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Intersectionality, emotionality and transnationality: migrant academics in UK higher education

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ABSTRACT

While these injustices around race and gender are experienced across many academic communities, migration status produces a specific and undertheorised layer of vulnerability, shaped by anti-immigration policies, visa-inflected precarity, and shrinking academic freedoms that existing frameworks have not adequately theorised. This editorial introduces a special issue (SI) that brings together six papers examining the overlapping forms of marginalisation experienced by migrant and minoritised academics in UK higher education (HE), at the intersection of race, gender, and migration status. It develops three interconnected analytical lenses – intersectionality, emotionality, and transnationality – as a framework for understanding experiences that no single concept can fully capture. Intersectionality is extended through translocational positionality to account for the fluid, multi-sited identities of migrant-scholars; emotionality foregrounds affective experiences such as exhaustion, loneliness, and invisible labour as structurally produced rather than incidental; and transnationality attends to the cross-border dimensions of migrant academic life, including transnational care burdens and geopolitical surveillance. Methodologically, this SI foregrounds biographical and autoethnographic approaches, arguing that these methods enable deeper engagement with lived experience and challenge dominant notions of objectivity in knowledge production. Addressing three interconnected gaps in the existing literature – the relative neglect of migrant-academics, the undertheorisation of racialisation and migration as a compounded intersection, and the absence of transnational care and visa-related precarity from accounts of academic labour. The editorial calls for a fundamental rethinking of HE structures and EDI frameworks, advocating change that moves beyond symbolic inclusion to address the material, affective, and epistemic conditions shaping migrant academics' lives.

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Neoliberal HE in crisis

The UK higher education (HE) sector is currently at the crossroads of multiple, overlapping crises: increasing concerns over the financial sustainability of institutions, a growing mental health and well-being crisis among staff and students, and deepening tensions between universities, their staff, and students over competing visions of society and global politics. These challenges are not isolated but interconnected, reflecting broader structural issues within the sector. However, the dominant discourse that blames declining international student numbers for the financial crisis in UK HE (Blake, 2024; HESA, 2026; Jimenez, 2025) has overshadowed the longstanding realities of neoliberalised and globalised universities. Despite the crisis, HE continues to be characterised by a “neoliberal cascade” in education – application of the market logics of privatisation, profit, and competition upon educational institutions shaped by market-driven reforms that prioritise profit, efficiency, and competition over academic inquiry and social justice (Connell, 2013, p. 104). Within this context short-term, zero-hour, teaching-only contracts are widespread, disproportionately affecting early-career, racialised and minoritised staff (Myers, 2022). At the same time, systemic racism continues in hiring, curricula, and institutional culture, with Black and minority ethnic academics as well as minoritised migrant academics significantly underrepresented in senior positions (Blell et al., 2022; Rollock, 2019; Rollock, 2021; Stockfelt, 2018). When racial, gender and migration-related inequality is made evident internally, universities respond with tokenistic EDI measures that do more harm than good (Ahmed, 2012; Ahmed, 2021). COVID-19 further exposed many of issues plaguing the neoliberal HE in the UK and globally, especially the vulnerabilities of migrant workers including academics: lacking access to public funds, travel restrictions overseas, further uncertainty around visa and residency.

It is important to acknowledge at the outset that HE has never been a structurally just institution. The inequalities that shape academic experience along the lines of race, gender, class, disability, and sexuality are longstanding, well documented, and experienced by very many academics who are not migrants. Black and minority ethnic scholars, women, and working-class academics have faced systemic exclusion, underrepresentation in senior roles, and the disproportionate burden of diversity labour for as long as these categories have been tracked (Blell et al., 2022; Rollock, 2019; Rollock, 2021; Stockfelt, 2018). This special issue (SI) does not seek to displace or diminish that broader landscape of injustice, nor to suggest that migrant academics constitute a uniquely or most harmed group within it. What it does argue, however, is that migration status produces a specific and under-theorised layer of compounded vulnerability, one that intersects with but is not reducible to the forms of marginalisation already documented in the existing literature. The conditions facing migrant academics in UK HE are not simply more of what other precarious or minoritised academics experience; they are qualitatively distinct in important respects. These include disproportionate visa and health surcharge costs, the emotional toll of isolation and loneliness, and the constraints placed on research, writing, and academic freedom around contentious issues, all of which are explored across the contributions to this SI. This is exacerbated further by progressively more anti-migrant government policies which make the immigration and residency status of migrants and their families uncertain. Alongside superficial commitments to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and social justice within universities (Tsouroufli & Ferri, 2025), the

emotional, financial and health-related fallout of these policies remains largely unrecognised within institutions. These pressures are not entirely new, but they have converged and intensified in the post-Brexit, post-pandemic period in ways that make the current conjuncture historically specific: a point-based immigration system that has tightened institutional dependency, a hostile environment policy architecture that has deepened surveillance and uncertainty, and a culture wars climate that has placed racialised migrant scholars working on contested research topics under forms of professional and reputational risk that their non-migrant colleagues do not face in the same configuration. The six papers of this SI are united by a shared concern to make these specific, compounded, and structurally produced vulnerabilities visible and to insist that existing intersectional frameworks, EDI policies, and HE research have not yet adequately theorised or responded to the distinctive experiences of migrant academics in UK HE.

This SI contributes to the nascent literature on migrant and minoritised academics' experiences in HE (Coleman et al., 2025; Pustelnikovaite & Chillas, 2023; Sang et al., 2013), particularly using intersectionality of gender, race and migration experience. HE research has tended to focus on the experiences of students, and particularly international students, and the need for cultural and pedagogical integration within universities of the Global North (Bhandari & Blumenthal, 2011; Brooks, 2018; Murray & Gray, 2023). But fewer studies explore migrant academics' experiences and more specifically questions around the economic and emotional burden of migration, gendered and racial injustices within the immigration system and HE itself. In this SI, we are attentive to processes of racialisation of highly skilled migrants alongside other minoritised groups in increasingly globalised spaces of HE, to advance understanding of entanglements of new and persisting forms of exclusion with the capitalist imperatives of internationalisation and diversification of HE spaces. We aim to reimagine the migrant academic experience by paying attention to socio-economic and affective consequences and processes of exclusion, to explore their lived experiences and the navigations and negotiations undertaken by them. Ultimately, the SI offers a situated critique of HE diversity policy with a view to challenging the race-gender status quo of HE. This SI brings together literature from a range of disciplines including education, sociology, gender studies, studies of race and racism, and migration to consider the nature of emotions and emotional work undertaken by transnational academics, which will be appealing to an interdisciplinary readership. In doing so, it addresses three interconnected gaps in the existing literature: the relative neglect of migrant academics' experiences compared to those of students; the undertheorisation of racialisation and migration status as a specific and compounded intersection within the broader minoritised academics literature; and the absence of transnational care burdens, geopolitical surveillance and visa-inflected precarity from mainstream accounts of academic labour and wellbeing.

Shrinking academic freedoms in UK HE are becoming increasingly visible through heightened restrictions on campus protests, tighter control over public discourse, and growing pressure on academics to self-censor. Especially with the upsurge in the popularity of far-right ideologues, the Universities are under ever-increasing pressure from government, media and donors to police political expressions on campus – particularly expressions that challenge dominant ideologies. Academics who produce research or public commentary critical of government policy, especially on dog-whistle issues like immigration, colonial history, institutional racism, or international conflicts often face

institutional pushback, reputational harm, and even harassment. This is especially true for racialised scholars who are routinely accused of being “divisive” or “radical” and not being “objective” and whose work is dismissed as activism rather than legitimate scholarship. In particular, the Government interventions, such as the UK’s HE (Freedom of Speech) Act, paradoxically claim to protect free expression while creating a chilling effect by placing universities under pressure to platform “both sides” even in cases involving hate speech or misinformation (Blell et al., 2022; Christou et al., 2026; Danvers, 2023; Rollock, 2019). For migrant academics: visa-dependent, racialised, and frequently working on the very research topics that attract political hostility, these pressures compound in distinctive ways from non-migrant colleagues. Thus, making the current moment a particularly pressing one for the kind of analysis this SI offers.

Following the discussion above, the collection of papers in the SI contend that internationalisation of HE has not produced equity. Institutions in the UK and in Ireland have enthusiastically recruited international students and scholars, and have developed EDI frameworks, Race Equality Charters, and diversity strategies. And yet, as the papers in this collection collectively demonstrate, these processes have too often functioned as a “fiction of equality” (Hussain & Hussein, 2025) or as forms of “corporate protection” (Lander & Ludhra, 2025) – a set of performative gestures that often extract value from minoritised and migrant scholars while doing little to transform the conditions of their inclusion. The “outsider-within” to use Patricia Hill Collins’ (1986) now canonical formulation, remains structurally embedded in the university – simultaneously needed and not quite welcome, visible as a symbol of diversity while remaining invisible as a full and equal member of the academy.

The current editorial article aims to provide a theoretically grounded framework bringing together intersectionality, emotionality and transnationality as interconnected analytical lenses through which the contributions to the SI can be read. To do so, we start with the specific conceptualisation of intersectionality, emotionality, and transnationality not merely as descriptive categories but as analytical threads that bind the papers in the SI together. The next section offers a methodological account of the contribution focussing on the choice of a range biographical methods as well as other qualitative methods focussing on centring voice and the narratives of minoritised migrant women in academia. It then gives a detailed summary of each of the contributions to the SI, and concludes by offering three collective arguments drawing on the insights from the contributions.

Intersectionality, emotionality, and transnationality

Intersectionality has a rich and politically grounded intellectual genealogy forged in response to concrete, material failures of law and politics to account for lives shaped by more than one axis of oppression. Inspired by Black feminism, Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) introduced the term to address the marginalisation of Black women within not only anti-discrimination law but also within feminist and antiracist theory and politics. Crenshaw (1991) further elaborated the framework by employing intersectionality to highlight the ways in which social movement organisation and advocacy elided the vulnerabilities of women of colour, particularly those from immigrant and socially disadvantaged communities. It is precisely the insistence that race, gender, class, migration status

and other axes of identity cannot be understood in isolation from one another – that makes intersectionality indispensable for the contributions to our SI. Bastia et al. (2023) note that, intersectional thinking predates the formal coining of the term by Crenshaw. Black women active in the civil rights movements, feminist geographers in the academy and grassroots women's movements in the Global South (from at least the 1970s) were making intersectional interventions. For our SI, the foundational role of the women's movements from the Global South or the Third World Feminists (Mohanty 1988) in challenging mainstream middle-class feminist narratives and demanding recognition of their lived experiences is vital. This history matters not only to correct North-centric accounts, but also to decolonise feminist theory and disrupt the direction of knowledge production from North to South by centring the voices of marginalised women whose experiences are rendered invisible by liberal, second-wave feminism.

The contributions to this SI demonstrate, intersectionality must be extended and adapted when applied to the distinctive situation of transnational lives of migrant academics. Floya Anthias (2012) argues that a conventional understanding of intersectionality as a tool to map multiple axes of identity producing particular positions of advantage or disadvantage was largely developed within a national frame. When people move across borders, or maintain sustained connections to multiple national contexts, the social meanings attached to their identities may or may not travel with them intact. As such transnationality/transnationalism enhances intersectionality. Hussain and Hussein (2025) in this SI deploys the conception of translocational positionality (Anthias, 2008) while Tsouroufli (2025) uses transnational mobility to understand identity being fluid in multiple locations which are context, meaning and time specific. As an intersectional frame translocational positionality “moves away from the idea of given ‘groups’ or ‘categories’ of gender, ethnicity and class, which then intersect, and instead pays much more attention to social locations and processes which are broader than those signalled by this” (Anthias, 2008, p. 5). This is particularly important for migrant academics, whose sense of identity and belonging is shaped not simply by where they are but by where they have been, where their families remain, and the power asymmetries between those locations. Anthias (2012) views the translocational frame as a tool for making sense of the positions and outcomes produced through intersections between different social structures and processes (including transnational ones), giving importance to the broader social context and to temporality. As such, the translocational lens does not replace intersectionality; it enriches it by insisting that the migrant academics are multiply positioned in both space and time, shaped simultaneously by institutions, processes and policies in the host country and the home country, and the vast power differentials between them.

The theoretical literature on transnationalism has established that migration is not a one-directional journey from one national container to another. Basch et al.'s (1994, p. 7) foundational account defines migrant transnationalism as “the process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement”. Specifically drawing on Mohanty (2003), we understand migrant academics as transnational beings where transnationalism stands for interconnectedness of migrants' struggles, histories and experiences across communities in cross-border existence and survival. For the everyday lives of migrant academics, transnationality takes several specific and overlapping forms highlighted across this SI: from the

transnational care burdens mapped in the papers by Hussain and Hussein (2025) and Tsouroufli (2025), to the geopolitical surveillance experienced by Chinese postgraduate researchers discussed by Ma (2025), and loneliness experienced by early career/doctoral scholars explored by Das (2025). Transnational subjects who are the contributors and the subjects of the papers in this collection are those who engage with discursive frames, organisational and political practices that are inspired, (re)affirmed, or reinforced, by movements that go beyond national borders through a wide range of transnational contacts, discussions, transactions, and networks (Chowdhury, 2011, p. 6). Such an understanding of transnational subjects enables us to understand how transnational processes, particularly around migration and work, shape migrant subjectivities in the UK which are imbricated in asymmetrical power relations (Alexander, 2005, p. 183). Contrary to “global”, which only emphasises South-to-North labour flow and North-to-South flow of ideas and resources, “transnational” offers an analytical corrective by recognising multi-layered power relations shaping migrants’ struggle across multiple geographical spaces, simultaneously – “here and there” (Chowdhury, 2011; Hussain & Hussein, 2025).

Finally, emotionality names the affective terrain on which much of this disadvantage is enacted and endured – the pain (Lander and Ludhra 2025; Das 2025), exhaustion (Hussain and Hussein 2025), loneliness (Das 2025), emotional (Rizvi 2025) and invisible labour (Lander and Ludhra 2025; Ma 2025; Hussain and Hussein 2025; Tsouroufli 2025) that are not incidental to the experiences described in this SI but central to them. Hochschild’s (1983) foundational account defines emotional labour as the management of feelings to create bodily and facial displays compliant with social requirements as a condition of employment. The insight that feeling itself can be extracted as labour has proved enormously generative, and has been extended far beyond its original service-industry context to illuminate how racialised and gendered academics are required to manage their own emotions, the emotions of colleagues and students, and the institution’s emotional image, all without recognition as noted across the contributions to the SI. More specifically, the concept of the *politics of exhaustion*, developed by Emejulu and Bassel (2020), reframes affective experience in explicitly structural and political terms by demonstrating the disproportionate political and psychological impact of exhaustion on women of colour. They argue that “to declare exhaustion is to hail the equally exhausted to build solidarity” (p. 400). Not only exhaustion (and burnout) but viewing loneliness, pain, fear, anger, silencing, misrecognition, etc. as structural allows papers in this SI to analyse the overarching conditions under which minoritised and migrant academics are required to work within UK HE. The papers gathered in the SI bear witness to the emotional and affective experience of minoritised migrant academics not as individual or exceptional but as a structural feature of UK HE. In doing so, they make a claim for emotionality as a legitimate and necessary category of educational and sociological analysis.

Ultimately, *intersectionality*, *emotionality*, and *transnationality* are mutually reinforcing: the intersectional character of migrant academic identities shapes the emotional labour demanded of them; that emotional labour is itself transnational in its scope and burden; and the transnational conditions of their lives are themselves differentially distributed along intersectional lines of race, gender, class, and national origin. While individual papers draw on these frameworks in different combinations and to different ends,

together they constitute an emerging critical vocabulary for understanding what it means to be a migrant academic in UK HE today.

What is distinctive about this collection is its breadth of scope. These papers refuse any single story of marginalisation of migrant academics in UK HE. They move across career stages – from PhD students to professors, and attend to experiences that are rarely placed in dialogue with one another: the racialised loneliness of early doctoral scholar (Das 2025); the geo-politically inflected anti-Chinese racism that remains largely invisible to British EDI frameworks (Ma 2025); the particular exhaustion of transnational care responsibilities falling almost entirely on migrant women (Hussain and Hussein 2025); the careless policing and disciplining of racialised foreign bodies (Tsouroufli 2025); the fractures that internalised racism can open up even within communities of solidarity (Rizvi 2025); and silencing of racialised voices (Lander and Luthra 2025). Together, these papers make a case not simply for greater representation in HE, but for a recognition and rethinking of the institutional, political, affective, and epistemic conditions under which minoritised and migrant scholars are asked to work.

Methodological commitments: a case for biographic methods

This SI was born out of a shared need to situate the unique experiences of migrant and minoritised academics within UK HE. Like Rahbari and Burlyuk's (2023) work on academic precarity in Europe, the contributors found themselves united by a sense of frustration and a desire to tell stories about academics, and stories told from within their academic/scholarly work itself – that existing methodological conventions have struggled to accommodate. It is no coincidence, then, that four out of six contributors drew on various forms of autoethnography or biographical method, either alone or in combination with other approaches. The choice of method, in each case, is not incidental to the argument being made; it is constitutive of it.

Autoethnography and biographical methods are particularly well suited to the questions this collection pursues because they begin where the experience of marginalisation begins – in the body, in memory, in the felt texture of daily institutional life. As Ellis and Bochner (2000) established, autoethnography connects lived experience to the cultural, enabling marginalised groups to express multiple layers of consciousness and to link the personal to the structural in ways that more conventional social scientific methods tend to foreclose. Critically, this is not simply a methodological convenience. It is an epistemological stance. Critical feminist biographers, post-structuralist, postcolonial and queer theorists have developed biographical methods which take the subject's "outsider" status as their vantage point rather than a limitation to be managed or overcome. These accounts of marginalised or non-normative lives, as Harders (2014) has argued, serve to broaden the dominant Euro- and ethnocentric perspectives that have long governed academic knowledge production. Biographical methods are equally valuable for challenging the explicit and implicit assumptions that pervade research on migration (Erel, 2007), and for generating knowledge that is "animated by", rather than abstracted from, everyday experience – what Ahmed (2017, p. 10) describes as theory made in and through the everyday.

We are conscious that autoethnographic and autobiographical work on race, gender, migration and otherness in academia is now a substantial body of scholarship, and that

the viability of self-narrative as robust data remains contested in some quarters. We do not dismiss these epistemological debates, but we align with those scholars drawing on Black feminist thought, postcolonial theory and critical race methodologies who have made a compelling case that the demand for “objectivity” in social research has itself functioned as a racialised and gendered gatekeeping mechanism – one that renders certain kinds of knowledge illegitimate precisely because of whose body and whose experience they arise from. The autoethnographic accounts in this SI use embodied, emotional, intersectional and transnational experience as minoritised migrant academics. The multiple identities of the contributors in this SI, is both an empirical and theoretical resource which rejects the separation of the knowing subject from knowledge.

What is notable across the collection is not simply that biographical methods are used, but the range and creativity with which they are deployed. Lander and Ludhra (2025) frame their method explicitly as counter-storytelling within a Critical Race Methodology (CRM) informed by Critical Race Theory, presenting the racialised and gendered voices of two older South Asian academics whose voices have found, as they put it, new strength with age. Significantly, they describe how conducting their research conversations – often in their mother tongue – enabled them to use voice itself as a form of protection, survival and resistance within an otherwise silencing academic environment. Language, here, is not merely a medium of communication but a site of reclamation. Hussain and Hussein’s (2025) duo-ethnography, conducted during the intersecting crises of the COVID-19 lockdown and the Black Lives Matter movement, offers a generatively different iteration of collaborative biographical method. Their fragmented, non-linear, Bengali-Hindi-Assamese inflected conversations developed what they describe as a feminist sisterhood and solidarity in times of crisis – an account of methodology that is inseparable from an account of care. Read alongside Lander and Ludhra’s paper, Hussain and Hussein’s contribution illuminates both the intergenerational differences in how minoritised migrant academics navigate HE and the enduring importance of collaboration, friendship and mutual care as conditions of intellectual survival.

Tsouroufli (2025), calling her approach a narrative epistemology, speaks from the standpoint of the transnational, Southern European female academic, attending to particular experiences of belonging and othering at the intersection of gender, racialisation and care. Her method centres standpoint not as a limitation but as the very source of its analytical purchase, making visible what is obscured when the speaking position of the researcher is assumed to be unmarked. Das (2025), meanwhile, deploys autoethnography in its more recognisable form, using it to foreground experiential knowledge as a means of questioning narratives, theories and concepts otherwise rooted in white British academic norms – insisting on the validity of knowledge that is located in, and generated through, the body’s own remembrance of pain, solidarity and exclusion. The other two contributions by Ma (2025) and Rizvi (2025), while not autoethnographic, also place the voices and narratives of racialised academics and students at the centre of their analysis, deploying qualitative methods to excavate the subjective experience of racism that survey data and institutional metrics consistently fail to capture.

Altogether, the migrant and minoritised voices gathered in this SI make visible the contours of the personal, the political and the professional, allowing readers to critically examine the terrains of power that exclude minority voices and the many possibilities

of resistance that open up when those voices are heard. We understand these papers to constitute a powerful site for interrogating the coloniality inscribed into academic knowledge production – developing in their place, forms of knowledge in which minority perspectives are not merely objects of study but the very source from which analysis and theory flow. In this sense, the choice of biographical method is itself a political act: a refusal of the view from nowhere, and an insistence that situated, embodied, transnational and intersectional knowledge is not merely legitimate but necessary.

Outline of the SI

The contributions to this SI respond to the three gaps identified above, drawing on a range of disciplinary, methodological and career-stage perspectives: the relative neglect of migrant academics' experiences in HE research; the undertheorisation of racialisation and migration status as a specific and compounded intersection; and the absence of transnational care burdens, geopolitical surveillance and visa-inflected precarity from mainstream accounts of academic labour and wellbeing. Together they build a cumulative account of the structural conditions shaping racialised migrant academic life in UK HE that no single contribution could provide alone.

Opening the collection, Hussain and Hussein's (2025) paper introduces the concept of the *translocational outsider within* to theorise the marginalisation of minoritised migrant women academics. Extending Hill Collins's (1986) Black feminist outsider-within framework using Emejulu and Bassel's (2020) politics of exhaustion and Anthias's (2008) translocational positionality, they identify four structures of exhaustion: misfit identity categories; precarious academic freedom and intellectual minoritisation; transnational care; and EDI and invisible emotional labour. Crucially, their analysis shows that the outsider-within position is misappropriated by higher education institutions (HEIs) as a commodity to present the illusion of diversity, inclusion and internationalisation – a theme that resonates across the SI. The framework that Hussain and Hussein develop is foundational for the collection as a whole, synthesising all three of the issue's central concerns – the intersectional character of migrant women's positionality, the emotional and bodily costs of their labour, and the transnational dimensions of their experience that University EDI policies has largely failed to see. While outsider-within frameworks have been productively applied to the experiences of racialised groups, the translocational and transnational dimensions of that position for migrant women specifically have not previously been theorised as a distinct analytical category. Hussain and Hussein's paper fills this gap directly.

Das's (2025) contribution turns to the PhD experience, using autoethnography to examine the structural loneliness of a migrant woman of colour pursuing a doctorate in Irish academia. Situating the loneliness of PhD-ing at the intersection of migrant identity and neoliberal academic culture, Das examines how Irish university spaces – white and shaped by austerity measures – accentuate the isolation of minoritised doctoral students. This paper treats loneliness not as a subjective feeling but as a form of structural and institutional violence. The paper's concept of the non-dialectics of loneliness and speaking up where resistance neither resolves the isolation nor cancels the violence is a theoretically rich contribution to understanding agency in structurally constrained conditions. Its inclusion in a collection focused on UK HE is deliberate: Ireland's neoliberal

university sector offers both a cognate context and a comparative lens that illuminates transnational dimensions of academic precarity, particularly for scholars whose doctoral training takes place far from home institutions and kinship networks. Das argues that foregrounding ideals of care and community as ethics within the everyday can help contend with such loneliness, offering a vision of academic culture grounded in solidarity rather than competition. While doctoral student wellbeing has received growing attention in the HE literature, the specific intersection of migrant status, race and structural loneliness in neoliberal academia remains largely absent from that scholarship. Das's contribution addresses this gap through autoethnographic engagement with the Irish neoliberal university.

Ma's (2025) paper makes a significant intervention by challenging the analytical limits of existing racism frameworks when applied to Chinese scholars in the UK. Focusing on overseas Chinese postgraduate researchers in post-pandemic Britain, Ma identifies institutional limitations in the BAME categorisation that does injustice to the historical and everyday formations of their distinct national, racial, and ethnic identities. Anti-Chinese racism, Ma shows, is shaped by geopolitical tensions as much as by domestic race relations, rendering it partially invisible to frameworks calibrated for a specifically British context. The paper unveils unique dimensions of racialised experience in Western academia and the strategies Chinese scholars deploy to navigate them, arguing for a globally oriented approach that can account for the ways in which international power dynamics including surveillance, intellectual suspicion, and the politics of research access play out directly on the lives of Chinese academic migrants. Ma's paper thus enriches the collection's intersectional and transnational concerns in a distinctive register, demonstrating that the racialisation of migrant academics in UK HE is inseparable from global geopolitics, and that analytical frameworks which do not account for this will systematically misread the experiences of significant parts of the international scholarly community. While anti-racism scholarship in UK HE has expanded considerably in recent years, it has largely operated within domestically calibrated (and widely critiqued) frameworks such as BAME, that are poorly equipped to account for forms of racialisation shaped by geopolitics and international power relations rather than domestic race relations alone. Ma's paper intervenes directly in this gap.

Longitudinal, career-spanning accounts of racialised academic experience are rare in the existing literature, and the temporal accumulation of racial harm across a career alongside the sustaining role of solidarity, faith and community has received little sustained theoretical attention. Lander and Ludhra's (2025) contribution is distinctive within the SI and within wider literature precisely for the depth of its temporal perspective. Lander and Ludhra offer what is perhaps the most explicit longitudinal and autobiographical contribution to the collection. Revisiting Nirmal Puwar's (2004) concept of the space invader, they narrate their experiences as two (b)older South Asian female academics, tracing careers shaped by racialised gatekeeping, microaggressions, and what they describe as *dukh* (pain) alongside hard-won moments of agency and hope. Drawing on Critical Race Theory and a counter-storytelling approach, they reflexively narrate a series of research conversations, exploring stages of voice across space and time. Their paper is distinctive within the collection for the temporal depth of its perspective: where other contributions attend primarily to the present conditions of migrant and minoritised academic life, Lander and Ludhra's paper traces the accumulated weight of

decades within UK HE. They highlight the ways in which racial trauma compounds over a career, but also the way solidarity, faith, and community sustain resistance across time. Their paper demonstrates that the costs of surviving as a racialised woman in British academia are not only professional but deeply somatic, while also refusing the reduction of South Asian female academic life to injury alone. The presence of Umeed (hope), running through their analysis insists on complexity: that survival entails not just endurance but also the making of alternative communities.

While emotional labour in academia is well documented, the specific institutional disposability of migrant academic bodies within formally diverse institutions and the gendered and racialised care and carelessness that underpins it has received comparatively little direct analytical attention. Tsouroufli's (2025) paper addresses this gap from the standpoint of her own trajectory to a professorship in UK HE. This paper examines the emotional labour mechanisms through which migrant academics navigate, and sometimes survive, the policing of their presence in British HE. Drawing on her own trajectory to a professorship in the UK and turning to the affective to expose gendered and racialised othering of migrant academics engaging in transformational practices of EDI, Tsouroufli outlines three narratives of emotional labour to unravel the gendered and racialised care and carelessness underpinning the disposability of migrant life in UK HEIs. Her use of the concept of disposability is significant, and connects directly to the collection's concern with emotionality: it names the institutional indifference that underlies even formally diverse institutions, wherein the labour of migrant and minoritised staff in the classroom, in leadership, in solidarity networks is extracted but not valued, and where bodies can be released back into precarity without institutional consequence. Tsouroufli argues that embracing a political ethic of care has potential to challenge and resist the individualistic neoliberal ethos of British HE, while also warning that resistances typically come with ethnic and gender penalties. Read alongside Hussain and Hussein's structures of exhaustion and Das's politics of loneliness, Tsouroufli's contribution helps consolidate the collection's case that emotionality is not incidental to the experience of minoritised migrant academics – a terrain on which inequity is most intimately felt.

The existing literature on racism in HE has focused primarily on racism directed at minoritised scholars by white institutional structures, leaving the experiences of internalised racism within communities of colour, and the fractures it produces, largely unexamined. Rizvi's (2025) paper addresses this absence, introducing a dimension of the migrant and minoritised academic experience that neither the preceding papers in this SI nor wider literature engages with. Drawing on Critical Race Theory and a qualitative study conducted within pre- and post-1992 British universities, Rizvi uncovers the experiences of internalised racism of minoritised academics and students, revealing participants' critical awareness of how internalised racism sustains white supremacy in HE. She presents the concept of the solidarity bind, wherein racialised academics and students are expected to foster solidarity with other marginalised colleagues while simultaneously being the target of internalised racism they are expected to suppress for fear of being labelled disloyal. Placed at the close of the collection, Rizvi's paper performs an important function: it guards against any temptation to idealise solidarity as the straightforward answer to the harms documented in the preceding papers, insisting instead on the complexity and fragility of coalitions built under conditions of structural racism. It is also, in its own way, a call to honesty – about the ways institutions can instrumentalise fractures within

minoritised communities, and about the ongoing work required to build the kinds of communities of care that Das, Lander and Ludhra, and others in this collection envision.

Conclusion

Read together, these six papers make a number of collective arguments that we wish to foreground as editors in lieu of a conclusion. First, EDI as currently practised in HEIs is demonstrably insufficient. The papers in this collection are not hostile to the principle of equality; they are deeply critical of its institutional performance. As the evidence gathered here repeatedly shows, performative diversity extracts labour from the very scholars it nominally protects, while leaving the structural conditions of their exclusion untouched. Second, the specific intersection of minoritisation and migration produces particular forms of hardship that need to be acknowledged and addressed – from transnational care burdens to geopolitical racialisation to the particular loneliness of being a non-white body in a white institute. The theoretical contributions in this collection, including translocational outsider within, politics of exhaustion, disposability, solidarity bind, and globally oriented anti-racism represent genuine attempts to build better analytical tools for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers alike.

Third, and perhaps most urgently, the experiences documented here are not exceptional. They are systemic. They recur across career stages, across UK and Ireland, and beyond, across disciplinary boundaries. These are systemic issues which will need systemic multi-pronged responses from institutions, that go beyond superficial EDI work. And finally, as editors we “see” the courage of our contributors to speak about the woundedness in their professional lives. But we remain conscious that speaking about pain and intersectional injustices suffered, does not denote privilege or freedom but rather a struggle to insist for accountability and responsibility through an array of negotiations of speech, writing, and emotions, in an attempt to protect ourselves from shaming, victimisation and further trauma (Hooks, 2000).

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