# Critically exploring the career barriers and enablers of ethnically minoritised professional services staff in UK Higher Education Institutions

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# Contexts and methods

- Changing HE context – diversification, marketisation and massification of student intake.

- EDI activity promotes academic inclusion, but issues faced by those in UK professional services is 'largely unexplored' (Harrison, 2023; Nangia, 2024).

- Intersectionality, agency and structure; movement from 'liberal antiracism' to 'radical antiracism', an antiracism that acknowledges the negative impact of global structures, capitalism and coloniality of power (Kundnani, 2023; Gee et al., in press).

AHUA commissioned NBS to research the barriers and enablers for ethnically minoritised professional staff in senior roles in UK HEIs.

- Targeted UK HEIs for institutional data.

- Interviews with ethnically minoritised professional services staff grade 5 (or equivalent) and above

- Document provided to interviewees with details of interviewers available and their backgrounds, linked to University profile.

- Participants selected the interviewer and booked directly with them.

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# Findings

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| HEIs cannot provide career tracking data for professional services [HESA consultation] | **Perceptions of professional services** <br><br> "…there's a bit of an Upstairs Downstairs approach". | **HE: a microcosm of society – overt/covert oppression** <br><br> Participant experience of white colleague moving seats due to situation in Gaza | **Stereotypes and informal networks at play** <br><br> "Older and British, I wouldn't have had this issue at all". |
| **Changing identity at work** <br><br> "I need to stop being myself. I need to be 'coconut' as my colleague…. My relationship at workplace is the workplace, outside is outside". | **Additional (emotional) labour** <br><br> Being told, "I think you should lead on EDI". | **Intersectionality** <br><br> "It's quite a battle to be a woman in the organisation, let alone a black woman… every day is a fight". | **Support** <br><br> Line manager, programmes i.e., Aurora, EAP and informal networks |

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Duality exploring the relationship between agency and structure – explores the paradoxical relationship between agency and structure – to highlight how macro structures influence agency, though reproduced, and to some degree altered by such agency – self and other, to explore micro actions that influence and are influenced by micro location – and being and becoming to highlight the temporal and diachronic nature of career development (Gee, 2017).