danvers, 2020).

PREVENT refers to the government's strategy to counter extremism, and it is now a statutory duty to report if one has concerns about an individual being radicalised within HE (Whiting et al., 2020). While the policy is not explicitly focused on Islamic extremism, prior research has suggested that the PREVENT strategy has left Muslim students in HE feeling isolated and under surveillance (Kyriacou et al., 2017). Furthermore, Danvers (2021) interviewed 14 academics who discussed how PREVENT curtailed critical research, particularly for women, BME academics, and those early in their careers. Academic 5's experiences also lend support

to research by Younis and Jadhav (2019). They concluded that the PREVENT led Muslim employees to self-censor themselves for fear of being seen as radical within the NHS. This research builds upon their work by suggesting that a similar process of self-censorship is considered by academics within UK HE.

While the male academics talked about feeling hyper-visible and under surveillance, the two female academics talked more about feeling invisible. Wright et al. (2018) suggest stereotypes in HE are informed by gendered racism, which may explain the differences between male and female participants in this study. Sian (2019) suggested that male academics are positioned as threatening or too confident, while female BME academics are positioned as submissive and weak. However, others have noted that Black female academics are subjected to tropes of the angry Black women (Doharty, 2020). The two female academics in this study were South Asian, which may explain their feelings of invisibility rather than hyper-visibility.

Nonetheless, while the angry stereotype was discussed by a Black male academic, it was also experienced by a male academic who self-identified as Arab. Subsequently, both participants felt a need to counteract this stereotype which Academic 2 referred to as portraying the "erudite scholar". The process of considering the social consequences of expressing anger matches previous research on emotional restraint for Black men in higher education settings (Wilkins, 2012). The findings in this study suggest that racist stereotypes are not confined to a specific ethnic group. Furthermore, alongside anger, anxiety emerged implicitly and explicitly in the participants' narratives. The anxiety experienced by the participants supports the concept of the "neurotic academic" described by Loveday (2018). Anxiety was particularly pronounced with Academic 6, who identified her temporary contract as

contributing to her distress. Academic 6's experiences support previous research suggesting that temporary contracts contribute to psychological distress for academics in UK HE (Moorish, 2019).

While all the participants discussed experiencing racism and other forms of discrimination, how racism influenced wellbeing diverged between participants. Some participants, such as Academic 4 and 5, expected to experience discrimination at work. Academic 5 likened the predictability of experiences of racism within HE to the routine of waiting for a bus to arrive on schedule. Subsequently, he felt that despite the impact of racism on social relationships, he could mitigate the impact of working within HE on his wellbeing. However, the differences in how participants discussed wellbeing might be explained by referring to prior research. Academic 3 was most explicit in how racism and working in HE had negatively impacted her physical wellbeing. Previous research has discussed how the cumulative toll of repeated microaggressions may be more impactful than isolated significant racist experiences (Carter et al., 2018). Therefore, since Academic 3 had spent more time working in UK HE than any of the other participants, she may have experienced a greater number of racist incidents in her academic career.

Alternatively, Academic 3's accounts of poor physical wellbeing may be related to the type of racist experiences that she discussed. While most participants discussed what may be termed as micro insults and micro invalidations, Academic 3's experiences of bullying from a colleague are more aligned with Sue et al.'s (2007) concept of micro assaults. Donovan et al. (2013), reported microassaults had more adverse effects than microinsults and microinvalidations in a sample of Black women. Therefore, Academic 3's experiences of micro assaults may explain the more pronounced impact racism in HE appeared to have on

her psychological and physical wellbeing. She discussed how she believed gendered racism at work contributed to diabetes and a chronic heart condition. Her experience would support previous research that found higher levels of self-reported racism increased the risk of developing diabetes in African American women (Bacon et al., 2017). Although it is based on one individual's experience, the findings in this study suggest that racism may also be a diabetes risk factor for Asian women living in the UK.

In this study, past experiences as students appeared to influence how the participants understood their wellbeing as academics. Their repeated reference to past experiences of racism fits in with research by Brondolo et al. (2005), who reported that prior experiences of racism increase the likelihood that race-based discrimination will be experienced as threatening and harmful to wellbeing (Brondolo et al., 2005). Furthermore, Nadal et al. (2019) suggest racial microaggressions may re-traumatise individuals who have previously experienced racial discrimination. Thus, it is possible that experiencing racism as academics was more distressing for participants due to previous racial discrimination as students. While further research is needed, the present study would appear to support Nadal et al.'s (2019) hypothesis.

Relationships with students were also discussed by the participants when reflecting on their wellbeing. Cohen (2020) reported that Black female academics valued providing support and mentoring for Black students. A similar theme emerged for participants in this study who spoke about the importance of being a resource for students experiencing racism. Academic 2 was explicit about how he wanted to be a role model for future BME academics. Previous authors have noted that BME academics may have less time and energy to publish research due to providing pastoral support to BME students (Constantine et al., 2008). Padilla (1994)

proposed the term *cultural taxation* to describe the burden on BME academics to care for BME students formally and informally. Cultural taxation may result in a situation where BME academics "play the role of advocate, counsellor and therapist" (Canton, 2013, p.9). While supporting BME students has a moral value, it does not have an economic value. Given the emphasis on generating income within HE, it is possible that while supporting students enriches the students' psychological wellbeing, it may not support the career progression of BME academics.

One of the key findings of this research was how participants strived to work harder to overcome stereotypes and negative assumptions from colleagues. Several participants noted that working harder led to poorer wellbeing in the long term, which supports previous research findings. For example, Padilla and Thompson (2016) found that increases in the number of hours worked per week and self-reported pressure to perform well were associated with higher levels of burnout in US academics. Furthermore, Kinman (2019) found that UK academics who reported that they put more effort into their work also had poorer physical and mental health levels. However, this study builds upon previous research on HE by suggesting that racism and other forms of discrimination can drive BME academics to work harder.

The academic performance of participants in this study supports prior research on microaggressions in the workplace. For example, Pardiwalla (2020) interviewed 8 British Asians and explored their experience of microaggressions at work. Pardiwalla (2020) reported that British Asians strived to work harder after experienced workplace microaggressions. Striving to work harder in the face of negative stereotypes has previously been described as *John Henryism* (e.g., Hudson et al., 2016). Some studies have reported that

John Henrysim appears to buffer against poor mental health outcomes after experiencing racial discrimination (Matthews et al., 2013). In contrast, Hudson et al. (2016) found John Henryism was associated with a greater risk of depression and did not mediate the relationship between discrimination and depression. Participants in this study described striving to achieve as a "trap". They noted that devoting more time to "excelling" at work led to the marginalisation of other aspects of their lives, such as physical health. The participants' experiences align with prior research, which indicated that higher John Henryism is associated with poorer physical health (Robinson et al., 2021). There may also be a double burden considering that while work pressure motivates one to perform, the pressure may limit productivity by negatively impacting activities outside of work that positively contribute to wellbeing (Winefield et al., 2014). The double burden could lead to a vicious cycle where BME academics are driven to perform academically. This drive leads to neglecting activities outside of HE that positively enhance wellbeing as they prioritise work. Counterintuitively, they may perform worse academically, leading to further criticism, self-blame, and ultimately poorer wellbeing.

Some of the participants spoke about how they felt unable to be their authentic selves within HE. For example, Academic 2 described the feeling of being divided into multiple selves and switching between identities to navigate the workplace environment. Switching between identities in the workplace has been proposed to have positive and negative wellbeing consequences for employees from an ethnic minority group (Dickens et al., 2019). When switched to their professional identity, there are career benefits if others accept them in the workplace (McDowell & Carter-Francique, 2017; Dickens & Chavez, 2018). However, Hall and colleagues (2012) suggest that switching between authentic and professional identities can be detrimental to wellbeing. In their focus group research with Black women, participants

described sleep difficulties and anxiety as they constantly shifted their identities in response to negative racial stereotypes (Hall et al., 2012).

Relatedly, participants in this study also spoke of the importance of communication and how "being articulate is the main currency" in HE. The participants' narratives in this study support previous research, which indicates that language changes are used when shifting identities (Dickens & Chavez, 2018). Increased frequency of identity switching is suggested to be psychologically exhausting (Shih et al., 2010), and this was supported by participants who described feeling inauthentic in the workplace. However, this changed with time, and participants described greater congruence as they gained more experience of working within HE. Although most of the previous research on identity shifting has focused on Black women in the US, this study indicates that BME males also shift their identity within HE. The repeated mention of language and communication in this study may be because five of the six participants were born outside the UK. Previous studies on UK HE have documented how language proficiency is experienced as vital to career progression for international academics (Giminez & Morgan, 2017; Śliwa & Johansson, 2013). Although I should note participants in this study spoke less about their accents and more about the emotions conveyed with their communication. For example, two male participants described being wary of how colleagues could view their communication through the lens of racist stereotypes about angry racialised men.

5.5 Coping Strategies

The findings in this study indicate that participants utilised various coping strategies to manage the demands of their jobs and racism within HE. Caution should be applied so that tackling discrimination is not left solely to the individuals who experience it. However, the

findings of this study speak to the resourcefulness of BME academics in managing their

wellbeing. While there may be a tendency to view minorities as passive agents in research,

this study challenges that perception. Participants developed strategies that minimised the

adverse impacts of working in HE and experiencing discrimination.

A key finding was how participants experienced social relationships as something that could

support their wellbeing. Social support was repeatedly discussed as a strategy, conscious and

unconsciously, to manage the challenges of racism within HE. The findings in this study

support previous research that suggests individuals seek out social support after experiencing

racism (Brondolo et al., 2009; Paradies et al., 2006; Sue et al., 2019). Social relationships had

a practical function as they allowed academics to receive problem-solving advice. One

example of this was Academic 5 using his support network to plan how to raise racism in an

email to senior management. However, participants discussed that it was important to find

support from the "right" people.

Although the participants identified social support and connecting with others as an essential

strategy, the research on whether this is effective after experiencing racism is unclear

(Brondolo et., 2009). For example, Chakraborty et al. (2010) found social support did not

mediate the association between racism and poorer mental health in sample of 4000 BME

individuals in the UK. However, Clark (2006) reported that social support mediated the

relationship between perceived racism and high blood pressure in Black US college women.

It is possible that the type of social support received determines how helpful it is for

wellbeing. For example, Academic 1 discussed how his friendship group had changed over

the years as he did not feel previous friends would be able to offer the support that he

needed. To this point, Seawell et al. (2014) reported that social support mediated the

relationship between racial discrimination and wellbeing only when individuals received "tailored" social, and not if individuals received "general" social support. Tailored referred to social support that focused on racial discrimination, while general did not focus on race or racism. Moving forward, HE institutions may do well to understand what tailored social support would look like for BME academics.

Despite several participants discussing the benefits of connecting with others, social support may not be equally effective for all academics in HE. For example, Giunchi et al. (2019) found that receiving social support exacerbated the impact of job insecurity on general wellbeing for individuals who felt highly insecure in their job. There are caveats in that this was in a French sample outside HE. However, it does suggest that social support may not be sufficient for the wellbeing of BME academics on a temporary contract. The additional challenges for wellbeing posed to Academic 5 due to her fixed term employment reinforce the need for intersectional interventions.

Although it was not included as a theme, I was struck by how participants would laugh when discussing their experiences. My humanistic training initially led me to view this laughter as an example of incongruence (e.g., Rogers, 1957). Or, as others have noted, laughing may have been used to limit the experience of negative emotions during the interviews (Houshmand, 2018). Previous studies indicate that humour can be an effective coping strategy and facilitates access to social support (Moran & Hughes, 2006). For example, Houshmand (2018) found humour was used as a resistant strategy after experiencing microaggressions in the workplace. In addition, the use of humour when discussing experiences of racism may allow the individual to reframe their experience as a collective phenomenon (Hylton, 2018). Participants may use humour when accessing social support

inside and outside of HE. However, this was not something that I explored during our interviews.

Conversely, the participants described inadequate social support as leading to further distress by some of the participants in this study. For example, Academic 3 blamed herself for not reporting racism after discussing it with a colleague. Previous research has that the "race card" and similar comments shape a discourse where only the most blatant acts can be considered racist (Bonilla-Silva, 2002; Harper, 2012). Her experience underscores why the literature indicates racial harassment is underreported in HE (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2019). Although the experience of being silenced by a colleague could be viewed as just an interaction between two colleagues, the silencing of racism has institutional benefits. Beighton (2021, p.4) notes that limiting the documentation of racism by staff can serve to protect the "international brand image" of the university. Therefore, the HE sector must decide whether protecting their universities' brand or the wellbeing of BME staff is a more important strategic goal.

Previous research suggests that individuals may become more spiritual after experiencing racism in their lives (Smith, 2004). It is not possible to say that experiencing racism deepened the participant's faith. However, two of the three Muslim academics discussed how they perceived their religious faith as helping mitigate the effects of racism on their wellbeing. Szymanski and Obiri (2011) looked at positive and negative religious coping strategies as mediators between racism and psychological distress. Positive coping, which refers to using spirituality and religion as a source of support, did not mediate psychological distress. However, negative coping, which refers to questioning the existence or intentions of a higher power, was shown to mediate psychological distress. Thus, the findings in this study would

appear to contradict Szymanski and Obiri (2011) as the participants used positive religious coping and expressed that this helped manage racism-related stress. Carter et al. (2018) noted that coping strategies after racism are culturally influenced. Therefore, the participant's positive perception of religious coping in this study may be due to cultural differences between the US sample in Szymanski and Obiri (2011) and the cultural background of participants in this study. The use of religious coping in this study also contradicts research by Shen and Slater (2021), who found religious coping was the least common coping strategy for stress in HE. Furthermore, they reported that religious coping had no significant effect on stress in 87 academics based in Northern Ireland. Unfortunately, Shen and Slater (2021) do not provide details on the ethnicity of participants in their study. However, one could speculate that the differences are due to the participant's ethnicities and experiences of racism in this study. For example, previous research in the US has documented how the coping strategies used for racism-related stress differ from coping with general stress.

Finally, participants spoke about the strategies they used to redefine their engagement with HE. I was struck by how their strategies shared similarities with my clinical practice with clients. For example, in Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy for eating difficulties, a key component of therapy is broadening the client's sense of worth beyond their weight and shape (Fairburn, 2008). Despite the apparent differences between racism and eating difficulties, there were parallels in how the participants broadened their areas of evaluation beyond work. In person-centred terms, one could view the participants as moving from an external to an internal locus of evaluation (Mearns et al., 2013). Additionally, some participants redefined what it meant to be a BME academic. For example, Academic 2 spoke of the process of viewing his presence as one of the view Black professors as a sign of his success. His experience aligns with Spates et al. (2020) research on the coping strategies of Black Women

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in the US. Spates and colleagues (2020) noted that their participants redefined what it meant to be Black Women and expressed that it was important to view their identities as a source of pride.

5.6 Summary of Contributions to the Literature

This research has explored the intersections of work and discrimination by interviewing six BME academics employed in UK HE. While the study focused on the experiences of academics, the participants emphasised their experiences as students. The study, therefore, has highlighted how attempts to improve the wellbeing of academics must go hand in hand with attempts to improve the wellbeing of students. Similarly, while racism featured heavily in the participant's accounts, an intersectional lens has highlighted how social categories such as BME, or even more specific terms such as Black, can fail to capture the diversity of individuals' experiences within a particular category. Thus, this research demonstrates a need for intersectional interventions that acknowledge that the wellbeing of BME academics will be influenced by a variety of factors related to their social and professional identities. Furthermore, while this research focused on UK HE, the global nature of racism within HE suggests that these findings will have relevance internationally.

This study has highlighted how the wellbeing of BME may be influenced by what I termed hyper performance. Racist stereotypes within the broader culture of competition in HE can result in pressure to perform academically and socially. Importantly, hyper performance influences the wellbeing of academics inside and outside the workplace. In particular, the relationships with friends and families can be negatively influenced by the challenges of working in HE. The participants discussed microaggressions as implicitly and explicitly negatively influencing wellbeing. Therefore, this study contributes to the ongoing debate

regarding the usefulness of microaggressions for psychological research (e.g., Lillienfeld, 2017a; Williams, 2019).

The study has contributed to our understanding of the strategies that BME academics use to support their wellbeing. For example, social support inside and outside of work helped mitigate the challenges that HE placed on their wellbeing. Additionally, participants also used strategies to redefine their engagement with academia. For example, prior research has criticised the absence of attention to racism when discussing the wellbeing of academics (e.g., Tate, 2017). This study has responded to that gap in the literature by highlighting how racism intersects with other forms of discrimination to influence BME academics' wellbeing.

Additionally, this study has contributed methodologically by employing an IPA design. Urbina-Garcia (2020) noted that research on the wellbeing of academics had not used phenomenological approaches. In this study, I responded to that gap and utilised an IPA design. The use of IPA has enabled an in-depth exploration of the wellbeing of six BME academics. Furthermore, the study has contributed to the literature by exploring wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic and first national lockdown in the UK. While it was not a specific focus of the research, the context of COVID-19 would have shaped the participants' accounts. Although, somewhat surprisingly, the changes to working necessitated by COVID-19 were not discussed by academics as affecting their wellbeing positively or negatively. Finally, the study has also made conceptual contributions to the study of wellbeing in HE. This research project study has used a holistic definition of wellbeing, including psychological, social, spiritual, and physical dimensions (McNaught, 2011). In doing so, the study has contributed to a literature base that has typically focused on burnout and stress when discussing academic wellbeing (Guthrie et al., 2018).

5.7 Implications and Recommendations

Grzanka & Moradi (2021) suggest that social justice, research, and therapy are intertwined activities. Similarly, authors have noted that critical researchers need to advocate for change rather than simply stating the inequalities that their research has uncovered (Dixson & Rosseau Anderson, 2018). Despite this, I am cautious in presenting wide-reaching implications from the position of an expert. During my interviews, I asked participants directly what they believed would be helpful regarding policies and interventions in HE, and they struggled to identify straightforward recommendations. However, engaging with the literature and speaking directly with BME academics has enabled some tentative suggestions. In the remainder of this section, I begin by discussing implications for counselling psychology before moving on to recommendations for HE institutes and employees.

Counselling Psychology is well-positioned to play a role in dismantling white supremacy and racism in the UK and beyond. As a profession, we could follow in the footsteps of the recent efforts by the American Psychological Association (2021a) to reflect on the legacy of racism within counselling psychology and take practical steps to address racial inequities in society (American Psychological Association, 2021c). For years the applied psychology professions in the UK have seen underrepresentation of BME psychologists, and access to funding remains a barrier for BME individuals training as applied psychologists in the UK (e.g., Turpin & Coleman, 2010). I would have struggled to finance my doctoral training without the monthly stipends I received from the university as part of a scholarship. Therefore, I was encouraged to see that the School of Education, Environment and Development (SEED) has recently introduced the SEED Enhancing Racial Equality studentship (University of Manchester, 2021). Reducing the financial barrier towards training will play a key role in

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increasing the number of BME Counselling Psychologists in the UK. Adding the talents and perspectives of more BME psychologists will also lead to more insightful research into racism and tangible changes to our practice. Increasing access to training is just one example of what anti-racism within Counselling Psychology might look like in a post BlackLivesMatter world.

There has been an increasing acknowledgement of the benefits of intersectionality for therapy and research activities within psychology (Cole, 2020; Grzanka, 2020; Rosenthal, 2016). Therefore, in line with previous recommendations (e.g., Clauss-Ehlers et al., 2019), I invite counselling psychologists to reflect on how intersectionality might apply to ourselves in addition to our clients. As noted by Turner (2021), intersectionality and the simultaneous forces of privilege and oppression shape our work as therapists. Furthermore, Turner (2021) uses the case study of Susan to highlight how while being older may be a source of marginalisation in British culture, being older may be a source of privilege in Afrocentric cultures. Beyond that specific example, the use of intersectionality with clients, even when well-intentioned, may be prone to cultural biases. Therefore, this research proposes that psychologists need to continually reflect on our beliefs and be open to new perspectives when listening to minoritised groups.

This research project suggests that other aspects of CRT (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017) may also prove beneficial when working with groups and systems. For example, interest convergence (Castagno & Lee, 2011) provided context for the participant's experiences of tokenisation. Drawing on CRT concepts such as interest convergence may help ensure that anti-racist practice, rather than the social performance of anti-racism, is authentically embedded within counselling psychology training.

Much of the psychological literature talks about the cost of unemployment on an individual's wellbeing (e.g., Clark, 2011). However, this study indicates that the relationship between employment and wellbeing is nuanced, and for some individuals, the workplace environment can contribute to poor wellbeing. Therefore, I suggest that psychologists enhance therapy by exploring the client's experiences and relationships at work. While this is something that counselling psychologists already do to an extent, I suggest that therapists more explicitly ask work-related questions. Alongside this, asking racialised minorities explicitly about their experiences with racism could improve therapy. For example, research shows that asking clients about their ethnic background can improve the therapeutic relationship (Gurpinar-Morgan et al., 2014). In addition, when trust and rapport have been developed, therapists may ask something along the lines of "Is it okay if I ask whether you experienced racism in that situation?" (Beck, 2019, p.5).

Social justice requires moving from a deficit model and advocating for systemic changes (Buchanan & Wiklund, 2020). On this point, this study has implications and recommendations for HE institutes and for those working within academia. A recent report noted that UK universities were oblivious to the scale of racial discrimination in HE (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2019). Subsequently, addressing racial inequality in HE is difficult because many individuals still need to be convinced that it exists. Without widespread acknowledgement that racism is a persistent problem in HE, any initiatives will be seen as unfairly privileging BME academics (Law, 2017). While stating that racism exists in HE may be uncontroversial to some readers, this study suggests that not all academics agree. For example, Academic 3 discussed how a colleague dismissed her experiences of racism and warned her not to play the "race card". The participants' accounts of colleagues

being reluctant to acknowledge racism in the workplace are also supported by previous research. One study suggested that accounts of racism by BME colleagues were viewed as a "psychological projection" by some academics (Kim & Ng, 2019, p. 16).

Furthermore, Academic 1 referred to differences in "race politics" between himself and colleagues, suggesting that not all academics are committed to racial equality. Hopefully, by presenting the participants' first-hand accounts and verbatim quotes, this study demonstrates that racism and other forms of discrimination are a reality for some BME academics. This conclusion supports the expanding body of literature documenting experiences of racism for BME academics (Arday, 2018a; Bhopal, 2021; Rollock, 2021). This study also highlights how distressing it can be for BME academics when colleagues in the workplace dismiss their experiences. Therefore, a primary recommendation for all workplaces is that when colleagues share experiences of discrimination, responding with empathy rather than dismissing their claims may be helpful.

In this study, I have discussed how the experiences of students and academics are interconnected. Previous research has illustrated that poorer wellbeing in academic staff is associated with poorer wellbeing in students (Harding et al., 2018; Kiltz et al., 2020). Therefore, in line with previous authors, strategies to improve wellbeing within HE should focus on students and academics and the interactions between the two groups (Kiltz et al., 2020). Creating an environment with policies and practices that promote the wellbeing of BME academics will also lead to improvements in the wellbeing of BME students. One such example relates to Academic 1's discussion of student evaluations and how they perpetuate surveillance and anxiety for BME academics. Moving forward, tools such as the TEF, which are racialised and gendered, should not be used to determine the value of BME academics

(Gatwiri et al., 2021). Or, as Boring and Ottoboni (2016) argue, the onus should be on HE institutes to demonstrate how the use of such evaluations are not biased against historically marginalised groups in academia. As Heffernan (2021, p.9) stated, "no university, and indeed the higher education sector as a whole, can declare to be a gender equal employer or have an interest in growing a safe, inclusive and diverse workforce if they continue using [teaching evaluations] to evaluate course and teacher quality".

Tate (2017) argues that universities have reduced staff wellbeing into another key performance indicator alongside research and teaching metrics. Additionally, racism and microaggressions have been absent within discourses of wellbeing in HE (Tate, 2017; Walcott, 2021). In this study, the six participants gave persuasive accounts that experiences of racism, often intersecting with other forms of discrimination, contributed to poorer wellbeing. Additionally, my literature review highlighted the links between racism and poorer wellbeing across the globe (Carter et al., 2018; de Freitas et al., 2018; Williams et al., 2019). Thus, attempts to improve the wellbeing of BME academics cannot be achieved without also considering how to reduce experiences of racism within HE. Moving forward, any attempts to improve the wellbeing of academics should consider the presence of racism and other forms of discrimination within HE

Accordingly, interventions that hope to tackle racism, or any other type of discrimination, should be intersectional (e.g., Buchanan & Wiklund, 2020). In doing so, wellbeing initiatives must consider the similarities and differences between individuals in terms of gender, class, age, and employment contract, among a myriad of other factors for BME staff and students. Moving forward, it would also be beneficial if schemes had real buy-in from BME academics (Universities UK, 2019). In practice, this will differ from department to department but needs

to ensure that the voices of BME academics influence the workplace environment. For example, isolated sources of support such as a one-off seminar are unlikely to address the wellbeing of BME academics who regularly experience racism in the workplace. Instead, the focus should be to foster an anti-racist culture in HE (Law, 2017).

5.8 Strengths and Limitations

I believe this thesis has made a novel contribution to the existing literature. However, the research has both strengths and limitations, which I will discuss in this section.

To my best knowledge, this is the first study to use IPA to understand the wellbeing of BME academics in UK HE. Due to the timing of the data collection, it will also be one of the first studies to look at the wellbeing of BME academics during COVID-19. Some may view the sample size as a limitation as it is difficult to generalise the findings of six participants to the 36,775 BME academics in the UK (Higher Education Statistics Office, 2020). However, the sample size fits the methodological approach and the aims of the research. Furthermore, the inclusion of six participants allowed for a more comprehensive analysis of their experiences than I would achieve with more participants.

Nizza et al. (2021) suggest four markers for assessing the quality of IPA research. These are:

(1) construction of a compelling, unfolding narrative

(2) development of a vigorous experiential and/or existential account

(3) close analytic reading of participants' words

(4) attending to convergence and divergence

I would argue that this study has worked towards all four markers suggested above. Firstly, this study has constructed a narrative of how wellbeing is influenced by working in HE. I

drew upon metaphors such as the game of academia to help the reader understand this narrative. Secondly, this study has emphasised the existential aspects of the participant's wellbeing. For example, the findings emphasised phrases such as "that's how we drown" to illustrate the perceived existential challenges of working in HE. I then presented my interpretations of the included quotes. Thirdly, as detailed in Chapter Three, I paid close attention to the participants' words and engaged in a lengthy process of analysing the conceptual, linguistic and descriptive comments (Smith et al., 2009). Finally, throughout the paper, I have paid attention to areas of divergence and convergence. For example, I have highlighted how other aspects of identity, such as religion, shaped how participants mitigated the wellbeing challenges of HE.

A strength of the study is that the participants came from five different universities in six academic subjects. Their universities were based in different geographical locations, and there were five Russel Group universities and one post-1992 university. Additionally, five of the participants were born outside the UK from four different countries. Subsequently, the research was able to gather perspectives informed by different university contexts and different life experiences. However, the diverse backgrounds of the six academics could be considered a limitation as the participants were not completely homogenous. For example, I could have explored the experiences of academics from the same ethnic group at the same university. However, I believe the different backgrounds of the participants is a strength of the study. Furthermore, there were shared experiences among the six participants, suggesting that my participants were at least similar enough to conduct an IPA investigation.

It could also be argued that, in some respects, my participants were too similar to each other. Many of the academics worked in the social sciences and were accustomed to critically

discussing racism in their professional and personal lives. Additionally, all the participants described experiences of discrimination in the workplace. Subsequently, my analysis often emphasised the negative aspects of working in HE on wellbeing. Research indicates that not all academics who fall under the BME umbrella report experiencing racism in HE (e.g., Kim & Ng, 2019). Interviewing participants with experiences of racism within HE may have produced a different analysis and highlighted more of the ways in which working HE is perceived to benefit wellbeing. Only academics working in England were interviewed in this study, and it is possible that speaking to academics in Wales or Scotland would have resulted in different findings being presented. Additionally, five of the six participants were at Russell Group universities, which may not represent the experiences found at other universities. For example, academics at universities that ranked high on league tables reported greater working conditions than those at lower-ranking universities (Fontinha et al., 2016).

Using academics as participants meant that the participants occasionally referred to terms such as microaggressions and intersectionality in our interviews. Their intimacy with relevant concepts could be viewed as both strength and a limitation. It is a strength of the study because the participants and I had a shared language to communicate their racialised experiences. However, their familiarity with these terms may have led to a more theoretical discussion than I would have had by interviewing participants in a different workplace. Although, it could also be argued that these terms are familiar to some BME individuals due to their lived experiences. Overall, I think it was beneficial to interview participants who could draw upon their theoretical understanding when discussing their experiences in HE.

As with any qualitative research, the findings will be influenced by my worldview and prior experiences (Berger, 2015). The findings will also be limited by my ability to interpret the

participants' words. My interpretation was second order, and I could not draw upon the lived experience of events when interpreting the transcripts (Smith, 2019). However, I have included direct quotes and providing reflective sections throughout the thesis. Therefore, the reader should understand the findings within the context of second-order interpretations and the socio-political environment at the time of the interviews. For example, the murder of George Floyd was on the mind of the participants and me during the interviews. Additionally, the interviews occurred during the first lockdown following the COVID-19 outbreak across the globe. It is unclear how these events may have influenced the findings presented in this study, but I am sure they have in some way.

The research may have been improved if I had lived experience of working as an academic. Approaching the research with an insider perspective may have enabled me to access unspoken knowledge of the research topic (Tuffour, 2018). It is also possible that certain areas were unexplored as I do not have first-hand knowledge of different aspects of working as an academic. Additionally, recruiting participants may have been easier for an insider researcher who already has existing social networks with potential participants (Chammas, 2020). However, my status as a postgraduate researcher meant that I had some knowledge of UK HE, and perhaps I was an insider-outsider researcher as described by previous authors (e.g., Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Furthermore, a BME academic researcher may have had faced challenges in bracketing their experiences from the participant's experiences during the analysis.

As with any research project, some aspects of working in HE remains untold or underemphasised in the participants' accounts. After completing the interviews, I realised that most of the participants worked at Russell Group universities, and the majority were also

born outside of the UK. If I were to conduct the research again, I would ask more questions related to both aspects as this likely shaped their experiences to some extent. However, as stated by Turner (2021), the demographic details above would likely have resulted in simultaneous privilege and discrimination that may change from one situation to another within HE. For example, BME academics who can migrate to work in the UK may be more likely to come from a middle-class background in their countries of birth.

Upon reflection, it is surprising how the benefits of working in HE remained absent in participants' accounts. All the participants made conscious decisions to continue working in HE at the time of the interviews. Therefore, it is likely that there are aspects of the job that they find enriching for their wellbeing, despite being absent in this research project. My identity as a Black-mixed race postgraduate may have unconsciously led to a greater emphasis on the challenges of HE. However, academics might minimise the challenges of working in HE when talking with a doctoral student interested in an academic career. Therefore, the overwhelmingly negative accounts provided by participants, despite me being a doctoral student, suggests that racism and other forms of discrimination are pervasive within HE.

Some limitations are related to completing this research as part of a professional doctorate. For example, had this research been conducted outside the context of a marked assignment, I may have used member checking when completing the analysis. Although, upon reflection, this may not have been necessary due to the interpretive nature of IPA (Larkin & Thompson, 2012). However, I do believe the format in which this research is currently published limits the accessibility of the findings. The findings are presented in a 45,000+ words thesis that will likely only be read by my thesis examiners and future students looking for examples of

theses. Therefore, one of my goals following completion of the doctorate is to present the findings in a way that will be accessible to key stakeholders. For example, I could achieve greater accessibility by publishing the findings in a journal article and engaging directly with relevant groups such as university diversity committees.

The research highlighted the importance of considering other forms of discrimination that intersect with racism. However, there were possible intersections that were unexplored in this study. For example, previous research has suggested that BME academics with disabilities experience exclusion based on their race/ethnicity in addition to disabilities (Bhakta, 2020). It would have been insightful to explore how discrimination based on disability or sexual orientation influenced wellbeing. However, as Delgado (2011, pg. 1264) notes, "Intersectionality can easily paralyse progressive work and thought because of the realisation that whatever unit you choose to work with, someone may come along and point out that you forgot something". Therefore, despite the limitations discussed in this section, I believe this research makes a meaningful contribution to our understanding of the wellbeing of BME academics working within UK HE.

5.9 Future Research

While this study has answered the research question by detailing how working in HE influences the wellbeing of BME academics, there is scope for future research to build upon the findings in this study. For example, recent racist experiences appear to influence wellbeing more than historical experiences of racism (Carter et al., 2018; Paradies, 2006). Therefore, future research may wish to adopt a longitudinal design with multiple interview phases. A longitudinal design with follow up interviews would allow access to recent experiences of racism in the workplace and insight into how this has shaped wellbeing.

Furthermore, a longitudinal design would enable researchers to understand how changes in the socio-political context shape wellbeing. For example, while COVID-19 was not discussed as impacting wellbeing in this project, a longitudinal study may have documented changes in how wellbeing was experienced pre and post COVID-19.

In the findings, I noted how Academic 2 sometimes described hyper performance as addictive, and some pleasure was derived from it, at least in the short term. Hyper performance may be beneficial for wellbeing up to a point. For example, Fontinha et al. (2019) reported that academics who worked 10 hours of overtime reported greater job satisfaction and wellbeing than those who worked no overtime. However, there does appear to be an upper limit to hyper performance as those who worked more than 10 hours reported poorer wellbeing and job satisfaction. Those who work more than 10 hours of overtime may be more likely to be early-career academics or those with more job responsibilities which might independently lead to poorer wellbeing. Despite the caveats noted above, further research on the links between hyper performing and the wellbeing of BME academics would be helpful.

One of the frustrations that arose when completing the literature review was that the limited studies on academic wellbeing did not collect data related to ethnicity (e.g., Fontinha et al., 2016; Kinman & Wray, 2014). This study suggests that BME academics report challenges to wellbeing that relate specifically to racism in HE. Therefore, I encourage researchers to consider ethnicity as a variable alongside gender when exploring the wellbeing of academics in UK HE.

Finally, the research indicated that working in HE might also influence the wellbeing of spouses/partners of BME academics. For instance, many of the participants spoke of having to prioritise work over other commitments. Studying the wellbeing of family is also relevant considering how providing social support was described as overwhelming and disrupted Academic 2's sleep. Furthermore, family members may be particularly prone to cultural taxation (Padilla, 1994), which may negatively influence their wellbeing while supporting individuals in HE. Therefore, understanding how partners and family members perceive supporting BME academics to influence their wellbeing would be beneficial.

5.10 Reflective Discussion

Authors have noted that it is critical to have a post-completion reflective statement in IPA research, where the twists and turns of the research are detailed (Alase, 2017). A reflective-practitioner model also underpins counselling psychology training (Donati, 2016). In clinical work, reflection has helped me grow as a therapist, and I firmly believe that I can help clients more now than when I had 0 hours towards the 450-hour requirement of client work required to pass the doctorate. Similarly, I think reflection and learning as a researcher is just as critical.

This research has been an emotionally challenging yet rewarding endeavour. One key takeaway is that racism is deeply ingrained in Western societies and appears to be increasing rather than declining by some measures. I recall a specific conversation with a Black friend who innocently asked me, "do you think there will be much racism in HE?". He explained how he imagined that academics are in positions of power and might be insulated from the effects of racism. I replied that I was unsure, but I suspected racism would not feature for all

my participants. However, after completing this research, I can confidently say that yes, racism exists in HE.

When I was considering different possible topics at the beginning of the research process, I was hesitant to research racism within HE. I was unsure if racism was still a pressing issue in society. I also worried that the topic would be considered too subjective and not "real" psychological research. With the benefit of hindsight, I bought into the concept of a post-racial society before undertaking this research. I identify as Black Mixed-Race, and I have encountered racism throughout my life. However, at least regarding HE, I have been privileged. Despite the documented attainment gap, I achieved a first-class degree in my undergraduate studies. I was awarded a bursary to study my MSc for free, and upon completion, I was awarded a prize for achieving the highest grade in my cohort. Finally, I have been highly privileged to be awarded a stipend with waived fees for the Counselling Psychology professional doctorate. I have benefited hugely from HE while other racialised minorities, including friends and family, have had dramatically different experiences.

Throughout the research project, I experienced anxiety about many issues. First, there was anxiety related to the practical issue of obtaining enough participants. I was aware of the relatively low number of BME academics working in HE, which meant the potential pool of participants would be limited. The anxiety over recruiting participants resembled a fight-flight-freeze situation, and for several months after receiving ethical approval, I was stuck in the freeze response. Just as I began contacting potential participants through word of mouth, the COVID-19 pandemic hit the UK, and in-person interviews were no longer possible. Additionally, some potential contacts lost their employment during this period and understandably were no longer interested in taking part. However, many academics were now

working from home, which made it easier to set up remote interviews. I also found that I was more comfortable conducting the interviews remotely and perhaps I was more present. Therefore, it is possible that the participants also felt more relaxed and open as they could complete interviews from their homes.

There was also anxiety related to the renewed focus on racism in society. A few weeks before my first interview, news of the murder of George Floyd began to circulate and there appeared to be a collective momentum towards challenging racism in society. On the one hand, this may have benefited the research as BME academics were more willing to discuss their racialised experiences. However, I did worry that my attempts to recruit academics would be viewed as opportunistic. Additionally, I was conscious of the collective trauma that BME academics may have been experiencing as racism was discussed daily on news channels and social media.

Van Manen (1990) notes the potential for phenomenological research to have a transformative effect on the researcher. Completing this research project has had a profound effect on my clinical practice. During my third year, I have completed a service evaluation and clinical audit focused on marginalised groups and what could be done to support their needs better. In MDT meetings, I have tried to ensure that structural factors such as racism are considered when discussing clients. However, I recognise that there is still more that I could do, particularly when challenging stereotypical remarks made by senior colleagues. The power dynamics in a workplace can make challenging microaggressions difficult, even when they are not explicitly directed at me.

At times I have worried that I am too closely related to the research topic as a BME postgraduate researcher. On speaking on researching Black women, as a Black woman herself, Collins (2000) writes that she worried others would discredit her research as too subjective and less scholarly. I shared similar concerns and wondered if a quantitative design looking at depression and anxiety would represent "real" research. However, I do believe there were some benefits to my "insider" status. My identity as a Black Mixed-Race doctoral student has probably helped build rapport with my participants and facilitated further questions. For example, many of the participants used phrases like "I am sure you have also experienced" when sharing their accounts of working in HE. However, there may also have been a negative consequence to researching this topic as a racialised minority. By discussing my positioning, I hope that the reader can conclude to what extent my positioning has influenced the research.

If I was to begin the research again, I am sure that it would be a better piece of research. Only by completing the research project have I been able to learn more about the research phenomenon. For instance, I was not previously aware of the negative connotations that "wellbeing" had with locating distress at the individual level in HE (Gill & Donaghue, 2016). This is unfortunate as my intention was not to suggest that BME academics need to learn to better "cope" with racism in HE. Similarly, I was woefully naive about how specific terms could potentially invalidate the participant's experiences. For example, I initially planned to use the term "perceived racism" when discussing the participant's experiences. However, Neville et al. (2013) highlights how the term "perceived racism" could be considered a microinvalidation towards the participants. In conclusion, while this marks the end of the research project, it also marks the beginning of incorporating social justice and anti-racism into my identity as a counselling psychologist.

5.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter outlines how the research answered the research question while discussing the findings with relevant literature. Working in HE influences the wellbeing of BME academics, and at least in this study, it influences wellbeing in mostly a negative way. However, receiving support from the "team" appears to mitigate the challenges to wellbeing. Future research may also benefit from a longitudinal design to monitor the changes in wellbeing over time. I suggest practice and research on the wellbeing of BME academics must consider the role of racism and how it intersects with other forms of discrimination. While the research has made a meaningful contribution, there are limitations to conducting this research as a doctoral thesis. Finally, as expected, my positioning has influenced the research process. However, completing this research has motivated me to make anti-racism central to my personal and professional identities.

6. Conclusion

A culture of competition has replaced collegiality which was previously identified as a protective factor for the wellbeing of academics (Wray & Kinman, 2020). Moreover, this culture of competition is exacerbated for academics who also must contend with racism and other forms of discrimination. This study has provided a novel insight into the wellbeing of BME academics working within UK HE. The use of an IPA approach allowed me to interpret the participant's interpretations. I hope that this has resulted in a deeper level of analysis for the reader to consider. The findings in this study are consistent with previous research documenting the presence of racism for academics and students in UK HE. However, this study builds upon previous research by exploring how six BME academics perceived working in HE to influence their wellbeing. Microaggressions and more overt bullying influenced the participants psychological and physical wellbeing. In addition, the presence of racism and the competition in academia resulted in pressure to work harder in professional and social domains.

Completing this study has highlighted that humans are innately social creatures. Consequently, the social interactions that BME academics experienced could adversely impact their wellbeing. Despite this, participants described social connections as mitigating the adverse effects of working in HE. Furthermore, spirituality and religious faith also helped navigate the challenges posed to wellbeing. It is worth reiterating that due to the scarcity of previous research on the wellbeing of BME academics, this project was intended to be an exploratory study. Future research, perhaps with a longitudinal design, is needed to understand further the connections between wellbeing and working in HE as a BME individual.

I initially imagined the project would be just another checklist on the list of items to complete before achieving the title of Counselling Psychologist. However, this research has reinforced how racism can be found throughout society, even in supposedly liberal environments such as HE. Furthermore, this study has illustrated that the impact of racism is very much real and discussing it goes beyond the so-called culture wars (e.g., Sobolewska & Ford, 2019). For many of the participants, racism and other forms of discrimination changed their lives and sense of identity. Perhaps unsurprisingly, exploring their experiences has led to a similar process where my identity has been profoundly changed. To give one example out of many, I suspect it will be a personal challenge to acknowledge the merits of research and practice that do not consider the tenets of intersectionality to some extent. Additionally, I continue to reflect on the influence of spirituality on my wellbeing, given the positive contributions it made to the wellbeing of some participants.

I want to conclude this thesis by thanking the participants for the insightful discussions during the interviews. I hope that this thesis can play a role, even if it is small, in foregrounding anti-racism into HE institutes in the UK and beyond.

7. References

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8. Appendices

8.1 Ethical Approval

Ref: 2019-7839-11946

21/11/2019

Dear Mr Andre Etchebarne, , Mr Andre Etchebarne, Dr Terry Hanley, Dr Laura Winter

Study Title: How Do BME Academics Experience Working in Higher Education to Impact on Their Subjective Wellbeing?

Environment, Education and Development School Panel PGR

I write to thank you for submitting the final version of your documents for your project to the Committee on 01/10/2019 12:29 . I am pleased to confirm a favourable ethical opinion for the above research on the basis described in the application form and supporting documentation as submitted and approved by the Committee.

Please see below for a table of the titles, version numbers and dates of all the final approved documents for your project:

Document Type	File Name	Date	Version
Consent Form	Research Proposal Consent Form	01/01/2019	1
Participant Information Sheet	Research Proposal Preliminary Information Sheet (individual)	01/05/2019	1
Participant Information Sheet	Research Proposal Preliminary Information Sheet (focus group)	01/05/2019	1
Additional docs	Focus Group Interview schedule	01/08/2019	1
Additional docs	Research Proposal Interview Schedule individual	02/08/2019	1
Letters of Permission	Gatekeeper Email	10/08/2019	1
Advertisement	Research Advert	10/08/2019	1
Data Management Plan	Data management plan	10/08/2019	1

This approval is effective for a period of five years and is on delegated authority of the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) however please note that it is only valid for the specifications of the research project as outlined in the approved documentation set. If the project continues beyond the 5 year period or if you wish to propose any changes to the methodology or any other specifics within the project an application to seek an amendment must be submitted for review. Failure to do so could invalidate the insurance and constitute research misconduct.

You are reminded that, in accordance with University policy, any data carrying personal identifiers must be encrypted when not held on a secure university computer or kept securely as a hard copy in a location which is accessible only to those involved with the research.

For those undertaking research requiring a DBS Certificate: As you have now completed your ethical application if required a colleague at the University of Manchester will be in touch for you to undertake a DBS check. Please note that you do not have DBS approval until you have received a DBS Certificate completed by the University of Manchester, or you are an MA Teach First student who holds a DBS certificate for your current teaching role.

Reporting Requirements:

You are required to report to us the following:

1. Amendments: Guidance on what constitutes an amendment
2. Amendments: How to submit an amendment in the ERM system
3. Ethics Breaches and adverse events
4. Data breaches

We wish you every success with the research.

Yours sincerely,

8.2 Research Advert

● BME academic staff wanted!

We are looking for BME academics for our research project looking at the experience of working in higher education and its impact on your wellbeing.

Who?

- If you: self-identify as BME and work in higher education then I'd love to hear from you!

What?

- Participants will discuss their experience of working in higher in a semi-structured individual interview.

How long for?

- It is expected that the interview will last between 45 to 60 minutes.

If you are interested in taking part, or for more information, please contact:

Andre Etchebarne, Trainee Counselling Psychologist: andre.etchebarne@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk

8.3 Preliminary Interview Schedule

Initial conversation with the participant(s): I am conducting this interview because I am interested in how working in higher education impacts on your wellbeing. I am particularly interested in the ways you experience your ethnicity to impact on your work and wellbeing. There are no right or wrong responses to these questions.

1. Can you tell me a little bit about you; your age, gender, your title (example lecturer), whether you are on a part time or full-time contract and how do you self-identify in regards to ethnicity, race and social class?

2. How would you describe the impact of working in higher education on your wellbeing? (By wellbeing I mean your emotional, mental and physical health)

   Prompt: How does this impact on your work life? (ability to complete tasks, marking work, teaching etc.)

   Prompt: How does this impact on your life outside of work? (relationships with friends and family, hobbies etc.)

3. What are the challenges associated with working in higher education?
Prompt: Are there any specific examples that come to mind?
Prompt: What are the coping strategies that you use?

4. How do you perceive your ethnicity, race and social class to impact on your working in higher education, if at all?

Have you noticed any changes in the way you feel about this?

Are there any specific examples that come to mind?

5. How do wider social and political issues (e.g. Brexit) impact on the experience of working in higher education?
Prompt: Have you noticed any changes in the way you feel about this?

6. How do you view your universities attempts to minimise racial inequality among its workforce?

Prompt: Have you noticed any changes in the way you feel about this?
Prompt: Are there any specific examples that come to mind?

7. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

8.4 Participant Information Sheet

The University of Manchester

Project Title: Exploring the experiences of BME Academics and the impact of working in Higher Education on their wellbeing

Participant Information Sheet (PIS)

This PIS should be read in conjunction with The University privacy notice

You are being invited to take part in a research study as part of a university assignment. The overall aim is to look at BME academics experience of working in higher education and the impact on their wellbeing. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether you wish to take part. Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Who will conduct the research?

The research will be conducted by Andre Etchebarne, Trainee Counselling Psychologist.

What is the purpose of the research?

The purpose of the research is to develop a deeper understanding on how academics from BME backgrounds experience working in higher education and how they perceive this to impact on their wellbeing.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen as you work in higher education and self-identify as from a BME background.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?

You will be asked to take part in a interview for 45-60 minutes. You will be asked to expand on working on higher education and your wellbeing. It is not anticipated that the questions will be distressing, however there may be times when you feel a sense of discomfort.

What will happen to my personal information?

In order to undertake the research project we will need to collect the following personal information/data about you:
- No personally identifiable information will be collected.

The audio recordings will consist of your voice only and will be used for completing a university assignment. The audio recording will be obtained via a 60-minute interview. Only the research team will have access to this information.
We are collecting and storing this personal information in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018 which legislate to protect your

personal information. The legal basis upon which we are using your personal information is "public interest task" and "for research purposes" if sensitive information is collected. For more information about the way we process your personal information and comply with data protection law please see our Privacy Notice for Research Participants.

The University of Manchester, as Data Controller for this project, takes responsibility for the protection of the personal information that this study is collecting about you.   In order to comply with the legal obligations to protect your personal data the University has safeguards in place such as policies and procedures. All researchers are appropriately trained and your data will be looked after in the following way:

- The data gathered via audio recording(s) will be transported via an encrypted memory stick and transferred to the researcher's personal computer and stored in an encrypted folder.

- All personal information collected about you, will be anonymised. However any identifiable information, such as the consent form, will be stored in encrypted files and held securely by the university.

- The data will be used for a university assignment and will be deleted as soon as practically possible.

You have a number of rights under data protection law regarding your personal information. For example, you can request a copy of the information we hold about you, including audio recordings. This is known as a Subject Access Request. If you would like to know more about your different rights, please consult our privacy notice for research and if you wish to contact us about your data protection rights, please email dataprotection@manchester.ac.uk or write to The Information Governance Office, Christie Building, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, M13 9PL. at the University and we will guide you through the process of exercising your rights.

You also have a right to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office, Tel 0303 123 1113

Will my participation in the study be confidential?

Your participation in the study will be kept confidential to the study team and those with access to your personal information as listed above. The recordings will be used to create a transcript, this will be completed by Andre Etchebarne. Any personal information will be anonymised and removed from the final transcript. The audio recording will be transferred via an encrypted USB device and stored on a secure university storage system.

There may be circumstances that may require third party disclosure of your information. These may be to the GP/family member/care team in the event of concerns about yours or another person's safety, or to authorities when there is a professional obligation to report misconduct or illegal activities.

Also, in the event of an incident, individuals from the University site where the study is being conducted and/or regulatory authorities may require access to study information.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?

It is up to you to decide whether to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to yourself. However, it will not be possible to remove your data from the project once it has been anonymised and forms part of the dataset as we will not be able to identify your specific data. This does not

affect your data protection rights. You will be free to stop the audio recording at any time if you do not feel comfortable.

What is the duration of the research?

The study will take place over a 1 x 60-minute interview.

Where will the research be conducted?

The interview will be conducted at an agreed upon quiet room. The room and time are still to be confirmed and you will be informed of these details prior to the interview session

Will the outcomes of the research be published?

The outcomes of the research may be used to present at conferences or submitted to journals.

Who has reviewed the research project?

The project has been reviewed by School of Environment, Education and Development Ethics Committee.

What if I want to make a complaint?
If you want to make a complaint, please contact Dr Terry Hanley.

Minor complaints

If you have a minor complaint, then you need to contact the researcher(s) in the first instance

Researcher: Andre Etchebarne

andre.etchebarne@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk

Supervisor: Terry Hanley

Terry.Hanley@manchester.ac.uk

Formal Complaints
If you wish to make a formal complaint or if you are not satisfied with the response you have gained from the researchers in the first instance then please contact
The Research Governance and Integrity Manager, Research Office, Christie Building, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL, by emailing: research.complaints@manchester.ac.uk or by telephoning 0161 275 2674.
What Do I Do Now?
If you have any queries about the study or if you are interested in taking part, then please contact the researcher.
Name: **Andre Etchebarne**
Email ID: andre.etchebarne@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk

This Project Has Been Approved by the University of Manchester's Research Ethics Committee [ERM reference number]

Thank you for taking part in this study.

8.5 Participant Consent Sheet

The University of Manchester

Project Title: Exploring the experiences of BME Academics and the impact of working in Higher Education on their wellbeing
Consent Form

If you are happy to participate please complete and sign the consent form below

	Activities	Initials
1	I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily.	
2	I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to myself. I understand that it will not be possible to remove my data from the project once it has been anonymised and forms part of the data set. I agree to take part on this basis	
3	I agree to the interview being audio recorded.	
4	I agree that any data collected may be published in anonymous form in academic books, reports or journals	
5	I agree that the researchers may retain my contact details in order to provide me with a summary of the findings for this study.	
6	I agree to take part in this study	

Data Protection

The personal information we collect and use to conduct this research will be processed in accordance with data protection law as explained in the Participant Information Sheet and the Privacy Notice for Research Participants.

_____   _____   _____
Name of Participant   Signature   Date

_____   _____   _____
Name of the person taking consent   Signature   Date

[1 copy for the participant, 1 copy for the research team (original)]

8.6 List of Initial Themes Across Six Participants

Interview 1 Emergent Themes

Master Theme 1 - Standing out and being viewed differently
Microaggressions as everyday experiences
Being watched
Standing out in sea of whiteness
Observing eye
Gazed upon
Freedom
surveillance
Intersections of experience
Fitting in/Expectations of what an academic is
Incongruence
Learned helplessness
Expected performance
Novel commodity and tokenistic
Slow to realise what is happening but experiences stay with you
Wanting to forget how it feels – avoiding the reality
Viewed as chip on shoulder

Master Theme 2 – Stepping back and seeing the game
Facade of equality in HE
Race "politics" and playing the game of HE
Race(ism) is left to me discuss or bring
Policies maintaining and/or perpetuate racism
Symoblising diversity as an acceptable face
My presence serves the interests of the university

Master Theme 3 - Finding ways to protect myself
Finding meaning + purpose
Freedom
Mentor
Finding community
Social support
Process of time as healer
Purpose – therefore I persist
Meaning making
Developing resilience/coping strategy
Shared experience of racism
Not individualising the experience
Underneath the surface/suppressed
Compartmentalising
Thought Suppression
Looking for positive outlets

Master Theme 4 - Process over time
Changing social group over time

Increased anxiety
Finding my tribe
Changing Identity
Change in feelings
Finding myself over time
Developing confidence

Master Theme 5 Impact on mind and body
Isolation
Exclusion
Lonely
Not belonging or fitting in
Psychosomatic expression of stress
Physical side effects
Skin problems
Anxious existence X
Paranoia as you question the merit of your achievements
Devalued/valued arbitrarily
Illegitimate
Pressures/Demands/ Expectations/pressure
Seeking protection
Poorer self-care
Shame
Resentment
Decreasing confidence
Undermined

Interview 2 Emergent Themes

Master Theme 1 - Stepping back and seeing the game
Providing support to minority students
Picking my battles
Understanding how to master the terrain
Seeing past the game/choosing not to play
Poking the bear

Master Theme 2 – The life of the outsider
Constantly being watched
White gaze
Micro and Macro aggressions
Pressure to sustain success
Hyper visibility
Outsider status
Burden of representation
Represent myself +others

Master Theme 3 –Bio-psycho-social
Overwhelming
Social Isolation
Burn out
Nervous breakdown
Vicarious distress
Neglecting physical health
Weight gain
Black emotional tax
Disrupted social life
Isolated from others like me
Incongruence
Cognitive dissonance
Hyper performance is all consuming

Master Theme 4 – Finding my cocoon of safety
Reshaping internal narrative to cope
Limiting social media
Developing self confidence
Finding purpose
Therapy
Music
Creating cocoon of safety
Reshaping the narrative
Seeking community
Connecting with black culture

Master Theme 5 - benefits
Sense of security
Sense of accomplishment
Enjoying what I do, particularly compared to prior job
Black excellence

Interview 3 Emergent Themes

Master Theme 1 – Multiple forms of discrimination
Gendered experiences
Seen as a foreigner
Intersection of race + gender + immigrant
Targeted as a woman
Intersections of race + gender
Gendered experiences
 Recipient of aggression
Derisive comments
Social exclusions

Bullied
Accent as a marker of difference
Not accepted as a manager
Achievements are belittled
Perceived as weak
Power dynamics
Threatened
Verbally abused
Burden of perceptions

Master Theme 2 - It goes beyond being an academic
Broader socio-political context
Need for policy changes at government levels
Taking a stand
Questioning the real views of colleagues
Brexit
Black lives matter

Master Theme 3 - It effects all parts of my wellbeing
Physical health consequences
Anxiety
Cardiac difficulties
Extreme stress
Sickness
Physical health consequences
Loss of confidence
Gaslighted
Stress
Initially blaming my self
Stress impacting personal life
Depressed
Loss of self-esteem and confidence
Recognising pain after the fact
Socio-political context
Traumatic

Master Theme 4 -Stepping back and seeing the game
Culture of competition
Understanding the rules of the game
Standing my ground
Relentless demands in the role
Resented for being a senior/manager
Your success is resented
Tokenism
Understanding the game
Selectively sharing information

Understanding the game
Helping others
Ways that being a minority helps you
The whole game is racist

Master Theme 5-Finding ways to protect myself
Seeking external support
Pharmacological support
Putting protection in place
Changing social environment
Sleep difficulties
Benefits of external support
Benefits of psychological support
Desire to build resilience
Developing wellbeing strategies
Benefits of changes to lifestyle

Master Theme 6- University can't help
Blamed for others response
Problems with seeking support
Lack of support leading to more issues
Limitations of institutional processes
Let down by the system
Let down by university
Questioning motives of the university
Avoidance to protect yourself
Understanding potential triggers
Many faces to racism
Failed attempts to gain support from university
Concerns are overlooked
Shared experience among minority staff
Expectations of what an academic looks like
University placating to social pressures
Academic flight/choosing to leave the game
Losing faith in the university
Attempts to silence you
Race making others uncomfortable
Silencing yourself
Racism is dismissed
Ignorance to your pain
Sense of being placed in a box

Master Theme 7 – protecting myself
Driven to work harder
Continuous innovation is expected
Designing the role to fit me
Internal pressure to work harder
Changing role
Recognising the existence of differences

Use of language
Different cultural understanding
Concealing your difficulties
Shared experiences
Attributing the difficulties to racism
Criticised by others

Master Theme 8 – Psychological reactions
Experiential avoidance
Needing protection
Delayed recognition of pain
Taking a stand
Competition with peers
Questioning self
Being in a new country
Social exclusion
Changes how you understand yourself
Blaming myself
Internalising negative comments
Lack of support from university
Resented by others
Attempts to exclude you
Benefits of external support
Changes over time
Understanding yourself better
Evaluating yourself solely on job is unhelpful
Broadening areas of self-evaluation

Interview 4 Emergent Themes

Master Theme 1- Benefits of working in HE
Things that drew me to academia'
Parts of my job that I value
Integrating the job/not compartmentalising
Aspects of the job that I value
Finding your community
Finding a routine that works for me
Finding things that I value
Enjoying the reading, writing and learning
Things that I value (financial security)

Master Theme 2- Rules of the game
Competing demands for your time
Pressure to work
Drive to succeed
Social isolation
The game is not meritocratic
The game favours the insider

Rules of the game are different for insider
The never-ending demands
Frustration at not knowing the rules of the game before
Hard to put into words

Master Theme 3 - Discrimination as student and academic
Immigration issues
Intersections with religion
Labelled as a misfit
Questioning self
Life changing consequences of racism
Intersections of religion
Covert and subtle interactions
Punished for being an outsiders
All that I have known
Social exclusion
Intersections with religion
Social exclusion impacts your job directly
Cultural differences
Racism outside of academia
Intersections of religion
All that I have known in HE (racism as a student)
Question how you are treated
Subtle interactions
Different expectations
Taken for a ride

Master Theme 4 – Getting with the team
Perspective has changed over time
External support from family
Shared experience
Social support is key
Impacting on social life with family
Utilising social support for emotions
Faith as self-care practice
Keeping things in perspective
The benefits of social support
Increased confidence over time
Helping other outsiders
Experience of the outsider
Things improving over time
Finding a community
Self care – exercise and spirituality

Master Theme 5 - Limitations of university support
University based support has not been helpful
Short term nature of university staff
Limitations of university support is open knowledge
Intersections of discrimination

University support needs to be targeted
Feel that you need to work harder

Interview 5 Emergent Themes

<u>Master Theme 1- The emotional experience</u>
Disappointed
Feeling awkward
Disrespected
Affecting relationships/social life
Avoiding interacting with others
Anxiety and super vigilance

<u>Master Theme 2 - Hyperaware of how I am viewed</u>
Visible markers let others know I am different
Hired as a commodity that helps the university
The diversity guy
Assumption that you are skilled on diversity issues
Only approached for views on race

<u>Master Theme 3 -Recognising the game</u>
"Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence""
Questioning self and others
Evolving sense of race identity
If I am fired so be it
Ready to leave academia/heart not set on it
Views dismissed as unobjective on race/diversity issues
Difference in full time vs part time (contract) work
Racism permeates the environment
Snowy peaks
Things are better in the UK
Post racial
Movement of anti-racism
Managing professional risk
Careful about what I write
Feeling exposed/vulnerable
Stereotypes encourage silence
Aware of stereotypes of Angry Arab

<u>Master Theme 4 - Half-hearted attempts by the university</u>
Institutional support is often flawed and artificial
Institution viewing diversity as a checkbox exercise
Reducing racism to diversity
Simplistic view of positive change by the university
Reductionist approach
Looking for easy solutions

Master Theme 5 - Discrimination
Being Muslim takes prominence over race
Racialised as Muslim
Double edged sword to being the minority
Stand out from others
Mainstream view of racism
Don't want to be token
The racism bus always arrives
Careful not to assume the worst
Suffocation of expectations
Race is intertwined with other aspects of my identity
Passionate about reading/writing
Other responsibilities prevent me from doing the things that I enjoy
Constantly reflecting
Day to day feels stable
Difficult for other minority staff
Felt unsupported by the university
Finding support from others
Perpetuating circle
Subtle nature makes it harder move on from
The toll of subtle interactions
Suffocated
Feel like drowning
Hard to prove
University remove emotion from discission
Others staying silent
Racialised as Muslim

Master Theme 6- Coping Strategies
Sense of community provides support
Finding a team reduces burden
Faith and transcendental justice
Righteous anger
Trust and listening to my emotions
Protecting myself
Ensuring that I don't bottle up
Organic support is the best
Avoiding compartmentalising aspects of my life
Community builds slowly
Responsibility to speak up
Slowly coming to terms
Difficulties processing/understanding it

Interview 6 Emergent Themes

Master Theme 1 - Constant Anxiety
Pressure + anxiety
Job insecurity
Clock is ticking

Multiple demands
Lack of confidence
Imposter syndrome
The everchanging game of academia
Precarious job security
Competing with colleagues

Master Theme 2 - Goes beyond HE
Gendered community
Job reflective of broader society
All that I have known
Subtle communication
Defining sense of self outside of academia
Neglecting social life + self care
Carving time for myself
Self-care is a chore

Master Theme 3 - Treated differently
Gendered experiences
Intersections
Questioning myself and judgement
Gender + race intersect
Language as currency
Not fitting into others expectations
Socialised into white male as default
Questioning intentions of others
Intersections of experience
Easy target for others
Dismissed by other

Master Theme 4 - Finding what works for me
Framing race as a positive
Reminding myself that I belong
Nutrition
Seeking stability
Finding myself over time
Secure in who I am
Finding my voice
Being secure in my identity

Master Theme 5- Supportive colleagues
Supportive department
Benefits of mentoring
Social support
Intersectional support

8.7 Sample of Reflective Journal

14th June 2020

A participant mentioned the death of George Floyd during our interview. I wonder to what extent the current context including COVID-19 is having on the research. Furthermore, I have noticed that I am struggling to stay motivated and recruit more participants. Will academics want to take part in an interview that touches on race and ethnicity? I think taking a week off from research will be helpful as I am currently feeling emotionally and physically burnt out.