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The interacting dynamics of institutional racism in higher education

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ABSTRACT

This paper has its origins in the Macpherson report's suggestion that public organisations in British society are characterised by institutional racism. Drawing upon the Parekh report's identification of ten components of institutional racism, the paper examines which, if any, of these components are manifest in a university in Central England that was the subject of ethnographic investigation in the decade following the publication of the Macpherson report. It is argued that the Parekh report's identification of various components of institutional racism is helpful in disclosing the extent of disadvantage faced by BME staff and students and the institution's reluctance to do anything about it. It is also illuminating in sensitising us to the overwhelming whiteness of the university and the position of White privilege within it.

PAPER

At face value, universities in England and Wales seem to have made significant progress in addressing race equality. Take policy development, and the key outcomes of concern to key policy makers, notably the proportion of students from minority ethnic groups and staff representation from minority ethnic groups. All seem to be moving in the right direction. A survey conducted in the late 1990s discovered that a third of HEIs did not have a race equality policy and that, even among those who had a policy commitment, most did not have a 'well developed policy' and only 14% had 'an advanced policy'(Carter et al, 1999). Less than five years later, (almost) all HEIs had a race equality policy plus a race equality action plan, with most being judged at least to be 'developing appropriately' and 26% being considered to have an 'exemplary policy'(John, 2005). As for students, the overrepresentation of students from minority ethnic groups compared to White students discovered earlier (Modood & Shiner, 1994) has persisted. This has resulted over time in an increasing proportion of higher education students from minority ethnic backgrounds. And progress also is evident in relation to staffing. Over the period from 1995-6 to 2006-7, the percentage of staff from minority ethnic groups on permanent contracts has increased. This applies to both academic and professional/support staff and at each grade (HEFCE, 2008a).

We must not, however, be seduced by the official discourse. And indeed when we dig down official documents, we find a somewhat different picture emerges. Two surveys commissioned by HEFCE are revealing here. A survey conducted in 2003 found that more than a third of HEIs were 'seriously deficient' in meeting the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (John, 2005: 593); and a year later another survey showed 'some 20% making only limited progress' (Crace, 2004). Even when legislation had insisted

on the production of race equality policies and action plans and guidance had been provided to aid the production process, the requisite policies and action plans were often lacking. What is more, when (some of) those institutions that had produced exemplary policies were followed up 'eighteen months to two years later, those Institutions had done very little to translate their first class policy into meaningful action that could make a difference to the learning community, and especially to its black students and staff' (John, 2005: 593-594).

As for students, HESA figures continue to remind us how concentrated students from minority ethnic groups are in new universities, with Black Caribbean students for example more likely to be found in one university, London Metropolitan University, than the entire Russell group of 19 (highly prestigious) universities (Curtis, 2006). In addition, students from minority ethnic backgrounds are more likely to drop out, are less likely to gain good honours degrees and tend to leave universities with fewer job prospects (Connor et al, 2004; Broeke & Phillips, 2007). On the whole, race equality policies and action plans do not appear to inform HEIs' engagement with [these persistent] attainment issues' (HEA, 2008: 3). In the light of this, it is perhaps not surprising that, in successive national student surveys, minority ethnic groups, especially Asians, are less positive overall in their ratings than other students (Surridge, 2006; 2007).

And when we turn to staffing, we find a similar picture. Official documents produced by HEFCE may point to an increase in the proportion of professors from minority ethnic backgrounds, but on close inspection whatever progress there has been has been small, with evidence mounting that staff from minority ethnic groups face difficulties in gaining promotion (Curtis, 2005b). In 2006-07, the percentage of professors from minority ethnic groups among UK permanent academic staff was still below 5% as opposed to over 6% of lecturers. And when we turn to professional/support staff, we find that minority ethnic groups are also still under-represented at the top, in this case managers and professionals (HEFCE, 2008a). In 2006-07 they comprised 5.6% of UK managers and professionals as opposed to 6.9% overall. As for the heads of HEIs, 'as of December 2004, there are only two …who are from minority ethnic backgrounds (HEFCE, 2005b:3). A recent literature review confirms that, despite the increase in the proportion of BME staff, 'the higher the grade, the lower the proportion of BME staff' and that, the 'conditions of BME staff are less favourable than those of non-BME staff' (Leathwood et al, 2009: 5)

The Interacting Components of Institutional Racism: Midshire University

What is most striking above is continuity rather than change. And yet, despite the persistent ethnic differential outcomes in higher education that impact adversely on minority ethnic groups, there has been a lack of urgency in addressing the issue. As the author of the

survey conducted in 2003 to review the compliance of the HE sector with the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act put it, 'Given the inertia that accompanied the RRA 1976 and the performance of the Sector on "race" issues prior to the RRAA2000, it is obvious that self regulation cannot be depended upon to deliver equality and social justice to marginalised groups' (John, 2005: 597). The question that forms the subject of this paper flows from the Macpherson's report's suggestion that public organisations in British society are characterised by 'institutional racism' (Macpherson, 1999). Does the lack of evident progress in race equality indicates that universities are institutionally racist? We shall focus here on one university which was subject to ethnographic investigation in the decade following the publication of the Macpherson report (Pilkington, 2011a; Pilkington, 2011b). The university which comprises our case study is a new university in Central England and will be identified as Midshire University. Drawing upon the ten components of institutional racism identified by the Parekh report (2000: 74-75), this paper will explore each in turn and assess which, if any, of them are manifest in Midshire University.

Indirect Discrimination : *Do Black and Asian students receive a service that is comparable to that received by White students?*

At one level, significant progress is evident. We now have much more reliable information on how students from different ethnic groups are doing. What is more, this information reveals that students from minority ethnic groups as a whole are well represented in the student body. Indeed they are over-represented relative to their proportion of the population both nationally and locally.

Statistical reports have since 2004-5 been produced annually on student admissions, enrolments, cause for concern, retention and good degrees (Midshire, 2008a). These have been supplemented since 2007-8 by a further one on degree failure rates (Midshire, 2008b). What these reveal are some persistent ethnic differentials: disproportionate and adverse offer rates to applicants of Black African ethnicity; an under-representation of BME students on part time programmes; an over-representation of Black and Asian students identified by tutors as a 'cause for concern' (with a third of Black and Asian first year students in this position); a higher withdrawal rate of Black students on full time programmes and BME students on part time programmes; an adverse difference in the proportion of BME students gaining good degrees, with a 20 percentage points difference for Asian students and a 10 percentage points difference for Black students; and a higher likelihood of BME students failing their degrees, with the gap between Asian and White students widening over a four year period from less than 1% in 2004 to over 13% in 2007 and that for Black and White students widening over the same period from 1.9% to 3.7% . By themselves these ethnic

differentials do not demonstrate that the university is guilty of indirect discrimination, but this possibility can't be ruled out and indeed a full impact assessment identified some practices in selecting courses that were discriminatory (Midshire, 2008k).

A variety of methods were used to ascertain student perceptions of racial discrimination. Questionnaires administered to 95 undergraduate students and interviews conducted with 4 students revealed little personal experience of discrimination or racism at the university (Midshire, 2005). A focus group conducted with BME students in February 2006 presented much the same picture, with participants confirming that 'race relations were felt to be good on campus' (Midshire, 2006). At the same time, it is important not to present too rosy a picture. Two students at the focus group claimed that they had experienced discrimination on placement, while others pointed to examples of indirect discrimination such as the centrality of alcohol in the social life of most students so that 'the only facilities on campus in the evenings for students serve alcohol' (Midshire, 2006).

Most of the examples of alleged discrimination that cropped up in interviews related to the actions of non-academic staff. I shall give two examples here. The first relates to an interview that I conducted with a British Asian male student. He was suddenly told early one morning by a supervisor in halls that he was not allowed to have a female guest stay the night despite the fact this was common practice among his White peers. On another occasion, he was ordered by somebody in security to move his car from a spot where 'everybody parks…He goes, "Move", and I told him, "Listen, right, don't shout at me again. I am warning you". There were five, six, other members of staff as well. All were White and they started laughing and that's the reason I went out of control'. The other example emerged in an interview with a Black female member of support staff who narrated to me the case of a colleague of hers who had colluded with the racist attitudes of parents by relocating three White students whose parents 'didn't want them to be on the same floor with Asians'. In both cases, I found their testimonies persuasive, but was not able to gain corroborating evidence that discrimination had occurred. While it is extremely difficult to provide conclusive evidence that discrimination has taken place and while it is not possible to quantify its extent, there is little doubt that students at the university are not insulated from it.

Employment Practices : *Are Black and Asian staff being treated fairly when it comes to recruitment, promotion and staff development?*

While significant progress has been made in routinely producing statistical reports on students, the same cannot be said of staff where monitoring data on applications, short listing and appointments has been collected since 2002 but not analysed on a regular basis.

The failure of HR to produce such reports and also to conduct initial equality impact assessments on HR policies was reported to the Equality and Diversity working group. While this was first officially reported in May 2007, there was a reluctance to acknowledge this in the minutes of successive meetings. Eventually, a paper was submitted by one of the Equality and Diversity Officers to a meeting a year later which argued that 'the university is in breach of its statutory duties as regards its Employment facing functions and activities (i.e. availability for analysis monitoring data, implementation of EIAs)' (Midshire 2008c).

Between 2002 and 2008, no reports were produced which provided systematic evidence on applications, short listing and appointment. We need therefore to look at the data from the reports in 2001 and 2008 to identify the fairness of employment practices.

The 2001 report indicated that there were ethnic differentials in both short listing and appointments. Ratios were calculated for Black and White applicants; and Asian and White candidates. Both Black and Asian candidates were less likely to be short listed and appointed than White candidates (Midshire, 2001d).

It is conceivable that such adverse ethnic differentials have declined. The formal procedures have been tightened up. Attached to each job title now is a job and person specification, with essential and desirable criteria being distinguished; pro-formas informed by these criteria are used for short listing; and candidates who are invited for interview are asked to complete the same tasks such as deliver a presentation and undergo a series of interviews with standardised questions. However, 'it should not be assumed that there is a straightforward connection between greater formality and greater equality of opportunity' (Jewson & Mason, 1989: 130-131). Many of those involved in the selection process have not been trained and there is no doubt that informal criteria continue to play a role in selection. I witnessed one such example on a formal interview panel for a Lecturer in law. The candidates had given their presentations and been interviewed by two members of the department in the morning. As required, the course leader explained to the panel why some candidates were not recommended to go though to the formal panel in the afternoon. One of the candidates, an extremely well qualified British Muslim Asian was in this category. It was pointed out that he had no sense of humour and would not therefore relate well to the students. The course leader in short considered him unacceptable. Here suitability criteria were overlain with acceptability criteria (Jenkins, 1986). On this occasion, the panel chose not to follow the advice of the course leader who had been naïve in formulating his recommendation in the way he did. Nonetheless, the example demonstrates how formal procedures can act as a smokescreen for judgements which may be indirectly discriminatory. Judgements are often made about whether the candidate will fit in and candidates who are ethnically and culturally

different can, because of their very difference, be deemed to be in this category. 'Ethnocentric assumptions that [often] remain implicit and unspoken' can in this way help to 'reproduce the sorts of ethnic divisions within [the] profession that already exist' (Carter, 2003: 177).

After lengthy pressure from Equality and Diversity champions, a paper was eventually produced on applications, short listing and appointments. This confirmed the hunches of both Equality and Diversity Officers that individuals from minority ethnic groups were less likely to be recruited to routine jobs such as cleaning, security and catering than would be anticipated from their representation in the local labour market. The report based on data for 2005-06 and 2006-07 confirmed

 the accuracy of this perception, with 'the proportion of BME candidates applying for posts (20% and 14% respectively) equating to 7% and 8% of successful candidates respectively' (Midshire 2008d). What is disturbing is not only continuing evidence of adverse ethnic differentials but also the paucity of monitoring and the lack of action to address such differentials. Despite the obligation under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act to publish on a regular basis pertinent information on the position of different ethnic groups, appropriate monitoring reports were not routinely produced on recruitment and also retention, promotion, staff development and complaints, grievances & disciplinary incidences. And even when reports are produced, they did not invariably lead to appropriate reflection.

Occupational Culture : *Is racism not tolerated and diversity celebrated?*

It is instructive to make a comparison between the interviews conducted with 10 police officers from minority ethnic groups reported elsewhere (Pilkington, 2011a) and those conducted with 14 academic and support staff from minority ethnic groups. The former graphically revealed the severity of the racism experienced by police officers both from the public and from their White colleagues. Racism here was not an exceptional phenomenon but an everyday occurrence. By comparison, the latter were much more reluctant to report experiencing racism. A British Asian female lecturer put it as follows: 'I am often reluctant to revisit my experiences of racism in academia largely because 1, I don't want to be couched as a victim, 2, academia is in many ways a positive space for me, 3, I think negative moaners are a bore'.

Experiences of racism often had to be teased out and, even then, they were often less overt than the experiences minority ethnic police officers recounted. A young Indian female part time lecturer commented, 'I don't think I've acknowledged this before, even to myself or someone else, But I do think I get patronised a bit…it's like, look at this Indian girl…she's

relatively bright and she's doing so well for herself, kind of thing, let's all look after her, kind of thing, let's help her along. It works to my advantage most of the time but I would sometimes not have that. I would rather like just be like everyone else…A lot of time people just say, oh you know she might have an interesting point because she's the Other…It's just stuff like that, and I think that patronising attitude is a bit irritating at times'. This lecturer did not utilise the concept of racism to describe her experiences. Other staff did, but often this was only after a lengthy period of conceptualising matters in personal terms.

Minority ethnic staff by no means automatically conceptualised bad experiences in racist terms but rather learnt to do so. A Black British female member of the support staff, who was reprimanded for moving beyond her brief, learnt to conceptualise her experiences as racist only after becoming involved with a trade union: 'At first I thought it was just a case of conflict between myself , my colleagues and the department, you know. I was getting too, I was getting above my station. You know, this is your job, all we want you to do, and you're now getting above your station. So I thought, you know, it's just a conflict. The more I became angry about it, because I didn't see I was doing anything wrong…I was actually putting students in touch with local community groups…I was just signposting people and , you know, I thought that instead of being congratulated for that I was being penalised. That made me angry and after a while, I'm thinking, you know, why should I get a slap on my wrist for doing my job and I started internalising it, I was comparing myself to other departments that I was pointed out to by the Union and I started to formulate that it might be an issue of race. I was saying, had it been my White colleague, that they were doing the same, there would not have been a problem. So I started, my mind started turning around thinking, Oh well, let's look at this objectively, and I thought it was race. It was race'. And the experience of this member of staff is by no means unique. A Black British female member of another support department in a more senior position also found the union an invaluable source of support: 'What I have done is worked quite closely with the trade unions – that is how my role has received some measure of support and a level of awareness'.

There is no doubt that in many departments (both academic and support), white bodies predominate and minority ethnic staff are conscious of being 'space invaders' (Puwar, 2004). They are acutely conscious, as one respondent put it of being 'the only black person sitting in that room'. In this context, there is some evidence that staff from minority ethnic groups experience hyper-surveillance. One writer explains why: 'Because they are not the "natural" bodies for academia, black academics have to endure a burden of doubt from those around them. And it comes with a high level of hyper-surveillance, giving a feeling that colleagues and students are more likely to pick up on any mistakes and see them as signs of misplaced authority' (Puwar, 2004: 53). A British Asian female lecturer describes her experience with

her Head of Department in these terms: 'I felt like I was being watched. Every time I marked an essay…she'd come in and look at, you know, have you marked it? Can I have a look at your comments? So any little opportunity she had to exercise discipline, she would use it...And one day…she just said to me, I'm coming into your lecture'. While the Head of Department might have seen herself as being supportive, the lecturer saw her as 'patronising', a judgement that received support from a part time lecturer that I interviewed. Interestingly, this experience of hyper-surveillance is not restricted to academic staff.

A Black British female student advisor also recounted a similar experience: 'I had this problem with my direct supervisors. It came to a point where they would actually come in and sit in on my interviews [with students]. It was a way of supervising me to make sure that what I'm there to talk about was money problems or the remit of my job, not anything else'.

While I did not directly come across many examples of racial stereotyping, interviews with three minority ethnic staff in a support department proved an eye opener. The following are some of the examples they recounted. On international students: 'If I can't understand the student, they are not worthy of my time, they should be able to speak English…It's like well if they can't speak English they shouldn't be here. I can't spend my time trying to understand these people '; On Black and Asian people, 'They have got a chip on their shoulder because [they] are black…Every Asian or Black or every ethnic minority because they have the [race relations legislative] protection will go out and look for these things'; On Muslims, 'If you are brown Asian coloured skin, or a Paki, or whatever, obviously you are Muslim…Within the Muslim community…the tensions that's going on at the moment, you will get, they are recruiting for suicide bombers and things like that'.

It should not be assumed that racial stereotypes are only articulated by junior members of staff. According to a minority ethnic member of another support department, a very senior manager dismissed concerns that few minority ethnic applicants were appointed in the following terms: 'They lack the education, qualifications and experience that white applicants have, and that is the reason why they are not successful because they are ignorant and not experienced – that's what I derived from these comments, which of course I challenged…It was said...in an open plan office as a throw away comment, with side ways glances at me as if, Aren't you going to say something? That is hugely insulting, particularly because I was aware that I was and still am the most senior support black person here. I don't know of any other in the entire institution at my grade and I find that odd in an institution this size that only one black person would be academically or equivalently qualified to occupy a position as a principal officer in this institution…[This] says more about the institution than the applicant in my view'.

It is difficult to identify *one* occupational culture in universities. While racism may be less overt in universities than the police, there are clearly significant cultural differences between academic schools, on the one hand, and support departments, on the other hand. All too often we forget this because we assume wrongly that academic staff comprises the vast majority of employees when in fact they comprise a significant minority. While we also need to note differences between individual academic schools, and of course differences between individual support departments, there does seem at Midshire to be evidence that racism and racial stereotyping are more prevalent in (some of) the support departments.

The strongest critique of the university in these terms came from a relatively senior (Black female) member of a support department who resigned from her job. Asked to reflect on her five years at the university, she commented: 'So does racial discrimination exist? It's alive and well here! It's painted over…and how shall I put it? As a colleague put it to me, they don't overtly discriminate against you; they just move you around and unsettle you and don't give you the products you need to do your job. That's how they discriminate against you. But they don't call it that; it's just seen as restructuring, moving you around and that's what has happened to me since day one'.

There clearly are instances where minority ethnic staff feel that they do not really belong and where their identities are not given due recognition. Since 2004, however, efforts have been made to make the culture of the university more inclusive. The Chaplaincy is now multi-faith; facilities exist on different campuses for Muslims to pray; and different religious festivals are celebrated. An equality and diversity lecture series takes place each year; there is annually an Equality and Diversity week; and events are mounted to acknowledge Black History month and Holocaust Memorial Day. These developments entail both the celebration and regulation of cultural differences. The Chaplaincy may now be multi-faith but one faith is hegemonic. Thus a multi-faith debate that I witnessed included representatives from different faiths, but they were all, with the exception of the Hindu, White and they had all been vetted by an advisory group to the local Bishop. While this form of multiculturalism is subject to critique (Sharma, 2004), it should not be forgotten that it does represent a public recognition of identities that are critical to people and is, in this sense, a progressive development.

Staffing Structure : *Are Black and Asian people well represented in senior management?*

Senior management positions continue to be disproportionately held by White people. Indeed, the Vice Chancellor and Pro Vice Chancellors have in all cases continued to be White. And the same has been true of the Heads of Support Departments. It is only in the case of Deans/Heads of Schools that there has been any challenge to this monochrome picture and that was for a short time in the past: one Head of School was Black. A Black

African lecturer whom I interviewed, though otherwise reluctant to challenge the commitment of the university to race equality, saw the uniform whiteness of senior management as problematic: 'Here, I am not saying that no support has come from the institution that no matter where you come from, the move for equality means that you can get anywhere. [But] people look at and don't see people present at senior level, and there's a perception that…nobody's going to speak for me. The institution needs to be proactive, ensuring equality at all levels'.

Lack of Positive Action *:   Are efforts being made to recruit Black and Asian people to senior positions?*

Few or no efforts have been made to recruit Black or Asian people to senior positions. The only exception to this has been the Governing Council where two people from minority ethnic groups have been recruited. The (ex)Chair commented in my presence, 'That's more than enough; we have now a higher representation than their proportion in the general population warrants'. While some positive action has been taken in relation to gender, and progress has been made in terms of access to senior positions, the same cannot be said of race where the whiteness of senior staff is taken for granted.

Management and Leadership *:   Is the promotion of race equality a high priority?*

The task of addressing institutional racism has not been regarded as a high priority for managers or academic leaders. The Macpherson report didn't even warrant a mention in 1999 at Governing Council or Senate, or more extraordinarily the Equal Opportunities Working Group (EOWG). This is scarcely surprising since a race equality plan approved by Senate in 1994 and launched in 1996 had been forgotten by then, so much so that a discussion ensued at EOWG in 1999 about the need to develop such a plan.

What has been evident is that at different times more or less attention has been placed on race equality. At certain points, the university has made a serious effort to address the issue of race equality. At other times, the issue has not been on the institution's radar. The development of equal opportunity policies from 1989 onwards eventually led to the development of action plans for different strands of equality. A race equality plan was devised between 1992 and 1994. This was updated and launched in 1996 and, in terms of Carter et al's typology, merited top marks; it was an 'advanced policy' (Carter et al, 1999).

Within an extraordinarily short time, however, the policy had been forgotten. Indeed the subsequent requirement under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act to develop by May 2002 a race equality policy and action plan was not appropriately met. The policy and plan

were awarded bottom marks by the Equality Challenge Unit; it was considered 'not yet to be aligned with the requirements of the RRAA [and] in need of urgent revision' (ECU, 2003). The university was subsequently required to resubmit its policy and action plan to HEFCE within a limited time period. This provided an opportunity for race equality champions within the university to develop a robust policy and action plan and persuade senior management to put in place appropriate resources to support the policy and plan.

Race equality subsequently had a higher priority within the university, with the statistical reports on students informing mainstream committees and decision making. Despite this, there are increasing indications of some resistance to the equality and diversity agenda. Take for example the statistical reports on students. As one of the Equality and Diversity officers put it, 'People's response to the data is quite interesting. It is essentially either the numbers are too small…so that is one way in which it is dismissed or minimised; the other is to say, Well it is too big, we recognise that this pattern exists but society is at fault, you know, this is not something to do with [Midshire]. And that is another way you dismiss it'. These responses are not unusual, with research in other universities also identifying 'attitudinal barriers' when staff are presented with data pointing to ethnic differentials. Such barriers constitute 'obstacles in terms of getting staff members to take issues of racism and race equality seriously and to act accordingly and appropriately' (Turney et al, 2002). Examples of such barriers include the following: dismissing the possibility of there being a serious issue ('Let's face it. The university is a liberal environment'); seeing the issue as less serious than elsewhere ('I'm sure that race equality is less of an issue in a university than other work places'); displacing responsibility ('The difficulty is that we can't get ethnic (sic) people to apply'); and questioning the appropriateness of any benchmarks ('The trouble is that we don't know who we should be comparing ourselves with'). While it is, of course, important to look at statistical data critically, defensiveness has been the predominant response of staff when asked to reflect on data pointing to ethnic differentials. This has led many staff to dismiss the data out of hand and challenge the appropriateness of numerical targets. Indeed what is evident at Midshire is an extreme reluctance, even among senior staff such as Heads of School, to develop recruitment or other targets relating to any of the equality dimensions. While the rhetoric continues to refer to mainstreaming, the reality is more mundane, with no progress made, for example, in the incorporation of (race) equality targets into the strategic plan.

Professional Expertise : Does the staff have expertise in intercultural issues?

Few members of the university staff have skills in intercultural understanding and communication. In the case of one support department, this deficiency has entailed repeated

failures in defusing situations where tension has existed. And this has in turn resulted in highly skilled staff leaving. The department is overwhelmingly White and has only ever recruited four staff from minority ethnic groups. All but one has left, in their eyes pushed by an insufferable situation rather than pulled by opportunities opening up elsewhere. The first claimed that she had not received the same support for staff development as her White colleagues and took her case of racial discrimination against the university to an industrial tribunal; the second complained that a senior position within the department had not been advertised and that she had therefore been deprived of an opportunity to apply for promotion; and the third issued a grievance against her Head of Department for failing to respond to legitimate concerns that she raised and for failing to treat her with equity.

All three provided examples where equality and diversity policies seemed to be deliberately flouted and subverted by White staff unsympathetic to the equality and diversity agenda. In some cases racist incidents were deliberately not being recorded: 'If you look at the incident reporting form…there is a little bit on the back that says, if it is a racist attack…It's on the reporting form, but one of the staff actually openly said, Oh no, we don't fill that bit in because we have been told not to…We don't want to show…that sort of thing happens'. In other cases there was a reluctance to complete equality monitoring forms: 'I do equality monitoring for the department to see, Is our service meeting…the needs of students from different countries…ethnic groups and so on? People don't want to know about ethnic equality monitoring. They don't want to know about equality full stop. It's not in their remit…They are supposed to give them [equality monitoring forms] to the students. The form goes to the student with the pack; say they are going for, for example, funding…And some people aren't sending them, aren't giving the students the equality monitoring forms…They don't want to know…[Eventually] management will have a word with them. Nothing is still being done. They are saying, I am not following what the management are saying'. In this particular department, there was a widely held perception that management was weak and thus unwilling to confront staff who ignored institutional and departmental policies.

All the minority ethnic staffing in the department provided evidence that their Head of Department had been reluctant to take the lead in ensuring compliance with equality and diversity policies. They were supported in this view by some majority ethnic members of the department. One of them put it like this: 'You will get lip service. They [management] will tell me what I need to hear and then they won't act on it…It's not personal. It's just some people are not confrontational or they don't, they can't, they are more indecisive about, okay, How do I take this decision?...Why can't they just deal with problem because then little things get bigger and bigger, and bigger and bigger, and then there is a point that people will say, I am not having that anymore'.

Asked whether he felt staff had expertise in intercultural issues, one of the Equality and Diversity (EDO) officers commented: 'Most staff do not have a clue'. He illustrated his view with reference to a hate incident that occurred in the inter faith Chaplaincy. In this particular incident, some anti-Christian material was discovered which turned out to have been left in the prayer room by a Muslim cleaner. The response of the Head of Department responsible was initially to ignore the incident. He only took action after being ordered by the PVC at the EDO's prompting to complete a hate incident report form, see the cleaner concerned and place a record on her file. Rather than leave it at that, the Head of Department then reported the incident to the local Special Branch (which had briefed senior management in the interim). After initially doing nothing, he went to the other extreme, thus potentially exacerbating intercultural tensions.

Training : Is there high quality training in place that enables individuals to know how they can promote race equality?

There is little doubt that the provision of high quality training improved over time and that the take up of training has significantly increased. Prior to the advent of the race equality policy and action plan, and its subsequent incorporation into an equality scheme and action plan, training was uniform and optional. Since then, different forms of training (including bespoke training) were developed for different groups and an ambitious target set for all staff to receive training in equality and diversity. While considerable progress was made, the university continued to remain some way off meeting this target of 100% of staff being trained, with Governors, senior managers and academic staff in particular being reluctant to attend training sessions. The feedback from those attended recent training has been positive, with most acknowledging their obligations under the race relations legislation. There is evidence, however, that the momentum for staff to be trained stalled and that for many groups it again became optional (Midshire, 2007a).

Consultation : Are Black and Asian communities consulted on key issues?

Few special efforts have been made to seek out and consult Black and Asian staff specifically. The development of the race equality policy and action plan involved minimal consultation internally with Black and Asian staff and none externally. And when it came to a major institutional review of arrangements to support the equality and diversity agenda at the university, only one of the twenty five people consulted was from a minority ethnic background and she was consulted because of her role as an Equality and Diversity officer.

Lack of Information : Does the university have good information on the impact of its policies and procedures on minority ethnic communities?

Midshire university has made progress in conducting equality impact assessments. An initial screening timetable has been approved and some key policies and procedures have been screened. While all new policies and procedures are as a matter of routine expected to be screened before being approved, this requirement is not always currently being met, however. Progress has been patchy and many new HR policies have been approved without prior screening. A distinction can be made between information that pertains to students and staff. The information at the disposal of the university in relation to students has vastly improved and this has enabled the university to make considerable strides in assessing the impact of its policies and procedures on Black and Asian communities. The same cannot be said of information that pertains to staff. The information at the disposal of university has, if anything, deteriorated, with the result that it is not in a position to undertake a systematic examination of the impact of its policies and procedures on Black and Asian communities.

Institutional Racism in Midshire University: Continuity or Change?

Our examination of the components of institutional racism identified by the Parekh report reveals both continuity and change at Midshire University. Let us examine the changes first before then going on to examine the continuities.

There have clearly been some changes between 1999 and 2008. The university improved its monitoring by ethnicity of the student experience; it tightened its formal recruitment procedures; it developed a more inclusive culture that exhibits public recognition of diverse identities; it has an equality scheme and action plan that does address race; training in equality and diversity improved, with more staff now cognisant of their obligations under the race relations legislation; and information on the impact of institutional policies and procedures on Black and Asian communities improved. While it is now exceptional for references to be made to institutional racism, the university has responded in various ways to the charge that it is institutionally racist.

What is perhaps more significant, however, than the changes we have identified are the continuities (note the final column of Table 1) These include the following: persistent ethnic differentials in the student experience that adversely impact on BME students and point to possible indirect discrimination; ethnic differentials in staff recruitment that adversely impact on Black and Asian applicants and point to possible indirect discrimination; (some) minority ethnic staff subject to racism and (some) White staff cynical about political correctness; an overwhelmingly White senior staff team, with no evident efforts to transform this situation; low priority given to the implementation of a race equality action plan; few staff skilled in

intercultural issues; many staff not trained in equality and diversity; and few efforts made to consult Black and Asian communities.

Institutional Racism in Midshire: Comparing the University and the Police

It is instructive not only to compare the university at different points in time but also to compare the university with the police, the subject of a previous study (Pilkington, 2002).

Table 1 entails a comparison of these two institutions in relation to the interacting dimensions of institutional racism identified by the Parekh report (2000). Column 1 identifies 10 dimensions of institutional racism; column 2 and 3 scores the police and university respectively on a three point scale (high, medium and low); and column 4 identifies any changes in scoring for the university between 1999 and 2008.

This table is in some ways disturbing. It brings out clearly the lack of progress made by the university. On only four of the ten dimensions is any progress evident. It is no wonder in this context that a senior Black female member of the support staff summed up what had happened over the previous five years in these terms: 'On the face of it, there have been improvements because we have nice policies now and we write nice statements and we are going to consider the equality impacts. Fine. But what does that look like? We have not moved further than changing the curtains, but behind the windows the grime still exists'.

Even more importantly, the table also brings out not only some key differences but also some significant similarities in the experiences of minority ethnic groups within the police and the academy. The table points to more similarities with the police than might be anticipated. This is significant because the police represent the paradigm case of institutional racism. While the university has more favourable scores than the police on four of the ten dimensions, it has a less favourable score on one dimension and has comparable scores on the other five dimensions. It is not possible to draw any definitive conclusions from this somewhat mechanistic exercise, but it does suggest that, despite the obvious differences between the two institutions, there are below the surface some similarities. In many ways, the results of this comparison are congruent with the conclusions of an earlier study which compared the experience of employees from minority ethnic groups within the health service and the academy. 'What the evidence suggests is that there are qualitatively different experiences of racism and discrimination in different occupational spheres, but also that there are broadly similar quantitative outcomes in terms of the position of ethnic groups within professional spheres' (Carter, 2003: 175). Thus, while it is exceptional for employees in the university 'to talk about physical or verbal abuse in the same way that nurses in the NHS describe their experiences' (Carter, 2003: 175), or for that matter police in this study

describe their experiences, this does not mean that there are not remarkable similarities in terms of employee outcomes.

Asked to compare his experience as a policeman and later an academic, one respondent from a minority ethnic community commented: 'It's much more sweet sounding here in academia…but if we can talk of some bully boys in the police, I feel many in academia are smiling assassins. I really did trust those heads of department to do the right thing [in relation to a complaint of racial discrimination against a colleague] and on the surface what they had to say, everything was fine, but the consequences of their actions, it was business as usual…It's just the manner of expressions that are different. The outcomes are not dissimilar…Black and ethnic minority people have been around in the country for generations but we don't see them at the top of institutions and, once they get there, they are not exempt from experiencing racism. So there are those similarities but they're played out in different languages'.

Midshire University and Whiteness

The previous two sections bring out both some remarkable similarities between the university and police and also some significant continuities over time in the approach of the university. These are striking and illustrate very clearly both the continuing disadvantages faced by minority ethnic groups and also the lack of urgency to transform this situation. It is conceivable of course that Midshire University is exceptional (compared to other higher education institutions) in this respect. And we cannot of course generalise from this case study to the sector as a whole. Nonetheless, what we have found at Midshire University resonates with findings elsewhere (Turney et al, 2002; Bhattacharya, 2002; Major, 2002). Whatever qualms we may have with the analytical utility of institutional racism, what the concept has sensitised us to is 'the sheer weight of whiteness' in the university (Back, 2004: 1). In this sense the concept has been extremely revealing. And it helps us grasp why there are indeed some important parallels between the university and the police. It is impossible to comprehend the persistence of racial disadvantage and the failure to combat this without recognising 'how deeply rooted *Whiteness* is throughout the…system' (Gillborn, 2008: 9). While minority ethnic staff are typically conscious of this, often for White staff (including White researchers) 'the whiteness of the institution goes unnoticed and is rationalised into a day-to-day perception of normality' (Law et al, 2004: 97). It is crucial therefore that we are reflexive and do not let 'the "whiteness" of the academy…go unnoticed and uncommented' (Clegg et al, 2003: 164; Frankenberg, 2004).

Universities are unlikely to take measures to promote race equality unless prodded (Pilkington, 2011c). This is for a number of reasons. Firstly, there is a widespread perception

held by senior managers and (many) academic staff that universities are liberal institutions already committed to equality of opportunity, academic freedom and rational inquiry (Neal, 1998). As one contributor at a BSA Race and Ethnicity Study Group conference at Leeds Metropolitan University put it in 2003: 'I think there is some sense to the fact that because we all work in universities we're all jolly nice people and could not possibly be accused of racism or any other discrimination'. Conceived in this way, universities do not need to devise and implement any special measures. Secondly, there is a widely held view (especially) by senior staff that the adoption by universities of equality and diversity policies already ensures that staff and students are treated equitably (Deem et al, 2005). Since equity already exists, there is no need for special measures to promote race equality. Thirdly, universities are spaces where White bodies predominate and hold power (Puwar, 2004). This whiteness is typically not noticed. In this context, it is all too likely that differential racial outcomes will also go unnoticed or be overlooked, and the need for positive action rejected (Gulam, 2004).

Summary

It is extremely revealing to explore how one university has addressed the issue of race equality over an extended period. Our examination points to both continuities and changes. In many respects, the continuities are more striking. Both staff and students from minority ethnic groups continue to experience disadvantages compared to White staff and students; and yet such racial inequality continues not to be a high priority issue for senior managers and academic leaders.

In previous publications (Pilkington, 2003; Pilkington, 2011a), I have expressed some misgivings with the concept of institutional racism. Nonetheless, it has to be said that it has proved useful on this journey in bringing to light matters that might have otherwise remained obscure to me. The Parekh report's identification of various components of institutional racism has been particularly helpful in disclosing both the extent of disadvantage faced by BME staff and students, and the institution's reluctance to do anything about it. It has also proved illuminating in sensitising us to the overwhelming whiteness of the university and the position of White privilege within it.

Table 1: The interacting dynamics of institutional racism in Midshire University and Police

Dimension	Police	University	University Changes
Indirect discrimination	HIGH	HIGH/MEDIUM	Some progress While there has been an increase in the proportion of students from minority ethnic groups, there is also increasing evidence that there continue to be persistent and adverse ethnic differentials.
Unfair employment practices	HIGH	HIGH	No change
Racism in the occupational culture	HIGH	MEDIUM/LOW	Some progress While there continues to be little evidence of overt racism and some attempt to be more inclusive, there is evidence that (some, especially support) staff from minority ethnic groups feel marginalised.
White senior management	HIGH	HIGH	No change
Lack of positive action	HIGH	HIGH	No change
Low priority given to race equality	HIGH	HIGH	No change
Low expertise in intercultural issues	HIGH	HIGH	No change
Inadequate training in race and community relations	HIGH/MEDIUM	MEDIUM	Some progress While the university has not met its target of 100% staff being trained, progress has been made, with 20%

			currently trained.
Poor consultation with minority ethnic communities	HIGH/MEDIUM	HIGH	No change
Lack of information on the impact of policies, practices and procedures.	MEDIUM	MEDIUM/LOW	Some progress This has improved considerably for students but not for staff