What do the experiences of ASAW reveal about the role of networks in pursuing career opportunities in the field of Higher Education?

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Abstract

This thesis draws on the concept of social capital, network theory and feminism to critically investigate choices and paths available to a specific group of women, namely Academic South Asian Women (ASAW) as they navigate their careers through British Higher Education (HE). Although gender and race inequalities experienced by academic staff within higher education insitituions are well documented (Bhopal, 2020; Rabelo, Robotham and McCluney, 2020; Rollock, 2019; Ahmed, 2019; Morley, 2014) little is known about the specific voices of ASAW: in particular, how they use/access informal/formal academic networking spaces.

Findings identified multifarious factors which both enabled and constrained ASAW's access and mobilisation of networks. These encompass the role of enabling behaviour and personal interventions facilitated through relationships with supervsiors, managers and informal sponsors. Participants' stories revealed a variety of explanations of their experiences ranging from individual historical accounts, personal 'snap' moments (Ahmed, 2017) as well as negotiating an HE Sector characterised by an entrenched white, patriarchal, racist structure.

The conceptual framework for this inquiry is built on Bourdieu's *Theory of Practice* (1986), particularly his concepts of habitus, capital and field. However, it moves beyond Bourdieu's conceptualisation of habitus, in that it reveals ASAW make use of a hybrid habitus, which is often operationalised in order to negotiate their position within the academy. This thesis argues that although Bourdieusian theoretical framing offers valuable methodological insights, it somewhat undermines the active agency of the ASAW themselves to transformatively construct their own identities to improve their position within HE. In order to explore this limitation, in addition to Bourdieu, the works of feminist writers such as hooks (1990) and Ahmed (2012, 2015 & 2004) are critically integrated within my analysis.

From my participants' narratives four key themes emerge, which explore both the barriers to networks and how they are mobilised and accessed through: (i) relationships, (ii) agentic behaviour, (iii) structural inequalities & fitting in, and (iv) informal/organic networks. The research demonstrates how, despite a glacial pace of change in higher education, ASAW demonstrated innovative and agentic personal strategies to develop their professional careers and identities. In conclusion this research explores the extent to which ASAW pursue

‘alternative’ capitals such as external, digital and emotional capital to improve their position within the academy. Ultimately, this thesis innovatively argues that there is potential for transformative outcomes for ASAW, enabling both access to networks and mobilising them by resisting dominant rules, disrupting historic practices and through this, ASAW, flexibly and responsively, are sourcing their own solutions to improve their position in HE.

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Acronyms

ASAW	Academic South Asian Women
AS	Athena SWAN Charter
B.A.M.E	Black Asian and Minority Ethnic
BLM	Black Lives Matter
BME	Black Minority Ethnic
EDI	Equality and Diversity Initiatives
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institutions
HESA	Higher Education Statistical Agency
NPM	New Public Managerialism
NSS	National Student Survey
REC	Race Equality Charter
REF	Research Excellence Framework
SC	Social Capital
STEM	Science Technology Engineering and Maths
TEF	Teaching Excellence Framework

Introduction

My thesis engages with the perspectives of women with a background and origin from the Indian sub-continent, which covers Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. Both British-born women and those that have migrated to the UK, holding an academic teaching and or research position within British universities will form part of this thesis. These women will be referred to by using the acronym ASAW (Academic South Asian Women) throughout the thesis. Additionally, my thesis has strong resonances with my own personal journey as a first generation, British Sikh woman working as an academic at a British university. I, therefore, begin this chapter by sharing my personal interest in conducting this research, my background and what bought me to this thesis. I then define key terms that will be used throughout the thesis, which is followed by my research objectives. I also draw upon existing literature that has examined the purpose and benefits of networks, and finally I end the chapter by outlining how I view networking spaces within the context of HE.

1.1 **Personal Interest**

In this section I explain my positionality and summarise what bought me to this thesis. When I was younger, I was often asked where I come from? and when I named my hometown, I sensed from the look on people's faces that this was not the right answer. This question continued and followed me around into the early days of my employment. I was now a young adult and although of Indian descent, I would describe myself as British. I became tired of this line of questioning but could see there was a desire to label me in some way. I had experienced various struggles and challenges relating to belonging during school, university, and employment. Unlike my peers I did not have the networks, contacts, and connections to help build my CV and instead I had to create my own opportunities and strategies to overcome barriers encountered in my career. However, I knew I wasn't alone, and I was also fully aware from both my experiences and wider literature (Rollock, 2019; Bhopal, 2020; Runnymede Trust, 2015; Morley 2014) that inequalities and underrepresentation for different ethnic groups was a well-researched field. Through my reading, I came across a range of literature examining the experiences of black women within HE (Maseti, 2018; Wright et al., 2022; Colon-Alverio & Flowers, 2022) but noted there was very little focusing on women who looked like me, and although I recognise there are other women who might define themselves as Asian e.g., Chinese they were not the focus of my thesis as I was seeking to

examine the stories of women from a similar region, culture, language and history.

As an ASAW myself, I am an inside researcher (Mercer, 2007), a position that I discuss in more depth in my Chapter 5. As a member of the group I am studying, it is possible to critically reflect on my positionality and recognise a degree of familiarity with some of the journeys detailed within the literature, as well as those expressed by my participants. I share, therefore, a personal narrative about how my own academic career has been influenced by professional/ personal networks thus leading to my interest in this field of study. Indeed, my biography as a first generation, British Asian woman (of Indian origin) working within a British university as a senior lecturer for fourteen years has underpinned my decision to undertake this thesis. For this reason, I feel it is helpful to clarify my beliefs and experiences in relation to this research.

I will argue, social capital is very important to professional development/ career advancement in higher education. Social capital has been described as a resource available to individuals because of one's personal network of contacts (Baker, 2000). Furthermore, Baker (2000) stipulates how social capital can offer new ideas, information, job opportunities, business leads, influence and social support. When I reflect on my own experiences around mobilising social capital for career opportunities, I view it as a site of consistent struggle. Both my parents were immigrants and I quickly learnt I always had to achieve so much more than my white counterparts in order to pursue opportunities. Growing up with difference, sounding different, looking different and being treated differently became an accepted norm.

My own journey was shaped very early on during my school years, where I was subject to racial abuse and discrimination. Even today when I look back, it is the memory of being made to feel different, which is an injury I have never fully recovered from. I took refuge with those similar to me (a form of homophily) and saw this as a route to survival. I took on board my parents' strong belief in a democratic Britain, which valued qualifications and rewarded those willing to work hard. I gained the necessary qualifications and was one of the few in my community to attend university and live away from home. Deviating from the cultural expectations of my community, as a student I entered a very different world in HE, which mirrored Bourdieu's analogy of being a 'fish out of water' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992), a notion that explains conditions that individuals encounter that are different to their own experiences and habitus. University life as a student saw me adrift in a foreign world of pubs,

nightclubs and going out with my newly found independence. However, I found I was often transported back to that feeling of being different, which I had experienced in my early years at school.

In my working life I have experienced obstacles, challenges and dilemmas, and quickly learned how to navigate my way around various institutions. In my professional career as a human resources (HR) practitioner the support of some good managers acting as 'door openers' enabled some progress to be made. However, compared to previous positions that I had held in industry, I had never fully realised the importance of social capital professionally, until I arrived in academia. Di Leo writes: "Academia is to a large degree unfair, biased, and prejudicial…an environment where success is in too many instances related to whom you know, not what you know" (2003, p. 5). These words reflect some of my own experiences in HE and similarly align with stories from the majority of my participants. Although I have managed to break, or at the very least, push against some of those glass ceilings, that is just part of my journey. Once I had broken one glass ceiling, I came across another, having to learn new codes and new informal rules about how things are done, which impacted or, at the very least, delayed my professional progression in HE.

During my time as an academic, I have come across numerous occasions (in the main through departmental meetings) when management, seeking new academic appointments or other career opportunities, ask colleagues to draw upon or nudge their networks, contacts and connections. Numerous training events I have attended within HE, around leadership, research and teaching practices often included 'networking' as part of the agenda. All of this indicates a desire on the part of British universities to develop and engage academics widely through networks and connections. Networking is used, in this way, on a regular basis within academia and is openly promoted as a tool to engage in and utilise to maximise opportunities. Networks are thus presented as though they are open to all, and access to them is unrestricted, even though this is clearly not the case. Therefore, for ASAW and other minority groups it is crucial to understand how networks operate, how we access them and benefit from them to maximise opportunities.

Ibarra (1993) recognises inequality within networking and argues that the benefits of formal and informal networks, e.g., in terms of friendship, support and advancement are not experienced by all equally. Gender and ethnicity have strong effects on network ties, and

through these ties, on career outcomes. For example, although reliance on homophilous (i.e., within-group) ties provide access to valuable social support for women and ethnic minorities, these may limit access to resources and information in wider terms across organisations and sectors (Ibarra 1992). The danger in HE "is that if Faculty/departmental/discipline cultures are only accessible to those with similar backgrounds to those who are its gatekeepers, then the main beneficiaries are those who have written the rules and those who they see as part of their social/professional circle" (Hu-DeHart, 2000, p. 29).

A further influence for my chosen area of research is the notion of social justice. Social justice is a theme that has influenced my work throughout my career in HE, especially with regard to teaching, where I teach areas related to equality, diversity and discrimination. Hence, my chosen area of research hinges on equity and trying to understand, even though you do/ have all the right stuff, (i.e., similar education/ experience/ qualifications) the benefits are not always the same for men and women and/ or for those coming from different ethnic groups. Research conducted in UK universities supports this view (Rollock, 2019; Bhopal, 2018; Gabriel and Tate, 2017; Runnymede Trust, 2015; Hey, Dunne and Aynsley, 2011). For example, Dovidio and Gartner's (2000) work indicates when black and white candidates apply for the same post, black candidates were not selected as often as whites, even though they had the same qualifications.

Early on in my own academic career, the explanation offered to me by my manager, after raising questions about my own career progression and opportunities, was that "*no-one knows who you are in the faculty*". This left me struggling to understand what more could be done and left me feeling invisible within my own institution. On reflection, I now ask myself was that comment motivated by a racist attitude. To make sense of those comments from my manager, I draw upon Bhopal (Twitter, 2020) who argues, "when she presents on racism she is often asked, how do you know it's down to racism?" However, when she presents on gender she is never asked "how do you know its sexism?" At the time of my career (when my invisibility was highlighted), I was probably reluctant to suggest racism for fear of being seen as a troublemaker, negative or destructive. If I did raise the issue, I would be branded a 'Killjoy' a term used by Ahmed (2019) to describe those individuals of colour/ feminists in HE who challenge their position. However, Ahmed also makes clear silence itself is also a tool of oppression (Ryan-Flood and Gill, 2010, p. xvi). Maybe my manager was right, "*no-one knew me*" but I learnt no-one would know or see me unless I made some noise, which then pushed

them to acknowledge my existence. Thus, I believe my thesis gives me an opportunity to make more noise, and to hear the different noises from other ASAW, who can help make sense of their position in HE.

1.2 Rationale for the Thesis

A range of statistics (Advance HE, 2022; ECU, 2019) paint a picture of inequality in British universities for academic staff from different ethnic backgrounds. Advance, HE acknowledges there has been an increase in the number of academic staff from more ethnically diverse backgrounds (2022). However, they also recognise inequalities persist, with lower proportions of individuals from ethnic minority groups being less represented in senior management/academic roles, professorial positions or in higher salary bands. Although this information offers a quantitative account of the position of B.A.M.E academics at British universities, it does not give us an insight into their experiences and does not enable their voice to be heard. Therefore, demonstrating a clear need for further interrogation to understand the level of underrepresentation that persists within the academy.

The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement has reignited a debate about the UK's shortcomings in tackling the issue of racism against black people in wider society (Francis, 2021). A range of employers used BLM as an opportunity to quickly reaffirm their equality and diversity principles. For example, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across the sector issued statements of support (Edkins, 2020). However, Edkins (2020) argues like other organisations HE has been criticised for offering tokenistic support, which fails both staff and students due to their failure to address systematic and structural inequalities (Edkins, 2020). A Freedom of Information request in 2019 (sent to 131 universities) further highlighted the extent of the problem in relation to discriminatory practices within the academy. The freedom of information revealed that Out of 996 formal racism complaints (from students and staff) only 367 were upheld (Edkins, 2020). For universities to be in this position, forty- seven years on from when the Race Discrimination Act (1976) was first introduced, is not only unacceptable but represents an inadequate approach to equality and diversity. Moreover, it suggests the issues related to discrimination and unequal opportunity are firmly ingrained within university structures and processes, and therefore it is necessary to continually interrogate what is going on in HE, which is what this thesis aims to do through my critical interrogation of the experiences of my participants.

A range of research (Rabelo, Robotham and McCluney, 2020; Rollock, 2019; Cabrera, Franklin and Watson, 2016; Leathwood, Maylor & Moreau, 2009; Pilkington, 2013; Shilliam, 2015; Bhopal, 2020) have examined B.A.M.E academics' lived experiences. More recently Rollock (2019) has focused on the lived experiences of black academics (Black here is defined in her report as African, Caribbean and other Black background). However, there is limited focus purely on the experiences of ASAW working in HE, which is where this thesis differs in its remit. Furthermore, the role of networks and career opportunities specifically linked to ASAW within academia has received very little attention. Even though existing research (Heffernan, 2020; Yarrow, 2020; Bhopal, 2014; Hey, Dunne, and Aynsley, 2011;) recognises the importance of networks in HE, this concept does not form the central focus of their work specifically in relation to ASAW. My aim is to make networks the key focus of this research, to understand how social capital may be mobilised through such networks for a distinct ethnic group (ASAW).

Ibarra (1993) encourages researchers to look past "anecdotal accounts of perceived exclusion" (p. 57) to examine network structures and outcomes and identify patterns of interaction and, subsequently, potential for differences in access or opportunity. Therefore, further research and insight into what appears to be differential returns for similar investments by different groups in HE, such as ASAW, is clearly needed (Ibarra, 1992). Bhopal (2011) supports the notion of the need for further research on networks for Asian women, specifically within the higher education sector, and Wang (2009) calls for future research to go beyond simply reporting gender-based differences in network practices and probe deeper into why these patterns still hold today. Heffernan (2020, p.12), who focuses his research within HE, adds to these views and claims further research regarding the implications of non-merit-based decisions (networking) in a profession that prides itself on inclusivity and diversity must be conducted. Importantly, existing literature (Runnymede, 2015; Rabelo, Robotham and McCluney, 2020;) suggests B.A.M.E academics are having to reach a higher threshold for career promotion and progression compared to their white colleagues, and thus potential differences in terms of access or opportunity alluded to by Ibarra (1993) can be seen to play out differently (within HE) based upon ethnicity. This research responds to these calls for greater accountability and transparency around Equality and Diversity Initiatives (EDI) in HE (Heffernan, 2020; Lin, 2001; Wang, 2009; Bhopal, 2011). Furthermore, by examining the significance and importance of both formal and informal network relationships (for career progression), this thesis builds a better understanding of the value and purpose of networks; helping to identify any

discriminatory practices, which may go some way to explain the small number of ASAW reaching senior positions in UK HEIs.

The next section of this chapter I clarify and explain the different categories of ethnicity and how I will refer to each throughout the thesis. I also define key terms that are relevant to the focus of this study.

1.3 Different Categories of ethnicity

Although existing research (Rollock, 2019; Bhopal, 2020; Runnymede Trust, 2015) has examined experiences of different ethnic groups, the experiences of academic women from the Indian subcontinent remains under-researched. For the purposes of this thesis, rather than use any of the existing acronyms, which have historically been imposed on ethnic minority groups, I created the term 'Academic South Asian Women' (ASAW) as it reflected my own identity and that of my participants. I recognise Asian is a term that can cover a wider remit, but as stated earlier in this chapter, I was interested in examining women, who came specifically from the Indian sub-continent who would share a similar culture, language, and background.

The use of different ethnic/racial terminology changes over time in response to shifting preferences in the wider society, changing composition of the population, and changing patterns of racialisation (Aspinall, 2020. p.2). Recent events such as Brexit, Windrush scandal, killing of George Floyd and student activism related to #BlackLivesMatter movement, go some way to confirming the need to challenge, review and reflect on the continued validity of existing labels. It is therefore necessary to comment on the current debate around categorisation of the different ethnic groups (DaCosta et al., 2021).

The categorisation of different ethnic groups is better understood by looking back at its historical development. Selvarajah et al., (2020) describes the period of 1960's to the early 1990s where some used the term 'black' as a political term to reflect the shared history of colonialism and political/cultural entanglement that bought people from Africa and the Indian sub-continent to Britain (p. 1). From the 1990's onwards the terms Black and minority Ethnic (BME) and Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) were popularised by their use by governmental agencies (DaCosta et al., 2021). However, Gabriel (2021) argues their use homogenises minoritized groups and masks significant inequalities and differences between ethnic groups. More recently, this position has been noted in the report by Sewell (2021) on

Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, which recommended that the term BAME should be dropped in official government research reports.

Throughout my thesis I will be drawing upon literature that uses the terms BME and BAME, and whenever I directly quote from an author's work, I will use the term they adopted within their research. Otherwise, I will adopt the acronym B.A.M.E as recommended by a report which explores the use of this term in the creative industries (Sir Lenny Henry, 2021). Thus, similar to Gabriel (2021) I argue the term B.A.M.E better reflects the individuality of different ethnic groups as opposed to treating all ethnicities as one homogeneous group.

1.4 Networking & Social Capital

The other two key terms being used within this thesis are networking and social capital. I use 'networking' in the sense of an activity having a direct positive impact on career outcomes by helping individuals to develop social capital (Wang, 2009; Heffernan, 2020; Yarrow, 2020). The term social capital -is based on the premise that an interpersonal network provides added professional/social value to its members by giving them access to the social resources available within the network (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988). Social capital is leveraged in the workplace in specific ways by ASAW for task accomplishment, career advancement, and social support (Bartol and Zhang, 2007). Networks (both formal and informal) can be seen as the vehicle through which resources, information and support can be gained to access or develop existing social capital. Therefore, it is not possible to talk about one without the other as the interaction of both is crucial in determining access to potential career opportunities.

Gendered and raced inequalities experienced by B.A.M.E academics have received increased attention and their lived experiences, lack of progression, inclusivity and leadership opportunities have been explored within the context of British universities. (Pilkington, 2013; Shilliam, 2015; Gabriel and Tate, 2017, Arday and Mirza, 2018, Rollock, 2019; Bhopal, 2020) . This thesis, while focusing on the lived experiences of ASAW working in Higher Education (HE), specifically explores their ability to use networks to develop relevant social capital and gain access to career opportunities within HE. In addressing this, the thesis research objectives are set out below.

1.5 Research Objectives

(1) To explore through the experiences of ASAW, how opportunities are managed at different stages of their careers within the field of HE.

(2) To critically evaluate what positions ASAW take within HE-related networks. And to explore any barriers and who/what influences, manages and determines access to networks for ASAW when pursuing career opportunities.

(3) To review, in relation to career opportunities, how effective HE networks are, exploring what, if any, networking strategies/ behaviours are used by ASAW to benefit, mobilise, and develop social capital.

Working on a research focused contract is one of the career paths available to academics within HE. This path is heavily influenced by the Research Excellence Framework (REF), which is an inevitable and important part of an academic's research/professional trajectory, and this framework (REF) is explored in more depth in chapter 2. It is however recognised REF is just one aspect of how an academic's role is shaped, and for those academics who are on a teaching focused contract, frameworks such as NSS and TEF become a priority. A desired outcome of this thesis is to provide insights and greater understanding of the career trajectory and experiences of ASAW working in HE by including participants at three different stages of their careers. These stages reflect typical career paths for academics within HE, namely the early career, mid-career and senior academic positions. It is recognised the criteria under which you are defined as an Early career researcher can vary across the sector. I have summarised below my definition of who fits the three career stages outlined above. To summarise:

(1) For Early career researchers, I have adopted British Educational Research Association's (BERA) definition of ECR, which defines ECR's as those individuals within 5 years of their PHD completion. This definition has also been used in the work of Bosanquet et al. (2016).

(2) Mid-career academics are those who have established teaching or research experience usually lecturers, senior lecturers, senior research fellows and readers. This definition mirrors the approach taken by Kandiko Howson, Coate and de St Croix (2017).

(3) Senior academic positions, which includes Professors, associate Professors, and heads of department.

By exploring the experiences of ASAW working in HE at these different careers stages it is hoped their insights may emerge to help inform other ASAW entering academia or looking to progress their career further. It may also offer insights into any discriminatory or exclusionary practices that may be encountered by this group of academics.

1.6 Methodology Overview

At this stage, I offer a short overview of my approach to methodology, which is further explained in more depth in Chapter 3. Coupled with my own experience and ontological position I am drawn to exploring further individual stories that can assist in making sense of the lack of progression for ASAW within British universities. Additionally, my personal interest in promoting change and encouraging empowerment reflect my own background and discipline.

As social capital is all about relationships, my research uses Bourdieu's (1986) theoretical framework, which seeks to capture individual ASAW's personal journeys, and experiences that have helped to shape their career trajectories through the use of networks within British universities. However, I recognise the limitations of Bourdieu and discuss these further in Chapter 3, for this reason I have drawn on Critical Race Theory (CRT) and feminist perspectives such as hooks (1990) and Ahmed (2006, 2012, 2015 & 2019) to fully evaluate the position of ASAW. My chosen ontological/ research position is social constructivism, which explains how individual actors make sense of the experiences they encounter. For this reason, there is a need for a congruent epistemology; I am therefore using an interpretivist approach. The narratives of five ASAW, at each of the different career stages outlined above, (early career, mid-career and senior career positions), constitute my data. These narrative interviews are analysed using the Bourdieusian concepts of habitus, capital and field, alongside the work of feminist writers Ahmed (2017) and hooks (1990). As I am aiming to examine the use of networks and social capital, I will be drawing upon my own networks to recruit my participants, relying on contacts, connections and social media as my initial source for my participants.

In the next section I will examine the meaning of networks and discuss a range of existing research that has already explored and contributed to an understanding of how networks can be used within the workplace.

1.7 Networks

For the purposes of this thesis any reference to exploring networks will include both informal and formal networks within British universities. Defining what is meant by informal and formal networks is a key part of this thesis and is crucial in understanding what relations can be drawn upon by ASAW in order to pursue career opportunities. Formal networks can be observed through organisational structures or hierarchies and are often based on university policies, formal procedures, and institutionalised programmes such as mentoring, senior management forums, Research Excellence Framework (REF) submission groups, Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) working parties and university council. These networks are "public, official, and have clear boundaries" (McGuire, 2000, p. 502). Informal networks, on the other hand, are "personal, voluntary, and have fluid boundaries not formally governed or officially recognized" (McGuire, 2000, p.503). Such networks include friendships, peer support/ advice, sponsorships and sharing of knowledge. They are usually less rigid and not subject to any specific rules about how they are used. Specialist interest groups, such as Black Academic Networks, could fit in either formal/ informal networks depending on how and by whom they have been created.

1.8 Previous Studies on Networks

Networks have been defined by Brass, Galaskiewicz, Greve and Tsai, (2004) as a set of nodes (connection points, i.e., individuals) where sets of nodes/ ties represent some type of relationship, or lack of relationship, between individuals (p. 795). These networked relationships can affect people's career outcomes (Benschop, 2009), and therefore networks form an important part of the discussion when examining the position and career opportunities available to ASAW within the academy. Popularity of using networks for careers is evident as 70–80% of all professional jobs are not obtained through classified advertisements; rather, they are obtained through effective and consistent networking (Koss-Feder, 1999). Therefore, when it comes to maximising career opportunities this statistic is a stark reminder of the benefits that can be gained from the networking process. Networking exists because it can spread ideas, knowledge and has the ability to influence one's position

within a wider social space such as the HE Sector (Papacharissi, 2011). Networking is viewed, therefore, in this thesis as a key human capital skill that is unique in its ability to increase an individual's social/ professional capital, (de Janasz and Forret, 2007).

There has been prior research and inquiry examining how networks for career opportunities within HEIs function (Heffernan, 2020; Yarrow, 2020; van den Brink and Benschop, 2014; Van Den Brink et al., 2010; Broadbridge, 2010; Maritz & Prinsloo, 2015; Walker & Yoon, 2017). It is important to acknowledge the contribution of this previous work and signal how my own thesis differs from it. Pifer (2010) argues although the theory and research on networks are well developed, only recently have researchers begun to apply them to academics and HE. Pifer's (2010) work uses research on professional and social networks with regard to academic staff within US universities. Her findings demonstrate networks do affect faculty members' access to resources in academic departments; in addition, she maintains that institutional cultures can also impact on networking behaviours and hence exchange of resources. My research examines British universities which operate under a different economic, political and social climate compared to the US. Secondly, a further departure from Pifer's (2010) study is that I will be examining networks through a Bourdieusian perspective using habitus, capital and field, as opposed to Pifer's use of Ibarra's (1993) framework of network development. Importantly, for my thesis however is that Pifer's (2010) findings highlighted a tendency amongst academics to develop relationships with others they perceive to be more like them, therefore giving support to the notion of homophily, i.e., a desire for people to have ties with those who are similar to them in socially significant ways, such as ethnicity, class and gender. Whilst Higher Education Statistical Agency HESA (2022) statistics suggest an increase in under-represented groups of academics entering HE as lecturers and senior lecturers, there is still a significant gap at the level of more senior appointments and positions of influence. Therefore, for ASAW, the chance to create wide-ranging networks with senior academics who are similar to themselves becomes highly unlikely. Shilliam (2014) adds to this view as his work indicates early career black academics are rarely introduced into formal networks, which limits their access to taking advantage of professional benefits associated with networking from the start of their careers.

Morley (2013) refers to using networks within academia as the hidden curriculum of HE. Furthermore, Socratous (2018, p.180) asserts "women need to enter the networking game to increase their opportunities for promotion". Forret and Dougherty (2004) identify different

types of networking such as maintaining contacts, socialising, engaging in professional activities, and increasing internal visibility, (p. 420). Importantly Lowrie and McKnight (2004) noted there is a lack of research on how academics, who are more research active, pursued career goals through the use of professional networks. Their study is key to this thesis, as it accepts networks play a role when staff are seeking to develop and manage their research profile for the purpose of publication (an important aspect of professional development for many academics).

My research will be examining only one ethnic group, namely ASAW, and my research will not be limited to exploring networks that just support academic publication; it also extends to examining the range of professional/formal and informal networks linked to teaching and enterprise such as research networks, taskforce groups, external examiner forums and or friendship circles. Other research such as Pataraia et al. (2014) examines the role of networks within higher education with an emphasis on the social structure, processes and value placed on personal networks relating to teaching and how they impact on professional development and thus a change in teaching practice. My research, however, will be examining networking in terms of the role it plays in professional careers in HE. I am not however investigating the changes networks bring to teaching practices, but I will be examining how HEI structures and cultures can contribute and influence how access to networks is managed and how they are accessed by different groups.

More recently, attention to the role played by networks and careers (specifically within HE) has been explored by Heffernan (2020), who advocates "that without networks there is no career within academia" (p. 1). Heffernan (2020) Moreover, Ely, Ibarra and Kolb (2011) suggest that despite the strong discourse of meritocracy in HE, it was individuals with strong support networks who succeeded and those without who failed. Likewise, Yarrow (2020) recognises the use of networks when examining the relationship between academic networks and women. Her findings indicate women employ what she calls the "knowledge hustle" as a mode of navigation and survival within HE (Yarrow, 2020, p. 579). Similarly, research by Van Den Brink et al. (2010) examines the relationship between networks and gender inequality in relation to academic recruitment, suggesting the 'old boy network' still holds a prime place within the Academy. Therefore, whilst it is recognised there has been some attention on the use of networks in higher education, there is, as suggested by Ibarra (1992) and Bhopal (2011), limited exploration of the use of networks specifically for under-represented groups, such as

women, and minorities, such as ASAW. It is here that my research does make an original contribution to existing knowledge as it increases understanding of how a minority group, like ASAW, working in academia can and does fare in the 'networking game'. It is argued networks are an integral part of academic life and as illustrated in the visual below (Figure. 1) networks can be both formal and informal. However, this thesis illuminates for ASAW accessing, benefitting and using networks for career progression is not automatic and requires them to strategize, negotiate and explore more innovative approaches to improve their position within HE.

1.9 Networking Spaces within HE

HEIs within the UK offer a number of networking spaces within which career opportunities can be pursued. I am interested in how these spaces are used by ASAW, as well as how, and the extent to which, they can rely on such spaces to pursue career opportunities/ professional development. I have chosen to map out the range of available HE networks under three main fields, namely teaching, enterprise and research as they represent the most common structure found within HEIs. Figure 1 shows a range of networks available specifically within HEIs. These networks shared are based on my experience, so I am not suggesting that networks are limited to what I have identified. During my interviews and data collection this visual was shared with my participants, who in the main had a shared understanding of networking opportunities within HE.

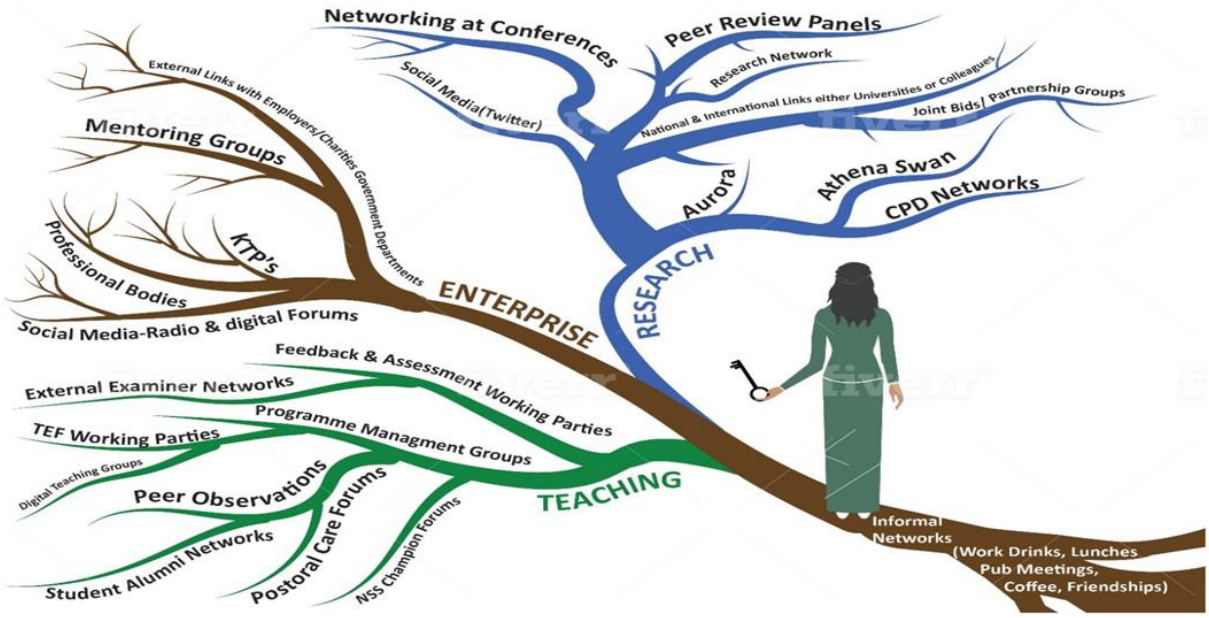


Figure 1 Examples of range of networks in HEI

To conclude, this chapter introduces the issues and interests that have brought me to this thesis and provided clarity on key terms that will be used throughout. Furthermore, having defined my research objectives, I confirm the focus of my research is on an under researched group of women, namely ASAW and their use of networks within HE. As stated earlier in this chapter research on women's progression within HE has been extensive, however, my focus (on networks and career opportunities for ASAW) is relatively under-researched. I have, moreover identified existing work that has explored the role of networks generally and how women (Yarrow, 2020) may use them. I have also drawn upon literature that looks at networks specifically within the context of HE (Heffernan, 2020; Yarrow, 2020; Pataraia et al. 2014), However, none of these existing studies have examined networks from the position of ASAW as a distinct group as I do, and it is here where my thesis adds to existing knowledge. The visual in Figure 1 (Above) highlights the range and importance of networks within HE. If, as is argued in this thesis HE promotes and encourages all academics to use networks for career opportunities, then network access, benefit and use for different groups of academics require further interrogation. A further point of interest for this thesis is whether network access and participation actually translate into the acquisition of more social capital to improve the position of ASAW (or any other marginalised group) in the academy. I argue although ASAW may not have the same established cultural and social capital as other groups working in HE (Bourdieu,1997) this has not deterred them from maximising their career opportunities. Instead, my research shows that ASAW can and do make use of their ethnic identity as a form of capital and are able to utilise it effectively as a resource in HE. However, as my concluding chapters explore my participants indicate that although networks form an integral part of life as an academic, they are not always equally accessible to all. Specifically, the data suggests that ASAW often need to negotiate and explore transformative approaches to mobilising, accessing and benefitting from networks in HE.

1.10 Structure of Thesis

The rest of this thesis is structured as follows:

In Chapter 2, I draw on a range of literature, which examines the position of women and ethnic minorities within the HE Sector. I also discuss the changing landscape of HE and how HE contributes to maintaining the position of underrepresented groups at the margins.

In Chapter 3, I outline the different theoretical perspectives of Bourdieu (1977), Critical Race Theory, Network Theorists Granovetter, (1973) and Burt, (1992) and feminist writers Ahmed, 2012 and hooks,1990.

In Chapter 4, I discuss my methodological position and approach to data collection.

In Chapter 5, My findings are discussed, and I share the contributions made by this thesis and provide links to my theoretical framework and research questions.

In my concluding Chapter 6, I summarise the contributions my thesis has made to original knowledge and consider the future of HE and limitations of my research.

2. Literature Review

My literature review begins by looking at research examining the underrepresentation of female academics within HEI. Although there are signs of small steps of progression for some women, it is argued this is not extended to women from a B.A.M.E background (Wright, Thomson and Channer, 2007). Following this discussion, I turn my attention to literature that highlights despite a range of equality and diversity interventions (Athena Swan, Aurora, Equal opportunity policies and Race Equality Charter) not much is changing with respect to career opportunities for B.A.M.E academics. Although, these initiatives aim to help eliminate discrimination and promote fairness, like Ahmed (2019), I argue that diversity in HE still functions in a non-performative way (i.e., interventions do not do what they say). Furthermore, research suggests (Rabelo, Robotham and McCluney, 2020; Rollock, 2019) treatment of B.A.M.E academics results in the use of differing standards, micropolitics, and marginalisation. It is argued such tactics negatively infect processes, practices, and procedures (e.g., recruitment, allocation of research hours and/ or promotion) within HE, which contribute to maintaining B.A.M.E academics' position at the margins. Finally, I explore how the changing landscape of HE within a neoliberal culture (both educational and wider) works in ways, which continues to preserve inequality within the sector. Despite the objective criteria for success outlined through REF and NSS this thesis suggests there is a recognition that one needs to use social and professional networks and connections to support one's progression in HE. Moreover, such social/professional networks, (to name a few; conferences, meetings, after work drinks, friendship circles, task-groups, and committees) with their unwritten rules and invisible criteria are not accessible to all equally. Although, HE has in many ways changed over the last 40 years, in many ways it is as Bhopal and Pitkin (2020) argue "the same old story" (p. 530) of an elitism that advantages some very established groups of academics (male, white, middle class) at the expense of others who do not fulfil that establishment criteria.

2.1 Position of B.A.M.E women in academia

Predicted figures on career advancement for women from Burkinshaw, Cahill and Ford (2018) support the view that progression for women generally within academia is slow. Although statistics (Burkinshaw, Cahill and Ford, 2018) suggest that academic women in junior and middle level posts are expected to form the majority by 2020, they also point out

that women gaining parity at professorial level will, at the earliest, take until 2070. More recently HESA's (2022) statistics confirm there is still work to be done as the proportion of male professors was greater than the proportion of female professors. Therefore, despite legislative interventions via the Equality Act 2010, progression and equality for female academics has been limited. However, as Wright et al. (2007) point out, there often appears to be an agenda for more opportunities and a stronger voice for white women within academia. Data (HESA, 2022) paints a picture of both women and B.A.M.E academics still being under-represented within HE, as illustrated in Table 1, below.

Table 1 Data on HE Staff at UK universities

HE Staff by activity standard occupational classification. Source: Higher Education Staff Statistics: UK (2020/21), HESA (2022)

	White	Black	Asian	Mixed	Other	Not Known
Employment Positions						
Professor	18,710	160	1,580	335	350	1,720
Other Senior Academics	5,435	60	300	75	85	260
Other Contract Level	141865	4,980	21,140	5,005	4,870	17,595
Total	166,010	5,205	23,020	5,410	5,310	19,575

	Professor	Other Senior Academic	Other Contract level	Total
Female	6,510	2,515	96,420	105,440
Male	16,300	3,700	98,695	118,695

For a sector that is allegedly committed to widening participation (Ahmed and Swan, 2006), such statistics raise questions and concerns about the true commitment and ability of HEIs to fully embed and promote equality diversity and inclusion within HE institutions. Just how such a secondary position for B.A.M.E academics has been allowed to persist, despite the sector's commitment towards equality, is an on-going question, which to date has not been fully resolved.

To make sense of the underrepresentation of B.A.M.E academics in senior positions (within HE), critical management studies suggest this is because organisations "tend to recruit in their own image" (Singh, 2002, p. 3). Studies into racism in HE (Jarboe, 2016; Arday and Mirza Safia, 2018) have suggested that unconscious bias may contribute towards this continuous underrepresentation of ethnic minorities in HE. For although recruiters may not plan to discriminate, their unconscious bias often results in appointment and promotion of people 'like themselves'. All of this suggests that to increase the visibility of ASAW in senior roles within British universities, there is a need for more recruiting panels to include ASAW or alternatively offer better training and awareness of unconscious bias. In contrast, Kwhali (The Guardian, 4th February 2016, n. P) believes "using unconscious bias as a factor for differences is a get out clause". She claims, "After years of anti-racist debates, policies, strategies, universities banging on about increasing diversity ... if it still is unconscious, there really is something worrying" (2016, n.p). It is here where the words of Ahmed (2012) urging B.A.M.E academics to remain 'sore' and 'angry' come to mind. Fighting inequality may enable ASAW to challenge the status quo in order to make the required difference. Yet, if white women benefit from the current racial order, then we must ask whether the changes need to come from those women positioned more at the margins. Moreover, keeping ASAW at the margins may enable those in leadership positions to better manage who is allowed to enter vital groups and networks that operate within the academy (Arday and Mirza Safia, 2018).

Previous research (Rollock, 2019; Bhopal, 2018; Gabriel and Tate, 2017; Runnymede Trust, 2015; Hey, Dunne and Aynsley, 2011) acknowledges the marginalised position of B.A.M.E academics, painting a picture of higher education institutions operating as a site of struggle for those from non-white backgrounds. Various terminologies such as 'imposter' (Trotman, 2009), 'Out of place' (Puwar, 2004), 'Trespasser' (Arday and Mirza Safia, 2018), 'space invaders' (Puwar, 2004), 'Visitors' and (Gay, 2004) 'Outsiders' (Wright et al., 2007, p. 151) have been used to describe the position of B.A.M.E academics.

Puwar's (2004) reference to 'space invaders' effectively captures the experience of those who feel they do not belong in HE. In essence, Puwar (2004) asks a crucial question, "What happens when certain groups come to occupy spaces rarely occupied by them?" (p. 141). Although the focus of Puwar's (2004) work was an examination of the occupational spaces within parliament

and the civil service, it is a view that can be translated into the world of academia. Puwar (2004, p. 51) suggests

> *Some bodies through their history are seen as natural occupants of specific spaces, some bodies have the right to belong in certain locations, while others are marked out as trespassers, and therefore out of place.*

Using this idea, she argues that the feeling of belonging, and inclusivity are linked to the perception white people have of B.A.M.E groups, who politically, historically, and socially have been excluded from privileged spaces, such as HE. For B.A.M.E groups to then take up spaces and roles not naturally accessible to them, causes disruption. My thesis reveals some ASAW have the appetite, know-how and agentic tendency to cause some disruption, and they do this not only by challenging the historical structures of HE but calling out inappropriate behaviour. However, as my participants' account reveal, this challenge and disruption for some ASAW came at a personal cost.

Wright et al. (2007, p. 145) confirm, B.A.M.E academics "are more than just a body out of place". They are being actively denied space in HE and instead some are being offered a "newly created and lesser space" (Wright et al., 2007, p. 152), leaving them to be excluded from dominant, more powerful spaces. Trotman (2009) adds to our understanding of the treatment of ethnic minorities within academia by examining the imposter phenomenon in relation to African American women within US higher education institutions. She uses the term 'imposter' to describe how black women have been doubly victimised by scholarly neglect and racist assumptions. Belonging, as they do, to two groups which have traditionally been treated as inferiors by American society, they have been made doubly invisible (Trotman, 2009, p. 78). In British universities, Rollock (2019), Arday (2015), and Bhopal and Jackson (2013) found academics from different B.A.M.E backgrounds are not only under-represented but also experience discrimination, especially when it comes to taking up senior positions. Therefore, it is clear the position of B.A.M.E academics is problematic and prospects for their upward mobility and increased career opportunities create a continual challenge for those involved. The persistent feeling of being an outsider becomes a barrier for B.A.M.E groups, which may hamper access to, and effect mobilising key connections, ties and network groups. How, and if, this imposter status contributes to accessing crucial networks for ASAW will be a prime focus for this thesis. In HEIs, as in other privileged work environments, the more social capital an individual has, the more status, recognition, and legitimacy he or she can acquire to advance

in their career (Niehaus and O'Meara, 2014). As I have already outlined, networks offer one vehicle by which academics can develop and build their social capital. However, not all networks benefit individuals equally, suggesting there is a selective element in terms of who can benefit from connections and ties. Participants, working in academia, in Bhopal's (2014) research help to illustrate this point further, as they acknowledged the power of friendship networks suggests accessing jobs and promotion is based on "who you know', which often counts higher than 'what you know' (Bhopal, 2014, p. 16). Thus, challenging the view that British HEI's operate on the basis of meritocratic principles is undermined, instead one's social circle and networks hold more power in mobilising careers.

Hey, Dunne, and Aynsley, (2011) draw attention to how social capital can be accumulated in British HE institutions via staff attendance at after work gatherings in pubs and bars, which is essentially an informal space for social networking. Their report reveals how, for many B.A.M.E academics, both professional services staff and academics, male and female, experienced exclusion or discomfort when asked to socialise in forms and spaces that took no account of cultural preferences and patterns. Their research reinforces this point highlighting the experiences of staff and students with a religion or belief were often made to feel out of place at social gatherings. For example, academics who do not drink alcohol might end up feeling cut off from establishing social relationships with colleagues, and in some instances cut off from receiving important information and exchanges that can take place in social spaces like pubs.

Research by Wright et al. (2007) focuses on British universities and examines how the experience of Black women in academia is one of marginalisation. The main aim of their research is to examine lived experiences of black women participants only, to determine how aspects of gender and 'race' are negotiated within predominantly white patriarchal, hierarchical and Eurocentric higher educational spaces. They use the stories of Black women to understand the challenges they face in an institution historically seen as a space reserved for the white middle class, and how as black women, when they begin to occupy this space, they are seen as 'space invaders' (Puwar, 2004). They also recognise the importance of other relationships, power and sponsorship, acknowledging the concept of connections, pointing out,

> *If white men are opening doors for other white men and white women are opening doors for each other, where is the patronage, the support for Black women? Who is opening doors for them?* (Wright et al., 2007, p. 155)

However, they make little inquiry into exploring the use of such door openings for other groups of academics such as ASAW, which is what this thesis aims to do.

Bhopal (2014) examines the experiences of B.A.M.E academics in both UK and US universities, noting how networks contribute to the persistence of inequality within the academy. She argues Black academics are less likely than their white counterparts to have access to powerful 'insider' networks, in which job offers are made and opportunities for career advancement are discussed. These insider networks may include recommendations and access to particular institutions and processes, making use of friendship networks with 'academic gatekeepers' offering members power to provide access to jobs, promotion and funding (p.16). To help understand why Black academics struggle to access powerful insider networks such as those described by Bhopal (2014), I turn to the analysis of Rabelo, Robotham and McCluney (2020, p. 1842), who argue organisations are able to maintain the position of black women as activities, processes and practices within institutions operate through what they call a 'lens of whiteness'. Accordingly, those individuals that deviate from whiteness open themselves up to additional scrutiny and control (p. 1840). Examining this view from the perspective of ASAW and identifying whether HE has specific practices by which whiteness is embraced and enacted in the workplace (Rabelo, Robotham and McCluney, 2020) is a point of interest for this thesis. In contrast, Kanter (1977) speaks of the notion of tokenism, whereby recruiting small numbers of diverse candidates to give the false perception of diversity at large enables some B.A.M.E academics to achieve upward mobility. Kanter (1977) points to penalties for taking on tokenistic appointments, (including increased workloads, which is discussed further later in this chapter). Similarly, Rabelo, Robotham and McCluney, (2020) suggest failure to comply with the white gaze and downplay their differences results in detriment for B.A.M.E. academics. All of which suggests there is the risk of being unable to access career opportunities for ASAW unless they display behaviours and dispositions reflecting the white gaze. However, for some of my participants taking on token roles and thereby moving closer to the white gaze appeared to be part of their strategy to negotiate and exploit the professional established rules/expectations in HE. In fact, one could suggest that these women are actively playing along with the rules to secure a position which, as advocated by hooks (1994) enables them to disrupt existing practices from 'within the tent' so to speak.

Findings from the Runnymede Report, 'Aiming Higher Race, Inequality and Diversity in the Academy' (2015) also emphasises over scrutinisation for B.A.M.E groups, and this helps confirm both Kanter's (1977) and Rabelo, Robotham and McCluney's (2020) views about marginalised groups like ASAW incurring penalties as B.A.M.E academics aim to move higher up the career ladder. Both male and female participants in the Runnymede report highlighted some valuable themes, which included not only over-scrutinisation of marginalised groups, but lack of trust and differing standards. In particular, they drew attention to the differing standards applied to B.A.M.E academics' performance, compared to that of their white colleagues. Experiences included questioning of academic credibility and additional checks on black academics' work and contribution to others' work. This additional scrutinisation and differing standards work as a tool was used to halt the progression of academics from B.A.M.E groups. Trotman and Greene (2013) and Wilder and colleagues (2013) offer further support to the findings of the Runnymede Report (2015); they argue black women have to work twice as hard if they are to survive and achieve any success in the academy. Essentially working harder and longer is the price to pay for failing to meet the white gaze (Rabelo, Robotham and McCluney, 2020).

Clearly, survival tactics in HE institutions, are exercised by B.A.M.E women to gain access to white spaces. Exploring how such strategies are operationalised is crucial and may go some way to explain how ASAW struggle to reach senior positions within the academy. This thesis will explore who is doing the reviewing of academics' performance and who is measuring their contribution. Essentially, if universities internal processes have in fact become infected by widespread assumptions based on the experiences of men, then this adds a real constraint for female academic staff. In particular, for ASAW this adds a further complication, which involves the negotiating of additional differences in terms of existing ethnic stereotypes and application of different standards, suggesting HE is a work environment riddled with obstacles for ASAW.

2.2 Marginalisation, Fitting in and Micropolitics

The term marginalisation is often used to describe the position of B.A.M.E groups and is significant as it can be translated into a feeling of invisibility, which from the perspective of seeking career opportunities puts ASAW at a severe disadvantage. In contrast, Thomas and

Hollenshead (2001) express marginalisation in a more positive way, indicating how Black women and other women of colour, at one US research university used their marginalised positions as spaces of resistance. hooks (1990) further support's the positive aspects of marginalisation and maintains that it should in fact be seen as a site for developing a community of resistance between and within marginalised groups in HE. Both writers suggest that the dominant doxa (practices) in academia can be challenged and a space for career progression, sought by B.A.M.E groups who are at the margins, is possible. This, thesis is focused on exploring the experiences of ASAW in achieving such opportunities from the margins and examining the role, if any, that networks may play in supporting career opportunities. What is of interest for this thesis is to explore if and how ASAW participants choose to 'fit in' or following hooks (1990) approach choose to alter and challenge existing approaches to pursue career opportunities through a third space. hooks, (1990:152) explains third space as "a space of resistance. It is a space I choose… that space in the margin that is a site of creativity and power, that inclusive space where we recover ourselves, where we move in solidarity…enter that space and let us meet there." It is hoped that my individual participant stories will help make sense of what approaches ASAW generally use to acquire more social capital through networks within HE, and whether, as suggested by hooks (1990), a space at the margins can be found?

Rollock (2019) argues that equality for B.A.M.E academics has not moved on. Her work indicates that treatment related to being an outsider is still evident within HEIs and argues the mistreatment of B.A.M.E academics has become more sophisticated as more subtle, passive and racial microaggressions reflect the culture of HE. If, as she says, more subtle and less explicit ways of treating B.A.M.E academics becomes the norm, it becomes increasingly important to know how to call out this treatment when it is professionally masked. Drawing on the work of Ahmed (2013) one can argue that a direct response to these injustices can be to become what Ahmed calls becoming a 'feminist killjoy'. Indeed, this thesis suggests that many, 'killjoy' moments were experienced by the participants although it is not clear if any of all of participants would have defined themselves in Ahmed's terms as a feminist killjoy.

The concept of 'internal fit' has also been highlighted as a critical factor to consider when examining career opportunities for B.A.M.E groups. The degree of dependence organisations place on the need for staff to 'fit' to meet organisational acceptance and success (Jenkins, 1986) is also important. With pre-existing stereotypes and cultural differences impacting on women

from B.A.M.E backgrounds, the 'fit' factor becomes an added hurdle to negotiate in order to move upwards. This manifestation of institutional habitus suggests, with regard to different groups of staff and the different treatment they receive, that the issue of belonging still needs resolving and openly acknowledging within HE. If, as Husbands (2019) suggests, student satisfaction is driven more by the degree to which an individual's appearance accords with expectations of what an academic should look like rather than anything else, it creates further challenges for academics who do not fit the standard norm. ASAW in British universities may not fit the normative identity of an academic, which raises questions of how they respond to such barriers and what role networks play in helping them to mobilise their careers.

Micropolitics is a further tool used in HE to keep B.A.M.E groups such as ASAW at the margins of HE. It includes strategies and tactics used by individuals and groups to further their own interests (Morley 2006; Hoyle 1982; Thomas and Davies 2005). Put simply, micropolitics includes a broad range of activities within organisations to acquire, develop and use power and resources through networking, lobbying, authority and one's position both positively and negatively. Through these activities (including formal and informal networks), individuals and/ or groups can in turn influence decision making related to individual academic careers. How this translates to determining one's career can be seen from research based on thirteen Dutch universities (van den Brink, Benschop and Jansen, 2010) which explored some of the practices used in relation to professional appointments of women in academia. Although it should be noted this study does not include or consider the intersectionality of gender, race and/ or ethnicity, the findings however offer a warning not to see transparency and accountability as the only remedy for gender inequality. Van den Brink et al.'s (2010) findings suggest subtle persuasion at informal gatherings, lobbying superiors, making deals behind the scenes, use of strategic skills and right connections were also needed to pursue appointments within academia. The interviewees gave examples of what could be termed 'political games' where influence and manipulation were used to confirm the appointment of candidates who had already been chosen. The selection committee "in many such cases, appeared to be merely a decorative tool used to formalise and legitimise the decision" (p. 1469). In particular, their findings point to the view where one has a connection or direct link with the dean or university board, there is a real opportunity to influence the outcome of academic appointments (Van den Brink et al., 2010). Tactics of lobbying, behind the scenes agreements and political games question the purpose and effectiveness of the Athena Swan Charter, Race Equality Charter and equality legislation, but equally highlight that investment in informal networks can offer

opportunities in terms of progression. Drawing upon the words of Ahmed (2007), such practices are clear reminders of why "diversity work remains undone" in higher education.

> *As such, diversity as a term has a marketing appeal; it allows the university to sell itself, by presenting itself as a happy place, a place where differences are celebrated, welcomed and enjoyed. Diversity becomes a brand, and a form of organizational pride. Not only does this rebranding of the university as being diverse work to conceal racism, but it also works to re-imagine the university as being anti-racist* (p. 606)

Thus, the power of unwritten rules in the academy needs some exploration. Unwritten rules include being involved in competitive self-promotional behaviour, which is traditionally associated with dominant masculine behaviours (Leonard, 2001). Other ways in which the rules can be embraced require women to engage with the hidden curriculum of academia, for example, the use of networks, contacts, persistence and political skills (Morley, 2012). Thomas and Hollenshead's (2001) study suggest that faculty women of colour were more likely to agree that there are many such unwritten rules, which other faculty members of the other groups find it easier to learn about and use to their own advantage. Supporting this view Leonard (2001) argues that women's absence from positions of power can be attributed to their lack of knowledge of the 'rules of the game'. Such insights suggest a form of alienation within the institution, which aligns well with Bourdieu's (1992) concept of the field, where each field is characterised by its own rules, and ways. This notion of field can be usefully applied to HE with its many institutional and disciplinary fields which intersect and work together to determine any individual's success (or lack of progress) within the academy. However, hooks (1990) argues that the need to learn the rules (as suggested by Bourdieu,1992) is not always the only way forward. Rather she advocates a position where groups like ASAW could and should be creating their own rules and possibly even own networks, so that they can prevent established elitist exclusionary practices being perpetuated unproblematically across HE by disrupting them and offering alternative ways for marginalised academics to work together. An area of focus for this thesis, therefore, is to explore the impact on career mobility for those ASAW who have consciously or otherwise deviated from the dominant expectations and practices of HE.

In summary, a great deal of attention has been placed in this section on the importance of exploring the lived experiences of B.A.M.E groups and acknowledging the extent to which the careers of B.A.M.E academics are affected within HE by its established, elitist and

exclusionary practices. Although none of the studies above focused purely on ASAW, they do highlight how the intersection of gender, race and ethnicity often created many complications for marginalised academics in terms of their professional development and career opportunities. As I have discussed in this section the presence and persistent use of unwritten rules, micropolitics and marginalisation within HE, indicate that the issue of equality is yet to be fully addressed. Furthermore, the statistics shared earlier in Table 1 (HESA, 2022) point to a position of subordination continuing to being experienced by academics from different B.A.M.E backgrounds. It is therefore necessary to insist on a critical dialogue on equality in HE which ensure that the voice of ASAW (along with other marginalised groups) can be heard and responded to. As Lorde (1984): so succinctly stated

> *It is not difference which immobilizes us, but silence. And there are so many silences to be broken.* (p. 44)

Following this approach Ahmed's (2019) concept of the of 'killjoy' is once again relevant. She describes how members of under-represented groups who speak out and question the status quo, are often seen as getting in the way of others' 'happiness' at being successful and fulfilled professionally, because they challenge that happiness on the basis of its elitist exclusionary foundations. Specifically, Ahmed (2019) makes the case that raising institutional consciousness about inequalities always and inevitably creates disquiet and 'unhappiness' for previously privileged (and usually) blissfully unaware HE professionals. One way of addressing inequalities is, as Ahmed argues, through being a 'killjoy. It is suggested that killjoy moments, voices and actions are vital to help break down HE's 'brick walls' of established practices which will never be addressed by those who benefit from them (Ahmed, 2017). The narrative accounts of my participants largely support this view, and as they break their silences and share their stories in this thesis, they provide a critical insight into how mobilising networking practices within HE has helped them to disrupt previously taken for granted privileges and discriminatory practices in order to advance their own careers.

2.3 Equality & Diversity Initiatives (EDI) within Academia

Having outlined (above) the range of inequalities experienced by B.A.M.E groups, I now turn my attention to how HE has responded to those claims of inequality. In the next section, I offer a critical review of how HEIs have attempted to address some of the concerns and challenges around under-representation of women and B.A.M.E groups. Initiatives such as the Athena

SWAN (AS) Charter, is one of the vehicles used to address opportunities for women. Other interventions include Aurora (HE's leadership development initiative for women) and the Race Equality Charter (REC), which are all discussed in more detail below**.** However, using Ahmed's perspective (2007) on diversity work, I argue there are still several shortcomings in HE's approach and the benefit of equality initiatives, including mentoring and sponsorship which are not benefitting all women equally.

2.4 The Athena SWAN Charter

The UK Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) officially launched Athena SWAN in 2005. Initially the charter was focused on STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths and Medicine) aiming to achieve gender advancement. However, in 2015 the charter was expanded to include Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences, Business and Law disciplines. HEIs and their departments are required to conduct a self-assessment against specific criteria, in order to gain a Bronze, Silver or Gold Award. It is useful to understand what interventions the Charter encourages; some examples include the design of more transparent processes for appointing heads of departments, use of career track schemes to help women to move from fixed-term contracts to permanent contracts, and to set up staff review and development groups where women are encouraged to submit their CV for advice that helps them in career progression and prospects (Gamage and Sevilla, 2019).

Despite these forward-thinking approaches such charters have their limitations. Pearce (2017) notes the work required for Athena SWAN to achieve accreditation is intense and universities often lack the required resources to ensure the charter's standards are met. Usually, the work towards assessment is unevenly distributed, where women end up with the bulk of the tasks around achieving the Charter, leaving male colleagues more time to consolidate their career through pursuing research and publications (Pearce, 2017). One could therefore argue that if the very initiative aimed at improving career opportunities for women is costing women time and becoming an administrative burden for them, then there is the danger of the AS Charter (and others) becoming counter-productive.

Pearce (2017) highlights a further criticism of the AS charter, which centres on the issue of intersectionality. Intersectionality highlights how different forms of marginalisation might intersect (Crenshaw, 1991); for instance, ASAW are not simply 'women' or 'Asian': they have

gendered experiences that are racialised, and racialised experiences that are gendered. In this way ASAW may experience more forms of discrimination within higher education. Pearce (2017) claims the danger here is if the equality agenda is pursued without organisations fully understanding the challenges of intersectionality, there is a risk that the true benefit of the initiative may not be fully felt by all women within the academy. Although, more recently, the transformed UK Athena Swan Charter does now support all intersectional inequalities (The transformed UK Athena Swan Charter | Advance HE, 2021), it is too early to confirm its impact.

AS initiatives can be useful in terms of networks as their objectives are often operationalised via working groups, taskforces and committees, which in turn can offer a valuable platform for networking. However, if as Bhopal & Pitkin (2018, p. 7) suggest only 'white women' feel the full benefit of the AS Charter, then the initiative may well be flawed as it does not work equally for all women. Rollock (2019), similarly to Bhopal & Pitkin (2018), suggests gender may work more effectively for some women within the HE Sector compared to others, but she also argues that some white female academics contribute to the exclusion of Black female academics. Such a perspective would indicate it is not only the masculine culture of HE (as described earlier by Morley, 2014) that is an obstacle for ASAW, but other aspects of their identity also become problematic. Similar findings in the USA indicate that white women have been the main beneficiaries of similar affirmative actions (Ladson Billings, 1998; 2005), suggesting therefore the opportunities to be gained for ethnic groups such as ASAW are likely to be limited.

These findings therefore bring into question initiatives such as AS, which by excluding certain groups and prioritising the needs of white women can leave B.A.M.E groups at a disadvantage. If exclusion is a potential output from such policies, then their place in the academy needs to be questioned. However, there has been limited research examining the experiences of under-represented groups such as ASAW with initiatives like AS and Aurora.

2.5 Aurora - HE's Leadership Development Initiative for Women

Aurora was created in 2013 by Advance HE to help address the issue of under-representation of women in senior posts in higher education, as outlined in the Advance HE's Stimulus Paper 'Women and Higher Education: Absences and Aspirations' (Morley, 2013). Aurora operates by developing:

> *"a unique partnership bringing together leadership experts and higher education institutions to take positive action to address the under-representation of women in leadership positions in the sector. It aims to enable women in academic and professional staff roles to think of themselves as future leaders; to influence their institutions and to develop leadership skills" (Aurora Women's Leadership Development Programme 2022 - Human Resources, 2022).*

In particular, some of the key offerings on Aurora's website in order to enhance the leadership position of women are the creation of a networking community and mentoring opportunities. Both activities can be deemed central in supporting the building of social capital, which can then be drawn upon to improve one's career prospects. From this perspective this initiative should provide a useful vehicle for ASAW to explore their development needs and pursue opportunities.

However, Pilkington (2011) argues, although positive action through initiatives like Aurora and AS has been taken in relation to gender, it is not reflected in inclusive policymaking related to race. The Race Equality Charter (REC) launched in January 2016 and run by Advance HE has tried to bridge this gap as it works in a similar fashion as the Athena SWAN Charter, but instead the focus is on race equality. REC aims to improve the representation, progress and success of minority staff and students in higher education (Arday and Mirza Safia, 2018). At the time of writing this thesis, the REC had 56 members and 12 award holders (Equality Challenge Unit, 2019). To put this into context, the UK has 164 higher education institutions, but when we compare the member numbers for REC with Athena SWAN a clear difference in terms of commitment emerges. Currently, for Athena SWAN, 164 members hold 815 awards between them (Equality Challenge Unit, 2019) so the level of attentiveness given to gender signals a stronger appetite to tackle the issue compared to the commitment given to race under REC. Although it is noted the REC is a much newer Charter, it is argued the needs of the B.A.M.E community (very similar to the new transformed AS Charter in 2021) emerge as an after-thought as opposed to being a central focus from the outset. This view is supported by Bhopal and Henderson (2022) who point out that the AS charter has always been prioritised over the Race Equality Charter (p.783). Such a perspective could help explain the secondary position B.A.M.E academics find themselves occupying within the academy. Adding to this view, Bhopal (2019) argues that specific equality-based programmes targeted at B.A.M.E groups within HE, rather than contributing to a commitment to inclusion, work for the benefit of HEIs to perpetuate and reinforce white privilege and fail to address ongoing structural

inequalities. It is hoped, that ASAW will increasingly have the opportunity and confidence to speak of their experiences through REC, AS and Aurora, which may help increase the value of these policies and interventions in improving careers of marginalised groups like ASAW.

2.6 Diversity

Ahmed, (2009) argues diversity in higher education is merely a 'numbers game' where, getting more people of colour added to the white faces of organisations becomes the priority, without necessarily changing anything with respect to improving career opportunities for B.A.M.E groups. Essentially, it means people of colour are what gets 'added on' (p. 41). Ahmed (2012) argues HEIs want to create a climate of 'happy diversity', where to speak about racism often is to introduce unwanted bad feelings. However, she counsels black academics to remain 'sore and angry' and refuse to be appropriated through institutional policy and practice as the 'happy objects' of diversity in universities. Ahmed's (2012) work reinforces the concern around the implementation and effectiveness of diversity within the workplace, arguing documents and policies alone cannot remove racism from the institution. Her research examined equality and diversity officers from ten British universities, which indicated diversity is often seen by HEIs as a question of projecting the 'right image'. By observing the documenting of diversity as a political process, Ahmed (2007) argues, "documents create fantasy images of the organizations they apparently describe, the document say's 'we are diverse', as if saying it makes it so" (p. 607).

There appears to be a strong consensus on the limitations of diversity initiatives, targets and policies, as many B.A.M.E students and staff have grown weary of the usual initiatives aimed at improving race equality in universities, which can often feel tokenistic (Husbands, 2019). Until these approaches become part of a comprehensive strategy for equality, diversity and inclusivity owned and driven by senior managers the position is unlikely to change (Husbands, 2019). Ahmed (2006) builds on this idea claiming diversity is too often about those who 'look different' which keeps whiteness/white space in HE in place by failing to challenge it (p. 42). Essentially, HEIs may have recruited people from diverse backgrounds within their institutions, but merely having them in the building does not equate to equality of treatment or signify access to opportunities/ development. Tokenistic appointments within HEIs can be seen as one response by HE used to signify progress. Kanter (1977) expanded and explored the notion of tokenism, and how it grew in importance. According to Kanter (1977), there are serious

consequences for B.A.M.E academics who opt to take on tokenistic roles. These consequences put B.A.M.E staff at risk, as Kanter (1977) believes tokenism results in increased visibility, stress, and additional performance measures. What universities end up doing is seeing people of colour as part of a huge marketing exercise aimed at managing their image globally, domestically, or both. For example, some of the more elite universities paint very positive pictures of their commitment towards diversity, often using the language of globalisation and internationalism where diversity for them equates to appealing to a wide variety of diverse people across cultures. Enders (2004) supports the view that universities, by focusing on a policy of internationalisation, are more concerned with the economic gains; this then becomes the focus for EDI initiatives as opposed to a commitment to any domestic/ wider based diversity and inclusion. "Diversity here is not associated with challenging disadvantage but becomes another way of doing advantage" (Ahmed, 2007, p. 16). This is different from the newer universities which usually have a higher proportion of UK staff and students from B.A.M.E backgrounds; in this instance, they tend to call upon their B.A.M.E academics and students to act as symbols of diversity, evidence as it were of their essential EDI credentials.

If diversity becomes something that is added to organisations, then people of colour merely confirm the whiteness of what is already in place (Ahmed, 2007, p. 33) Those female B.A.M.E academics who enter higher education (from different ethnic backgrounds) may well be used as ambassadors to attract B.A.M.E staff and students through the doors; however, they themselves continue to fail to break down the barriers to gain senior positions in British universities. This thesis argues real diversity has to be part of a moral and legal imperative, which moves HEIs towards making possible a genuine state of belonging as opposed to viewing diversity as 'non- performative' (Ahmed, 2019). Therefore, an analysis of HEI institutional approaches towards the concept of diversity plays an important role in the fight for equality; however, EDI practices on their own will not suffice.

2.7 The Glass Ceiling

The concept of 'glass ceiling', a term employed to describe how women face barriers for the next level or stage of advancement (Bagilhole, 2009) relates to both invisible and informal artificial barriers that prevent women pursuing opportunities (Lewis, 2020). Coupled with this approach is the concept of the 'ivory tower', which is a term that has been used to refer to a similar situation for B.A.M.E staff in academia (Sanders, 2005). The double jeopardy faced by

B.A.M.E female staff creates further barriers for them to contend with, in what is already a competitive employment environment. The term 'labyrinth' is yet another term used to describe the uneven path of upward progression for women in organisations (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Eagly and Carli (2007) write of how the female HE professional trajectory involves diverse challenges, indirect forays, and ventures into foreign territory rather than following a straight line to the top. Although reaching the top positions is possible for some women, this journey has to be carefully negotiated as women are confronted with issues associated with childcare needs, racism, sexism, and discrimination on the basis of gendered and racialised identity (Sanchez-Hucles and Davis, 2010). Eagly and Carli (2007) assert during these negotiations, women need to demonstrate both agentic and communal skills as well as creating strong personal social capital. Use of networking and mentors is described by Eagly and Carli (2007) as one of the vehicles employed to improve career opportunities. However, even once women have reached top positions, some are then confronted with what has been termed the 'glass cliff'. The glass cliff is associated with women who find themselves dealing with situations that have high risk and can potentially set them up for failure (Hewlett et al., 2008). For ASAW the situation becomes even more complex as they are managing both race and gender to negotiate their positions. ASAW therefore must learn to maintain a positive self-image when confronted with further 'micro aggressions' that could halt promotions, mentoring, and success (Holvino & Blake-Beard, 2004).

2.8 Mentoring & Sponsorship

Although mentoring is often quoted as a useful tool to help manage development and career opportunities within, HE there is a view that mentorship is not always translating into career progression for women (Morley, 2012), and if race and ethnicity are considered alongside gender, the success rate for women of colour may well be even worse. It is argued by Ibarra, Carter and Silva (2010) what is missing for women is sponsorship, something more readily extended to male rather than female mentees. However, a fundamental difference needs to be noted between mentoring and sponsorship. Mentoring is an interpersonal process of employees, in which they share their experience with the less experienced employees (Ragins and Kram, 2007). Mentoring is helpful in supporting career development and it is often quite a formal arrangement consisting of advice, support and guidance (Khalid, Muqadas and Rehman, 2017). In contrast, sponsorship is considered to be a more informal arrangement than mentoring.

Unlike mentors, "… sponsors put their reputation on the line for their sponsees …" in private, one-to-one, off-line conversations (Hewlett et al., 2012, p. 8).

However, there is support for the view that mentoring does not work equally for all mentees. Research interviews from Ibarra, Carter and Silva's (2010) work suggest that women are over-mentored and under-sponsored relative to their male peers. Furthermore, without sponsorship, women are not only less likely than men to be appointed to top roles but may also be more reluctant to go for them (Ibarra, Carter, and Silva 2010). Although Ibarra et al. (2010) offered insights into tools that can aid career progression, their interviews did not take place within the HE sector, and they did not consider the added impact of gender, race and ethnicity. Extending Ibarra, Carter and Silva's (2010) work for this thesis is key as it aims to explore how, and if, there is an alternative /additional opportunity to promote career prospects for ASAW through the network connections of mentoring/ sponsorship (within HE).

Crucially, sponsorship aligns well with Burt's (1998) perspective of using social capital (which is discussed in more depth in Chapter 3) of legitimate others to improve one's own position. Equally, Bourdieu and Wacquant's (1992) theory that power is occupied by an elite group of decision-makers who have better access and control to a privileged field, demonstrates the importance of how employment in HE is managed and how the ability to influence within the field can lead to movement across the sector. Both Burt (1998) and Bourdieu's (1992) theoretical perspectives in relation to networks are discussed in more depth in Chapter 3.

Arguably both forms of support (mentoring & sponsorship) contribute to advancing careers in HE. However, it can be argued that sponsoring is more powerful as it provides front-line leverage from a senior organisational player (Hewlett et al., 2012). Sponsors go beyond giving feedback and advice; they advocate for their mentees and help them gain visibility fighting to get their protégés to the next level (Ibarra, Carter and Silva, 2010). Spending the time to build these connections and securing sponsors within an organisation can therefore pay professional dividends for individuals. However, arguably there are a limited number of senior ASAW sponsors available or willing to support their ASAW colleagues, which obviously impacts the availability of appropriate sponsors and mentors.

In summary what emerges from this section is that despite efforts to bring about equality and diversity through a range of interventions, higher education sector work is still characterised

by discrimination, bias, marginalisation and tokenism; all of which can hamper and delay useful career opportunities for ASAW (and other marginalised groups).

2.9 The Changing Landscape of HE

As the focus of this thesis centres on the field of HE, it is necessary to discuss the structure, processes and practices within HEIs that currently contribute to shaping career opportunities. This section therefore provides an overview of how success is measured within HE through frameworks such as the Teaching Excellence Framework, Research Excellence Framework and National Student Survey (TEF, REF, & NSS).

2.10 Neoliberalism and HE

Reduction in state funding for HE, globalisation and a desire for greater efficiency and accountability for the sector (HE) have changed the purpose of universities, and as a consequence the role of the academic across the world. At the forefront of this broadly neo-liberal shift in global education policy across all sectors British universities increasingly act less like liberal/humanist centres of education and research and more like economic enterprises that aim to maximise their revenues and/ or advance the economic competitiveness of the spaces in which they operate (Jessop, 2017). They are increasingly being shaped by a New Public Management (NPM) approach which creates increased pressure to meet customer needs through neoliberal policies. NPM is designed to make public sector organisations and the people working in them much more 'business-like' and 'market-oriented', that is, performance-, cost-, efficiency- and audit-oriented (Diefenbach, 2009). Increased use of quantitative data and the constant comparison for improvement against competition has increasingly come to be the standard by which universities over the world are now judged. The increased proliferation of national and international university league tables and national student satisfaction surveys (NSS) both of which seek to quantify 'success' in ways that mirror neoliberal ideologies has become the new norm (Sanders-McDonagh and Davis, 2018). The overall effect translates into academics spending more time being accountable and reporting on what they do, rather than doing it. In such "regimes of 'performativity', experience is nothing, productivity is everything, last year's efforts are a benchmark for improvement and the demand for more publications, more research grants and more students persists" (Ball, 2012, p. 19).

With universities embracing the NPM approach to management, there is, theoretically at least, an emphasis on 'what you do rather than who you are'; in theory, women have the same chance of being promoted as their male counterparts (Lynch, 2014). However, the traditional culture of HE suggests progression is more beneficial for white middle-class men than it is for anybody else. According to Lynch (2010, pp. 56/57) "if the idealised neo-liberal worker is one that is available 24/7 without ties or responsibilities then the gold standard set for leadership at all levels within the academy is reserved for the 'care-less' worker who can fully satisfy the demands", hence this outlook plays out less favourably for women who often carry out the majority of family/childcare responsibilities. Furthermore, Lynch, (2010) claims "although in theory, the focus on performativity in the sector (HE) is genderless and deracinated, as it is presented as rational, efficient, accountable, and offers value for money" (p. 55). In reality, as indicated by Morley (2001; 2003) those conducting most of the surveillance in HE (in terms of performance) tends to be white men who are the 'surveyors' in control of decision making related to careers based on their performativity judgements. Consequently, Women, and B.A.M.E. staff end up being more likely to be the 'surveyed'. For this reason, Blackmore (2007) and Halford and Leonard (2001) have suggested part of the answer to B.A.M.E under-representation in HE could lie in changing organisational structures and processes, such as recruitment and selection, job grading and career progression. In addition, HEIs could look at the time and effort invested in the seemingly neutral informal networks and sponsorship that operates outside of work hours in clubs, gyms, sporting and other leisure activities, which often contribute to determining academic success (Blackmore, 2007; Halford and Leonard, 2001). In essence the framework of NPM has resulted not only in increasing competition amongst academics but as argued by Blackmore (2007) and Halford and Leonard (2001 is matched with the growth of more informal networks to pursue career goals. However, existing research into access and mobilising of networks for under-represented groups remains an under researched area (Ibarra, 1992 and Bhopal, 2011) a situation that this thesis seeks to address.

The metrics culture is creating an environment which encourages the use of networks (through collaborations and connections) to achieve individualised objectives. This view is strengthened further as HEIs are warning staff that failure to achieve submission criteria for REF could lead to increases in non-research workload, transfer to teaching-focused career pathways, and/ or capability procedures that could lead to staff being 'managed out' of their institutions or targeted for redundancy (University and College Union, 2013). Therefore, meeting REF requirements can be strongly linked to creating career opportunities for academics in higher

education, and it would seem there is scope here for networks to play a key role to address the REF expectations.

2.11 Research Excellence Framework (REF)

REF formerly known as the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), is a system used to determine the quality of research at British universities. It is extremely important for British universities to engage with the REF process to build, develop and maintain global reputations within academia. REF assessment outcomes are used to assess allocation of research funding, but also rely on citations, and a qualitative assessment of research impact (REF, 2021). Research outputs are assessed by discipline-based expert panels, in terms of originality, significance, rigour and impact. Lord Sterne's review (2016) argued that the REF should have six distinct purposes; however, the one that is particularly relevant to this thesis is creating performance incentives for HEIs and individual academics.

Survey findings from UCU (2013) illustrate B.A.M.E.'s lack of access to REF, stating that one in ten black and ethnic minority respondents regarded their institution's REF selection process as discriminatory in relation to race. To add to this perception of discriminatory practices, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) in 2017 announced its equality and diversity advisory panel membership (of eight members) consisting overall of seven white members, which raises questions about the sector's alleged commitment to transparency and diversity. As Bhopal (2017) maintains, this situation is at odds with its stated focus on being transparent and applying principles of equity in the REF funding allocations.

Furthermore, Wright et al. (2007) contends that one reason for black female academics not being considered to have sufficient academic/epistemic authority for the REF relates to the subjects some teach, specifically, 'race', diversity and equality issues, which are generally regarded as less valuable possibly because they may appear threatening to the status quo. Supporting this view is Mirza (2009) who suggests that some white colleagues consider the subject 'threatening' and it is such perceptions that account for this subject area not being awarded the high value it deserves. Furthermore, when applying the framework of REF to scholarship that centres on race, Stanley (2007) claims the review process illuminates how the application of REF is grounded in the master narrative (p.16). Stanley (2007) analysed feedback of six reviewers for work submitted on race issues and her analysis revealed the reviewers used a language steeped in white privilege and research was only valid with a

comparison group of white faculty members (p.16). The idea of research/ researcher legitimacy links well to Burt's (1998) view on how to make use of networks. He describes how employees who are deemed to be 'legitimate' (i.e., white male) were more successful in building social capital through networking. However, those deemed 'illegitimate' (such as marginalized groups) needed to employ an alternative strategy of 'borrowing social capital, in the context of HE, this borrowing would usually be from a line manager or supervisor. In Chapter 3, I explain in more depth the meaning of borrowing social capital, and in Chapter 5, ASAW share their stories of how supervisors and managers were key candidates from whom social capital was borrowed. Although, hooks (1990) does not refer to the strategy of borrowing capital as described by Burt (1998) she does acknowledge that a lack of legitimacy is in fact a strength. This strength enables under-represented groups to create a better 'third space' in HE for themselves, which bypasses and could potentially challenge the status quo.

If REF (2021) is seen as contributing to the way in which academics' performance is managed and or assessed, then the behaviours and expectations it creates are important to consider in a discussion about career opportunities for marginalised groups such as ASAW. If academic success measured by REF standards is about achieving publications and being research active, then knowing about REF, how it works, what is required from academics and how academics can be supported in this process are key to achieving progression. It is also important to note that REF plays out differently in more research- intensive universities as it is a big source of income for these universities.

Research indicates that in general most information about the REF comes from informal discussions with colleagues, followed closely by decisions regarding who and what are to be entered by heads of departments and university-wide research managers (Weinstein et al., 2019). This therefore suggests that engagement with informal networks is required to actively participate in REF participation for emerging and middle career researchers. Weinstein et al.'s (2019) study also emphasises other forms of support, such as social media, mentors, and professional services, which can also play a role in informing researchers about how to engage with REF. Another key consideration for REF is the increased weighting given to the impact of research, which is based on the idea that academics must demonstrate engagement between academia and the outside world; this signals a need to engage and form partnerships, connections and networks with both public and private sector organisations and therefore, a strong indicator of the need to employ networks and connections outside of HE to create REF

impact as required in the latest and next round of REF. Participants in this research indicated greater success and more support when trying to access networks external to HE, such as professional bodies or employers. This then raises the question as to why networks within HE, (such as internal conferences, meetings, committees and research networks) operate as a barrier rather than enabling ASAW to pursue career opportunities?

One of the common networking spaces where doctoral and academic capital are developed /accessed, is the conference. Attending any conference is a way to share academic research, connect with others in one's field and potentially collaborate. Essentially, it can be viewed as a Bourdieusian playing field full of potential contacts. Mair and Frew (2018) argue, "despite identifying networking as a factor that contributes to a potential delegate's attendance decision, the meaning or experience of networking at a conference has not been fully examined in the academic literature" (p. 2153). Ford and Deckens (2019) explored the different position of women and female scientists at academic conferences, examining gender, career stage and types of presentation delivered by each participant from 2014 to 2016. They found female scientists are offered fewer opportunities than men to present their research at conference and identified that men were more likely to provide speaking opportunities to other men, potentially limiting women's conference opportunities. Such practices indicated a clear preference of men 'opening doors' professionally for other men. Thus, Ford and Deckens (2019) suggest women's voices are being drowned out at conferences, thereby limiting their opportunities for success. Drawing out the experiences of ASAW at conferences, as I do in this thesis can, however, help to bridge this gap and provide a better understanding of how they and other marginalised groups can begin to use networking practices, individually and collectively in such spaces more effectively.

2.12 TEF/NSS

Alongside the introduction of student fees, the need to justify and measure teaching has become one of the latest neoliberal initiatives to affect academic life. Beer (2016) emphasises how metrics measure us in both new and powerful ways, which function to shape our lives and possibly even careers, which is why there is a need to understand the influence of such frameworks on academic careers. The TEF emerged in 2016 after consideration of a government White Paper, Success in a Knowledge Economy (Department for BIS 2016). TEF focuses on ensuring students are better informed about the choices they make, raising esteem

for teaching, recognising and rewarding excellent teaching and being better at meeting the needs of employers (Pearce, 2019). Universities' submissions under TEF are assessed by an independent group of academics, students and employers, leading to an overall ranking of gold, silver and bronze with respect to quality of teaching.

Learning any new rules within the field (HE) and aiming to tick off the various performance indicators creates a 'gamified culture' within the education sector with points, rankings, winners and losers (Morini, 2019). Research by Lucas (2006) concluded the new 'research game' in academia has led to a further fragmentation between teaching and research, but equally may have led to further fragmentation between different social groups, such as ASAW within academia., REF-based 'game playing' are not the only games in town, and with increased emphasis on reviewing the quality of teaching, we can see how promotion of NSS follows a similar approach.

A key contributor to the TEF framework in England (where all the participants for this study worked) is the National Student Survey (NSS), which is aimed at final year undergraduate students asking them about their time and experiences at British universities. NSS is an annual exercise and participating universities submit a combination of written data and NSS data, which centres on the student experience. These evaluations make their way to the TEF outcomes page on their website and are also shown on the UCAS and Unistats websites offering a public display of the alleged quality of teaching and student experience on each course in English universities. Internally universities support this process by having module evaluations, external examiner reviews and student forums to review teaching, assessments, and feedback.

The significance of these English HE activities and processes are that results emerging from such reviews often form the basis for assessing the competence and capability of academics, which in turn can impact on their career progression and/ or opportunities. If, as indicated in the Runnymede Report (2015), the standard of performance for B.A.M.E academics is higher, then TEF potentially creates additional obstacles for ASAW wanting to achieve better career opportunities. Student satisfaction, positive module reviews and influencing employability become annual objectives for academics in teaching-based posts; consequently, the relevance and implications of not meeting the required standards can be highly detrimental in terms of career progression. Although the same process (NSS, TEF and Module feedback) is applied to all academics regardless of gender, ethnicity and race, there is evidence to suggest students

taught by B.A.M.E academics are less likely to rate their courses positively in the NSS (Bell and Brooks, 2018). Many universities use the NSS, but Bell argues:

> *We have to be aware that there is a bias in the NSS, and I don't think we can do anything about that, but we need to be aware that, if we are building a diverse workforce, our results may go down as a result…we have to accept that and be happy with that.* (Havergal, 2016. n.d.).

This is a strong indicator of how B.A.M.E groups fail to fit the perception of who is an effective academic, which may go some way to explain the feeling of being an imposter (Feenstra et al., 2020). Systemic bias within the NSS puts B.A.M.E academics at a real disadvantage and highlights some of the great perils of the metric approach. For example, students are happiest on degree programmes where high proportions of staff have the following characteristics: white, full professors, holding doctorates, and on fixed-term contracts (Bell and Brooks, 2018). Further research from Reid (2010) supports the view that race does matter when evaluating academics. Reid (2010) uses 'Rate my professor' scores, which confirm that a racial minority faculty are at a disadvantage to their peers when being judged by student evaluations. Basow and Martin (2012) argue "overall, it is likely that the race/ethnicity of the professor affects student's ratings, with white faculty generally rated higher than minority faculty" (p. 43). Student evaluations form such a big part of academic life and are often used as a tool to monitor, develop and/ or promote academics.

2.13 Academic Roles and Progression

As well as understanding the different ways in which HE measures success in terms of academic careers it is also important to have an awareness of the range of roles that my participants represent within HE. Within British academic institutions there are usually two clear routes that most academics employ, namely a route with a bias towards teaching or a route with a bias towards research. Research based positions are readers, professors, research fellows and senior research fellows, whose outputs are assessed by the REF framework, whilst roles with a teaching bias are referred to as teaching fellows, senior teaching fellows and senior lecturers/lecturers, which are assessed by TEF and NSS frameworks. Furthermore, academics at entry level on either route are termed early career academics who need to work to establish a position within the academy. Often doctoral students aim to secure a position in either research or teaching to kick-start their careers. Participants in my research come from a mix of

all these different career routes providing valuable insight into their experiences of using networks to maximise career opportunities at all levels of professional development.

Walker and Yoon (2016) introduce the concept of 'doctoral capital' to help explain why some PhD graduates go onto secure faculty positions and others do not. In short, they reveal the extent to which certain existing and acquired academic practices, attributes, dispositions and behaviours collectively form a doctoral type of capital, which can then be used in the academic marketplace. Their research focused on PhD students, who expressed a view that opportunities in academia were awarded based on 'who you know' (Walker and Yoon, 2016, p. 408). Of equal importance was the social life in that those who hung out socially with their professors as students were now successful academics, illuminating the power of the informal network. Continuing collaborations with former peers and professors were also a factor contributing towards their success, hence relationships, connections and ties become a decisive factor in accessing career opportunities. Initiatives such as academic writing groups during the PhD process (a principle/activity that can equally apply to post-doctoral work) served to be a further opportunity to share ideas, receive and give feedback, all of which points to the importance of networks and connections to mobilise academic careers and build social capital.

Angervall, Gustafsson and Silfver's (2018) definition of social capital includes "having access to resources and the ability to acquire resources jointly through social relationships" (p. 1096). For many entering academia, the status of professor is seen as the ultimate prize and is often the position that is viewed as being most endowed with social capital (Maritz and Prinsloo, 2015). Therefore, professors and experienced supervisors are sought after for their social capital, and as such, their access to networks can be highly productive for their students (Maritz and Prinsloo, 2015). How, and if, such networking relationships play out positively for ASAW is a key point of focus for this thesis, as these connections can potentially enhance careers. However, equally, lack of such connections can negatively impact on career prospects by acting as barriers or gatekeepers to crucial networking opportunities.

The exclusion of some groups to doctoral and post- doctoral opportunities is related to the issues of gate- keeping. "Membership of a group is guarded by the custodians of the group who define the entry criteria at stake for each new entry" (Maritz and Prinsloo, 2015, p. 981). The importance of gatekeeping is outlined below:

To force one's way through the gates of groups that are placed higher, more 'closed', more 'select', to close one's doors on more and more people: such is the law of socialite 'credit. Bourdieu (2013, p. 295)

Such barriers become a further hurdle for ASAW in HE to overcome and to gain membership may require further game playing to be employed in more senior positions within the academy. Boateng (2013) claims universities are still "nepotistic and cliquey…it is all about who you know" (p. 71). ASAW face a double threat of being female, and of colour, thus lacking power, competence and academic capital to navigate through academic systems. In addition, Butler (1997) also warns that white women may act as oppressors towards women of colour, which adds additional barriers to accessing opportunities.

To summarise this chapter, it is argued that although measures of success often link to TEF, REF & NSS, the criteria used in these frameworks apply equally to all academics within HE, yet it is the same individuals (namely B.A.M.E groups and women) who continue to be underpromoted and overworked, which then limits their opportunity to reach senior positions. I claim, despite promoting a criterion for all through frameworks such as REF, TEF, and NSS, HE is complicit in using informal networks and connections to maintain inequality, which in turn impact on career opportunities for B.A.M.E academics. Essentially, HE continues to tell "the same old story" (Bhopal and Pitkin (2020) p. 530). There may be new games being played due to the rise of social media etc. but they continue to disadvantage the same groups of academics.

3 Theoretical / Conceptual framework

Bourdieu's Theory of Practice (1977) with its conceptual framework of capital, field and habitus is used as a starting point in this thesis. However, I acknowledge that Bourdieu's perspectives can only take me so far and it lacks the ability to fully evaluate the position of ASAW. For this reason, I have used the feminist perspectives of hook and Ahmed to help more fully explore the challenges and position of ASAW careers in HE. I thus extend Bourdieu's concept of capital and explore how other emerging capitals such as professional, digital, hybrid and emotional capital can be used to mobilise HE careers for marginalised groups like ASAW. I also utilise Critical Race Theory (CRT) scholars (Bell, 2013; Taylor, 2009; hooks, 1990 and Crenshaw, 1989) to further interrogate the systemic racism embedded in, HE's policies, procedures and practices. The principles of CRT are discussed in this chapter and used to critically interrogate dominant ideologies of objectivity, colour-blindness and meritocracy, which are often relied upon by HEI's in pursuit of creating a more inclusive environment. Finally, as I am interested in how networks can be used for career opportunities within, HE. I examine a range of network theorists namely Burt, 1992; Granovetter, 1973; Coleman, 1990 who discuss the role of networks in helping to accelerate careers. Although these network theorists do not focus on marginalised groups, I apply the perspectives of hooks and Ahmed to explore the impact on ASAW collectively and individually.

3.1 Field & Capital

HEIs are made up of many fields such as teaching, research and enterprise, and each of these fields is made up of their own individual/collective networks, i.e., conferences, teaching groups and industry links/forums. To understand the social relations that exist between these fields and explore how they could potentially impact on career opportunities in HE, there is a need to investigate how individual ASAW navigate and position themselves within HE and aim to improve their position. From a Bourdieu (1986) perspective the role of capitals (social, cultural and economic capital) is key to improving one's position. Bourdieu's (1986) three types of capitals are discussed below, but it is argued that for ASAW in HE they only have a limited impact in terms of creating and benefitting from career opportunities through the usual channels.

Social Capital

The concept of social capital was originally considered and defined as an 'individual good' within the field of sociology (Bourdieu, 1986; Portes, 1998; Lin, 2000; 2001). Bourdieu's (1986) definition describes social capital as:

> *The aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possessions of durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition—or in other words membership in a group—which provides each of its members with backing of the collectively-owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to credit, in various senses of the word.* (Bourdieu 1986, pp. 248–249)

Here, Bourdieu is indicating firstly the importance of the kinds of relationships that allows individuals to claim access to resources possessed by other members of the network, and secondly the amount and quality of those resources (Rostila, 2010). If ASAW are denied access to crucial relationships such as a supervisor, dean and/ or line manager, the collective backing is missing for these group of women, which could then impact on their access to career opportunities. For Bourdieu social capital reproduces positions of power by maintaining the status quo. Social capital is therefore based on membership of a group that provides an individual with the backing of collectively owned capital (Bourdieu, 1986). For Bourdieu (1986), social capital is not uniformly available to members of a group or collective but available to those who acquire it by achieving positions of power and status (Bourdieu, 1986); a degree of 'game playing' is needed to manoeuvre freely within any field. Like any game players, there is a need to learn the rules of the game to progress, and this is where agents (individuals) will draw upon their habitus (skills, values and dispositions) in order to navigate their way around the field. Both habitus and capital work together to allow agents to maximise their positions in the field. Linking this to HE specifically, researchers and/ or teaching practitioners need to learn the rules or codes, which form part of the wider context called doxa. (Both doxa and habitus are explored in later in this chapter.)

3.2 Cultural Capital

Cultural capital gives individuals a social advantage as it validates their status and position in society and is central in helping to understand how inequalities can be reproduced and maintained in social institutions such as British universities. Cultural capital was used by

Bourdieu to account for the persistence of class inequalities as it represents investments on the part of the dominant class in reproducing a set of symbols and meanings, which privilege them at the expense of other groups (Bourdieu & Passerson, 1977).

Bourdieu maintained that three types of cultural capital exist, namely embodied, objectified and institutionalised. Embodied (often an un-conscious state) translates to knowledge attained in early childhood and reinforced in adulthood. Objectified cultural capital reflects the production and accumulation of high-status cultural goods and objects, such as the clothes one wears or owning a piece of art, all of which privileges an individual's 'taste'. Importantly, what is valued culturally can vary in different societies and it is likely those ASAW with a very different cultural background and different socialisation from the mainstream will value different things. Lastly, institutionalised capital offers official recognition and certifies professional competence such as in HE, degrees and PhD's (Walker and Yoon, 2016). Economic capital refers to money, property, and other assets and can result in and develop from social and cultural capitals as all forms of capital can be transformed into economic capital (Bourdieu, 2001).

It is important to clarify the vagueness that may surround the issue of whether it is in fact network relations themselves that are a type of social capital or whether social capital is an asset that emerges from networking. Crucially, what is clear is network theory cannot be discussed without an understanding of the concept of social capital. The volume and nature of an individual's social capital depends on the size of the networks that they can mobilise as well as on the volume of personal capital (and the social and cultural value of this capital) that the individual possesses in his or her own right (Maritz and Prinsloo, 2015). This is why my thesis will combine an analysis of both social capital and network theory to explore the position of ASAW in British universities.

Focusing on how social capital can be acquired in HE though networks can also help to understand its multidimensional nature. Although some attention has been given to the experiences of women and social capital (Angervall, Gustafsson and Silfver, 2018; Yarrow, 2020) little attention has been given to the career trajectory of a specific ethnic group, namely ASAW. Lin (2001) advocates a call for further research in this area of social capital, urging us to look at its uses and impact in HE. Additionally, it can provide insights into why

underrepresented groups, such as ASAW, are often missing the required social capital to mobilise their careers.

3.3 Using Bourdieu – Habitus, Past and Present

Having discussed Bourdieu's different capitals, this section focuses on the role of habitus and doxa and how these Bourdieusian concepts contribute to shaping academics' careers. Although Bourdieu's (1977) analysis of capital and field offer an effective way to interrogate the dynamics of the social space of higher education, Bourdieu also relies on the concept of habitus, which is a central feature of his theoretical framework. Habitus is our way of seeing the world representing an individual's history acquired over time. Such a framework of past, present and future can be useful in making sense of how ASAW position themselves within the HE structures over time.

Grenfell (2008) suggests that habitus engages with histories in ways that are then carried forward throughout our lives. It is habitus that predisposes us to make certain choices and decisions rather than others that may be available to us. Given the different background and heritage of ASAW, I argue in this thesis that my participants' stories can inform us of how their norms and values guide their behaviours and choices and shape their approach to using and benefitting from social capital and networks within HE. Importantly, habitus is fluid, as it is created through a social, rather than individual process, which works relationally with field and capital. Therefore, habitus is not static, can be developed and changes over time. Crucially for ASAW the challenge is whether or not they are able to move beyond their habitus of origin or whether their racialised and gendered identities complicate their career prospects.

In addition to individual habitus, the significance of institutional habitus needs attention. Using the definition from Byrd (2019) institutional habitus is "an institution's values, common sense, beliefs, behaviours, and taken-for-granted positions as situated within historical and contemporary social relations" (p. 201). Reay argues (1998) institutional habitus, is less capable of being extended, shaped or altered. The incapability of institutions such as HE to adapt their habitus supports Ahmed's (2017) view of HE seen as represented by virtual 'brick walls'. Although Ahmed's brick walls represent a physical image, they manifest themselves through fixed policy, processes, practices, which aim to maintain the (unequal) status quo.

Although individuals are primarily influenced by their childhood experiences, where habitus first takes shape, this is continually modified as one enters new and different fields. Those ASAW, who arrived as adults to work in British universities, often left behind an affluent lifestyle in their country of origin. In this sense, many ASAW have a hybrid habitus, one which encompasses the rich cultural, religious and often middle-class values of their families/ friends, and another they acquire as they interact and engage with the different social fields within UK, HE. How ASAW are able to use this duality to their benefit is of interest for this thesis.

Although for Bourdieu habitus is central to the understanding of class-based culture, I am interested in examining the racialised dimension of habitus. Stoler (2016) accuses Bourdieu of undermining the impact of race and points out he gave little attention to race in his writings. However, Bourdieu (2004) does describe the experience of transitioning and holding of two habitus at one time as a 'cleft' habitus (2004, p. 111); the suggestion here is one's habitus of origin as it engages with new fields develops a new habitus, which may cause a cleft between one's original identity and the habitus of HE. Having this opportunity to develop a hybrid habitus can provide additional opportunities for B.A.M.E academics. It is the aim of this thesis to explore the responses of ASAW and understand if, as Ingram (2011) argues, the habitus becomes destabilised as it is caught in a tug between two different social fields (p. 290) or whether racialised subjects exercise agency, negotiate and or adapt within the institutional habitus of HE.

Feminist writers such as hooks (1990) and Ahmed (2012), like Bourdieu, also draw upon individual histories to make sense of an individual's position within given social fields. hooks (1990) call for women of colour to theorise from a 'place of pain', using their history of exclusion to work in the margins. Ahmed (2012) draws upon the work of Audre Lorde (1984) who encourages women (of colour) to use the anger they might have about racism as a response to the histories of racism that are unfinished. Such anger and emotion are ways in which the 'brick walls' (Ahmed, 2017) that reflect the history of our HE institutions can be challenged to transform the rules of the social field or potentially push ASAW to create a new field of their own.

A further important aspect of Bourdieu's approach is individual engagement within the field, in particular with the 'rules of the game', also known as doxa. Doxa, as explained in Chapter

2, this is the unspoken but widely accepted logic that informs and structures social life these rules can shape field relations contributing significantly to how inequality is maintained or reproduced. When individuals internalise these dominant rules and ideas there is an unconscious acceptance, or what Bourdieu terms a 'symbolic violence' such that individuals take on the ideas of the oppressors within the structure to succeed. Such a perspective may help explain the lack of resistance and protest with the status quo. The concept of symbolic violence, however, underestimates the notion of individual agency and the ability to challenge the rules of the game. Nor does it account for the potential collective power of specialist interest groups such as Black British Female Academic Networks. Neither does it account for those ASAW as suggested by Bhopal, Brown and Jackson (2015) who consider the possibility that the game is no longer worth playing and leave HE altogether. For Bourdieu (1977), doxa is a term which illustrates how both formal and informal rules construct behaviour. However, if doxa is disturbed it can cause individuals to begin to question or resist the norms or expectations that characterise their social environment or their place within it (French, 2019). How much questioning is done within HE by ASAW will be an area of focus for this thesis.

3.4 Limitations of Bourdieu

Having explained Bourdieu's principles of capital, field and habitus (Bourdieu, 1977) it is necessary to discuss how this approach can only support my thesis up to a certain point, and it is here where I explore some of the limitations of Bourdieu's perspective. During the latter part of the twentieth century the work of Bourdieu a successful white male academic, reflected thinking on power and inequalities in society. However, it cannot not fully reflect the experiences and inequality encountered by ASAW currently working within the HE. By drawing on the work around Inclusion and discussion of CRT and feminist writers (Ahmed, 2007 and hooks, 1990) later in this chapter I am able to revisit areas of Bourdieu's analysis, which underplays that fact that different groups have different choices and possibilities (and obstacles) within individual journeys. In fact, Bourdieu's early work on Algeria (The Algerians, 1961) undermined and ignored anti colonial and anti- racist positions, which Stoler (2016) argues demonstrates that Bourdieu sidestepped the racial distinctions that produced the habitus of modern bourgeois France (p.137). Furthermore, it is important to go beyond Bourdieu (1984) as his writings on higher education in France cover a time when academics experienced greater academic autonomy and freedom as a key feature of their roles. Having autonomy as a hallmark of the elite field of HE in Bourdieu's work in the 1960s and 1970s

allowed dominant classes to reproduce their social position by exploiting cultural as well as economic and social capital.

Although neoliberal policies increasingly informed the HE Sector through political interventions (such as the reduction in state funding/imposition of tuition fees), the sector has responded by engaging and working with new forms of capital such as digital capital that /did not exist at the time of Bourdieu's writing. During the latter part of Bourdieu's life, the internet had not yet reached its full potential. However, the use of digital networks is of particular interest for this thesis, as it is a relatively new form of networking, which is not necessarily characterised by the notion 'it's who you know' (Bhopal, 2014, p. 16). Minoritised groups in a particular field may now be able to enter and succeed via digital (networks) social platforms. These new social fields could potentially offer ASAW the opportunity to convert their use of social media into social/professional capital. For example, the option to write an open access blog removes the need for any gatekeepers to legitimise one's access to virtual networks. What HE recognises as a successful academic today potentially differs to the time of Bourdieu's writings; instead, the growing discussion of professional capital and/ or digital capital can begin to contribute to shaping/ creating career opportunities that were simply not there before. How exactly this translates for ASAW working within HE will be explored as part of this thesis.

To understand how HE engages with ASAW in terms of career opportunities, I also take account of both structure and agency, translating them into the limitations and affordances offered to ASAW. Bourdieu's work does focus on bridging structure and agency, but it has been criticised for dwelling too much on structural reproduction (Yang, 2014) which historically maintains and reproduces inequalities. Bourdieu's critics cited in Mills (2008, p. 79) describe his views as seeing the world as far more reproductive than transformative; This means that his idea of a social universe "ultimately remains one in which things happen to people, rather than a world in which they can intervene in their individual and collective destinies" (Jenkins, 2002, p. 91). Feminist writers move away from this view and examine how the position of B.A.M.E groups such as ASAW can be understood in more subtle ways. For example, Ahmed, (2017; 2012; 2009) and hooks, (1990) contend that B.A.M.E academics are able to construct their own identities and alternative collective spaces which can help them to succeed in HE (on their own terms) and not just necessarily let things 'happen to them'. Unlike Bourdieu, they do not see individuals as passive recipients of social structures, rather they explore how they can and do use individual agency to challenge the

status quo. Their critique of Bourdieu has helped develop my understanding of how ASAW often act agentically to make sense of and proactively manage their position within HE in order to mobilise and access crucial networks.

For example, as stated earlier, hooks (1990) views a position of marginalisation (or as Bourdieu and Wacquant, (1992) argue 'being a fish out of water') as potentially a position of power. Unlike Bourdieu, hooks (1990) sees working at the margins of the academy as offering a clear strength and a space from which groups like ASAW can challenge the doxa (dominant practices which are discussed earlier on in this chapter) and take the opportunity to create third or liminal spaces within which they can function more agentically/ autonomously, and possibly draw on their hybrid habitus for personal and collective gain, thereby indirectly challenging and reshaping the status quo. I use this approach to explain the effect of the emergence of all female networks within HE and the rise of networks, such as Black British Academics, which resist and challenge dominant norms (Gabriel, 2018).Through these networks, I am suggesting that it is possible for ASAW in HE to work/progress with a degree of success outside the system of dominant social positions traditionally delineated by Bourdieu's (1977) concepts of capital, habitus and field.

Like Bourdieu, Ahmed (2017) draws upon past histories (personal and institutional) to understand the present. She uses, the metaphor of 'brick walls' to show how HEIs are full of barriers for marginalised groups. For Ahmed these walls are more than a metaphor as they refer to the processes whereby institutional histories can become concrete, creating fixed patterns which set and harden. In this way the brick walls become barriers for ASAW, as they only come up for those who are trying to transform institutions as well as those who do not quite inhabit the norms of institutions (Ahmed, 2017. Ahmed, as an ASAW herself, suggests ASAW (and other B.A.M.E. groups) encounter many walls within HE. This in turn could help to explain the absence of ASAW in senior positions, which Ahmed attributes to racism and sexism becoming fixed concrete walls within HE (Ahmed, 2017). Thus, concrete walls, full of history, reflect the status quo (dominant discourse), which prevents change and instead promotes the reproduction of inequalities by privileging certain groups and disadvantaging or excluding others. In contrast to Bourdieu, Ahmed's introduces the notion of a 'feminist killjoy' (Ahmed, 2019) who are individuals who point out sexist or racist injustices making them more visible and real. Underrepresented groups not willing to conceal, hide or neglect what is unfair makes these individuals the problem in the eyes of their oppressors, primarily because they are,

willing to 'kill the joy' out of other's happiness (privilege), which is a price nonetheless that Ahmed argues is worth paying (Ahmed, 2010). Ahmed's uncompromising killjoy stance deliberately creates tension, as it is unwelcomed by those in power and gets in the way of what institutions want to achieve through their "institutional polishing" via EDI mission statements.

Ahmed (2017) also speaks of 'snap moments' as a way to transform the ongoing structure of power relations within HE. Ahmed (2017) describes 'snapping' as moments of anger, frustration and rage against institutional disadvantage experienced by minoritised group. 'Snap moments', represent a sharp sound, a noise, which calls out racism and sexism and signals that one is unwilling/no longer willing to meet the conditions set out for them (Ahmed, 2017, n.p.). This refusal to ignore or go along with discriminatory practices results in a 'snap'. When, such snap moments are experienced by enough people they can, according to Ahmed (2017), turn into a movement. My data suggest that ASAW do take on the role of being 'killjoys' moreover that many of my participants experienced 'snap moments' which resulted in them disrupting existing practices to call out unfair behaviour.

Although Bourdieu's uses the concept of cultural capital to explain why individuals of disadvantaged classes achieve less in terms of educational success, it is not helpful in explaining why some disadvantaged groups do better than expected or predicted on the basis of class and or racism (Modood, 2004). It is too simplistic to argue ASAW simply need to learn the 'rules of the game', indeed both Ahmed (2019) and hooks (1990) argue that marginalised groups like ASAW are willing and able to devise their own rules often disrupting and calling out unfair behaviour in order to challenge the status quo. So, although Bourdieu's (1986) work examines how the values of the dominant classes are structurally reproduced in society; in this thesis, I am interested in exploring how ASAW (and other underrepresented groups) can achieve upward mobility without having to replicate the status quo. Later in this chapter, I use CRT to help me interrogate and extend the thinking of Bourdieu in order to better understand the position of ASAW within the academy.

3.5 Professional Capital

Bourdieu did not pay attention to the notion of professionalism (Noordegraaf and Schinkel, 2011). Noordegraaf and Schinkel (2011) argue that moreover, "Professionalism is a form of symbolic capital which needs to be maintained" (p. 100). However, Hargreaves and Fullan

(2012) define professional capital as the confluence of human, social, and decisional capital. Historically, academics' university qualifications were taken as evidence they had the required knowledge, skills and behaviours (human capital), which equated to professional capital. However, within the context of current UK higher education, as I have argued earlier (Chapter 2), professional capital is predominately mapped out by the neoliberal tools of TEF, REF and NSS. If an academic can demonstrate compliance with the metrics, they are considered to be a 'professional' as an academic. Therefore, to achieve professional capital becomes much more of an evidence-based exercise and less about knowledge. However, data from my participants suggest even if all the EDI evidence and boxes have been ticked career opportunities bypass them as they do not have the necessary connections and networks to help propel their career in, HE.

Measuring competence driven from data (through metrics such as TEF, REF & NSS) is only part of the answer. Using the analysis of Noordegraaf and Schinkel (2011), one can argue that a professional worker is one who is well-educated and compliant, whose "habitus is well adjusted to the objective set of relations in which he or she occupies a position" (p. 100). Arguably, therefore, professional capital can be achieved by invoking the right behaviours, symbols and standards promoted by the institution. Furthermore, Noordegraaf and Schinkel (2011) maintain that without the right language, narrative and categories, it is impossible to (re)produce and regulate professional behaviour (p. 101). In terms of this thesis, I am arguing that when academics look to progress, they seek to acquire/ perform appropriate behaviours as that is what will give them professional capital/ legitimacy. |However, because ASAW have a very different habitus (compared to their own HE institution), they find it difficult to acquire appropriate behaviours, which may then limit or influence access to career opportunities. Moreover, some of my participants clearly rejected and refused to acquire the dominant practices and behaviours and instead took on a more agentic stance in doing things their way.

One of the formal ways in which professional capital is acquired is through the range of HEIs' metric frameworks/professional standards prescribed by successive governments in the UK. However, as suggested by Rainford (2021, p. 8), "possessing the power to set institutional policy (around recruitment, hours of work and workload allocation) means that national policy (metric frameworks) could be shifted based on doxic assumptions to fit local agendas", i.e., for one's own higher education institution or one's own network. This means there is a risk of reproducing the types of academics already seen in senior positions, which reflects the current

institutional doxa, i.e., white, British, male. This leaves underrepresented groups such as ASAW who do not fit the doxic assumptions (Rainford, 2021) excluded from opportunities within the academy. Interrogating how ASAW have responded to these changes (NPM) and how they translate the new rules can offer a better insight in making sense of how ASAW optimise career opportunities in a neoliberal environment

Therefore, I argue that although professional capital is evidenced by reference to external standards, set out in TEF, REF and NSS, this is only part of the answer. As outlined in Chapter 2 it ignores the fact that often-unequal application of the standards using relationships, connections and contacts still forms a key part of the process to acquire the status and opportunities within HE. This thesis suggests that for B.A.M.E groups the rules of the game have been tweaked from time to time, but the gatekeepers to success remain the same.

3.6 Digital Capital

Digital networks during the time of Bourdieu's writing were not the force they are today to and therefore, in this sense (as stated earlier) his framework is limited. However, I am going to apply the notion of digital capital (Veletsianos and Kimmons, 2013) to explore how this is being operationalised in the contemporary HE Sector to help create career opportunities. Currently, the contribution of digital networks and their ability to impact on career opportunities is creating a newer form of capital, namely digital capital. Digital platforms offer users a way to organise and display research, create professional profiles, and make connections to share scholarly interests (Mangan, 2012). In addition, social media is often used to form online communities or spaces that produce open discussions and promote the free exchange of ideas through increased use of Myspace, Twitter, LinkedIn, blogs and wikis. All such sites, according to Boyd and Ellison (2007), have distinctive features that allow individuals to create profiles, maintain regulation of connections and browse the connection of others. Further benefits of using academic social networking sites are that they offer the opportunity to efficiently distribute information, increase participation and collaboration, and provide avenues for scholars to organise academic conferences and events (Veletsianos, 2013). There has generally been less coverage on how social media platforms/ networks are used by higher education professionals for career development (Williams and Woodacre, 2016) but it is clearly an approach that is an emerging practice of academic life and can potentially transform the way academics engage in teaching and research.

Chat rooms, blogs, and tweeting as well as specific academic social networking sites such as Academia.edu, Mendeley.com, Researchgate.net, Zotero.org and Google scholar have gained in popularity within the HE Sector (and society at large). Social media sites offer ASAW and other B.A.M.E academics an alternative means of making their voice heard, and an opportunity to bypass the usual barriers and obstacles that they face. Online social networks have much to offer the scholarly profession by positively influencing research, community outreach, and career advancement (Veletsianos and Kimmons, 2013). An online presence can therefore allow ASAW to leave behind their racialised/ gendered offline identity (Veletsianos and Kimmons, 2013) enabling them to compete on a more equal footing.

Digital capital therefore may offer a new types of network space, environment, or platform for ASAW, which enables them to overcome much of the inherent racism and sexism that too often informs/ characterises traditional face-to-face exchanges. Kollock and Smith (1999) argue that online interaction may strip away many of the cues and signs that are part of face-to-face interaction. However, they also acknowledge that traditional status hierarchies and inequalities are reproduced in online interaction as we leave clues by naming our institution, our name, the letters after one's name or even listing a range of publications, all of which signals an individual's identity, class and status and hence reflect academics' offline identity within the digital forum. Singh (2017) examined the use of Twitter and indicated there are clear career advantages of engaging with this digital tool. Singh (2017) found Twitter led to participants being invited to the editorial board of an online journal, requests to collaborate on conference proposals and resulted in sharing of resources. Equally, the findings acknowledged at times these favours were returned; it could therefore be argued that the networking game academics are accustomed to offline have similar characteristics online. Hargittai (2007) argues, despite initial impressions and arguments about how users shed their offline identities in online interactions, offline identities very much carry over to online behaviour, and hence the scene is set for inequalities in the physical world of HE to prevail in its virtual counterpart. According to Burt (1992) and Granovetter (1973), the more diverse a network the better the access to social capital and thus career opportunities, but if online interaction merely reflects off-line behaviour (putting one in touch with those similar to one's own background) the opportunities to connect may be limited; sustained engagement and collaboration may only be possible with those who reflect your own habitus. This, of course, is something that this thesis explicitly seeks to explore.

3.7 Emotional Capital

Bourdieu does not explicitly include or refer to emotional capital as part of his theoretical framework, but Ahmed (2015), Nowotny (1981) and Diane Reay (2000) refer to emotions as a valuable resource to draw upon to gain personal and professional advantage. I use the notion of emotional capital to extend Bourdieu's thinking of capitals, (cultural, social and economic) and similar to Reay (2000) I acknowledge Bourdieu's assertion that his combined capitals links to educational and often economic success (p.580). However, emotional capital does not work in the same way as Bourdieu's capital theory. Members of marginalised groups and participants in my research (through emotional capital) are not seeking to mirror the dominant behaviours of the academy, but instead they use their emotional capital in different ways, which can include disrupting, challenging and calling out the behaviour of those individuals responsible for making and applying the rules. This way the emotional capital of ASAW can be transformed into achieving success but is often done so to the detriment of ASAW, where they either become the 'neoliberal subject' (Gill, 2010) the 'careless worker' (Lynch, 2010) and or the 'killjoy' (Ahmed, 2019) of the institution. Nowotny (1981) sees emotional capital as a variant of social capital and although it is more private, argues it can act as a valuable tool. Reay (2000) has explored the role of 'emotions' in her work on mothers' involvement in their children's education, defining it as something accumulated and sustained in relationships which may be passed on from one family member to another. Both Reay (2000) and Skeggs (2004) point out emotional capital has value and is worth the labour of accumulation in that it has the potential to be exchanged for personal gain. For this reason, it is argued that the thinking around emotions and the role it may play in relation to ASAW is considered as part of this thesis.

Ahmed (2004), however, challenges the notion that emotions are a private matter. Instead, she sees "emotions as psychological dispositions, we need to consider how they work, in concrete and particular ways, to mediate the relationship between the psychic and the social, and between the individual and the collective" (p. 119). For Ahmed (2004) emotions therefore "do things… they align individuals with communities or…with social spaces" (p. 119) and through this process individuals have the ability to align some bodies together (that reflect the dominant ideology) and marginalise other bodies, which in turn represents what Ahmed (2004) describes as the cultural politics of emotion. Ahmed (2015) emphasises although we all have emotions, what makes them relevant in the context of this research is how they are mediated by specific

social and cultural contexts for individuals, especially those from under-represented/marginalised groups in HE such as ASAW. Emotions build over time, but it is an individual's historical experiences that gives them meaning, and what is of interest is how emotions are used, converted and possibly even exchanged to gain an advantage. Exploring emotional capital for B.A.M.E groups in HE can assist in understanding how individuals may use their marginalised experiences to generate a space in the field (network) in which they are seeking to advance.

For Ahmed (2015) emotions are relational and social, and it is our contact with objects such as a picture, an article or movie, as well as other human beings which creates feelings. Some feelings are stubborn and give a sense of our limitations. For example, the feeling of being an imposter or outsider. Participants in this thesis often referred to this feeling of imposter syndrome and explained that despite their success it is a feeling that stays with them throughout their career. Using Ahmed's (2004) analysis, this feeling can represent the pain that is informed by our personal and cultural history, which is often archived by ASAW but can be ignited as new encounters, exchanges and contacts within HE is experienced. Interactions within HE where emotions can be ignited could be a conference space, meetings and/ or through a line-manager's conduct. I argue in this thesis that emotions and the emotional capital ASAW generate can be used like other forms of capital in HE, professionally to help gain social advantage for minoritised groups. This thesis is interested in drawing out how, and if these emotions are used as a form of capital to promote career opportunities and access and mobilise crucial networks for ASAW.

3.8 Critical Race Theory (CRT)

As argued earlier Bourdieu's (1977) framework of capital, field and habitus can only take me so far in evaluating the current position of ASAW within HE. To effectively interrogate ASAW's position, I use CRT as it provides me with the tools to understand and disrupt institutional structures and systems from a perspective of racial identity. CRT argues racism is not an individual or personal characteristic and it is not a theory about 'bad people', but instead the problem is a system or institution that reproduces bad outcomes (Fortin, 2021). I argue individuals come and go within any institution, but the structures, cultures, processes, and practices largely remain the same and often support/embody discriminatory practices and values. The statistics shared in Chapter 1 (Advance HE, 2022) and the literature discussed in Chapter 2 (Rollock, 2019; Arday and Mirza, 2018; Bhopal, 2018; Gabriel and Tate, 2017;

Runnymede Trust, 2015 and Puwar, 2004) suggest, the persistence of inequality and lack of career progression for B.A.M.E. groups has never been fully addressed or eliminated. Thus, it is argued for change to happen within HE, systemic practices need to be challenged. It is for this reason CRT is being used as a theoretical lens as it enables me to take the lived experience of ASAW drawing upon their history and social reality to illuminate how racism operates and maintains a type of permanence within the academy (McCoy and Rodrick, 2015).

Historically CRT was used as a response to challenge delays in USA civil rights advancements (McCoy and Rodrick, 2015). Key scholars such as Crenshaw (1989) and Bell (1980) challenged racial injustices within the field of law, they viewed US law as "reflecting and advancing established power relationships in society by covering injustices with a mask of legitimacy" (Taylor, 2009. p.2). Hence CRT serves to illuminate unfair treatment and can be seen as a movement seeking to challenge and disrupt existing practices. In the context of this research CRT recognises people of colour, and their lived experiences as both valuable and legitimate to understanding racial discrimination (McCoy and Rodrick, 2015).

The key tenets of CRT help to further explain its relevance and application to my research. Bridges (2021) explains how racism is seen as a 'normal' feature of society and should not be viewed as one-off incidents, in fact racism is deeply embedded in institutions systems and practices. This view reflects Ahmed's (2017) metaphor of 'brick walls', discussed earlier, whereby the institutions customs and practices become firm and hardened like concrete unwilling to change. However importantly, these walls are only visible for those (such as ASAW) that come up against them and for who they form a barrier. This perspective could help explain why change within the academy moves at such a glacial pace. Furthermore, CRT challenge concepts such as objectivity, meritocracy, and equal opportunities, as it can explain why these concepts often work to camouflage the self-interest, power, and privilege of dominant groups (McCoy and Rodrick, 2015. p.12). It is argued these interventions (based on promoting equality) although desirable goals given the history and pace of change within, HE they are as Ahmed (2019) claims non-performative.

Other education scholars (Laden Billings, 2005; Gillborn, 2006 and Bhopal, 2022 have used CRT to illuminate people of colour's experiences often providing evidence of the institutions' unwelcoming and hostile climate, which can impact on their ability to access crucial career focused networks. Furthermore, research by Diggs et al., (2009) helps to explore how principles

of homogeneity and use of closed networks (i.e., Black academic networks) are utilised by people of colour as a coping mechanism within the institution. Diggs et al., (2009) speaks of the 'party' and 'after party' to describe the experiences of people of colour. By this they mean that when socializing with white people there is a sense, for many non-white groups of having to maintain a compliant, even happy (Ahmed, 2010) public face and adhere to workplace norms (p.328). However, people of colour often have what Diggs et at., (2009) describes as the 'after party' in a smaller intimate group with other people of colour where they feel they can be 'real' (p.328) that is their more authentic selves. This other, more homophilic space took them away from the scrutiny of the dominant culture and white norms and expectations. Although, this thesis is interested in how networks are used within HE for career opportunities it is acknowledged some networks, especially those developed by marginalised groups can also serve as a psychological place of safety, that is an, 'after party' space for such groups helps them to share their experiences and provide mutual support for each other.

CRT scholars recognise and explore ways in which their own stories and identities inform their research process. This is what I have tried to do with the discussion of my positionality in chapter 1. Furthermore, CRT is committed to principles of social justice as argued by Yosso et al., (2004) social justice advocates "must challenge the presence of racism in policies intended to remedy racism" (p.19). In my methodology chapter, through this research, I aspire to reflect principles of social justice by seeking to critically analyse the political, social, and institutional structures of HE. At its core CRT provides the potential to facilitate change and I explore how this has been achieved through the powerful accounts of my participants' narratives. In this sense CRT differs to Bourdieu's rather deterministic perspective, as CRT is much more open to ideas about transformation and bringing about change, especially for marginalised groups.

Finally, I note CRT centres on issues of racial identity, and how it functions as a form of oppression. However, CRT also recognises how ethnicity intersects with other forms of identity such as gender, immigration status, sexuality, and class. Crenshaw (1991) introduced the term intersectionality in her work exploring how women of colour experienced oppression based not only their race but also gender. Her work critiqued the tendency to talk about race inequality as separate to other identities (i.e., gender and class) as it overlooks how people are subject to all of these aspects of identity and how their experiences are therefore complex and overlapping. Most specifically, for the focus of this thesis different aspects of one's identity

can impact on academics' position and opportunity to access crucial career focused networks in HE.

However, Ladson-Billings (2013) surmised that "it is often difficult for individuals to grasp the concept of intersectionality because society is organised along binaries. Because of these binaries, we see issues as black or white, right or wrong, yes or no" (p. 39). Illustrative of this is that some of my participants pointed to their race (i.e., skin colour) as a prime reason for their exclusion. However, other participants spoke of their ethnicity (shared culture and language) and how their accent /language was a barrier to success. Overwhelmingly the majority of my participants saw gender as a secondary issue. A number of participants also pointed out how HE institutions had a bigger focus to address gender discrimination, which played out differently and more favourably for white women. Using an intersectional lens enables me to recognise the different histories of my participants and allows me to explore their position based on their individual experiences. Intersectionality, in this way, helped me to put into context different experiences based on my participants' positions as some of them arrived in the UK as adults, others were first generation born ASAW and finally there were those ASAW that arrived in the UK during early childhood. Put simply there is no one uniform approach to addressing their different experiences, which impacted on their different and overlapping identities.

In the next section, I conclude with a discussion of network theory as this is an integral part of my research, as I am interested in how networks in, HE functions in terms of providing career opportunities.

3.9 Network Theory

In chapter 1, I discussed a range of literature on the use of networks and how they contribute to career opportunities (Heffernan, 2020; Yarrow, 2020; van den Brink and Benschop, 2014; Van Den Brink et al., 2010; Broadbridge, 2010; Maritz & Prinsloo, 2015; Walker & Yoon, 2017). The following section focuses on network theory, and I chose to employ Burt (1992) and Granovetter's, 1973 network theory as they undertook their research in the field of business, which as Jessop (2017) argues is more reflective of how HE institutions now operate. Burt (1992) had used data from a large electronic and computer company and Granovetter (1973) approached a wide sample of job holders in professional, technical, and managerial positions. Furthermore, I chose to identify with the above-named network theorists as I wanted

to apply a network theory that reflected my own discipline and the discipline of my participants, all of whom worked within the Business school of British Universities. However, I recognise there are other ways of examining networks and have discussed earlier how through a CRT lens I need to acknowledge the intersectional identities of my participants, which will help me to make sense of ASAW's challenges when seeking to mobilise and access networks. Other scholars (Valenziano; 2008; Bierema, 2007; Bagilhole, 2001) argue in relation to networks the main barrier to achieving equality is a patriarchal and resistant culture in male dominated workplaces.

When discussing network theory of Burt (1992) and Granovetter, (1973) I also apply a feminist perspective (hooks, 1990 and Ahmed, 2017, 2015 and 2012) to further interrogate the position of ASAW, which acknowledges their history, identity and structural inequalities/practices. Throughout this section I apply a feminist perspective to network theory to help explain the unequal and oppressive nature of networks, which is somewhat overlooked by network theorists Burt (1992) and Granovetter (1973). I begin this section by exploring 'weak tie theory' (Granovetter, 1973) and 'structural holes' theory (Burt, 1992). These theories both promote the idea that for social capital to effect career mobility, greater access to information, resources, and sponsorship or social credentialing is needed. At the end of this chapter, I have summarised in a visual how Bourdieu (1977); CRT scholars and network theory help to create social capital for career opportunities.

Granovetter (1973) claims ties among members of an identifiable social circle are likely to be strong and that the information possessed by any one member of the circle is likely to be either shared or deemed redundant. The stronger the tie between members, the more likely their contacts will overlap so that they will have common ties with the same third parties. However, strong ties are unlikely to generate novel ideas due to homophily. On this basis, Granovetter (1973) suggests individuals with a different habitus to one's own would be a better connection to promote/ widen career opportunities and social capital. In summary Granovetter's (1973) views on networks are based on one's position in the network relative to others, which in turn will determine whether you gain access to resources and information. However, this approach can overlook the history of institutions, history of individual women and their cultural backgrounds. Bierema (2005) as highlighted earlier suggests the patriarchal nature of networks simply replicate the existing power structures. "Too often networks are left to their own devices to fix cultural and structural problems in organizations. Instead of creating real change, these

networks simply reproduce patriarchal power" (p.218). Furthermore, Bierema (2005) claims in order to move away from this patriarchal position work needs to be done at changing the power relations within the workplace.

However, if we follow Ahmed's (2017) views on brick walls of HE (discussed earlier), where historical processes and practices hold firm, the likelihood of change at an institutional level becomes a real challenge. Additionally, hooks (1990) claims that operating from a place of pain and anger often results in underrepresented groups of a similar background working in a homophilous network, whereby they use their strong ties to create opportunities. Thus, in contrast to Granovetter's perspective who sees strong ties as redundant, hooks (1990) views strong ties as an effective way for women and underrepresented groups to challenge the status quo and develop a movement from their own networks. This thesis, therefore, explores whether ASAW use of homophilous networks merely replicate the patriarchal culture or whether they use these networks with similar others as an opportunity to promote real change.

Granovetter (1973) also speaks of 'Bridging ties' between existing groups, which are a source of novel ideas and enable individuals to go beyond their immediate groups and seek contact with other groups to whom they are less closely connected. For example, within the context of HE, this could mean going beyond one's own department, and/ or institution, which would bridge ties with colleagues working in a different disciplinary area to create or generate ties. I argue that certain identities within HE such as ASAW are at risk of being devalued. Moreover, as Wright et al. (2007) points out, one of the reasons for black female academics not being considered to have sufficient academic/epistemic authority often relates to the subjects some teach, specifically, 'race', diversity and equality issues. Although, my participants work within Business Schools of British universities, many of them did undertake teaching and or research on challenges in promoting equality in businesses and exploring the value of a diverse workforce for businesses. These subject areas are generally regarded as less valuable within the sector possibly because they are threatening to the status quo (Mirza, 2009). Bagilhole (2001) claims for women in the pervasive culture this is problematic (for women) as they find their academic achievements very differently valued and evaluated from those of male peers (p.163). Mirza (2009) supports this view suggesting that some white colleagues consider the subject areas of underrepresented groups 'threatening' and it is such perceptions that account for this subject area not being awarded the high value it deserves and thus may deter academics from bridging ties with B.A.M.E groups who work in their chosen field at the margins.

3.10 Structural Holes (Burt, 1992)

Burt's (1998) research in a US computer and electronics company offers some key learning about how to make use of networks to one's advantage and thereby build social capital. Burt (1992) builds on the work of Granovetter (1973), looking more closely at the pattern of social ties within a network. The basic element in his account is the 'structural hole': a gap between two individuals with complementary resources or information. When the two are connected through a third individual, which Burt calls an 'entrepreneur', the gap is filled. Competitive advantage is, according to this theory, a matter of access to structural holes in relation to market transactions. Burt (1992) found a positive correlation between social capital and the number of structural holes in a network and concluded that so called 'brokers' are in a very strong position to build their social capital as they are better placed to acquire more unique information, greater bargaining power and control over resources and greater visibility. Within the context of HE, managers or individuals (supervisors) with authority can take advantage of these 'holes' by bridging people from opposite sides of the holes facilitating the flow of resources and information (Burt, 1992). For example, within the setting of higher education, a supervisor, supervising a range of doctoral students examining different disciplines, has an opportunity to act as a 'broker' and acquire information, knowledge and bargaining power often bringing two or more individuals together to write/ explore the possibility of a paper. Hence, potential publications assist in progressing academics' profiles and arguably impacting positively on individual careers. How ASAW can or do mobilise such relationships, connections and ties within HE will be explored to understand the individual experiences of ASAW. Within HE from a Bourdieusian perspective, one can see how brokers not only act as the gatekeepers of who will have legitimate access to structural holes, but in acting as gatekeepers they also maintain their own privileged status. It is evident Burt's (1992) structural holes theory and broker positions advocates the importance of social relations and self-promotion. However, studies (Bagilhole & Goode, 2001; p.169) suggest "women want to very much stand on their own two feet to achieve progression". Furthermore, Bagilhole & Goode's (2001) study indicates women did not like the current system or rules of the game, and instead believed in what Aisenberg and Harrington (1988; p.52) define as the 'merit dream'. The merit dream undermines the need for self-promotion and maintains a strong belief in integrity and hard work. This notion of hard work was evident in some of my participants interviews, and although a 'broker' (i.e., supervisor/manager) was often available within the university, ASAW

often did not fit or benefit from access. Therefore, another contributory factor that can influence access and benefits of networks is the culture of a neoliberal university (Jessop, 2017; Ball, 2012; Barnett, 2000). Although, a neoliberal university encourages collaboration this can often only be achieved if you work as the ideal academic, as one who is 'care- free' from care responsibilities (Lynch, 2010) and willing to take on additional tasks and workloads (Gill, 2009). According to Gill (2009) a 24/7 work culture is what becomes valued within HE and B.A.M.E groups are at risk of working above and beyond to meet these aspirations. Existing literature supports this view as the work of Runnymede (2015) and Bhopal (2018) suggest underrepresented groups have to work much harder to be considered for the same career opportunities as their white counterparts. So, although Burt's (1992) perspective is helpful in understanding how networks could be used to create opportunities, one of the limitations of his work is he overlooks the issue of access and how networks are not open to all.

Alternatively, Coleman (1988) argued that that social capital is better developed in networks when the actors are all connected and where the network is, effectively, closed. Such a perspective of closed networks is likely to encourage a general tendency for individuals to associate with those of similar group or socioeconomic characteristics (homophily), which can help entrench inequalities in HE (Lin, 2000). hooks (1990) supports this argument, claiming people of colour are coming from a 'common place of pain' and are therefore able to better receive the relevant support from those similar to them with whom they can identify. However, closed networks within HE could also relate to networks such as Black Academic network groups, which do not reflect the institutional norm/ exist beyond the 'white gaze'. Applying Bourdieu's concept in this way demonstrates those who reflect/ embody/ maintain an institutional habitus have a lot of influence in determining who may succeed, and that their affiliations will reflect the institutional habitus, which, as Reay (1998) indicates, is often not very malleable or open to change. For ASAW, seeking powerful allies to network work with therefore becomes a challenge, as there are a limited number of B.A.M.E groups holding senior positions within the academy (HESA, 2022).

Studies by Burt (1992) and Granovetter (1973) have shown that a more diverse network of contacts can extend one's reach into different social circles and consequently enhance one's career opportunities, such as obtaining faster promotion opportunities and finding jobs (Forret and Dougherty, 2004). Burt suggests that where employees had 'legitimacy', a strategy of

building capital was successful, but where employees were viewed as 'illegitimate' players then they gained more from a strategy of 'borrowing' social capital. Again, applying this to HE, borrowing capital could include using a professor's name to co-author a paper or being asked to be part of a funding bid to help improve visibility and individual profile. Similarly, Bourdieu's field analogy states that where one knows the rules of the game, one is able to engage and mobilise more effectively within the field. Burt (1998) points out social interaction hinges on assessments of who is an insider and who is an outsider (Perriton, 2006). Applying this perspective to the position of ASAW, who often exist in HE spaces as 'space invaders' (Puwar, 2004), 'outsiders' (Wright et al., 2007) and 'trespassers' (Arday and Mirza Safia, 2018), the suggestion is ASAW could easily be viewed as 'illegitimate' or outsiders within powerful fields operating in HE. Thus, their inability to access networks through brokers, structural holes and weak ties diminish their opportunities to fully benefit from networks within HE.

Closely linked to Burt's (1986) structural holes theory is Putman's (2000) perspective on acquiring social capital by distinguishing how we 'bond' and 'link' resources in making a career. Essentially Putman (2000) believes social capital created by bonding is organised horizontally offering strong mutual solidarity. This type of social capital results in strong ties and high-level loyalty within bonded groups. In contrast, social capital that emerges from linking is instead vertically organised and generates links to new networks and social relationships. Linking results in weak ties and vital relationships and in this way generates competitiveness as it opens up the different fields of play individuals have access to (Angervall, Gustafsson and Silfver, 2018). To understand how this approach can function within HE for ASAW, I draw upon interview data collated by Angervall, Gustafsson and Silfver (2018), who investigate how young women researchers accumulate social capital only by moving horizontally through administrative work and teaching.

Bonding of social capital according to Burt (1998) creates a 'flat network' (which he associated with notions of femininity) while 'borrowing' social capital generates a more hierarchical network (associated with notions of masculinity). Guarino and Borden's (2017) research links this idea to women in academia, claiming women either choose or feel compelled to work more horizontally in a collaborative rather than competitive structure, and often women take on the burden of "taking care of the academic family" p. 690. This could help explain why the new

NPM structure in HE lends itself to notions of masculinity. Furthermore, Puccia et al. (2021) provide a further dimension to how social capital can be operationalised, claiming resources in a network can be used either through what they call 'instrumental' and/ or 'expressive' ties. Van der Gaag and Snijders (2005) define 'instrumental social capital' as obtaining resources to help one achieve a goal such as concrete advice and guidance, from a mentor, and expressive social capital as having the goal of emotional support (encouragement from a colleague). Additionally, expressive actions relate to practical daily support relying on trust, similar to Granovetter's notion of strong ties (Van der Gaag and Snijders, 2005, p. 21). Instrumental actions are more akin to weaker ties and accessed more infrequently (p. 21). In this thesis, I explore the experiences of ASAW to examine how and if expressive/ instrumental ties are used within their networks and whether they offer the required returns in terms of career opportunities.

Having discussed above the different approaches about how network theory can contribute to developing social capital, I have summarised below (Figure 3) how network theory helps to create social capital and thus career opportunities. I have also identified how Bourdieu's work on habitus and his notion of being a 'fish out of water' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) influence the development of social capital and I have indicated where hooks (1990) work is more likely to support the idea of marginalised groups using networks to maximise their position.

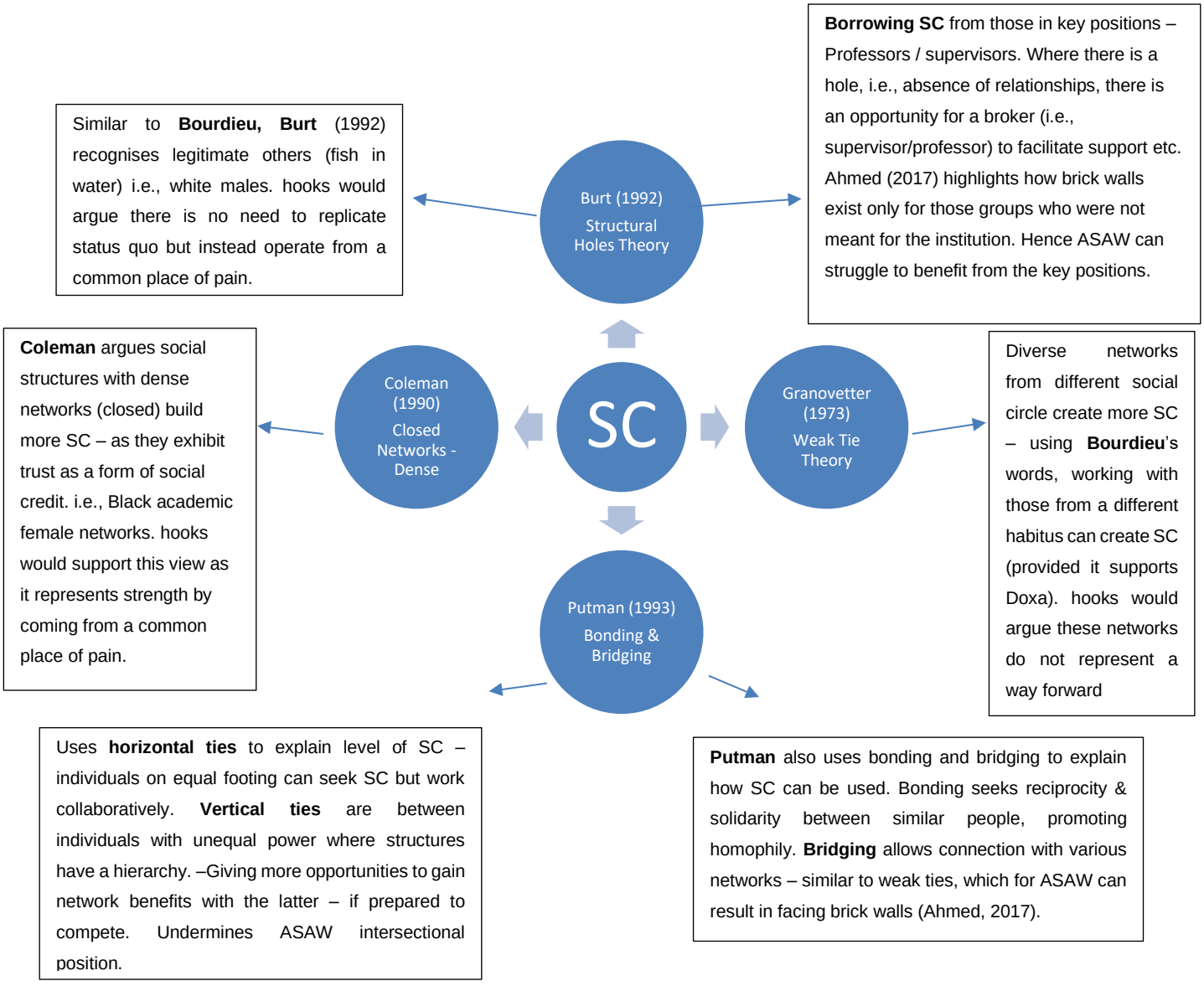


Figure 2 How network theories help create SC

4. Methodology

This chapter aims to set out the methodology employed to address the research questions, and in doing so, it first addresses the philosophical approach adopted and acknowledges the connection with an interpretivist and critical realist perspective. Secondly, it describes the research design and proposes a qualitative methodology. Thirdly, it sets out the process of data collection/ data analysis and finally discusses the ethical considerations relevant to my research.

4.1 Philosophical Position

Chia (2002, p. 3) argues that our philosophical attitudes "shape and orient us towards particular strategies for knowledge production". Creswell (2007) offers clarity on the meaning of the term 'research paradigm', defining it as a set of assumptions or beliefs that guide the researcher's enquiries adding that the influence of personal experiences, culture and history shapes the paradigm held by each researcher. The key therefore to understanding which paradigm reflects my position is to ensure that, as a researcher, I am aware of my positioning as outlined in the opening chapter. The way any researcher views the world is important, as this will have an effect on how the data is collected and interpreted (Saunders et al., 2009). Furthermore,

> *When a researcher's standpoint is made explicit, it helps readers makes sense of what particular story is being told and invites them to connect this story to other perspectives they hold.* (Fletcher, 1999, p. 8)

With, this in mind I am aware that my position as an academic and my own Indian heritage and background will have influenced the remit of my research and the research questions I am asking.

Habermas's early work (1972) conceptualised research styles into three distinct categories. The scientific, positivist style; the interpretive style and the emancipatory, ideology critical style (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011, p. 33). My research is connected to the latter two of Habermas's approach. I recognise my practice and desire to understand and gain meaning, but at the same time I have an emancipatory interest (to liberate) the voice of my participants; both have helped me determine my methodological approach.

4.2 Ontology and Epistemology

Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggest a paradigmatic framework defines the nature of the world as well as the range of possibilities for its holders in relation to reality. In other words, ontological, epistemological and methodological concerns shape the dimensions of any paradigm.

Positivism is an epistemological position that focuses on objectivity and evidence in its search for truth; it seeks to examine causal relationships to explain and predict events. Overall, this perspective strives for an objective clinical means of studying subject matter and tends to be dominated by quantitative techniques, employing statistical analysis of data, empirical tests and methods such as sampling, measurement, and questionnaire (Warren Maroun, 2012). This suggests that insights provided by positivist researchers may have a high-quality standard of validity and reliability and be generalised to the large scale of population (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

My research differs as I aim to gain in-depth knowledge and understanding of the experiences of a relatively small group of ASAW. This thesis treats the notion of 'reality' of life as socially constructed via the multiple lived experiences of ASAW (or any other social group), which in turn gives rise to multiple perspectives and accounts as opposed to a single reality or 'truth'. My rejection of a positivist paradigm is based on the view that it is impossible to measure objectively phenomena related to the intention, attitudes, and thoughts of human behaviours (Hammersley, 2013, pp. 23–24). Furthermore, I am an 'inside researcher', and I will explore this concept further (later in this chapter). Suffice to say at this stage an insider researcher is "someone whose biography (gender, race, class, sexual orientation and so on) gives them a lived familiarity with the group being researched" (Griffith, 1998, p. 361). As I am an ASAW it is likely that I will share some of the experiences of my participants.

4.3 Interpretivism

Bryman, (2008) and Von Wright (1971) describe the epistemological debate between positivism and interpretivism as a division between the positivist approach emphasising the explanation of human behaviour while interpretivism emphasises the understanding of human behaviour. With an interpretivist perspective, researchers are seeking a deeper understanding of their research phenomenon and its complexity in its unique context, instead of trying to generalise to a wider population (Creswell, 2007). A further advantage of such research allows

researchers to conduct research in a 'natural' setting via utilising key methodologies such as grounded theory, ethnography, case study or life history to gain an insider's insights into the research's objects giving more authentic information related to the object of research (Tuli, 2010). With this in mind, Guba and Lincoln (1994) propose that a philosophical principle of interpretivism enables opportunities to examine human experience as people live and interact within their social worlds. As my aim is to draw upon the experiences of ASAW to make sense of their position within the social world of the academy, an interpretivist stance is more suited to my research focus.

My intention is to draw on a number of theoretical conceptual frameworks (discussed earlier in Chapter 3) to open up spaces and new ways of thinking about the issues raised by the research; acknowledging multiple lived experiences of life as ASAW in HE is possible, as people are diverse and different, carrying a range of contradictions and tensions within themselves (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). In this research, I aim to explore the role (if any) that networks and social capital play in relation to managing my participants' career trajectories. I propose to critically evaluate the underlying meanings, events and activities related to their career opportunities focusing on their experiences of equality, discrimination and diversity. I aim to examine what, if any, strategies and approaches have been employed by ASAW to bring about change as they apply to career opportunities.

4.4 Critical Inquiry

Critical theory is commonly associated with research, which, like this thesis, is sensitive to questions of power. It also aspires to put research in the service of social justice (Cousin, 2009). At its core, a critical research paradigm is focused on power, inequality, and social change (Calhoun, Gerteis, Moody, Pfaff, & Virk, 2007). Denzin (2017) argues there is a greater need for critical qualitative inquiry in social science research as we live in an audit culture of global neoliberalism. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007, p. 26) define critical theory in the following way:

> *Its intention is not merely to give an account of society and behaviour but to realize a society that is based on equality and democracy for all its members. Its purpose is not merely to understand situations and phenomena but to change them. In particular, it seeks to emancipate the disempowered, to redress inequality and to promote individual freedoms within a democratic society.*

Principles of fairness and equity are at the core of this thesis, and they have particular relevance for those in marginalised positions such as ASAW, who, despite extensive legislative intervention, have been unable to change their position at the margins of British universities as an underrepresented group of academics.

As discussed in Chapter 2, higher education institutions have long espoused strategies around widening participation to promote a rhetoric of fairness and equality, but they have yet to translate into real and sustained opportunities for ASAW. I have committed (through this thesis) to give ASAW a voice in trying to make sense of their experiences and help explain their position within the academy. At the same time, I aspire to reflect wider principles of social justice by seeking to critically analyse the political, social and institutional structures of HE, in order to create awareness of imbalances in power and determine sources of oppression for AWW. Taking on a critical realist perspective enables me to see the structural and cultural conditions of HE and examine how use of networks, promotion processes, social capital and neoliberal policies may have shaped individual experiences for ASAW.

Using a critical inquiry approach also encourages a discussion of the relationship between structure and agency. This is important as a critical lens is required to interrogate practices, culture and structure, making visible any hidden expectations/ tacit practices (Stoller, 2019). By drawing upon the narrative accounts of ASAW within HE, a clearer insight into such expectations and how they play out for ASAW emerge. A critical inquiry lens prioritises the requirement to have an awareness of "the need to redress inequalities by giving precedence, … to the voices of the least advantaged groups in society" (Mertens, Holmes, & Harris, 2009, p. 89).

In exploring the views of ASAW, I not only hope to gain a better understanding of their experiences but also an opportunity to highlight and critique wider power imbalances by placing the voices of the oppressed at the centre of my thesis. In summary, by employing an interpretivist approach, I am striving to capture human behaviour as constructed by the experiences of my participants. Additionally, by using a critical inquiry approach, I aim to examine structures and cultures within HEIs, which then enables me to examine how the marginalised position of ASAW within British universities has been maintained.

4.5 Narrative Inquiry

It is important at this stage to clarify how I am going to use narratives in this thesis.
The main claim for the use of narrative in educational research is that humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). In simple terms, stories although told by an individual, have deep social dimensions attached to them.

> *Even if you tell your story to yourself, or to someone who does not understand it, you are still speaking as a social being; to an imagined social other who understands your tale.*
> Squire, 2008, pp. 41–63

Through their stories, individuals learn/ explore/ construct/ enact who they are or who they want to be, and in the process become embodiments of their lived stories. Recognising that these experiences are inevitably shaped both by intrapersonal and contextual factors (Williamson et al., 2015, p. 31) enables me to critically explore the relationship between HE institutions and my participants.

Narrative therefore is a useful window through which to view observable layers of experience in order to interrogate how structural conditions may also influence individual decisions (Archer, 2007; Case, 2013.) Narratives are very much embedded in social relationships and provide a unique connection between individual life trajectories and collective forces of institutions, which go beyond the individual and offer a location from which to comprehend human agency (Maynes, Pierce, and Laslett, 2012, p. 3). Although the opportunity to draw rich data through a narrative inquiry approach is a real benefit, there is much more being shared that people do not consciously know about themselves. For example, when talking about missed career opportunities with one participant, it became apparent that it was the first time she had registered the actions/ behaviour she had experienced as discriminatory. It is only once she shared and talked through her experience that an understanding of what really happened prevailed. In this way, a narrative approach can provide a powerful insight into people's experiences, beliefs, and attitudes (Webster and Mertova, 2007). I was drawn to a narrative inquiry approach, as it enabled my participants to freely express opinions about their experiences.

By looking back and drawing upon individual stories in my analysis, I explored how participants adopted a reflective/ reflexive approach to their lives, which aligns well with my use of Bourdieu's (1977) framework (discussed in Chapter 3, using his theoretical tools of habitus, capital and field). Bourdieu's (1977) framework provides a further prism through which I can question the past and present experiences of my participants to help determine future direction. I treat my participants narratives as records that represent the way in which individuals have chosen to order and interpret their experiences in, HE (Webster and Mertova, 2007, p. 9). Whilst Bourdieu (1977) views experience as being shaped by the interaction of habitus, capital and field, a narrative inquiry approach advocates experience as also having a collective cultural/social dimension. This is because although stories are personal to each individual they are, however, formed by the wider and often collective cultural, historical and institutional settings in which they take place (Elbaz-Luwisch, 1997).

4.6 Dimensions of Narrative Inquiry

The "three dimensions of narrative inquiry are temporality, sociality, and place which act as useful checkpoints to direct the researcher's attention in conducting a narrative inquiry" (Connelly and Clandinin, 2006, p. 479). Narrative inquiry has an inherently temporal thread in that current events are best understood as rising out of past happenings and pointing to future outcomes (Carr, 1986; White, 1981). Looking back (reflectively/ reflexively) requires participants to construct and revise their autobiographies as they tell their stories (Carr, 1986). In essence, as individuals, we are not only concerned with life as it is experienced in the here and now, but also with life as it is experienced on a continuum of temporal/ spatial dimensions (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 19). With respect to my research questions, career opportunities are something that occur over time, and my participants were free to draw on past and current experiences to capture the full meaning of the types of opportunities or networks they had encountered.

The second dimension of narrative inquiry is sociality, which enables me to consider how ASAW in this thesis reflect on the emergence of their professional selves or conceptualisations thereof, not only from a personal perspective but by taking into account any wider social/ professional interactions within HE (Taylor, 2018). Connelly & Clandinin, (2006, p. 480) explain personal perspectives to "mean the feelings, hopes, desires, aesthetic reactions and moral dispositions" of individuals. Whereas a social/ professional perspective refers to

conditions, under which people's experiences and events are unfolding (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990). In this way, sociality illuminates the existential conditions of my participants' working environment, namely HE, comprising relationships with other people and what others mean to the person, that form each individual context (Clandinin et al., 2007). In this way, stories from my research considered both personal reactions and social interactions of participants in the professional context of HE. For example, I considered the use of mentors, sponsorships and formal/ informal networking groups, and how they can all strongly influence the opportunities that may become available to ASAW in HE.

The final dimension to exploring narratives requires consideration of place, and the key to this is recognising that "all events take place some place" (Connelly and Clandinin, 2006, p. 481). Places in narrative inquiry are, therefore, not just viewed as sites where academics perform, "but as the catalysts and products of social actions in which they can be provided with multisensory experiences that can both orientate and alienate them" (Luhman and Cunliffe, 2013, p. 135). In the context of my research question, which is interested in participants' experiences in both formal and informal networks (physical and virtual places), I was able to assign meaning from the narratives and interpret the experiences of ASAW as they manoeuvre through their various network spaces within, HE. For example, one of the 'places' most participants discussed was conferences, and whilst some ASAW were able to use this network space which led to opportunities, others were left feeling isolated.

4.7 Data Collection – The Interview

Since my aim is to acquire personalised information about how individuals view the world, use of semi-structured interviews was employed to collate narrative accounts from the participants. Semi-structured interviews involve the interviewer preparing a list of questions prior to interview in order to elicit open responses from the participants that enable lines of conversation to be developed (Brown and Danaher, 2019). In this way, semi-structured interviews offer the flexibility but also allow other themes to develop throughout the interview process alongside the areas that the interviewer hopes to cover with their questions. During my interviews I was conscious not to assume that a high level of informality would give me the information and stories needed without some encouragement (Seidman 2006). As an ASAW myself, I am aware there might have been a temptation for my participants to assume that I know what it is like, because, like them, I belong to a minority group and work in HE. For this

reason, semi-structured interviews strike the right balance in this thesis. If I had tried to direct the conversations too much, I believe I would not have been able to elicit any unanticipated narratives, which can offer profound and different understandings and meanings (Trahar, 2009).

To maintain the focus on the phenomenon being researched, and without being directly intrusive, I shared with participants a prompt in the form of a visual (see below – Figure 1), which displays a range of networks that typically operate within HE. Glegg (2019) advocates the use of visual tools as a way to move beyond the typical question-answer approach of interviews. I chose to employ this approach to give my participants the space to take in the range of networks in HE. Using the diagram allowed the conversations to remain focused on networking but allowed the participants to share their own engagement (if any) with networks within the sector.

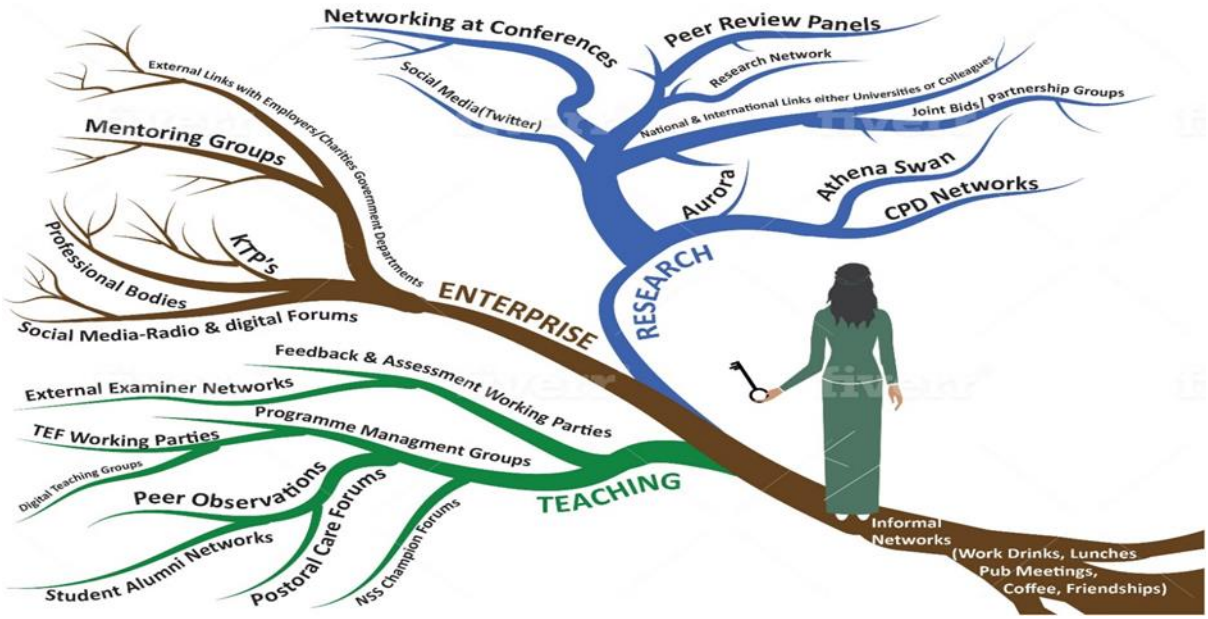


Figure 3 Examples of range of networks in HEI

By sharing with participants my research aims/ objectives and giving them an opportunity to review their own typed interview transcripts, I was able to create a collaborative research space, which helped minimise any power differentials between myself and the participants. An important part of my interview design was to encourage respondents to speak using their own voices. This is more likely to be achieved where the balance of power shifts between

interviewer to interviewee. Mishler (1986, pp. 118–119) explores how this can be achieved, arguing that empowering respondents by asking less restrictive questions and being an attentive listener is key to drawing out a participant's voice. By applying this approach to my interview process, I was able to address some of the issues related to balance of power and I found we often laughed and joked about issues related to HE during the interviews.

In order to capture the participants' experiences from the past and present my semi-structured interviews, I applied a biographical approach. Such an approach enabled the participants to refer to past experiences and explore how they interpret, define and understand events that have happened to them (Faraday and Plummer, 1979, p. 776). Chamberlayne et al. (2002) argues there has been more interest in 'biographical methods', which in the main derives from a growth of interest in the role and significance of agency in social life. My interest in this thesis lies in knowing how my participants, through their actions, exercised agency in ways that included efforts to avoid, challenge or resist perceived discriminatory HE practices and policies (McAlpine, 2016). Essentially, access to career opportunities was examined in two ways: firstly, whether participants think of their life as a life in which they have been able to 'act' agentically, which in turn led to opportunities to improve their position; alternatively, whether participants narrated their lives as something that has happened to them without much opportunity for influence of direction (Tedder and Biesta, 2013). Both insights can be hugely revealing in helping to explore career trajectories for ASAW within HE.

Narrative interviews represent an individual participant's constructions of reality as products of relationships, social forces, either structural or interactional (BURR, 2003, p. 20). Coffey and Atkinson (1996) see the aim of narrative interviews as being to elicit individuals' reconstructed accounts of connections between events and contexts. Bruner (1990) points out the importance of context and suggests that narratives must be interpreted within their cultural and temporal/ spatial context and not simply treated as isolated abstract structures. Therefore, in this thesis, ASAWs, culture, ethnicity and values are key factors considered when interpreting individual accounts. I see it as my role as a researcher to bring forward an honest, and credible reflection of the stories that I collected.

Participants (as outlined in the participant information letter, Appendix 1) were informed that the interview process would involve telling stories about their experiences of pursuing and receiving career opportunities in HE through their use of networks and/ or social capital. It is

important at this stage to distinguish between career opportunities and promotion. Although promotion is key when carving out a career, I am more interested in how ASAW have benefitted from or received professional opportunities, which may well lead to a promotion but I wish to recognise that 'opportunities' has a wider meaning within an HE context, such as being asked to be part of a project, funding bid, research group, attending a conference, guest talks, publications, devising new programmes and/ or engagement with the local economy. At this stage, individuals were also informed their participation was voluntary and they were free to leave the study at any time (as outlined in the consent forms, Appendix 2). Issues around confidentiality, privacy and informed consent were also covered during this stage and are discussed later in this chapter in the section on ethics.

4.8 Sample

I chose to conduct my inquiry across a range of different British Higher Education institutions, which enabled me to support the anonymity of my participants. Since my interest is in the use of networks, as a starting point, I relied on my own networks, contacts, and connections to identify relevant participants. My choice of sample was also guided by research question and objectives and thus I chose purposive sampling, as it enabled me to ensure that participants had the relevant characteristics needed for my research. My research question gave clear guidelines as to what categories of people need to be the focus and attention of the sample (Bryman, 2016). Creswell (2007, p. 112) describes this approach as; "...intentionally selecting participants who have experience with the central phenomenon or key concept involved". For the purposes of my research the two main criteria that needed to be satisfied to recruit participants were:

(1) Participants must identify as female with a background and origin from the Indian subcontinent (which covers Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka).

(2) Participants must fit into one of the three categories associated with an academic career, which include early career researcher, mid-career or senior academic/ professorial position (fully defined in Chapter 1) working at a British university.

However, Conscious of my own limited networks within HE and the current under-representation of ASAW (particularly at a senior level) I was aware that my own connections would only take me so far. My own route into HE was not through the traditional route of PhD and then lectureship, as discussed in my introduction I had spent the first half of my career in

industry working as a HR professional. However, I did use the connections I had by reaching out to members of my family who also worked in Higher education, this gave me some much-needed access to my first few participants. Although, this approach gave me initial access to a few ASAW, I recognised my contacts would not extend any further. To ensure I could overcome this limitation, I used snowball sampling. Bryman (2016) describes snowball sampling as where a researcher initially samples people relevant to the research questions, and those sampled participants propose others who have the same characteristic and experience. This technique did prove to be fruitful as one participant was able to put me into contact with two other ASAW that fitted the remit of my research. All of my participants worked within the Business Schools of there HE institution although they came from a range of disciplines, which included Accounting, Psychology, Law, Social Sciences, HR and Business Management. Information on my participants backgrounds and ethnicity is shown in the table below.

Table 2: Participants

Participants Pseudonym name	**Type of University**	**Job Title**	**UK Region**	**Background/ ethnicity**	**Religion**
1. Jeevan	Post 1992	Senior Lecturer	West Midlands	Punjabi arrived in UK at young age (Indian descent)	Sikh
2. Kuljit	Russell Group University	Professor	North-West Region	Punjabi UK Born of Indian descent.	Sikh
3. Neena	Post 1992	Professor	West Midlands	Punjabi arrived in UK as an Adult (Indian descent).	Sikh
4. Priya	Post 1992	Head of Department	East Midlands	Punjabi UK Born of Indian descent.	Sikh
5. Jatinder	Russell Group University	Professor	East Midlands	Punjabi UK Born of Indian descent.	Sikh
6. Seema	Russell Group University	Senior Lecturer	West Midlands	Bengali arrived in UK as an Adult (Indian descent).	Hindu

7. Durga	Post 1992	Senior Lecturer	West Midlands	Sri Lankan arrived in UK as an Adult.	Hindu
8. Gaytri	Russell Group University	Senior Lecturer	West Midlands	Indian from North India arrived in the UK as an Adult	Hindu
9. Kamal	Russell Group University	Senior Lecturer	North - West Region.	Punjabi arrived in UK at young age (Indian descent)	Sikh
10. Diljit	Post 1992 University	Lecturer	East Midlands	Punjabi arrived in UK at young age (Indian descent)	Muslim
11. Kiran	Russell Group University	Lecturer	West Midlands	Sri Lankan arrived in UK as an Adult (Indian descent).	Hindu
12. Neetu	Post 1992	Lecturer	West Midlands	Pakistani UK Born	Muslim
13. Banso	Post 1992	Lecturer	East Midlands	Pakistani UK Born	Muslim
14. Meena	Post 1992	Lecturer	West Midlands	Bengali UK Born	Muslim

Sampling using qualitative methods is not a matter of collecting representative opinions, but a matter of 'information richness' (Guetterman, 2015). With qualitative inquiry, therefore, there are no specific rules for sample size (Butina, 2015). To help with this decision, I looked back at my literature in this field to determine how previous research managed the issue of sample size. Rollock's (2019) work relied on twenty black female professors and Bhopal (2014) interviewed ten UK academics and twelve US academics as part of their qualitative research. Similarly, Burkinshaw and White (2017) interviewed eighteen women as part of their data collection; all of whom were focused on in-depth description rather than being representative of the population as a whole. Frost (2011) confirms that narrative methods are not appropriate for research conducted with a large number of respondents (p.98) as the key to narrative inquiry is sourcing rich detailed data. Based on this, I maintained a focus on the quality of data collected

and prioritised meeting the issues raised by the research question. I therefore decided in total to have fifteen interviews as part of my thesis (although one participant withdrew part way through my research). As I am seeking to understand the views of ASAW at three different stages of their career, a balanced sample with an equal number of participants at each stage of their career was sourced namely, 3x5 in each stage of career development. Although, I initially struggled to recruit participants who were in senior positions I tried to overcome this limitation by posting on Twitter, hoping this would lead to the recruitment of a wider range of participants occupying senior positions. However, I did not get a single response from this method and in the end, it was my own participants who were able to point to others who would be interested in supporting my research. Hence on reflection the use of snowball sampling became an effective way for me to contact a wider range of participants.

4.9 Interview Protocol

An interview guide was used to ensure my questions aligned with the overall purpose of my thesis. When preparing the interview questions, I was guided by both my research questions and literature review, which helped to develop questions, which allowed me to pursue coherent and relevant discussions during the course of the interviews. For example, when exploring the different career trajectories of ASAW, the concepts of habitus, emotions and professional capital, as discussed in Chapter 4 of my literature review, assisted me in my line of questioning.

The first section of the interview (interview schedule in Appendix 3) asked about the background of the participants and aimed to determine their ethnicity, job title (career stage, early/ senior/ professorial stage) and number of years' experience within HE. These closed questions helped with my data analysis and cross referencing; for example, all the participants who had reached senior positions, as well of those with less established careers all talked about the experience of feeling like an imposter within, HE.

The first tranche of questions within the schedule was designed to seek participants' views on their perception of networks within HE and explore what their actual experiences of engaging with these networks looked like. At this stage, the visual (Fig. 1, p. 17) as discussed above was shared to illustrate the range of networks on offer. At this point, it was made clear the visual is merely a snapshot of available networks and I was clear to state that there may well be many more that I am not aware of or have even heard of, but that the participants might like to discuss.

The purpose of sharing the visual was to establish a common understanding of how and which networks govern the working lives of academics, and how ASAW may position themselves to seek career opportunities by using them. In short, using the visual enables me to explain how the discussion on networks relates to the purpose of this thesis.

The next set of questions examined how participants gained access to networks, including who they spoke to, and why, how often, and what they did and whether their actions yielded any opportunities. The third set of questions focused on asking participants what factors determined their choice of using networks, and which had helped them to achieve the necessary experience and/ or career prospects. I also explored (in terms of career goals) whether their career trajectory was on track and what obstacles, if any, they encountered, and what advice would they give to other ASAW looking to pursue a career within the field of HE.

Finally, I was especially interested in capturing key moments or 'snap' experiences (Ahmed, 2017b) which, as I discussed in the literature review, often feature of ASAW's lived experience working in HE institutions.

4.10 Data Analysis

Data were initially analysed by listening to the recordings, followed by transcribing and then reading the different accounts several times to make sense of the overall story. Atkinson and Delamont (2006) argue that narrative analysis needs to involve more than a simple presentation of a narrative and must utilise some degree of rigorous analysis. However, before I began to analyse the data, I went back to my original theoretical frameworks of network theory, Bourdieu's tools of practice and feminist perspectives as discussed earlier within the literature review. The visuals (Appendix 4) were created to map out my thinking, which enabled me to critically review the position of ASAW using these theoretical frameworks; this then allowed me to critically interrogate the data. Revisiting my initial thoughts on how to explore the position of ASAW within HE in this way enabled me to ensure my understanding of existing theoretical perspectives could be drawn upon to critically review how the narratives could be analysed. I wanted to let the data speak for itself. I was, therefore, keen to explore emerging themes that had been detected through the data and use the stories I had gathered to reveal the experiences of participants. Acknowledging that each story is unique but also connected by a degree of commonality gives rise to the emergence of themes. By deriving these themes from

the data, I was able to identify new and relevant understanding of the position of ASAW within HE.

I chose to adapt an analytical route for data analysis laid out by McCormack (2000). I found McCormack's lenses a useful way to analyse the data and reveal meaning in different types of narratives (Dibley, 2011). Below is an image, which illustrates my adaptation of McCormack's tool for analysing data (Dibley, 2011, p. 14).

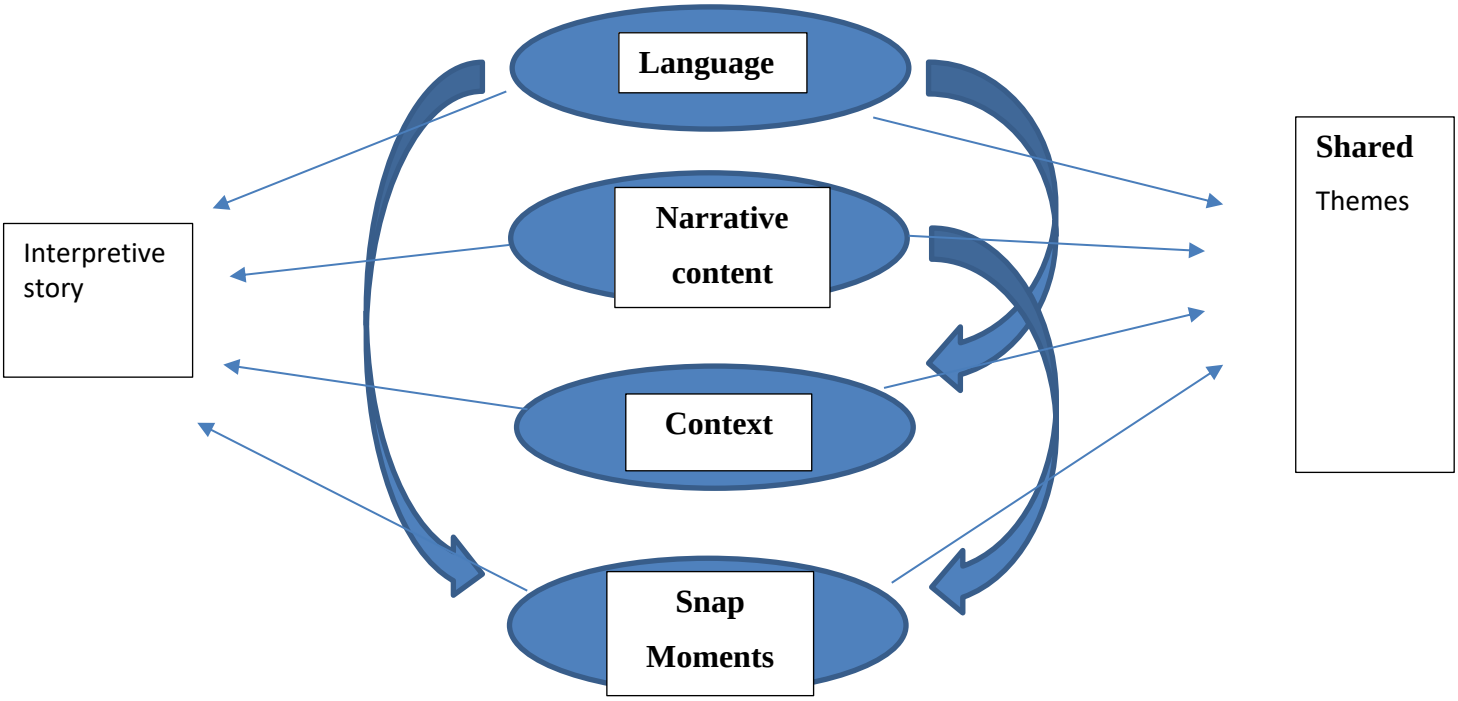


Figure 4: Applying McCormack lens to data collection

This visual demonstrates the different levels to the analysis, and clear points of connection can help give shape to themes that may emerge. Starting with the lens of language, the focus here is on the words used by participants, what they tell me and how they tell it (Dibley, 2011) and, importantly, what remains unsaid. For example, some participants spoke to me in our native language (here the term native has been used to describe the first language spoken by participants, which for all ASAW was not English but either Punjabi, Urdu or Hindi and all of these languages are familiar to me as an ASAW myself.) as it helped them emphasise more effectively the hurt and anger about how they were feeling.

Analysis of narrative content includes examining the way in which people use and structure words to tell stories; the pattern of words, rather than the words themselves is what matters in this research (Dibley, 2011, p. 15; Marshall and Case, 2010). For example, the significance of what is being said and clues about the level of emotion can be revealed through words being expressed in a chaotic, hesitant or disjointed way (Dibley, 2011). McCormack (2000) explains stories are not told in a vacuum and are situated within particular cultural and situational contexts. This was very apparent as my participants talked through their career trajectories. For example, in response to questions, some participants paused, smiled and repeatedly said the same thing, which then emphasised the importance of that experience and how it made them feel. Laughter was often an emotion and form of expression used by participants to convey

overt cynicism and an opportunity to mock equality interventions instigated by HEIs. A number of my participants took me back to when they first arrived in this country or their first encounters of feeling different when working within, HE. In this research, the cultural context related to the ethnicity of participants, and as my cultural background (in some instances) was similar to participants, a sense of unity and understanding often prevailed during our encounters. This meant some things which were discussed did not need to be explained, such as TEF, REF and NSS; these frameworks did not need explaining and so did not disrupt the telling of the story.

The final concept used by McCormack is 'moments', which are described as sudden intuitive leaps of understanding that unexpectedly emerge (Dibley, 2011). Sometimes these can be radical turning points (Marshall and Case, 2010) and a powerful source of information. However, my approach to using 'moments' as a focus for of analysis differs to McCormack's, as I am more interested in substituting 'moments' with Ahmed's (2017) concept of 'snap' experiences, as discussed earlier in the literature review. These critical snap moments (if any) can be revealing as exploring such 'snappiness' can encourage a deep insight into the often negative and frustrating experiences of ASAW reflecting the emotion and anger that has often accompanied their career trajectory. I found a range of snap experiences were shared during my data collection and many of these defined and shaped ASAW's career decisions and trajectory.

4.11 Inside Researcher & Validity

As part of my ethical considerations, my own positionality needs to be acknowledged as positionality frames social and professional relationships in the research field and also governs the 'tone' of the research (Sanghera and Thapar-Björkert, 2008). Facets of the self, such as one's profession, gender, race, ethnicity and nationality can influence a researcher's positionality (Rose, 1997, p. 307). As an ASAW myself, I brought insider knowledge of the social, political and cultural aspects of the HE landscape, and my own experiences of pursuing an academic career within the academy. Being an insider and researching in institutions aligned to my practice did, however, offer me some distinct advantages. For example, gaining entry into organisations, quicker access to participants and previous knowledge of HE processes, and procedures enabled me to save time developing a rapport and trust with my participants (Asselin, 2003).

The need to demonstrate detachment and objectivity with respect to research is reflective of positivist epistemological assumptions. In comparison, being an insider researcher is consistent with the ontological assumption that social realities are multiple and situated. Although being an inside researcher can raise concerns about validity, I was reassured by the words of Gair (2012), who argues, "privileging an objective, outsider stance in research, was considered in the past to guard against over-identification, whereas more recently, with some parallels to the empathy literature, a researcher with insider insight or 'common wounds' might be considered to be more desirable and legitimate" (p. 138). Equally, feminist researchers have dismissed the need to be detached in social science qualitative research, and believe it is neither possible nor desirable (Greenberg et al., 2019). On this basis, being an insider researcher, using an interpretivist position does not equate to contaminating the data or affecting its validity. My research addressed questions around equity, fairness, unequal treatment and racism, for a group of people (ASAW), which I am also a member of and who are often under-represented in higher education institutions. I therefore felt an obligation to ensure their stories were delivered in an authentic manner that reflected their reality. To respond to this challenge, I was always vigilant in seeking clarification from the participants so as to double check my understanding. In addition, I sought participants' approval of interview transcripts by encouraging them to amend and review final transcripts during the data collection process.

Researchers have highlighted many potential strengths of insider research, claiming it offers authority and legitimacy (Delios, 2017), especially as it includes a pre-understanding by the researcher to inform meaningful questions (Amabile and Hall, 2019). My own experiences as an AWASW taught me how the status of being an insider added to the richness and understanding of participants, which enabled a strong rapport between myself and the participants to develop. A strong rapport helped me develop an authentic and deep interest in the participants, which encouraged me to accurately and adequately representing their views, and convey their stories effectively (Ganga and Scott, 2006).

However, I was aware that my similarity to many of my participants could influence my research and my interactions with them. Not least because Race, ethnicity and gender definitely have a bearing on whether the researcher acquires/ assumes the positionality of an 'outsider' or an 'insider' (Sanghera and Thapar-Björkert, 2008). However, I believe being an insider is not dependent on single characteristics such as gender and race but on the intersection of many

different characteristics such as age, class, position, ethnicity, gender, religion and even professional experience (Mercer, 2007). I, therefore, believed that I did not always neatly fit as either insider or outsider; but rather often more accurately found myself straddled in between both categories, and as Milligan (2016) describes, I was thus an 'inbetweener' as opposed to an insider-outsider. Although I am British and born in the UK, I am also an ASAW of Indian heritage. Therefore, my age, place of birth, upbringing and religion made me, in some instances, an outsider in HE. However, as a British born/second generation ASAW I was unaware of the different types of racism faced by other ASAW, who have migrated to the UK as adults. These ASAW had different life experiences, different upbringings and different cultural values to my own. In some respects, this difference takes away some of the issues around proximity/ familiarity and reduces the level of my 'insiderness'. Therefore, with respect to some participants, their differences in socialisation, cultural values and religion made me more of an outsider than an insider, and I felt removed from them in terms of a shared background. Thus, for my approach, rather than considering my role as fixed, or even as an evolving, one-directional, outsider-to-insider persona, it is more useful to consider 'moments of insiderness' when there is a noticeable sense of proximity (Van Mol et al., 2014). In this sense, where I did share a high degree of familiarity and proximity, I considered this to be an asset to the research process.

Therefore, I occupied a space in the research process, which moved across a continuum of being both an insider and outsider. I clearly shared a language, culture and identity akin to my participants, and there is no doubt me being an ASAW myself and working within HE offered me a degree of 'insider knowledge'. However, Asselin (2003, p. 100) helps to clarify my position further as she points out "although the researcher might be part of the culture being explored through the thesis, he or she might not understand the subculture" (p. 100). In relation to my participants, they were often members of other subcultures that did not connect with me, or where my experiences and knowledge were limited. For example, understanding the challenges at professorial level, and experiences of those ASAW who had come from abroad having undergone a different socialisation process to my own were some of the subcultures not known to me. In such circumstances, I had no assumptions about their approach and experiences in relation to managing networks and career opportunities.

Another technique recommended by Asselin (2003), to promote validity in qualitative research, is to encourage the researcher to write down their thoughts and beliefs about the study, which

is what I have tried to do with my research as I shared my story in the introductory chapter. Adopting a reflexive approach was key, as considering my research persona at the outset of a project, as well as reassessing it during data collection and analysis, helped me articulate the assumptions of my positionality (Collins and McNulty, 2020). Such reflexivity required me as a researcher to consciously interrogate the theories, assumptions, values and emotions brought to the research process in order to improve the validity of my research (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009). Connolly (2007, p. 453) adds that "research with high level human interaction and drawing upon human relationships is going to feel messy!" However, I believe that being transparent and explicit about my own position means I accept this degree of messiness as more representational of what I am researching, as lives are not neat and tidy (Trahar, 2009).

4.12 Ethical Considerations

In this final section of this chapter, I examine the ethical challenges and considerations taken into account during my research. As my thesis related to the sharing of a salient identity (race, gender, language culture and profession) with research participants, it presented the risk that they might not explain their experiences fully because they assume that I had sufficient background knowledge to understand what they are thinking or experiencing (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009; Kanuha, 2000). To manage this assumption and to avoid the 'you know how it is' response (when collecting data), I approached the start of interviews with a disclaimer highlighting the need to not presume my knowledge of HE or cultural identity. I was also vigilant in always seeking clarification so as to double check my understanding by asking for explicit examples and descriptions. Other approaches included stating 'just for the record' and by doing so mitigating the challenge of unspoken shared assumptions and therefore meeting my researcher's need for rich data (DeLyser, 2001; Foster, 2009).

I am also aware of the risk of how researching people known to us can lead to a blur between the contextual boundary of 'researcher' and 'friend' roles (Collins and McNulty, 2020). To manage this boundary, I found it both practical and ethical to make clear (by verbally communicating) to the participant which role we were assuming at any given time so that if we met outside of the scope of formal interviewing, any discussions or interactions would not be treated as data. This, hopefully, prevented participants feeling pressurised and uncomfortable avoiding a feeling of continuous monitoring if we should meet outside of the research process.

If participants named other professionals, known to both of us, I removed their names to ensure anonymity.

I was aware of the standard research practice to make data from interviews anonymous. However, the nature of biographical interviews can make this commitment to anonymity difficult to achieve in small samples such as the one I was drawing on. Furthermore, studying within one's own institution/ sector can create ethical pressures, such as giving clues to identities of peers and signalling connections with a range of other higher education institutions (Hockley, 1993). Additionally, where under-represented groups (such as ASAW) are the focus of research, more pressure to maintain anonymity exists, as these groups of women are already in short supply and therefore more easily identifiable. Smyth and Holian (2008) add to this by arguing institutional anonymity is problematic, so it is best to assume the reader will be able to identify a participant's institution, should they wish to do so. As a result, initially, my efforts were more focused on ensuring participants were not identifiable and I used pseudonyms.

In order to further address Smyth and Holian's (2008) assumption of institutional anonymity, I sourced some participants beyond my own institution, using academics from a range of departments and I ensured I did not acknowledge what type of HE institution I was approaching (Post 1992/ Russell group), neither did I specify the department or region where the HE institution was based. My participants were equally conscious of sharing stories that would be easily detected, and therefore as stated earlier, I offered to let them re-write/ construct parts of the interview transcripts that they felt were compromising their anonymity. This approach was followed through with two participants and a further one participant elected to withdraw from the study having read her interview transcript. When withdrawing, she made it clear she did not want her data being used, as she described it as being too 'risky' especially as an ECR as she was still looking for permanent work.

A further important part of the ethical process required me to ensure I adopted an appropriate consent process (Appendix 2), which not only took place at the beginning of the thesis but also required me to monitor its progress during the process of research by offering the right to withdraw at any time. Diener and Crandall (1978) identify four elements to the process of informed consent, which include competence, voluntarism, full information and comprehension. I used this guidance to ensure I was protecting the needs of my participants and adhering to ethical principles. In simple terms, 'competence' requires an ability to

understand and make decisions (subject to receiving relevant information). Diener and Crandall (1978) suggest the researcher is responsible for ensuring participants are not subject to some form of psychological impairment. I responded to this concern by asking individuals if they were sure they had space and time to commit to supporting my research, as I was aware increased workloads and conflicting demands could sometimes affect an individual's mental health. Voluntarism is a further component of informed consent and required participants to freely choose to take part (or not). With respect to voluntarism, I found peers and colleagues who became aware of my research would often say to me "I would be happy to help/ support your research".

In order to ensure participants had 'full information' of what the research was about I had prepared an information sheet (Appendix 1), using a question-and-answer format to explain all the details about the research. Participants were also given a consent form to sign and read (Appendix 2). Opportunity to review consent and participation was offered again at the start of the interview process. The importance of the recording was explained, as this would enhance the data analysis process, but if at any stage during the recording participants wanted to stop recording and leave the session, they were free to do so. Comprehension is the final element of informed consent that Diener and Crandall (1978) draw upon; here the focus is to ensure participants understand the nature of the research project. Reliance on the information sheet and verbal explanations at the start of the research process helped to address this concern. An additional feature of the ethical process was to ensure the research aims and objectives were scrutinised and approved via the Health Education and Life Sciences ethics board.

Additional concern around the issue of harm (Laura Vazquez Maggio and Westcott, 2014) raises the issue of empathy and emotion during the interview process, analysis and write up. Drawing on my own experiences as a participant for other studies around the issues of identify, ethnicity and gender, I was aware and conscious of the degree of emotion/ hurt that may emerge as participants began to look back to make sense of their position/ experiences. During my interviews, some participants' stories and incidents resonated with me and reflected what Gair (2012) in her research on migrants describes as 'common wounds'. Before commencing the interviews, I did not assume that my sample would be without any such wounds, as I knew that talking about issues around race, ethnicity and gender would be likely to evoke some emotion from participants. To address this issue, I ensured I made participants aware of the counselling services within the university and offered them the space and time to take a short break during

the interviews. Even though I felt some connection and empathy towards the stories shared, I did not impose or influence participants with my own experiences. By using non-verbal gestures such as listening, nodding, body posture and tone of voice, I was able to convey my empathy, which supported and encouraged participants in speaking openly about their reality. Some stories did evoke some difficult memories for participants; others displayed anger and one participant insisted I share her experiences (story) as she has ‘had enough’ and wanted to expose the injustices she faced.

5 Findings & Discussion

Introduction

This chapter explores the multiple voices and multiple perspectives that my participants shared with me during the research. Will be arguing that by Recognising the complexity of the participants' experiences, the problematic nature of their stories and the messiness of their different journeys, I was able to engage more generatively and emotionally with the data. I am not proposing a solution to improving the career opportunities of other AWW, as there is no fixed pattern or formula to progression. In particular, I seek to explore how my participants navigated across and between themes driven by their individual histories, struggles, privileges, and emotions.

As discussed in the previous chapter, I adapted and extended McCormack's work (2000) to interpret the data, using the headings of Language, Context, Content and Ahmed's notion of 'Snap Moment's. I have broken the data down to allow meanings, connections, and experiences to emerge more effectively. My data provided insights from ASAW, which revealed how they positioned themselves within HE and pointed to different approaches taken by these women in managing the notion of 'fitting in' as academics. Some of these differences, which are context dependent, are shared to make better sense of how ASAW mobilise their careers with especial reference to how they use networks to do so. Both similarities and differences amongst the ASAW women I interviewed helped me to understand the ways in which some ASAW conformed to the expectations within HE, whilst others challenged it, and why a few had begun to plan an exit strategy from the academy.

5.1 Theme 1: Relationships

In this section, I focus my attention on different relationships within HE, which can both disable and enable access to academic career networks. Participants spoke of relationships where sponsoring gave access to crucial academic networks, and how 'snap moments' influenced their relationships in HE, which in turn had a negative impact on their ability to access networks and pursue career opportunities. All three groups of participants (ECR, mid-career and senior academics) highlighted the importance of relationships in their career progression journeys, and although they, unsurprisingly, did not speak explicitly of 'social capital' within their

interviews, its presence was evident to me as the researcher. In particular, participants identified key players, such as their doctoral supervisor, as the driving force behind their entry into academia. Here, the influence of supervisors not only refers to nudges or encouragement but often active action. Supervisors' actions also included sharing of expertise/ knowledge, and strong injunctions to a career within HE. Although supervisors played a key role in contributing to shaping the position of ASAW, other professional relationships and connections such as 'manager' and 'critical friends' were identified as vital. The term 'critical friend' was used by my participants to identify those connections that had moved beyond a mentoring role and operated in a more trusting capacity which also covered issues outside of work. I maintain that it is an important network connection for ASAW as not only is career advice and opportunities explored, but it is also a place of safety where all matters can be discussed. Most participants did however describe supervisors as extending and sharing their social capital. Meena, for example, demonstrated her connection with her supervisor as a valuable tool and describes their relationship as follows:

> *My supervisor (white male) in my UG introduced me to idea of PhD. I never even thought about it – I guess I was lucky… He was amazing when it came to getting this job (current) he reviewed my application, re-did my CV, did a mock interview with me watched my presentation and during my PhD told me about people in my discipline and which conferences to go for and which ones to avoid – I was very lucky. There were loads of other HE, job opportunities my supervisor told me about, I never thought about applying to other universities…. I feel privileged to be a lecturer, would never have dreamt of it.* (ECR, Meena)

During our interview, Meena used the term 'lucky' three times, this use of the term language implies that she feels that 'luck' had determined her position within the academy rather her own merits and talents. While this might be attributed to a lack of confidence, which at this early stage of her career is not unusual, it is significant that Meena places so much emphasis on this single personal/ professional relationship as the gateway to her later career opportunities. Her emphasis on luck, despite her academic achievements and professional accomplishments, reflects her belief she is 'not that bright'. She has difficulty in owning her achievements that is often referred to as 'imposter syndrome', a concept I return to later in this chapter (Feenstra et al., 2020).

Meena's case also provides an example of how, at least in terms of her own self-perception, the supervisor can become a powerful social actor within HE, with the ability to influence, and in this case 'open doors' for otherwise marginalised groups who they have decided to

champion. In her case, the well-connected supervisor, in line with Burt's structural holes theory (1992), has acted as a 'broker' to bring together people from opposite sides of the hole (Burt, 2017) to connect Meena with useful people, jobs, information and contacts presumed beyond her access.

Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) describe such professional and personal connections as a form of social capital, where individuals accumulate resources through institutionalised relationships, which in turn can be drawn upon for personal gain. At one level Meena's relationship with social capital in HE was limited because she was the first generation in her family to not only attend university but also teach at an HE, institution. However, she situates herself as someone who has been given 'privilege' as opposed to having earned it, largely due to the contacts she was able to make through her supervisor. Meena's use of the term 'privilege' "shows me how the storyteller (Meena) speaks of herself before I can speak of her" (Brown and Gilligan 1992, pp. 27–28).

The importance of the supervisor/ broker figure also appears to matter for some participants in their later career stages, although the relationship has usually by this point undergone changes. Once ASAW had reached more senior positions, they described their supervisory relationships more like a critical friendship. Some senior ASAW shared their accounts of how this kind of critical relationship was used to support their decision-making and knowledge exchange.

> *My supervisor was superb, and we wrote lots of papers together, but this relationship is much more mutual now, and he continues to be a critical friend and good support…more of a sounding board.* (Senior ASAW, Kuljit)

Similarly, other participants shared the view that the supervisory relationship had led to trusting, long-term relationships and connections, which led to future career opportunities as expressed below:

> *I started my career as a research assistant; I had a very nice role model, my supervisor, whom I aspire to be like… So, she is my inspiration. I also had another female PhD colleague at the time, very supportive. These two have pretty much formed my network, I have kept in touch over the years, other people have come and gone but these two have grown with me and kept in touch. We work differently now as we have grown in our roles, exchanging ideas and signposting.* (Senior ASAW, Jeevan)

This notion of a 'critical friend' (as discussed earlier) is based on the idea of trust. These 'critical friends' were used by participants to check through ideas, signpost and support each other, sometimes leading to career benefits of collaboration, publications, and research funding. They are closely connected relationships reflecting strong ties, which although Granovetter (1973) argues leads to less effective networking opportunities, they were ties that provided the necessary returns (in terms of career opportunities) for ASAW.

5.1.1 Mentoring and Sponsorship

My findings also found that sponsorship behaviours, from managers, supervisors and/ or critical friends was also a crucial factor in the careers of my participants. My findings suggest very different returns from a sponsor, compared to a mentor, most likely because the majority of participants described poor experiences with mentoring. Sponsorship can be construed as more powerful as sponsors can put their reputation on the line to give their protégés more visibility and progression (Ibarra, Carets and Silva, 2010). As discussed previously in Chapter 2 mentoring can be distinguished from sponsorship as the more formal of the two processes, although both comprise the giving of advice, support and guidance. Some ASAW did not have a dedicated mentor, despite it often being promoted as a welcome tool to overcome inequalities by the institution (Chesterman 2009; Eliasson, Berggren, and Bondestam, 2000). The majority of participants described how their mentors were senior academics within HE, but in reality, offered them little tangible help.

> *Yeah, I would say HOD is an informal mentor. I used to approach him for certain questions I had, and it was more of a general conversation, more of a collegiate relationship rather than a mentor/ mentee relationship. Although I would go to him for advice or run ideas past him. Even though we have a list, circulating around with a list of mentors and mentees – for me that has not worked. (ECR, Neetu – who identified mentors working externally rather than in her own institution)*

Similarly, Durga stated, "*When I first started, I had one, but I am a mentor for new starters. I don't have benefit of having a mentor now at this stage of my career*" (Mid-career, Durga). Yet, while most participants described mentoring as an essentially benign activity and of limited use, one participant went so far as to describe it as actually limiting them. For example, Kiran: "*(Laughs) I do [have a mentor] …I think if I ask a question, I will get an answer, but I*

have to ask. I do not want to be stuck with one person and it is limited, and we just chat about nothing of substance" (ECR, Kiran).

Interventions (such as mentoring) usually offered within HEIs to help support equal opportunities can often, for marginalised groups at least, be non-performative Ahmed (2019). Using a CRT lens, one can argue conversely that such institutional practices are deliberate in their lack of support for the actual groups they are supposed to be helping, rather than promote/create transformative relations they instead simply allow HEI's to tick off a procedural requirement. This was certainly the experience of Kiran as she states above it is an intervention with no substance.

Many participants described going outside of HE for support and advice, indicating/ reflecting the failings of some HEIs' internal mentoring support processes, and potentially a lack of trust between colleagues working in the same department. Trust and informality, moreover, emerged as key features of the career trajectory for many ASAW, holding far more weight than official mentorship arrangements. Seema, for example, expressed how she found better returns beyond her institution: "*I do have one (mentor), but my mentor is not in this institution. At my institution, do I trust my allocated mentor? Not really…he is lovely but very patriarchal*" (Mid-career, Seema). Equally, Priya stated, "*I have mentors but [they are] completely outside of HE, private*" (Senior academic, Priya). This, the suggests that to follow the expected/traditional path (used by more established groups of staff in HE) and to seek guidance from a formally instituted mentor is often not productive in the same way for marginalised groups. Indeed, some ASAW in this study ended up identifying /using alternative paths and tools to help improve their position. This alternative approach resonates with hooks' (1990) insistence that marginalised groups in education (and elsewhere) need to be identifying their own spaces and networks, which may need to take them outside of more formal oppressive/ exclusionary institutional structures and customs such as those operating in, HE

In contrast, a sponsor relationship was cited as more trusted by participants, particularly as the relationships that underpinned them ended to evolve more organically than formal mentor relationships. It was evident that sponsors were sometimes willing to share their social capital, connections, contacts, and even their name to help open doors. Typical sponsors included supervisors, managers and critical friends, all of whom offered valuable networking opportunities. This was evident in Meena's case, where her supervisor mobilised her position from undergraduate student to PhD student and finally a lectureship position. Arguably,

Meena's success could be attributed to the fact that she only viewed the possibility of career opportunities through her white male supervisor's perspective, who knew how things are done around here (Morley, 2014). However, this may lead to Meena replicating those approaches which end up supporting the existing status quo. hooks (1990) argues this is largely because women of colour see power as something which is outside of us, such as getting a publication or PhD and women thus end up undermining the power within.

Other colleagues also featured in participants accounts who played a significant role in either opening access to networks or enabling and developing existing networks. One participant, described how her manager actively supported her career by defending her against student complaints:

> *Amazing…he was really supportive, when I first started teaching, he would come in with me, sit behind and observe. He would give me feedback, telling me where I was going wrong. He reviewed my material before I handed it out and even when I received a student complaint, he defended me. He told me to shadow more experienced staff and gave me joint module responsibility to build my confidence. He was really good.* (Mid-career academic, Durga)

In Durga's case, her manager/ sponsor connected her to more experienced staff and gave her module leadership, which built her confidence and career. Sponsorship-type behaviours by a line manager, which give an ASAW visibility, space, experience, and progression was also described by Priya who recalled an opportunity to apply and serve on Governing Council:

> *My line manager pushed me to apply; I thought it was really nice of him. When I say pushed, it was to the extent that the deadline was mid-day, and I was standing in a coffee queue about 11.15am. He asked me if I had made my application, and I just said no, I won't get it. He literally took my place in the queue and told me to go upstairs and do my application and he would bring up my coffee, it was a massive confidence boost, which made me think I could do this.* (Senior academic, Priya)

In this example, social capital is operationalised through the participant's relationship with her manager, which was based on trust. Through this relationship the deficit of social capital on the part of Priya was made good through the effective relationship with her line manager. Some key actions of sponsorship are evident in her account of their relationship. Her manager helped

to improve visibility and actively acted as a broker to bridge access to opportunities (Burt, 1992). Once Priya was appointed on the Governing Council, she described her visibility as much improved: "*I would say I was much more recognised by the senior executive team, all the deans now know me, otherwise I was not known by name at all*" (Senior academic, Priya).

Priya is now in a position to draw upon her own strong professional ties, which contributed to pursuing an opening within the institution at executive level. Although Granovetter (1973) argues that strong ties (seen as friends, family and colleagues) can be unnecessary in establishing effective networks, where the manager steps up to act as a bridge between connections, we see how a strong tie relationship can offer returns. For Priya it is her 'strong ties' with her manager which proved to be a resourceful mechanism by which a career-opportunity was pursued. Central to making effective use of such close relationships is the presence of strong ties underpinned with 'trust', which often take time to develop, nurture and advance. This investment in nurturing and developing relationships may go some way to explain slow career progression for many ASAW. For example, Priya had been working in academia for over twenty-five years, but she had only just secured a senior role in the last few years of her career. To help explain this gradual progression Gowan (2010, p. 50) argues,

> *Some people…may have more social capital than they have economic, cultural, or symbolic capital [in Bourdieu's sense]. However, if they have none of these other resources, they will not be able to 'convert' their rich social networks into gains in prosperity or status … their primary deficit is one of resources, not relationships.*

From this perspective, combining social, cultural and economic capital is often a pre-requisite for ASAW success. However, in the absence of other resources, my participants demonstrated how investing in relationships that may sit outside of formal relationships and connections, but that allow for high levels of trust, can offer the returns needed for progression.

5.1.2 Negative Relationships

In contrast to my other participants, participants born and bought up in India described different experiences in UK HE institutions. Rabelo, Robotham and McCluney (2020) argue that this difference stems from these ASAW being further away from the 'white gaze', which creates more challenges in terms of individuals' ability to access networking relationships. A

Bourdieuian analysis would suggest this arose out of the fact that their Indian 'habitus arose out of a very different doxa/ field, especially with regard to working in HE than their British counterparts irrespective of ethnicity or other factors. From hooks' (1990) perspective, a different habitus of origin can be utilised by marginalised groups as a form of power and thus it could be argued that ASAW should resist replicating existing practices in HE but seek to find different networks and connections that can aid them in their careers. The actual problems experienced by ASAW coming from abroad in this study included additional scrutiny, less favourable treatment, and exclusion from key working networks. Additional scrutiny (within HE) was partly attributed to the way some ASAW talked (e.g., with an Indian accent). One such example was shared by Kiran:

> *I think students are very hard to please, I come from India but the scenario there is very different… I share a module with another British born ASAW and my reviews on this module were not great. When I talk to them, my way is different, and they keep comparing my language, accent and approach with British-born ASAW. When they see you are from India, they build up this image beforehand.* (ECR, Kiran)

It is clear from this account that Kiran is unable to mask her cultural identity, which is manifested through her Indian accent. This difference in the treatment she receives is directly linked, as far as she is concerned, to where Kiran comes from with a specific focus on her ethnicity and the region she came from. To make sense of this treatment, Rabelo, Robotham and McCluney (2020, p. 14) argue the difference also manifests itself with regard to the bodies of some ASAW, namely those with lesser proximity to whiteness, who are subjected to additional scrutiny of the white gaze, often categorising them as incompetent, unwelcome, or inadequate. Kiran did not meet students expected image of a lecturer; she did not represent a 'typical academic'. The module review from her students confirmed Kiran did not belong or fit. This reflects Ahmed's (2019) metaphor that arriving at an organisation which does not feel right or open to one, is like trying to fit into a 'garment' (Ahmed, 2019) which was never meant to fit you. Kiran feels uncomfortable, and it will take a great deal of effort to make it feel as though she fits into, HE. Research by O'Connor et al., (2019) suggests that when actors behave in ways that reflect stronger intersectional identities i.e., accent, the potential for disadvantage increases (p.23). This might explain Kiran's treatment by her students which signals how both her race and ethnicity intersected, resulting in poor reviews, which in turn can impact on progression.

This embodied difference expereinced by marginalised groups is also noted by Seema, who felt due to her "*less developed language*" she received less investment from her supervisor, who instead focused on the European students. Although Seema did not use the word 'racism', in my opinion this is what she was describing. Seema's relationship with her supervisor appeared to accentuate further her status negatively as 'different' and instead of that relationship (network connection) promoting network opportunities it actually worked to deny her access to crucial professional networks.

Neena, who had also come from abroad to the UK, offered additional perspectives:

> *I think if I want to progress in this country, it is unlikely, if I compare myself with you, they might prefer you, because you are born and brought up in the UK and compared to you, they will prefer a white female.* (Senior academic, Neena)

As she spoke, Neena pointed directly to me. I felt, as a consequence that despite her being in a more senior position than me, she felt I had more privilege as I was a British-born ASAW. These hierarchies echo the views of Rabelo, Robotham and McCluney (2020) on privilege and power being innately tied to proximity to whiteness.

Even though Bourdieu recognises the importance of relationships to build social capital, for some ASAW in this thesis, relationships represented one of the many 'brick walls' to hinder career progression. Ahmed (2017) discusses how walls only come up for those who are trying to transform institutions or for those who do not quite inhabit the norms of the institution, as was the case for Kiran who had come from abroad to work in HE.

> *My supervisor was a well- known professor. I knew she was working on other projects, and I asked to be included but it didn't happen. I know other PhD students got this opportunity, I didn't get that, I felt alone. In terms of the networks, I just went out on my own, decided to go to conferences and I decided to submit. I was not directed about good/ bad conferences – I just did it.* (ECR, Kiran)

If social capital is understood as the goodwill/advantage engendered by social relations (Adler & Kwon, 2002, p.17), this was clearly not happening for Kiran and other participants who came to work in HE from abroad. In the absence of any goodwill or sponsorship from her supervisor, Kiran (despite her feelings of loneliness) persisted in pushing through her brick walls. Using the pronoun 'I' suggests her sense of ownership and responsibility in navigating her

professional progression. Her perseverance in making her own way emerges as she dismisses relying on her 'supervisor, who she feels has failed to support her. Instead, she continued to look for other networking spaces, such as attending conferences to make her voice heard. This agentic attitude of "*I just did it*" helped introduce her to other networking opportunities such as academic conferences where she could conduct her own networking on her own terms.

5.1.3 Snap Moments

My research suggests that Some ASAW coming to British universities from the Indian sub-continent are ready and willing to challenge the 'white gaze' (Rabelo, Robotham and McCluney, 2020). My interviews revealed participant attitudes as complex, varied and tied up with their individual cultural histories, or in Bourdieu's words their 'habitus of origin'. For example, Seema, although bought up in India had been in the UK for over fifteen years, having completed her PhD and secured a position as a lecturer. She recalled a story that caused her to 'snap'.

> *I came to know my supervisor invested less time in me compared to other students. I told him this, went up to him and said, you don't give me the same level of support and that is because you don't think you will get the same out of me, and that is because my language is not as well developed, and I don't have the same sort of skills. Because I don't have the same resources to attend different statistical workshops and you invest in your European students who are already freshly made and minted for you. (Mid-career academic, Seema)*

Although Seema's experience was confrontational, it was moments like these in the data that made her comments 'glow' (Maclure, 2013). As she recounted this incident, her strong body language and finger pointing really stood out. Her expression displayed disbelief and horror at being treated differently. She stated: "*I don't understand race in the same way as others as I come from India so have never known difference*" (Mid-career academic, Seema).

Seema's Indian habitus of origin plays a significant role in shaping her views. For example, when Seema refers to 'others' she is referring to B.A.M.E individuals born and/ or bought up in the UK; it is clear that she associates' race/ racism/ and difference as a concept that plays out differently for them. Having been socialised with people who look and speak like Seema (in India), being viewed as different and experiencing othering as she does in an English HEI

was very disconcerting. The extent of her surprise in how her race played a role in her treatment was clearly expressed: "*I wasn't even aware of my race as it wasn't something I was bought up with as an issue. Being in India, I wouldn't – as I was amongst my own*" (Mid-career academic, Seema). When Seema was faced with 'brick walls' of racism and ignorance within UK HE institutions she did not walk away; instead, in line with the thinking of hooks (1990), she used her anger and frustration to move forward within the UK HE domains.

Seema's challenge to her supervisor about why she was treated differently to her European counterparts, was an important 'calling out' of his behaviour Her behaviour reflects the actions of the 'snappy woman', wilful girl or killjoy described by Ahmed (2017, pp. 191, 66, 195). By calling out her supervisor, Seema is enacting a reversal of power as described by Antonakaki, French and Guner (2018, p. 926):

> *After the reversal occurs, the act appears as the violent interruption in the seamless fabric of institutional life which nonetheless haunts the snappy subject from then on, inducing a suffering directly related to the conditions of institutional in/existence.* (Antonakaki, French and Guner, 2018 p. 926)

Although there is a temporary reversal of positionality, it does not last long and I agree that personal 'suffering', as a consequence of such challenges stays with ASAW and may contribute to maintaining their position at the margins. However, Ahmed (2021) argues that to be able to complain about an oppressive situation is evidence that you are not really oppressed by that situation. In this sense Seema is using her inner power and (hooks, 1990) to shape what happens when you complain, her pain is transformed into power, the rejection leads to growth, and she chooses to recycle that pain into something positive as she goes onto secure a more permanent lectureship within a different, HE institution.

Participants born and bought up in the UK also shared snap moments, which shaped their approach to their career and influenced which networks they would pursue. In the absence of cultural and economic capital, these British born ASAW put their faith in building social capital through working relationships (networks). However, it was apparent from the data that some working relationships were highly detrimental, perhaps even career ending. This was an experience emphasised by Jeevan, now an associate professor, who recalls a 'snap' moment five years into her career:

> *The manager you have makes a world of difference to how you progress within your career… At an individual level, I was going to give up, but the unions helped me. She made remarks about my culture and bullying behaviour such as finger pointing and invading of space. It was horrible! She was encouraging but when it came to supporting me for promotion, she refused to do so.* (Senior academic, Jeevan)

In our interview, Jeevan's anger came through via her accentuated tone, increased pace of voice, and her body language (hand gestures). This moment had stuck with Jeevan and could have possibly resulted in her leaving HE altogether. However, As Ahmed (2009, p. 51) argues, anger is not simply defined in relationship to a past but can work to opening up future decisions and possibilities. This is reflected in the fact that Jeevan went onto use this experience to help her seek career opportunities on her terms. Jeevan continued to pursue her HE career, using homophily (which is a preference /tendency to work/ be with those similar to oneself selves). Jeevan spoke of how she relied on other Asian colleagues for support, which suggests the cultural bond (i.e., being from Indian sub-continent, similar region, language and culture) led to a mutual understanding which functioned as a coping mechanism to help her get through this difficult period:

> *We are fortunate at X institution as we have quite a few fellow Asians, most of my colleagues are male Asians and that does help. Because we have a shared understanding of what we are going through, culturally – being accepted and strength in numbers.* (Senior academic, Jeevan)

This form of homophilic solidarity differs from the support supervisors /line managers offer (discussed earlier in this chapter) and instead relies on, "Solidarity which requires a community of interests with shared beliefs and goals" (hooks 2014, p67). This shared understanding is evident from Jeevan's words and functioned as a source of strength in her professional life. Jeevan also turned to her union to seek justice, and they enabled her anger to be channelled into action against her employer in response to the racism she experienced. The bullying behaviour of her manager brought out emotions of hurt, anger and frustration, which stuck with Jeevan in her subsequent career in academia, causing her to actively look for spaces and relationships that were more enabling for her career progression.

Theme 2: Fitting in & Structural Conditions

In this section, I turn to my second theme of structural conditions and fitting in, which are both considered together as they tightly overlap and connect. Here the data illustrates how HE's structural conditions create 'brick walls' (Ahmed, 2017) for ASAW, which hamper ASAW's

access to and opportunities to mobilise networks for career opportunities. As argued by Feenstra et al. (2020, p. 2), internalised, negative perceptions of the self-caused by constantly coming up against brick walls often lead ASAW to question their abilities and worth.

The term structural inequalities in HE is defined by Advance HE (2021, p. 7) who refer to systems and structures in which policies and practices are located. Certain acts, decisions and/ or processes managed by individuals and HEIs discussed in my participants' accounts are treated in this thesis as manifestations of structural racism (Advance HE, 2021, p. 8) which in turn leave ASAW with the feeling of not fitting in. Common structural practices described by ASAW include HE recruitment practices, which continue to use historic informal networking approaches of favouritism, tapping and grooming to support career progression. Added to this, the neoliberal university (as discussed in chapter 2) has created new structural conditions managed through internal and external frameworks and metrics such as REF, TEF and NSS. The inequitable application of these metrics, does, I argue, often create snap moments for ASAW, which then alter their perception of HE. In addition, key HE institutional practices (recruitment practices, hours of work/ allocation and metrics) make it problematic for ASAW to engage with academic networks and thus puts them at a disadvantage, often compounding feelings of being an imposter. Finally, this section focuses on how HE has attempted to address these inequalities through frameworks such as Athena SWAN and Aurora. I argue that these initiatives are principally framed on the views of 'white women' and do little to tackle the structural inequalities experienced by ASAW.

5.2 Fitting in & Structural Conditions

Several interview participants spoke of experiencing 'imposter syndrome', which is the well-documented internal experience of 'phoniness' that can be experienced by individuals in terms of self- assessing their own abilities and competencies (Clance and Imes, 1978; Stockfelt, 2018; Vaughn, Taasoobshirazi and Johnson, 2020; Wilkinson, 2020). Even once participants had reached senior positions, they frequently indicated that this feeling, although waxing and waning, never went away. Various scholars (Bernard et al., 2002; Rohrmann et al., 2016; Bravata et al., 2020) maintain that imposter syndrome is very relevant to the experiences of marginalised groups. In line with the thinking of Feenstra et al. (2020), my findings suggest that it is institutional social structures that create and maintain the feeling of not fitting in and being an imposter. This is illustrated by an example shared by Neetu.

> *I went for an interview once at X (Russell Group) University and I just remember thinking it really supports all those stereotypes of academics with tweed jackets and older white men…the space, old rooms – banquet type rooms for lunch, that feeling was there…I did not feel I could work there.* (ECR, Neetu)

Neetu's comments reveal how it was the institutional space which caused her to feel a sense of displacement, giving rise to a feeling of not fitting in. The elite nature of the institution, its traditional architecture and space embodied its elitist history, which did not include or display any sympathy to, or recognition of, ASAW contexts. Adding to this, the furniture, lunch and tweed jackets all came together to create an alien environment in which Neetu struggled to picture how she could fit in. Ahmed (Blog, 2019) describes HEIs feeling like an ill-fitting garment for B.A.M.E individuals and this helps to make sense of Neetu's experience. Neetu's feelings suggest she is trying to fit into an institution that was never intended for her in the first place. Arguably, it is only when those who are responsible in managing HEIs begin to understand the lived experience of marginalised groups (as Neetu describes) will they recognise that feeling of being othered, and only then will real change occur within the academy.

5.2.1 Recruitment Practices

The majority of participants felt they were at a disadvantage when applying for promotion or internal opportunities within the academy. Participants described selection processes as operating as a mere façade, and thus adding to their feelings of not fitting in. These stories paint a picture of an HE culture, heavily reliant on informal networking practices such as 'tapping, favouritism and grooming'. Such a picture opposes the declared ideas of transparency and fairness, and instead, reinforces unequal treatment, often to the detriment of ASAW (and other marginalised groups in HE). Although the UK have legislative interventions promoting equality and refusing racism, Pilkington (2013) argues that anti-discrimination policies in higher education institutions are ineffective because "formal procedures can act as a smokescreen for judgements which may be indirectly discriminatory" (Pilkington, 2013, p. 230).

As discussed earlier, other research (ECU, 2009; Bhopal, 2015; Stockfelt, 2018; Rollock, 2019) argues that, when it comes to the selection/ promotion of B.A.M.E academic staff, their lack

of networks, combined with the additional scrutiny placed upon their performance, reveals an inequitable approach towards career opportunities. Although the experiences concerning recruitment practices shared through my participants' accounts is not a new finding, their accounts offer confirmation that despite having policies and training on equal opportunities, a this is how 'things are done around here' attitude predominates (Bhopal, 2017, p. 113). In short, HE is not doing what it is saying it does in terms of supporting diversity and inclusion in its workforce. This supports Ahmed's assertion that its commitment to tackling equal opportunities is rhetorical and non-performative (2016).

5.2.2 Favouritism

Even though open recruitment is required by law, the use of closed procedures in HE recruitment is widespread and seldom contested (van den Brink and Benschop, 2014, p. 483; Bedeian et al., 2010; Rollock, 2019; Runneymede, 2015). Other research (Grummell et al., 2009b; Pullen and Simpson, 2009) also shows how, in reality, the criteria used for appointment and promotion can often be more focused on who is a comfortable fit as opposed to appointing based on merit and stated assessment criteria. Decisions made behind closed doors are often done via intimate social networks which often exclude ASAW who struggle to access and mobilise such opportunities. Morley (2013, p. 123) confirms this trend, arguing "a range of casual discriminatory practices in professorial appointment elude formal protocols and objective criteria". This, as Durga states below, enables 'favourites' to be appointed:

> *The way they are selecting course leaders – favoritism in terms of progression. They pre-select, no point to the assessment…I have sat in interview presentations and found out afterwards that applicants already know members of the interview panel. This happens quite a lot.* (Mid-career academic, Durga).

Although increased responsibility, programme management and other leadership type initiatives are often promoted as the key- ways to get ahead within HE, as highlighted by Durga, decisions about who gets those roles can sometimes be pre-determined. My data reflect Rollock's (2019) findings that opaque, uneven and blurred recruitment criteria are often relied on in HE promotion processes. Wider research (Walker & Yoon, 2016) has also recognised how HE operates using many hidden conditions. Walker and Yoon's (2016) study similarly confirms that first appointments were based around 'not what you know but who you know'.

This sends a strong signal, indicating social capital as a resource generates more career benefits than an individual's merit-based achievements.

Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 2, Singh (2002), Arday and Mirza Safia (2018) and Jarboe (2016) have shown how HEIs tend to recruit in their own image which means that some individuals are recruited because they reproduce/reflect the traditional/ established character of the organisation (Ahmed, 2012, p. 40). ASAWs trying to replicate the image of an organisation can be a difficult task. For example, as Jeevan comments:

> *It all makes a big difference the way they perceive you. At dean/ management level they want someone who speaks like them and presents like them – it is groupthink. So, when recruiting they want someone like themselves and this is where barriers arrive as we are not like them…it's all about whether the face fits, the way you dress, the way you present yourself, all makes a big difference.* (Senior academic, Jeevan)

This notion of 'fitting in' can govern and shape academic careers, being a 'fish out of water' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992), makes you stand out and this disjuncture can leave ASAW feeling insecure and uncertain about their place in the academy (Reay, 2005). Jeevan states "*we are not like them*" confirming her feeling of displacement. It can become difficult to shake this feeling of unwantedness, which Bourdieu (1977) would argue is derived from her being different to the field in which she operates. However, as argued earlier, difference should be welcomed and seen as a form of strength in order to move forward within the academy on your own terms. (hooks, 1990)

As described by Jeevan (above), career opportunities improve if candidates look, dress and speak like those already in senior positions. Where ASAW can increase their proximity with the white gaze, better chances of achieving career success materialise (Rabelo, Robotham and McCluney, 2020). Thus, the white gaze, as a practice, ends up contributing to marginalising particular bodies (ASAW) within HE. Other studies (Rabelo, Robotham and McCluney, 2020; Bhopal, 2018; Cabrera, Franklin and Watson, 2016) have demonstrated that deviating from whiteness puts ASAW at a disadvantage, illustrating the power of the white gaze and its ability to reinforce gendered and racialised hierarchies within the academy (Rabelo, Robotham and McCluney, 2020, p. 2). This is illustrated well by Kuljit:

> *I feel that all the time, not belonging. That stays with me and that has not gone away. When I went for this interview (senior executive position at a Russell Group university) I had to buy a*

> *grown -up dress, and I normally wear a suit. When I went back to my institution everyone said, "that is a lovely dress, never seen you in a dress before". It became a real focal point and I have never worn that dress again, but that was about fitting in.* (Senior academic, Kuljit)

Despite being appointed to a senior position, Kuljit retains a lingering feeling of not belonging, which acts as an illustration of her difficulties moving her personal habitus into a new professional field. some ASAW, due to the hybridity of their habitus (having been exposed to at least two sets of cultures, traditions and values), identify advantages integral to their duality. Kuljit, for example related how she tended not to talk about her habitus of origin (having immigrant parents), as she felt there was no advantage in this. Instead, she drew on her white habitus learned through the socialisation during her childhood, as she felt these cultural references were more appropriate for institutional expectations (one example was the assumption that the idea that women should wear dresses, rather than trousers). Her actions align well with Ahmed's (2007, p. 158) views that non-white bodies are required to 'inhabit whiteness' if they are to be accepted.

The significance here is that by wearing a dress (a more western look) this was neither culturally authentic nor reflective of Kuljit's personal preference. In Bourdieu's (1977) terms, she was responding to the symbolic violence of having to dress in an expected way imposed on her by the dominant expectations of the academy about how female academics should dress (that is not in traditional Indian dress). However, another layer can be inserted into this Bourdieuan interpretation. Kuljit could be said to know what she was doing and did this purposefully and with agency to better secure her socio-professional status. She acknowledged her attempts to fit in, and openly participated in some game-playing by buying the dress. Once appointed, and after only one wearing, Kuljit never wore the dress again; it didn't continue to be used as a symbol of her identity, as it had served its purpose.

5.2.3 Tapping

Tapping was a term used consistently amongst participants. It describes how access to key positions or opportunities often emerged informally in their HEIs. Existing literature (Heffernan and Bosetti, 2020; Herschberg, Benschop and Van Den Brink, et al 2010; van den Brink and Benschop, 2014) supports the view that HE relies heavily on network connections to mobilise careers. Heffernan (2020, p. 1) goes further, arguing there is no career in academia

without networks. A story shared by Priya confirms the power of connections and the practice of 'tapping':

> *Initially I went into Head of Discipline role on an interim basis (1 year). We then had a change of dean, idea was do well in interim role and if you prove yourself, you could stay in role. I had been at this institution for 25 years and ready for more. The new dean said the role had to go to advert, which I accepted as being fair. My view was he was following protocol, but everyone was saying he has someone in mind. I was doing the job well, met targets/ metrics and good feedback. I applied did not get role, transpired dean had 'tapped' one of his contacts. Neither of us (applicants) had a PhD, but I had management experience; he did not.* (Senior academic, Priya)

Tapping was employed by the dean, who was keen to secure this opportunity for his white male contact from his previous institution. Academics in key positions of influence engage in these kinds of gatekeeping activities when recruiting (Van den Brink and Benschop, 2014, p. 464) to grant privileges, allow access to some, and deny it to others (Husu, 2004; Weber, 1980 [1921]; Wright Mills, 1956 [2000]). When HE gatekeepers are mainly white men or women, access for ASAW becomes difficult as recruitment panels reflect the homophily of the white males sitting on them. However, with limited women and ethnic minorities in senior positions, the opportunity for ASAWs to sit on senior recruitment panels is already restricted. Evidence also suggests that tapping continues at a more senior level. For example, Kuljit stated:

> *Later on (in terms of career) I have seen the taps on the shoulder or the work that is done even before you get there or the language you have to speak, but I suppose I have never wanted to be that kind of leader or collude with those sorts of processes. I am absolutely with you, it happens, but I didn't see it in my early career, but I have seen it more as I got into senior roles.* (Senior academic, Kuljit)

Her words, furthermore, suggest that tapping is preceded by 'collusion' and 'work done before', indicating that a degree of investment takes place in getting candidates ready prior to the 'tap' itself. My data suggest those individuals that are invested in for the purposes of professional grooming either fit the image of their recruiters (Singh, 2002; Arday and Mirza Safia, 2018), have close proximity to the white gaze (Rabelo, Robotham and McCluney, 2020) or are able to negotiate their way through what Yarrow (2020) describes as the 'knowledge hustle', a tool used to survive in gendered organisations that involves academics navigating formal and informal practices and networks (Yarrow, 2020, p.2). In essence this demonstrates the change and shift in behaviour has to come from under-represented groups. As Reay (1998)

confirms HE institutions are not very malleable and to expect the change from management and other senior staff is thus unlikely.

5.2.4 Grooming

Those that speak the right language, who 'fit', who have the right connections and have a sense of belonging, like a 'fish in water' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992), are more likely to become prime candidates for the job. Grooming, for those who do not so easily 'fit the bill' in HE is a longer process and takes time, ensuring candidates buy into the expectations of behaviour preferred by the sector and/ or their institution. According to Van den Brink and Benschop (2014), the selection of candidates often takes place at an early stage, often long before a position is formally announced. This aligns well with the point made by Kuljit (above) who speaks of the "*work done to get you there*" which could be construed as a form of 'grooming'. Grooming as a practice being used within, HE is revealed in Neena's account below:

> *I applied for deputy head of department... I knew this role had been created for somebody else and I did say this to my line manager, who quickly replied saying, "No, no, no – you should apply"… I looked at the criteria (I had programme management experience, PhD and 4* publications) but I knew a white female was being* ***groomed****. Even my colleagues were saying, "Why are you, wasting your time – this position has been written with someone in mind". I knew this but I wanted to see how management would justify this as she has no PhD, no publications and not been in HE as long as me.* (Senior academic, Neena)

Neena did not get the job, there were only two applications and, as she predicted, her less-experienced white female colleague secured the role. According to Bhopal's (2018) argument, the white academic would have got the position because she met the correct set of unspoken institutional criteria. Neena, shares the feedback for not getting the job:

> *Oh, you did a brilliant job, but the other candidate was better, so impressive and more strategic, used expressive words, which they say I will learn with experience. (Senior academic, Neena)*

As discussed in the theoretical chapter, Bourdieu (1977, p. 82) argues each individual carries with him/ her dispositions that indicate his/ her social position within given social spaces (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 82). One could argue that Neena's status as an ASAW marks her out as less 'fitted' for the post, although, Neena is told she can learn more desirable behaviours with experience. This points towards the existence of invisible and informal processes within HE, which were beyond the official selection criteria and required candidates' socio-cultural 'fit'

for the less tangible expectations. Neena summarises the requirement for grooming and fitting in well:

> *Rubbing shoulders with people, buttering them up – I cannot do this.* (Senior academic, Neena)

She makes it clear how unless one internalises the university's institutional habitus, seeking promotion can be difficult for ASAW. Performing the knowledge 'hustle' (Yarrow, 2020) and knowing the 'rules of the game' (Bourdieu, 1986) demonstrates the link between informal networking practices and securing career opportunities. However, this is something which does not sit right with Neena's own habitus of origin which becomes a factor contributing to stalling her career progression, as she displayed strong resistance to embracing these unspoken rules and refused to conform. Thus, the brick wall stays in place, it is only Neena whose head is getting sore as she continues to bang her head against it (Ahmed, 2017). However, there is a form of resistance evident in Neena's voice, she is unwilling to conform and is looking for ways to resist and challenge her marginalisation.

5.2.5 Tokenism

Tokenism, as defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* (Waite, 2011) "is a symbolic effort to demonstrate inclusiveness, through a practice of doing something superficial", for example, by recruiting one person from a group underrepresented in the workplace in order to counteract claims about racism and non-representation. Kanter (1977) was one of the first to use the notion of 'tokens', describing it as representing a small number of minority group employees within the workplace population. Although Kanter (ibid) talks about some of the consequences of tokenism for the 'token,' such as increased visibility, and increased performance measures, leading to stress, her work primarily relates to white women in a male-dominated corporate organisational setting. Other literature (Dickens, Womack and Dimes, 2019; Dickens, Jones and Hall, 2020) identified token black women who altered their behaviour in order to mitigate experiences of discrimination in their workplace. Archer's work in HE (2008, p. 394) argues that accessing influential spaces may require ASAW to perform identities of the dominant power relations, in an attempt to gain acceptance as academics. This shifting of behaviour, whether consciously or unconsciously deployed, involves altering of language and cultural behaviours to counteract discrimination as tokens (Dickens, Joes & Hall, 2020). Unlike the forthright Neena, other participants were willing to alter their behaviour and move away from their habitus of origin to move forward and fit better into HE. They agreed that they were being

used as the 'token Asian' but felt, nonetheless, that this was 'a game worth playing' for personal advancement: As Priya points out:

> *I was the only brown face on Governing Council…My ethnicity played a role more to the advantage of the organisation (HE) – token Asian* (Senior academic, Priya)

Joining the Governing Council demonstrates that although Priya is now playing the game, she has not lost her ability to question it. She realised that her tokenistic position not only allowed her to progress, but that it also afforded the institution important tokenistic gains at her expense, meaning that the institution does not actually have to change anything by letting one brown face into a privileged space. For example, when Priya was being pushed to apply for a senior Governing Council role, she highlights how in her opinion her appointment was useful for those in power, "*you do not 'get something for nothing'*":

> *I was the only brown face on Governing Council…My ethnicity played a role more to the advantage of the organisation (HE) – token Asian. Therefore, I fulfilled the diversity gap…it helped me realise that if someone does give you a push or opened door for me there is always another side to the story. A clear win for my manager, with one of his staff on Governing Council and therefore he's 'in the know' and I contributed to diversity targets for the university.* (Senior academic, Priya)

Using tokenism to one's own advantage, in this way, relates to the ways in which networking is key to the thesis, as it supports the thinking of network theorists Burt (1992) and Granovetter (1973) who, as discussed in Chapter 3, argue that to gain maximum career benefits becoming part of diverse networks beyond one's customary social circles is vital. In Priya's example, she had no previous knowledge of Governing Council, but she was now engaging with them on a more regular basis and had consequently entered a more powerful social and professional circle. Despite her progression, however, Priya still feels there is work to be done to overcome her feeling of not fitting in. She outlines her concerns:

> *I am head of my discipline (only female ethnic minority in a senior role) leading a white middle-class team. When I think do I belong? …and look across at my team, I think <u>they do not</u> think I belong. So, I do get that feeling sometimes and I have to work really, really hard to win my team over.* (Senior academic, Priya)

There are two things to note from this statement; firstly, Kanter's (1977) notion that there are consequences or a price to pay for tokenism. Kanter (ibid) argues, the price one pays for tokenism is more stress, visibility and increased performance expectations, as Priya is having to work "*really, really hard*" to gain acceptance from her team. Secondly, there is the issue of belonging. Drawing upon Archer and Leathwood's (2003, p. 176) work (on working-class academics in HE) there is the assumption that other non-traditional members of the academic community will always need to adapt and change in order to fit into and participate in the dominant HE institutional cultures. Essentially, Priya did follow this approach and modified her behaviour to maximise her academic career opportunities. Yet, Priya's position is still perceived as threatened as her team struggles to sanction and endorse her authority. Her 'body' is not seen as natural in academia and she has to "endure a burden of doubt" from those around her (Puwar, 2004, pp. 53–54).

In relation to the practice of recruitment and promotion, my data in line with Rollock's (2019) work reveals how and why promotion for women of colour emerges as a messy, convoluted, and uneven pathway, with exclusion being played out in different ways, particularly lack of access to certain key groups or networks. As expressed by Seema:

> *As for those other networks for research, enterprise and teaching – the teaching networks they already have a group of people, their friends for teaching and research type networks. Those are people from their own networks and not open to somebody like me. I don't know why they don't ask me – no one ever asks me.* (Mid-career academic, Seema)

In summary, it is argued that by exploiting informal networking practices, HE's recruitment structurally disadvantages ASAW. Game playing and borrowing of social capital play out differently for those prepared to take on tokenistic positions or negotiate a position of influence. Various microaggressions (tapping, grooming, favouritism, game playing, tokenistic positions) become, for minoritised groups like ASAW, part of everyday life within higher education institutions, and thus "gender and race discrimination become situated social practices actualised in the everyday social and professional interactions" (van den Brink and Benschop, 2014, p. 558).

5.2.6 Neoliberalism & ASAW

While there is some existing research examining the impact of the neoliberal university on women (Morley 2006 & Lynch, 2010), less attention has been paid to its impact on the experiences of women from the Indian sub-continent. The neoliberal university has been described as functioning with a corporate mindset, based on an economic model and with a competitive nature which operates in a framework that promotes compliance and surveillance (Jessop, 2017; Ball, 2012; Barnett, 2000). As a consequence, managerial practices shift to a more individualistic way of determining success, which, superficially at least, puts the onus of each staff member's career trajectory within their own hands.

However, as I have already shown, my data reveal that, despite the alleged neutrality of the metric rules, the privileged few that decide hours worked and allocate tasks, regularly use micropolitical strategies to preserve a discriminatory *status quo.* My data suggest equality under neoliberalism is conditional and patchy; if you remain silent and do not 'rock the boat' you meet the conditions laid out by HE institutions. Lynch (2010) argues a further consequence of neoliberalism is the endorsement of an ideal academic as being one who is free of care responsibilities. She describes these academics as the 'careless worker' claiming, "The ideal academic is now officially defined (as opposed to more informally in the past) as being capable of working without time limits and without primary care responsibilities" (p. 58). As a result, women can find themselves taking up the care work (pastoral administrative type roles) of the institution (Lynch, 2010), positioning themselves in organisational 'housework roles' (Blackmore & Sachs 2007; Burkinshaw, 2017). According to Gill (2009), taking on additional tasks and reflecting the 24/7 work culture of HE describes the cruel optimism of the neoliberal environment. In many ways, some ASAW make themselves the perfect neoliberal subjects as they often accept and endure the increased hours and increased workloads (Gill, 2009). Aspiring to meet the definition of an idealised academic as described by Lynch (2010), one participant shared an example of how despite her willingness to take on more work she has not seen progression:

> *We do all this good work, writing modules, offer goodwill and show willing…My colleague and I who are both non-white, I feel we are given things to do, often last minute (admin). Whereas another person may not. It might be because we are both kind and just get things done…there is some unwitting stuff that goes on, maybe not due to gender but probably just racial factor – I don't know (shrugs her shoulders). This sort of stuff will impact my decision about my next move.* (Mid-career academic, Kamal)

Here Kamal acknowledges that her additional work and goodwill are undermined by those that matter in the workplace. She also notes that both ethnic academics are handed tasks that reflect the care work of the organisation. However, Kamal is cautious with her words and even though she hints at racial discrimination she is quick to qualify this with a "*I don't know*", shrugging her shoulders and moving the interview on, presumably she doesn't want to be a 'killjoy' (Ahmed, 2018 Blog). She notes the politics that goes on within the institution but is not willing to tackle the injustices or be a 'killjoy'; as a consequence, she starts to think about an exit strategy. Kamal has to weigh up to stay silent rather than 'call -out' the behaviour within the institution. In contrast, Jatinder, who felt she had been the subject of injustices in relation to allocation of hours for research, took her complaints about discrimination all the way to the top. She was keen to share her snap moment and insisted I use her experience in my thesis:

> *Recently we have gone through a process of work allocation, by the way I want this to be noted and aired. With the workload allocation for AP, they should put me in Band 2 automatically, which gives me more research hours. I was shocked to be given Band 3…I had written, and published papers, bought in grants, how can this be. I asked for clarity and was told I had not bought in enough external income. I said, "hang on there, white colleagues who never bought in a penny but have more research hours than me". I met over and above what is required for Band 2. I spent sleepless nights over this and could have let it go, but we always get blamed as BAME we don't raise things.* (Senior academic, Jatinder)

Jatinder only had sight of the formal written requirements for Band 2; the invisible networks that empowered her white colleagues were not available to her. In Jatinder's case, her complaint was successfully taken all the way up to the VC and Jatinder feels the department are now more cautious around her. However, there was a personal price to pay for her actions; this incident became a big issue and was a real 'snap moment' for Jatinder, giving her sleepless nights, making her short tempered with her kids and impacting her work relations. In her case, the formal written rules about allocating research hours were overlooked, in favour of satisfying more informal relations and supporting a culture of microaggressions. These examples undermine the idea of professional meritocracy in HE and also highlight the way the application of many rules is biased and based on 'who you know not what you know'. It is evident Jatinder's white colleagues who were given additional research hours had the benefit of privilege (Bhopal, 2018). This reflects Bhophal's contention that less effort is required when one has privilege, as one can pass easily through an institution like HE as it is a place assembled with privileged people in mind. Bhopal maintains, "white privilege is fundamentally a structural arrangement that affords undue advantages to 'the expression[s] of whiteness through

the maintenance of power, resources, accolades and systems of support" (p. 19). In this case the resource of using the work allocation model as a tool to overlook the position Jatinder had within the institution was evident. For ASAW, for whom the institution was never designed, the path one has to travel (Ahmed, 2021) is more uneven. However, Jatinder wanted to share this complaint and insisted I include it in the data. As Ahmed (2021) insists, a complaint can lead to recognition of similar problems and this is what Jatinder wanted to do by showcasing the injustices of her institution.

For some participants the goal to achieve publications was important as it enables them to contribute to REF (the importance of which I outline earlier), which in turn improves their academic profile and potential to progress their career. This can be seen as a demonstration of ASAW reaching for Bourdieuan 'symbolic capital' in HE as a means of gaining power and acceptance. However, success in research is subject to the rules of 'REF' and Kiran, an ECR, shared her struggle to get published: she had no networks to draw upon but has nevertheless actively tried to forge links and connections with projects and colleagues across the department.

> *I have been trying for 1.5 years to get published but there has been many issues as I have not been able to use my supervisor. There are some people who find it easy to publish because they have big names associated to their papers and because of their networks. I know there are people who actually don't even work on their paper but get their names on it. This is the ultimate truth and just because you know people you are getting published. So, what happens to people like me who have no networks? (ECR, Kiran)*

She told me that senior academics claimed, "*their research interests are different, or they are already working with someone else*". She is aware some of her peers have the benefit of discussions with editors of journals, but she did not have the established connections, or confidence, to make these approaches. Conscious of her targets on her performance review, she approached professors at different institutions about opportunities to publish. As a consequence of reaching out she was able to secure an external network connection to collaborate on a research paper. In some ways this push to seek external support to bolster career capital is a symptom of a neoliberal academy, which creates and promotes academic entrepreneurialism, exploiting competition internally, resulting in individuals (peers, colleagues and her institutional professors) being unwilling to share their contacts, each of them keen to contribute to REF and meet their own career goals.

In addition to the REF, student evaluations (NSS and in-house module evaluations) often contribute to managerial judgements about academic performance. However, as previously discussed in the literature review, research suggests that academics from under-represented groups, tend to experience microaggression through student evaluations (Bell & Brooks, 2018; Reid 2010 and Basow and Martin (2012). My data suggest a similar position for my participants:

> *I never liked NSS, I think students are really hard to please and I come from India, in India we care about students but don't have this national obsession of measuring their views…because of this we are overworked as students call the shots. When I talk to them, my way is different, and they compare my language and speech…they see I am from India and build this image.* (ECR, Kiran)

Challenges from students, in terms of providing poor evaluations, can also be viewed as a form of discrimination that often goes unacknowledged, despite the fact that these evaluations shape and make academic careers. As argued by French (2020, p. 151): "it's not what gets taught, or how well it may be taught, but who is doing the teaching that becomes the priority", and hence has the potential to impact the career trajectory of ASAW. The danger for ASAW (including other under-represented groups) is that by relying heavily on NSS/ in-house evaluations HE institutions can make superficial judgements about individuals' teaching ability, which might add and contribute to feelings of not fitting in. Employing such performative measures could be perceived as less about quality as required by TEF, and more about how close ASAW match the 'ideal academic' (usually white, male middle class).

5.2.7 Aurora/ Athena SWAN

Earlier in my literature review I discussed how organisational interventions such as the Athena SWAN Charter, Race Equality Charter and Aurora leadership programmes are focused on supporting the career progression of women within HE. In this section I explore how these different equality initiatives have been accessed and expereinced by ASAW. On the one hand, HE promotes the need for equality and diversity and on the other hand, powerful academics in key positions pay lip service to the process (Bhopal and Pitkin, 2020). Although the introduction of the Athena SWAN Charter has made some positive impact on gender equality (Ovseiko, Chapple, Edmunds and Ziebland, 2017) research suggests (Caffrey et al., 2016) that the impact can be limited where institutional practices (such as recruitment practices discussed

above) undermine its effects, particularly when some staff members, such as ASAW, might have limited understanding of it:

> *I have heard of AS, I've not had any involvement, but I do think these frameworks are good to raise awareness for diversity issues, I have never heard of Aurora.* (ECR, Neetu)

While senior ASAW were more likely to have heard of, or even be directly involved with, the initiative, others at earlier career stages knew very little about its content beyond the most superficial of understandings. According to some participants, interventions such as Athena SWAN and the Race Equality Charter are working to secure the diversity badge as a symbol of success are merely tokenistic gestures. The reality of how effective these formal interventions are is better understood when the very people who should be benefiting from them share their views, as indicated by Durga: "*I have seen a lot more on race since Black Lives Matter (BLM) but before that we had no idea about that (smiling)*". This was a view similarly shared by those such as Kiran who also felt that issues such as BLM "*re-focused their[managerial] attention*" on issues which had been within the system for some time. As argued by Ahmed (2012), when diversity commitments/ policies do not do what they say, they fail to challenge and become non-performative. Taking this to its logical conclusion, I argue, that this non-performativity also reveals the HE Sector as actually unwilling to transform and create spaces for ASAW and other minoritised groups to have a voice and equal access to professional advancement.

5.2.8 Aurora

As discussed earlier (Chapter 2), the Aurora development programme is dedicated to offering a 'women only' space and their own website (Aurora | Advance HE, 2021) promotes this as an opportunity to network to support development opportunities. Aurora events are designed to be a direct response to the 'old boy's network'. However, for such initiatives to truly represent, and challenge, inequality, more attention on the different intersectional positions of ASAW is needed. Most of my participants had not heard of Aurora, or never had time to complete the application or were not encouraged (tapped or nudged) to pursue it. Aurora is said to offer advantages as women are encouraged to be more open about the challenges they face as a group (Madsen, Longman and Daniels, 2011). Aurora events include building mentor relationships and offering a space to create connections, which can translate into career opportunities for women in academia. This homophilic space facilitates discourse between women who can

support each other via development, advice, and encouragement (Barnard, Arnold, Bosley and Munir, 2021). A better strategy to build awareness and communicate the programme on a wider scale is desirable, as some of my participants had limited knowledge of its purpose, as highlighted by Neetu: "*I have never heard of Aurora*".

Although, a woman-only network such as Aurora may appear to be a closed network working for the good of women, the nature of the site does nevertheless allow opportunities for establishing what Granovetter (2005) has argued are 'weak ties', i.e., ties with those dissimilar to oneself. For example, Aurora opens up information and resources not easily available to others (in their own institutions), which in turn could aid collaboration and/ or progression. Using this perspective, Aurora should offer a unique space for both the notion of homophily and weak ties to play out and offer returns linked to individual careers.

Previous literature (Barnard, Arnold, Bosley and Munir, 2021) that examined the effects of the Aurora programme reported slight increases in users' engagement and confidence in leadership and mentoring roles (p. 8). Barnard, Arnold, Bosley and Munir's research (2021, p. 6) only examined 5.7% Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) women, which according to HESA 2019/20 was significantly lower than the proportion of academics who are B.A.M.E (17%). However, in the main, their research reflects the perceptions and views of white women. In terms of understanding how the networking experiences at Aurora play out for ASAW, it is more difficult as my own data was limited. The few ASAW who did attend Aurora shared a different message to those found by Barnard, Arnold, Bosley and Munir (2021) and suggest both weak ties and the concept of homophily (that is creating and nurturing networks of female HE professionals) did not translate into career opportunities for them: "*I went to Aurora – waste of time, listening to women whose lives are not like mine*" (Senior academic, Neena).

This difference in life experience alludes to those Aurora speakers (white women) whose habitus seemed distant to that which was experienced by Neena, which offers some support to Bhopal's (2020) view that the most likely beneficiaries of such programmes are white middle-class women. Aurora was perceived by Neena as paying little heed to intersectional dimensions of race and ethnicity, revealing how HE's engagement with equality-based initiatives may not always translate into improved staff perceptions or better experiences for ASAW. Furthermore, my data suggest that having a habitus from abroad (India), as was the case with Neena,

presented a further hurdle to acceptance. It is noteworthy that UK-born ASAW had a slightly different Aurora experience:

> *I was signposted to Aurora – it didn't do much for me except some of the keynote speeches I could resonate with. But there was very little diversity there, I was grateful of the opportunity, and I am an Aurora mentor – But I still haven't seen a growth in ASAW or I don't even know if enough people know about it.* (Senior academic, Priya)

Priya clearly related to some of the stories of the Aurora guest speakers, so much so that she was keen to give back and become a mentor. As previously discussed, ASAW women born and brought up in the UK have a hybrid type habitus, part of which has a strong similarity with a white UK habitus and another of which reflects their own cultural upbringing and norms. It is this, latter part of Priya's habitus, that she felt was undermined during her Aurora experience. Although Aurora may be promoted as being a platform for *all* women to network, the suggestion here is the full benefit is somewhat limited for ASAW. For Neena, the interlocking of her different identities of gender, race, ethnicity, cultural upbringing and class contributed further to her feeling of being 'othered' compared to UK born Priya.

5.3 Theme 3: Agency

In Chapter 3, the debate between structure and agency was discussed using Bourdieu's (1992) theoretical perspective of habitus, capital, and field. However, because ASAW's socialisation and individual biographies have a different past to the dominant habitus of the institution to which they belong, an additional tension emerges when analysing their career negotiations. In fact, (as highlighted in chapter 3) although useful, Bourdieu's notion of habitus can be seen to be rather deterministic, neglecting how individuals can exercise some agency over their careers through the use of networks.

There has been an on-going debate about the role of individual agency in shaping action and future prospects, as opposed to theories which centralise organisational structural conditions as the most important drivers. My data on ASAW reveal the importance of both factors. For those participants who had a desire to fit in, they were able to use their habitus in a malleable way. However, some of my participants did not have that desire, or due to persistent structural barriers they developed other creative agentic approaches to achieving their career goals. As

advocated by hooks (1990) these ASAW were able to work in spaces free from the dominant practices creating a liberated space full of possibilities.

5.3.1 External Career Capital

Using the term 'external capital' from Shepherd (2017), I demonstrate how some of my participants indicated that they had more success and career opportunities by engaging with individuals and networks outside of their own HE institution, as indicated below:

> *I have much more success from working outside of my institution; I received an email from an Australian University about my paper, and he really wanted to work with me. He told me he would be attending a conference, we met, we shared our work, and I presented the paper due for publication. I know my growth lies with research but currently due to work meetings I am not being able to devote time to this.* (Senior academic, Neena)

Neena's experiences support the thinking of network theorist Granovetter (1973) who claims the more weak-tie networks (such as those individuals not known to you, i.e., academics from other institutions) you have, the more opportunity there is to use resources and information, which are likely to be accessible only to a limited few from your institution. When I asked her why she did not explore collaborating within her own institution, she was clear:

> *There is racism, I am noticing it more than before. When I started in my role you do not notice these things but when you start progressing, you face it more as you go up on the ladder.* (Senior academic, Neena)

Neena has experienced many setbacks at her own HE, institution and although there is the opportunity to collaborate internally with her own colleagues, her lack of trust and 'snap moments' forced her to look outside of her own place of work. For example, she felt conferences were a space where she could attain some new improved status. She described being asked to chair at European conferences as an opportunity. For Neena, the opportunity to attend international conferences allowed her to develop a global outlook. Over the years the many rejections for Neena have given her internal power that she has recycled for her own benefit. As hooks (1990) claims going from 'pain and hurt is part of the process and often occurs before any career advantage can be secured.

Other participants had also explored opportunities outside of their own HE institution to advance their career and connections. They found they were more welcomed in these different settings, which in turn developed their confidence and advanced their positions. As Neetu observes:

> *Actually, I have a positive experience from people in the practitioner setting (outside of HE). I talk quite a lot to people about my research in business from various disciplines and those interested in my field. I have done workshops and keynote address. I have reached out myself and found them more receptive than conferences.* (ECR, Neetu)

The kinds of strategic agency being exercised by Neetu are required if individuals are to prosper in the academic game (Acker, 2010). Neetu confirmed that if she wanted to progress her career, she needed to go elsewhere as opportunities were not forthcoming in her current place of work. Shepherd (2017) states this use of external career capital often means individuals move around to develop and grow. This decision to move indicates a desire by some ASAW to change where they were working (and how they were being allowed to work) rather than change themselves. A large element of active agency was nevertheless identified by the ASAWs in this study who frequently looked beyond their own institutions, to gain growth, connections, ties and development elsewhere not least because they recognised that the 'brick walls' within HE stays firmly in place.

5.3.2 Creating Networks

Some ASAW seek to develop their own networks with similar others and then use this collective strength to face common challenges within HE. Such solidarity and community-based networks based on a shared identity reflect hooks (1984:161) view of how the power of drawing upon collective experiences of similar others can bring about change and growth. As discussed previously, this is the thinking behind the 'Aurora' network, where collectively women join to share experiences. However, actively seeking a personal network is also a perceivable preference for some. Jeevan shared how she felt the need to develop her own network group:

> *My motivation dropped for EDI (Equality based initiatives) as it just became a talking shop…So I started my own thing, my own group 'women in XXXX'. I started to do sessions to encourage women (range of activities). We needed to work as a whole, and I am working on that now*

and keen to change this. It is working well but I need time on my timetable to really make a difference. (Senior academic, Jeevan)

This is a clear example of agentic behaviour operating to mitigate discriminatory structural conditions. In this case, lack of space on her timetable (an example of a brick wall) jeopardised the progress of the network group Jeevan has developed. Although some participants displayed similar agentic behaviour it should not be seen as an attempt to downplay the difficulties engendered by structural inequalities, which clearly limited and restrained agentic participants' actions. Diljit, for example, talked about how she leaned on her own informally created network, based on principles of trust and similarity. I asked her if having network members from the same ethnicity was important, and she responded:

I think there is a sense of community when you know there are others. I know it sounds a bit strange but there is a sense of an un-spoken community. Just familiarity of someone, without these other two colleagues (two other ASAW) I feel really out of place…XXXX (ASAW) pushes me, saying you should be going to this forum or this event, I don't get that from my manager. (ECR, Diljit)

The unequal treatment Diljit experienced in the past, pushed her to create this third space, where she can talk freely about her experiences and struggles. This type of solidarity is an emotional and practical response to the structural failures of the institution and reflects hooks (1999) claims that true resistance can only really begin when individuals confront pain, and work with other marginalised people, which is why this informal/homophilic network for Diljit is a strong source of strength. The deficit of social capital she experienced at an individual level is somewhat remedied through this collective, networked approach, giving rise to a more collective habitus with women who were like her. By creating, and then drawing on, a network of similar others, Diljit is developing a coping mechanism with those who just 'get it'. Although the strength is being gained at the margins, it can collectively, be used to push through to the centre. hooks (1990)

AS the accounts above shows, small intimate networks for ASAW individuals are often created to help ASAW communities survive and even thrive in dominant white spaces such as HE. It is crucial, however, to consider how and who determines the value of these small intimate networks. Indeed, it is the lack of institutional support that propels ASAW and other

marginalised groups to create alternative informal networks. Therefore, the value of these informal networks comes from within the group and forms a constituent part of their quest to move from the margins to the centre. Such networks provide alternative ways to develop social capital in a collective setting with similar others, aligning well with Putman's (1995) views, who stresses how social capital operates as with norms and trust facilitating action for the collective benefit. Using informal spaces, like personal networks, encourages ASAW to use the intersection of their racialised and gendered experiences offering them a distinct outlook in making sense of their position.

5.3.3 Emotional Capital & Hard Work

The emotional intensity that characterised participant experiences and reactions is revealing and is a type of emotional capital explored by Ahmed (2014), but which was not considered by Bourdieu (Reay, 2004). When listening to the stories and cultural influences experienced by my participants, the importance of 'emotions' became apparent. I felt it was important to understand what they did with this emotion and consider how and if it assists in transforming their position within, HE. Feminist academics (such as Lorde, 1984; hooks, 1990; Ahmed, 2014) discussed earlier, have always recognised the importance of emotions. Nowotny (1981) considers emotional capital as a resource women have in greater abundance than men, although she believed these emotions are activated in response to barriers rather than possibilities. I agree that the barriers my ASAW participants faced more often than not triggered agentic tendencies, which lead to their advancing new possibilities or like Neena (as described earlier in this chapter) supported their refusal to comply and change their behaviour. Kiran also used barriers to drive her forward:

> *Everyone, tells me to work in networks, work together and go to conferences and see people face to face…if you don't know people it is difficult to survive. I just have to do it my way. One white female (AP) told me "You have to chase networks and keep at it; this is how it works in academia"… but why? My view is I don't care what HE is about, I want to do it based on my stance. I'm not going to just kiss ass.* (ECR, Kiran)

Despite her struggles to mobilise and access existing networks, Kiran is keen not to replicate the normative behaviours of the Academy and persists in doing things her way, even if this delays her progression. In a Bourdieuan sense, the senior white female was letting Kiran know

the rules of the game; by not following her advice, arguably, Kiran is contributing to her own exclusion. However, Kiran was very confident other opportunities would emerge, found on her own terms.

During my interviews, emotion was touched on as a critical feature of ASAW's experiences. 'snap' experiences is the term given by Ahmed (2017) to emotionally charged, instances where individuals felt angry or hurt. However, many participants also spoke about aspects of their childhood or upbringing as affecting their formative snap moments. Most participants described their histories and pointed to emotionally charged aspects of their childhood that they still drew upon to drive their careers and navigate networks within HE. My data suggest for some ASAW agency is rooted in the past and their memories and childhood experiences contribute to their success. It is the emotion invested in their history, culture and upbringing connected over time that influences their perception of the ASAW sense of self and ultimately their professional experiences. Diljit talked about the influence her childhood had on her work ethic:

> *I was always bought up with the notion of hard work, and when you work hard you do everything you can to be the best you can. My parents were not educated, mum came from India…her qualifications did not count here, which meant they had to work, bloody hard to get where they are. Because of that and seeing them work hard, that was very much reflected on us.* (ECR, Diljit)

Diljit's position reflects the views of Aisenberg and Harrington (1988; p.52), who describe the "merit dream" as one based on integrity and hard work and rejects the need for self-promotion. Other participants shared how emotions shaped their approach to working in academia. Below, Neena, although she does not refer to it directly, implied that it was the emotion of fear and worry, which drove her to work hard to succeed. She does not want to be "*chucked out*" so needs to work hard to meet the white gaze (Rabelo, Robotham and McCluney, 2020). In some instances, this was articulated in a way which strikingly calls up strong colonial associations.

> *For someone that is not from this country it is my academic success and hard work that speaks for me. I have had to work much harder than my white counterparts – otherwise I cannot survive here. If anything goes wrong, they will not spare us, they will chuck us all out.* (Senior academic, Neena)

Neena's fear is self-described as originating from her past home country, which re-establishes itself in her present (Ahmed, 2014); it goes on to shape how her network relationships are

viewed within the workplace, and ultimately her career prospects. Below another participant talks of her father's influence on her work ethic:

> *I've always said I think it is an artefact of my ethnic and cultural background as my Pops has always instilled this hard work ethic, doing really well, keeping people happy and pleased at work, and not letting people down…Even though he's not telling me what to do with my lectureship, it sticks in your head – I need to keep my line manager happy and I need to make sure I do not shirk away from hard work.* (ECR, Banso)

Banso's's comments indicate a real sense of keeping the boss 'happy' which hints at a lingering of the old colonial mindset, where to say 'yes' will keep you safe and in a job. As Ahmed (2014) argues, a memory can be the object of feelings and Banso's's feelings about how hard she should work are shaped by the memory of what her 'Pops' used to say. Similarly, other ASAW referred back to childhood memories, which emphasise hard work as the key driver to propel careers:

> *I gave up my chair and I took a salary drop to take up another appointment at one of the top three universities in the country. Everybody thought I was mad, but a year later I got my chair back and it meant something. People like me who grew up in the back streets of XXXXX who were told they were never going to get to university, I had something to prove to myself.* (Senior academic, Kuljit)

Kuljit's narration of her history provokes strong emotions which Ahmed (2014) argues should not be seen as just an individual matter, but instead be recognised as arising out of external cultural factors, which contribute to shaping individual identities and which influence decisions about what activities we take on, which challenges to pursue and which to walk away from. Kuljit's childhood experience, namely being told she would not make it to university, informed her determination and agentic tendencies. I argue, although social capital in the form of networks is a powerful tool to achieve progression, equally the role of emotional capital, which is carried by many ASAW can give similar returns. Emotions can thus be a form of strength and empowerment offering a different type of capital not recognised by the doxa and hence requiring a route of its own to achieve success. Kuljit's story is one of resistance as she uses her power from within to create a position for herself within the academy.

5.4 Theme 4: Networks

Throughout the various sections of this chapter the use of networks, how and what returns can be achieved and an exploration of the different barriers ASAW have experienced with networks has been discussed. I next go on to share the views of ASAW where they share their experiences of two specific network spaces within, HE, namely conferences and meetings. Finally, I explore the impact and rise of another form of social capital, known as digital capital.

5.4.1 Conferences as a Networking Space

Within HE there are numerous spaces which encourage and promote networking. One of the networking spaces, which the majority of participants discussed, was attendance at academic conferences. Kriwy et al. (2013) argue visibility (a form of social capital) in such spaces is related to success and greater earnings in academia. Academic conferences contribute to maintaining a vibrant research agenda and as such play a valuable role in achieving exposure for academics' work and indirectly aid professional development and possibly career progression (Walters, 2018). In line with network theorists Granovetter (1973) and Burt (1992), conferences are an ideal site for taking advantage of networks as they present an opportunity to engage with what they describe as 'weak ties'. However, some participants suggested this was a space that did not naturally feel comfortable for them, and the opportunity to benefit from weak ties for some ASAW was limited.

> *I found conferences a bit hit and miss, the most recent was not too great. The most recent one I went to was XXXX, which I found cliquey. I mean number one it is a European conference, and it was really – hard to see diversity. For me to go to conferences like that and hardly see any real diversity is hard and it is at the back of my mind, where are all the brown people? and where are all the black people?… Other thing with these European conferences is they speak their own language and that just shuts you out.* (ECR, Neetu)

Neetu indicates a feeling of exclusion, which not only exemplifies the feeling of not fitting in but makes her more conscious of her own colour, as in her words she is searching for other similar "*brown people*". Rabelo, Robotham and McCluney (2020) argue the lack of diversity here is highlighted by her awareness of her own colour, because when set against a white background like a European conference her difference was accentuated. It is argued, although ASAW are seeking a sense of familiarity at conferences at the same time the feeling of being an outsider inhibits mobilisation of this more open network space. Strategies employed to manage this networking space differ, as pointed out by Meena:

> *You know I never really thought about it but recently, not just because of your research – even at work they have been talking about BMEs and being more inclusive, which has kind of got me thinking. I try not to think about it and avoid it, when I go to these events/ conferences I just ignore it and hope if I ignore, I'm the only Asian here, others will not see it either.* (ECR, Meena)

Neetu and Meena both point to the need to see others who look like them at conferences. As the absence of diversity at conferences makes them question their right to belong in such spaces. Meena has developed a coping mechanism whereby even though she recognises she is the only ethnic minority, she is hoping, her 'imposter status' and the subsequent feeling of being out of place is not picked up by anyone else. Using Puwar's (2004) work, such spaces are not naturally carved out for ASAW, and Puwar ask's "what happens when those embodied differently come to occupy spaces rarely occupied by them?" Using the experience of Meena, an example of what might happen indicates attempts to supress 'differentness' and identity in the hope others do not notice her feeling of being displaced. Neetu, on the other hand, is looking for familiar others to bolster her position/ confidence. In contrast, Kuljit developed a different approach to conferences:

> *Your first conference you just stand there, and nobody knows you. I have learnt over the years when you start going to the same conferences on a regular basis then you begin to network as you begin to see the same people and start to have conversations, and then you get this sense of belonging and community, which is really important.* (Senior ASAW, Kuljit)

In the quote above, Kuljit seems to have learnt the rules of the conference game. By picking up on the conference doxa, she now feels she understands the formal and informal rules, which in turn help inform and construct her behaviour to be most effective. The sense of community/ belonging that Kuljit refers to suggests a collective approach to navigating one's way around a conference. Putman (1995) would support this view as his studies identify trust as the main ingredient of social capital, defining social capital as networks with similar norms and social trust, which then facilitates co-ordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. Similarly, at academic conferences, the norms and values shared by conference attendees are shaped by working to a similar goal of collaboration and/ or publication. From Kuljit's comments, developing these collective groups and communities helped to supress her feeling of not belonging. However, for Kuljit, it took years of reflection before a sense of belonging prevailed, which may go some way to explaining the slow career progression of ASAW generally, despite their attendance at conferences and other networking events. The conference

is merely one way in which networks can be utilised to achieve publications, collaboration, and REF targets. As I discussed earlier success within, HE can be measured and valued beyond REF., and some ASAW who have no doctorate, (such as Priya) they develop their own benchmarks of what is success. Priya believed her promotion to head of department had not been given the full validation or confirmation that she belongs within HE, by her white middle class team. In her own words Priya states "*I have to work really, really hard to win over my white middle class team"* she is seeking the acceptance of the dominant status quo and this for her (an academic on a teaching track) is an indicator of progression. However, this is where ASAW need to change the scale of evaluation and move away from the need to validated by others, and instead give themselves power and recognition from within hooks (1990).

5.4.2 Meetings

Although the conference is an important space in academia, it is often external to the HE institution, whereas meetings reflect the institution's own cultural norms and practices. During my interviews, meetings were one of the network spaces that contributed to the commonly experienced imposter syndrome:

> *In meetings when you're trying to say something and all these male voices just talk over you and you are trying to get your point across, and when you finally do there is silence, not much of a positive response. Ten minutes later a male colleague will say the same thing and they will respond differently – it has happened many times. To the point now, I am so damn rude I just say what I want and don't necessarily wait for my turn. I don't wait for someone to say, "what is it you want to say?" as that will never happen.* (Senior academic, Jeevan*)*

Often pre/ post meeting chats can work as a form of networking in HE. Attendees may well agree approaches or ideas linked to the agenda in advance, thus making meetings a useful site to potentially influence opportunities or gain recognition and more visibility to improve career goals. The comments above, from Jeevan, describe how despite being present at meetings, ASAW are still invisible, unless they shout to be heard. However, Ahmed (2017, n.p.) maintains that if shouting is what marginalised groups need to employ to be heard, it is likely they will only be heard as 'shouting', This, therefore, limits the impact they can make in settings such as internal meetings where shouting is frowned upon. Priya also shared a similar experience at an academic meeting.

> *I have felt a bit cheated recently, again a bit of learning the rules and game playing. I played out an idea (within my own staff meeting) and the next time you hear about the idea, someone*

> *else in a meeting is passing it off as their own. This has happened a few times, which has made me a bit savvy. Recently I was mooting ideas about how to manage return of students from lockdown and in a larger meeting on teams I was told there was an idea proposed by X (white male colleague). In the end, I had to follow it up and say I am really pleased, X has taken on board the idea we discussed.* (Senior academic, Priya)

Priya and Jeevan are both challenging the norms of the meetings they attend. They are keen to make their presence/ authority known but do this in different ways. Priya has adopted a more subtle and indirect approach, whereas Jeevan has opted to deviate from the rules and comes across as assertive and aggressive. Priya's challenge towards her male counterpart, who was trying to pass off her ideas as his own, is more subtle. Goffman (1956) describes this approach as an attempt to perform in a way that will display a favourable impression to others. Priya, conscious of her precarious position, decides she doesn't want to 'rock the boat' but equally wants her contribution acknowledged. She has become more "*savvy*" and learnt to play the game by their rules. Priya is calling out the behaviour of her white male colleagues, and she is mindful that her more senior position has given her more privilege to challenge the white gaze. Jatinder comments on how the atmosphere in meetings often contributes further to keeping ASAW at the margins of the academy:

> *It is a combination of both (race & gender) but first comes ethnicity and then gender. You do get this attitude sometimes they will not say it directly. I can feel it when I go into a room and their body language says it all – almost saying, "who the hell is she going to these meetings and the chancellor's dinners".* (Senior academic, Jatinder)

Jatinder's account of meeting spaces is occupied and dominated by the white gaze, which she feels is judging and questioning how she earned herself a place in a space that implicitly was not intended for her. The intersection of both her race and gender has a part to play in her positioning, however she acknowledges her ethnicity faces more challenges when it comes to fitting in. Feeling undermined and silenced in this way is a less tangible form of 'othering', which then adds to ASAW feeling excluded and unable to mobilise important networks. On talking about her experiences further, Jatinder highlights one of her snap moments:

> *It is really hard to evidence that people are acting in a racial manner but there were individuals at my university who were really resentful of the Centre (Research Centre that Jatinder was a director for) and its success. But they could not do anything because it was coming from the VC…I had a couple of things come back to me – "I must have slept to the top" – all this I have had to face. So many obstacles and barriers.* (Senior academic, Jatinder)

As she speaks, she is throwing her hands up in the air, indicating despair at how her success has been translated, not least because of the insulting assumption that the only way in which her success could be explained was through her sexuality. Jatinder worked closely with the VC and Executive team, and the research centre she worked at had global attention from both the media and other academic scholars. Yet, her description of her white colleagues as "*getting the daggers out*", emphasised the seriousness of opposition towards her and how she felt in danger, due to her own success. The body language of her colleagues gave her clues about how she was being talked about as she mixes socially in a predominately white patriarchal space. Jatinder is describing a situation where notions of professionalism are more readily accorded to white middle-class males (Messner ,2000), and the presumption is 'others' are somehow less capable (Mirza, 2015). If the very spaces ASAW engage with in academic life (such as meetings, conferences and social functions) reflect only patriarchal, white, male views, then the academy merely perpetuates inequality within HE, making certain types of bodies more privileged than others.

5.4.3 Informal Networks

Overall, when speaking about networks, there was a strong consensus amongst participants favouring informal networks, which had links to different scholarly activity such as sitting on government committees, contributing to internal and external task groups/reports, joining professional bodies and friendship circles. Gaytri describes her use of informal networks below

> *When I think of networks I think of informal networks, my PhD supervisors, my colleagues and friends they tend to become my main source of networks. The idea of organic networks works for me; the casual conversation even in someone's office it can spark ideas.* (Mid-career academic, Gaytri)

This quote illustrates a desire to build networks and access ideas through strong ties, trust and mutual understanding, which was a consistent theme in the data. Being with similar others and having built strong ties enabled Gaytri to not only access these networks but also to gain benefits in terms of being invited to give joint papers or co-author publications. Some ASAW indicated the comfort achieved through engaging in networks with those similar to their own background. Below, Banso explains:

> *I do use informal networks and some of these are with peers of similar ethnicity. I find it easier as I can relate to their interests, and when they say I got to go home as mother-in-law needs*

> *X, Y or Z, I get that these extended family commitments are unique to our culture. But I also have colleagues who are British-white, and I cannot always relate to some of their values and vice versa.* (ECR, Banso)

This form of collective solidarity promotes inner strength, resilience and enables shared experiences and feelings to help resist and challenge dominant norms and practices. These types of informal networks might not have always delivered returns for Banso but did offer a place of refuge, because other ASAW understood her challenges through their own cultural experiences. Forming informal networks with those similar to oneself (like Banso) enabled these ASAW to collectively utilise expressive ties as these ties linked to their identity and where they were from.

In contrast, there were some AWW who highlighted the importance of instrumental ties (Van der Gaag and Snijders, 2005) such as more formal role-based networks, whereby interacting with professional bodies outside of HE (external capital) but linked to their discipline created different types of opportunities. Durga shares her experience:

> *An examiner from the professional body I engage with had asked me to do some book reviews recently, and then introduced me to an opportunity to get involved with additional work (with income) within my discipline for the professional body.* (Mid-career, Durga)

Another trend amongst ASAW coming from abroad expressed some difficulty in mobilising their habitus of origin. Seema describes how she initially relied on networks from her habitus of origin (India):

> *In terms of networks, when I first arrived in the UK, I relied on some of the networks of my father (who worked for UK companies back home and regularly travelled to UK). So very early on my local guardian was my father's old friend who was his old boss back in India. They were one of my main people…and informed my cultural understanding of the UK.* (Mid-career, Seema)

Drawing upon ties linked to her father was a comfort for Seema as they offered her some familiarity. However, these contacts did not have an HE background and although they were supportive in helping her settle, she could not utilise these contacts to help open doors within the Academy. Her experience indicated how the influential habitus she had back home (through her father's contacts) met with institutional 'brick walls' in UK HEIs, making her previous experience and skills redundant. In contrast Kuljit, a more experienced ASAW, operating at a

senior level, described how her networks were composed of both formal, informal and what she terms 'semi-formal' networks:

> *I have a combination of formal partners in industry and government policy makers and there are also informal networks in the form of critical friends…Then there are semi-formal networks which is about research papers and research grants. For me it is a combination…For me it is really important to work with people I do not get on with – working with people who are challenging makes me think.* (Senior academic, Kuljit)

Evidence of both weak and strong ties as a form of mobilising networks is at play here. Although this is a classic hybrid approach, my data suggest access to weak ties (with the exception of digital networks) can take longer for ASAW to mobilise. Reliance on strong ties is often employed as a network, but often based on conditions of trust and/ or working with those similar to them (who are not often immediately available to ASAW). The need to be challenged draws Kuljit to working with those who don't think like her, which supports Granvotter's (1973) network theory that these weak ties bring better career returns. Equally she also seeks the benefit from informal networks, finding herself navigating and moving around all different types of opportunities. Kuljit displays some strong agentic behaviour; being driven emotionally by her experiences as a child, she is able to negotiate her way through a range of adult and professional networks and barriers. In this sense, her long-standing agentic tendencies overcame the more immediate structural barriers within HE. Her biggest barrier was the lingering feeling of being an imposter, which she was still learning to tame and manage.

HE operates on a framework where success is now measured in terms of teaching, enterprise (links) and research publications. For some of my participants, publications were a priority andlike Kuljit sought success by engaging with government bodies or participants like Neetu who were more successful through delivering workshops to industry links. Other participants such as Priya and Meena were seeking endorsement from the dominant white male/ middle class academic team. However, Kuljit stands out as she has set herself her own measure of success, which does not indicate she needs to have met REF, TEF or Enterprise targets, she claims:

> *I gave up my chair and I took a salary drop to take up another appointment at one of the top three universities in the country. Everybody thought I was mad, but a year later I got my chair back and it meant something. People like me who grew up in the back streets of XXXXX who were told they were never going to get to university, I had something to prove to myself.* (Senior academic, Kuljit)

Her words are powerful as they are driven by her history, struggle, and experience. For Kuljit she has determined her own criteria of achieving progression and having finally made it based on her own terms she is then in a stronger position to support others.

5.4.4 Digital Networks

A relatively new field within which social capital can be developed is via internet-based networks. In Chapter 5 the rise of digital networks was discussed and although there is limited research in this field some scholars have argued that use of Twitter can bring about career benefits (Singh, 2017). For academics, the work of Veletsianos and Kimmons (2013) demonstrates how increased participation in digital platforms can offer more avenues for scholars to organise conferences and events, which in turn can lead to increased connections and social capital. Further research by Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe (2007), although related to students, indicates that the use of Facebook offers opportunities to build social capital through weak network ties. The digital space removes the need to engage with the physical doxa. It creates a more fluid type of playing field, not so dependent on dominant values and expectations. Furthermore, less fixed or hybrid professional identities which are facilitated via digital platforms can help to reduce feelings of being an imposter. While the majority of my participants were aware of the increased use of social network platforms, most ECRs in the study were reluctant to engage with them. To some extent this can be attributed to confidence. As one participant stated:

> *I know everyone uses it…but think why anyone would be interested to know what I think.* (ECR, Banso)

Others did, however, embrace the use of digital networks and shared with me the benefits and returns this has bought them:

> *I have a LinkedIn account. I use it; I have a strong Twitter presence. It is not something I consciously choose to do but being part of some research got me involved and it has grown. I am not one of those that uses it to say I went to a restaurant or event; my comments will be about research, showcasing a colleague work or about policy.* (Senior academic, Kuljit)

In line with Ibarra's (1995) notion of using networks as instrumental ties, Kuljit does not see social networks as a tool to socialise and build friendships, instead she sees them as a very task-

based way to improve her profile within HE and her disciplinary field. Kuljit, although she has no evidence to support the view that digital capital has improved her profile, she told me how, "*A week wouldn't go by when I was at University X, where a Head-hunter would contact me about a role*". This suggests how a positive virtual presence can bring other door openers outside of HE, who are not influenced by HE's culture, rules, or norms. Instead, Kuljit's digital capital helps her to secure new offers for career opportunities, based on merit as the head-hunters only have her work profile to view and no subjective knowledge of her.

In summary, it is argued that digital networks widen conditions of possibility and open up different kinds of collective agency for AWW. They can also offer networking opportunities that particularly support ASAW who, due to family commitments (both their own and the extended family), cannot mobilise the traditional types of networks. This view was expressed by Jeevan:

> *I'm not keen on networking…partly because all these groups /network events in my field would be based in London, so I never really took part. But what has helped is social media, so now we can connect easily with no need to travel, so it has made things a lot easier.* (Senior academic, Jeevan)

Jeevan is now an active user of both Twitter and LinkedIn and, like Kuljit, has found people approach her about her work via LinkedIn. She also actively uses Twitter, more for professional reasons, but she went on to describe how her Twitter network was now offering her expressive ties akin to a community of practice:

> *I have lots of connections, I feel there are people in my Twitter network that I know personally, even though I have not met them physically. I have built that rapport and understanding, people of all backgrounds. Including peers, students, and industry professionals…its brilliant.* (Senior academic, Jeevan)

Putting aside her initial dislike of networking, Jeevan has reframed her refusal to accept institutional barriers by accessing more open digital networking platforms where she did not face the same entrenched brick walls or snap moments. Her engagement with digital networks began as an opportunity to access weak ties; however, these have developed into strong bonded networks (Putman, 2000) enabling her to increase her visibility in a digital way and offering her returns in terms of career opportunities. Kamal in particular was a strong advocator of using digital networks:

> *I am very active digitally; I use LinkedIn and research-gate as well. I get really good comments for my research and get to know what is new. I also subscribe to other platforms and get real experts who blog about what they learn in my field. I follow the person to see what I can learn from this and use it in my teaching and own development.* (Mid-career, Kamal)

Digital platforms, therefore, do not have the barriers to access that may exist within physical spaces in HE for ASAW as discussed above. The digital forum enabled Kamal to have access to a wider network (weak ties) and with people from all backgrounds, ages and gender. Not only did this improve her visibility, but it has also informed her teaching practices and own personal development in a more productive way than more formal interventions such as mentoring, Aurora and/ or AS (discussed earlier in the chapter).

Overall, the majority of ASAW in the study were actively thinking about using digital platforms more or had already engaged with them and seen the returns. At the time of writing, due to Covid-19, the move to home working and increased reliance on a virtual working environment was just emerging as the new normal. This was not a factor during my data collection but would be an interesting area to pursue in order to understand whether a virtual network continued to promote career opportunities. More often than not, building digital capital was a positive move. My data reveals when ASAW turn outside of their own HE institution to connect and network externally, they are, in some instances, seeing more sympathetic, collective and welcoming and beneficial responses compared to those experienced in their own HE institution.

In conclusion, my data reveals the brick walls, snap moments and imposter feelings ASAW faced within HE, highlight the sector's historic, toxic, gendered/ racial undertones. In this way the history of HE has led to the construction of many brick walls (as described by Ahmed, 2017); the wall keeps its place and instead it is ASAW who have to change or seek alternative strategies. My thesis claims, in the main, ASAW opt to change the field but not the 'self'.

6 Conclusion

Although there has been a recent proliferation of research on under-represented groups within, HE (Bhopal, 2020; Rabelo, Robotham and McCluney, 2020; Rollock, 2019; Runnymede Trust, 2015), this thesis was undertaken because it was concerned with giving a distinct voice to one category of women, namely ASAW, independent from other ethnic minority categories working in British universities. Through unveiling the complexity and challenges facing ASAW in accessing and benefitting from more collective and often informal academic networking spaces within HE, in particular I have uncovered substantive variations in the way AWW have used both formal and informal networks to facilitate their career journeys. The data collected through the fourteen narrative accounts have provided me with a rich repository of snap moments, histories, and biographies cumulatively illuminating the multiple strategies ASAW employ to navigate the field of HE (individually and collectively/formally and informally). Although many of the accounts from my ASAW participants confirms institutional and deliberate discrimination and marginalisation not all descriptions point to experiences unique to their ethnic status as ASAW. However, the aim of this research was to give the participants a voice and explore their use of networks within HE. Although some participants echoed what has been said in previous research (Bhopal, 2020; Rabelo, Robotham and McCluney, 2020; Rollock, 2019; Runnymede Trust, 2015) there were some examples, which were unique to their ethnic status. For example, Priya referred to the cultural specificity of the extended family, and Kiran, Seema and Neena identified their Indian accent as a barrier to success. However, Jeevan and Diljit spoke of the need to work and seek refuge with those from the same Indian ethnic background as their own as they felt they just 'get it'. It is however acknowledged other than the examples described above the experiences of ASAW in HE was similar to other female ethnic minority groups.

In analysing the experiences of ASAW in this study, the key conceptual contributions of this thesis are threefold.

First, I have extended and complexified classic Bourdieusian conceptualisations of original habitus and how they play out for academics in HE. When looking specifically at the role of habitus within my data set, I have also highlighted an important distinction between ASAW born and raised in the UK, and those who enter British HE from lives abroad. In particular,

my data suggests that while British ASAW creatively found additional opportunities through their negotiation of a complex hybrid habitus, their hybridity starkly contrasts with the experiences of ASAW born abroad who often felt that their 'foreign' non-nationally conforming habitus put them at a distinct, racialised, disadvantage in English HEIs.

My second contribution has been to widen Bourdieusian ideas of social capital (SC). While not denying the central applicability of classic notions of SC, my findings demonstrate that ASAW also regularly engaged with alternative routes to professional capital accumulation through their multifarious engagements with digital, emotional, external, agentic, and borrowing capital. This illustrates how ASAW drew on resources differently from their white counterparts in navigating their careers and shows how they developed flexible, compensatory strategies when their own access to SC was limited by the expectations of their, HE workplaces.

Finally, I feel it is important to situate my findings in the context of the neoliberal development of UK universities. The increased managerialism of the university sector and its concomitant raised interest in data gathering and target setting, has, I argue, created new challenges for ASAW's careers that has hitherto have not received the attention they deserve.

Figure 5: Summary of findings:

My summary of findings below:

Figure 5 Summary of Findings

This infographic illustrates both the mobilising networks and the barriers ASAW face when seeking to improve their professional position within HE. My data suggest that although some ASAW have a deficit of classic forms of SC, it is not the only form of capital available to them. As illustrated within the large blue circle to the left of Figure 5, participants indicated a variety of engagements with six different types of capital. An engagement trajectory moreover which was dictated less by their career stages but more by their individual histories, particularly their habitus. To the right of the figure, I present the ten most important strategies identified by

respondents as of use in maximising career opportunities. These strategies are used in different combinations, and it is important to note that no one individual mobilised all of them simultaneously. Similarly, although common barriers, such as imposter status, emerge, these applied differently, and emerged in different combinations, in each participant for a variety of reasons. Specifically, it became apparent during this research that the participants had 'cherry picked' professional development strategies, both consciously and subconsciously, dependent on their personal situation to improve their professional opportunities. In several cases, however, the pursuance of classic SC was the central driver which participants used to bridge the gap between organisational structures and the position of ASAW.

6.1.1 Complexifying Understandings of Habitus

The Bourdieuian theory of habitus (1990) offers important insights into HE networks when examining normative majority behaviours. In the case of describing B.A.M.E experiences, however, its utility as a single analytic lens is constraining in several ways. First and foremost, I argue that another important finding suggests ASAW are not subject to the same habitus as their white peers. Significantly, this lack of socio-cultural applicability rather than being constraining, can sometimes be used by participants opportunistically, or purposefully, as an enabling force for change. In short, some participants navigated a hybrid habitus based on their complex dualised national and ethnic identities. ASAW born and bought up in the UK typically manage two sets of cultures, traditions, values, histories, and social rules. A clear example of using a hybrid habitus to one's advantage was provided by Jatinder. She had set up a research centre with global success, but the centre explored issues related to her cultural/ religious ties, which faced many obstacles within her institution before being accepted. The research centres success demanded leadership based on her ethnic identify and using networks not naturally available to her white counterparts. Here Jatinder's networks related to her habitus acquired from her immigrant parents, proved to be of value and were used to her advantage.

As discussed in Chapter 5, the participants in this study exemplified varied and complex approaches to managing their positions in network spaces in HE. For example, I turn to Kuljit's example of self-negotiation, which saw her recourse to improvisation to secure her senior appointment at a Russell Group university. Similarly, as argued by Ahmed et al. (2006), levels of pretence are sometimes strategically employed. My data suggest some ASAW with a hybrid habitus could 'put on', strategize and temporarily enact organisational expectations as a means

of advancing their careers. In this sense, ASAW can be seen to pay lip service to the rules of the academy for their own ends. Paying lip service is a tactic which HE is often accused of in relation to equality initiatives (Ahmed, 2019) but my research also shows how some ASAW are willing to utilise this approach to their own advantage, to push through some of the glass ceilings they encounter. Furthermore, once ASAW have secured senior positions, they can be shown to often abandon practices that did not align well with their own habitus of origin, and instead use their new roles to disrupt some entrenched informal institutional practices necessarily for career progression, such as tapping, grooming and the use of informal networks.

My identification of hybrid habitus therefore presents a broader, more complex model for analysing ASAW career behaviours. I argue that this hybrid approach, has become normalised and habitual for most ASAW, as it represents a complexity which they have experienced throughout their lives. Rather than be restrictive, I argue that hybridity provides avenues for more agentic and collective ASAW empowerment. This notion of adopting a hybrid approach to improving one's position enabled some ASAW, such as Jatinder to combine the different elements of their background, skills, knowledge, and experience, giving them multiple skills to challenge the HE doxa in which they worked. In short, although each habitus will have innate behavioural rules and boundaries, the choices and opportunities are multiplied for those with hybrid habituses.

However, this theory cannot be applied in the same way to ASAW entering UK HE directly from abroad. These ASAW, with formative experiences away from the dominant white habitus of the UK, enter the UK HEI workplace as outsiders unused to drawing on the hybrid identities that characterise British-born Asians. As described in Chapter 5, ASAW coming from abroad struggle to transport their habitus of origin into the new British location. A number of participants (e.g., Kiran, Neena and Seema) identified their Indian accent as a barrier which 'othered' their identity and restricted their access to key networks. Furthermore, participants coming from abroad described instances of exclusion from informal career-building opportunities gleaned through grooming, favouritism and tapping. My findings indicate HE enacts a hierarchy of oppression reflecting the innate racialised preferences of the academy. This hierarchy privileges white women first, followed by British-born-and-raised ASAW, leaving ASAW from abroad on the lowest rung. Following Rabelo, Robotham and McCluney (2020), it becomes apparent that, in HE, ASAW from abroad are farthest from the white gaze and therefore suffer the most detriment.

6.2 Beyond Social Capital (SC)

In my critical evaluation of Bourdieuian social capital, I argue that capital accumulation occurs in broader /different ways for ASAW, encompassing digital, emotional, external, agentic and/ or borrowing capital as part of a portfolio of choice (see Figure 5). I centrally argue that, although certain forms of habitus can influence one's position, it is not the only concept to explain how ASAW navigate professional HE networks. This notion of being able to draw on external capital, although not described in such terms by participants, can be seen as a tactical recourse regularly drawn upon by ASAW to support them in overcoming challenges at work.

My research shows how some ASAW built and used traditional forms of SC through their relationships with supervisors, critical friends and/ or line managers. Here I have stressed the temporal nature of accumulating SC, as professional relationships and mutual trust develop over time. In this respect, the importance of trust aligns well with that forwarded by Putman (1995) and Coleman's (1990) reading of SC. However, their account of SC underplays inequality that determines differential access to professional groups. To refer to an example from my data set, Meena spoke highly of her supervisor's' efforts to ensure she had insider knowledge of what to say and do to secure her first academic position. In this example, trust was a central part of this connection, which enabled her to borrow (Burt, 1992) her supervisor's SC to pursue her career goals. This was not an unusual example and supervisors, and line managers were often quoted by ASAW as key 'brokers' (Burt, 1992) connecting them to individuals, projects, information and/ or advice.

However, other types of a more collective/shared capital accumulation are also important. As evidenced by the data, sharing 'blocking' experiences with other ethnic community peers (homophily), especially identifying common wounds (Gair, 2012), is a source of comfort and support for many ASAW. A further common response for dealing with exclusion from academic networks led to some participants exercising agentic tendencies to mobilise other networks external to their own institution. In many cases, my data found that ASAW often set up or joined their own networks to mobilise equality issues which demonstrates use of a third space, as advocated by hooks (1990); this enabled ASAW to use their history and marginalisation to actively take advantage of working at the margins.

Similarly, collective digital capital and digital spaces were found to be important, evidencing the importance of Granvotter's concept of weak tie theory (1973). Although some ASAW were less keen than others on collective action and sharing, often preferring to view the use of technology as an opportunity to promote their individual knowledge and careers. However, Freed from the historic institutional brick walls of the academy, engagement with the more porous and often anonymised world of the digital academic enabled traditional gatekeepers to be bypassed. One participant (Jeevan), for example, spoke of how she had created a virtual community of practice through digital platforms. This appetite to create collective community networks through a digital forum should be seen as a compensatory tactic to fill any perceived deficit an ASAW may have in their own SC. It may also present an important strategy moving forward as the world, even HE, becomes ever more virtual and diverse.

Finally, I touch upon the importance of emotional capital for ASAW in pursuing networks and career opportunities within HE. Although emotional capital is not mentioned by Bourdieu and is not sought after in the same way as SC, in line with Ahmed (2015), Reay (2000) and Nowotny (1981), I argue for its importance as a form of capital that is deeply entrenched within an individual's own biographical history. As neatly summarised by Ahmed: "emotions do things" (2004, p. 119). My data shows how ASAW drew upon their formative experiences of exclusion to challenge and question their current circumstances working in UK HE. Similarly, deeply embedded values such as pursuing a strong work ethic, growing up with difference and always having to work harder than one's peers, often provided the emotional capital to feel motivated to dismantle and disrupt unfair practices by 'calling out' discriminatory behaviour in the manner described by Ahmed (2019) as being a 'Killjoy'.

What has become clear through the course of this research is that the problems facing ASAW within British HE forced them often to develop their own creative solutions (individual and collective/formal and informal) to institutional barriers. Examining their stories powerfully illustrates how ASAW challenged the current entrenched HE doxa through creatively resisting, adapting, appropriating, disrupting, and replacing existing networks. Although SC is often described as a 'missing link' in terms of opportunities for ASAW, I argue that many ASAW without (or with only limited access to) SC nevertheless navigated their careers through their creative recourse to alternative capitals.

In Chapter 2, I highlighted how the structural and institutional practices of neoliberal HE institutions have contributed to influencing career opportunities. Here I argued how HEs' shift to a more neoliberal environment (exemplified most powerfully through TEF, REF and NSS) has changed the way academics work and are measured. These changes centre on embedding collaboration, partnership working and networking as normalised strategies for career progression. Although the criteria of REF, TEF and NSS are applicable to all, I argue structural barriers and HEs' institutional practices of work allocation, friendship circles and informal networks make this a particular challenge for ASAW. My data reveals that professional networks and friendships and not individual ability often determine the allocation of research hours, and that these are often not as easily available to ASAW. Grooming, tapping and favouritism, as previously mentioned, were identified by ASAW as additionally significant invisible hurdles that they had to face. Moreover, it is clear from my literature review and the study that, HE has normalised this behaviour because it reflects the (invisible) historical and cultural networking practices that benefit white people and disadvantage ASAW and other marginalised groups.

Despite a range of commitments dating back to the 1970s (Equality Act) B.A.M.E academics remain scarce in senior positions (Advance HE, 2020). In recent years, HE may have attempted to address some of the inequalities through interventions such as Aurora, Athena SWAN and the Race Equality Charter, but, nevertheless, the majority of participants had not even heard of some of these schemes. However, it seems, as argued by Ahmed (2019), that working towards the goals of diversity has become non-performative. Furthermore, more participation by ASAW does not necessarily address the structural, gendered and racialised habits of the academy. In seeking solutions, a starting point for HE needs to be an acceptance that racism exists. Without real change, this thesis claims (as observed by Ahmed, 2013, blog post) ASAW will continue to have 'killjoy and wilful' moments, or as Audre Lorde points out, they will continue to care for themselves as "an act of political warfare" or as a form of self-preservation (1988, p. 131).

6.3 Future of HE

What has become clear from the stories of my participants' experiences within HE, is that examples of personal racism, institutional (policies and procedures) and systemic/structural racism (where the polices are located i.e., curriculum) continue to persist. The idea that

education is based on principles of meritocracy, (Parsons, 1959) equal opportunities and objectivity is not a true reflection of the experiences of ASAW in this study. Although this echoes what previous studies have claimed (Bhopal, 2020; Rabelo, Robotham and McCluney, 2020; Rollock, 2019; Runnymede Trust, 2015) about underrepresented groups and their experiences within HE; the contribution of this thesis is to focus on the experiences of ASAW in relation to accessing and mobilising networks. In terms of networks, it is a similar story of blocked access, limited ability to mobilise and instead networks operate as a vehicle by which existing rules and practices that favour the status quo can be maintained.

I have explored the ways in which neoliberal policies and procedures promote competition and difference over solidarity and unity in HE. I have shown how ASAWs favour more trusting, close knit, and supportive networks, which is not surprising due to their relatively low numbers and often marginalised status in HE. A subsequent need for solidarity and collectivity emerges out of their individual experiences which mitigates their feelings of uneasiness about many dominant norms and practices in HE. It is important to note however that these experiences of difference did not always start in HE as some of my participants spoke of how they also carried the emotion, memories, history, and trauma of their childhood, which gave them the inner power to question and challenge the status quo. Despite these difficulties ASAW in this study spoke of a range of alternative strategies (discussed above in figure 5) that has helped them navigate networks and develop connections which helped them persevere in HE.

Some ASAW in this study identified homophilic (often more informal) networks as places where ideas can be exchanged, which provided them opportunities to share their common wounds (Gair, 2012) and offered psychological safety with similar others. Moreover, it was also acknowledged that entry to more traditional networks within HE is not automatic and often comes with conditions attached or a willingness to replicate the dominant practices through taking on tokenistic appointments. Some ASAW, were willing to play this game and opted to take on tokenistic appointments, only to then use this opportunity to disrupt and challenge existing practices once senior positions had been gained.

The preference to be with those similar to your own background (homophily) was evident throughout the data and it is possible the future of HE will see the rise of more closed networks where ASAW and other under-represented groups will collectively tackle injustices within the academy. HEIs, should however consider their role in supporting and encouraging participation

of marginalised groups with more collective, closed and homophilous networks, which in turn could ease the opportunity to access, mobilise and benefit from wider (even more traditional) networks within HE. I myself have joined one such closed network called Sikhs in Academia (SIA, 2023) and I am seeing first-hand how my work on networks is being played out effectively through this forum.

The Sikh Academics network is a clear example of using the margins to move forward to the centre, but on their own terms. In this way the Sikhs in Academia network is a good example of what can be achieved collectively and is a network that is operating as a movement to bring about change. I believe HE on its own is unlikely to provide radical change unless 'snap moments and 'killjoy' tendencies from underrepresented groups illuminate relations of power and inequalities. Such closed networks could in the future become more popular and can contribute to help break down barriers and divisions. As described by Iskander & Landau (2022) these networks on the margins have the potential to ultimately shape the centre (p. 106). To date, change in HE has been slow, and I argue change will come, but it will come from marginalised groups. What is needed from HE is to acknowledge the misuse of networks and recognise uneven practices are being used to mobilise career-related networks, which as my data suggests can hinder under-represented groups. It is a responsibility of all, including those who are privileged through gender /ethnicity, to remain critical of our practices and to be willing to work differently and transparently. Some ASAW in this study openly advocated doing things differently from the more established dominant practices within HE, and instead, they created their own rules, found their own external, digital, homophily /collective networks, and set out their own measures of success. In this sense they are demonstrating an appetite to 'dismantle the master's house' and rebuild based on their own terms often motivated by their emotional and historic experiences within the academy. A HE with ASAW (and other underrepresented groups) working on the margins in networks with others should be seen as a positive act and celebrated by the academy.

6.4 Limitations of the Thesis

As with every thesis, certain limitations are inevitable. Particularly, I would like to have recruited more participants at the senior stage of their career, but the lack of numbers made this extremely difficult. It was also hard to evaluate the impact of initiatives such as Aurora and Athena SWAN due to participants' limited knowledge of and engagement with them. Despite

challenges, however, this research also presented several opportunities ripe with potential. In particular, it would be interesting to analyse the reasons behind the strong consensus amongst participants in dismissing, devaluing, and rejecting policy interventions around mentoring (preferring instead to connect personally with sponsors). The role of culture, class, family size and proximity too could have been interesting avenues for further exploration. I would have liked more time to dissect issues of identity and belonging, teasing out the complex fine lines, convergences, and divergences, between 'being' British and 'being' Asian. I have wondered whether, generationally, these things will become increasingly fluid? Do second, even third generation ASAW, for example, feel more enfranchised than the first generations? To what extent do national and religious heritage differences between Asian community groups help to define the various engagements of ASAW with HE?

These limitations to one side, however, it has been an inspirational journey following fourteen different life stories. I have been amazed and surprised by the levels of resilience and determination shown by participants during the course of this thesis. It has been a privilege to explore these complex negotiations of identity and to be able to hear such unique stories of adaptability and, often, success. Although there is still a long way to go in terms of changing the entrenched views of the academy, above all this thesis has inspired hope. Even behind concrete walls and against social odds, ASAW continue to show they hold the potential for transformative outcomes.

Appendix 1

Participant Information Sheet

Researcher Name: Sukhwinder Salh

Study title

What do the experiences of ASAW reveal about the role of networks in pursuing career opportunities in the field of Higher Education?

Introduction

This research project focusses on the historicised reflections of ASAW and their career trajectory within British higher education institutions. The research will be undertaken by adopting a narrative inquiry approach and collecting data through semi structured interviews. Participants will be invited to share experiences of using networks both informal and formal (within HE) and explore the contribution they make to offering career opportunities and or building social capital.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of the study is to explore the position of ASAW within British Higher education institutions. Despite extensive legislative intervention via the Equality Act 2010, and initiatives such as Athena Swan and the Race Equality Charter the number of ASAW in senior positions is still limited. The purpose of this study is to capture 'reality' of life experienced by AWW as socially constructed via the multiple lived experiences of ASAW. It is also anticipated that this study will further the understanding and value of storytelling within the context of this study's focus on how career trajectory for this group of women can be supported.

Why have I been chosen?

My research interest is to investigate how ASAW use networks and social capital to pursue career opportunities within the context of Higher Education institutions. You

have been chosen because you fit my research question, which gives clear guidelines as to what categories of people need to be the focus and attention of the sample.

The two main criteria that needed to be satisfied in order to recruit participants are:

(1) Participants must be female with a background and origin from the Indian subcontinent (Which includes Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.)

(2) Participants must fit into one of the three categories associated with an academic career, which include early career researcher, mid-career or senior academic/professorial position, and working at a British University.

Do I have to take part?

Whilst your participation would be most welcomed, you have no obligation to take part in this research. If you agree to take part you are free to withdraw at any point, there is no obligation to provide a reason of further clarify your decision.

What will happen if I decide to take part?

You will be invited to an initial meeting where the parameters of research will be discussed. Subsequently participants will meet at intervals to be agreed, to build on the memories and stories generated. It is anticipated there will be a total three meetings, however this number will be set by the participant and researcher as the research progresses and can be extended if the need arises. Post-meeting each participant will be asked to reflectively critique discussions/activities.

What are the potential benefits and risks of taking part?

Benefits:

- To build participant's expertise in the field of narrative-based research
- To provide participants the opportunity to engage critically with experiences that have impacted on their career trajectory.
- To provide insights that could support other ASAW entering the profession and seeking progression
- To inform British Higher education institutions of the value of networks for ASAW and contribution, (if any) they make in supporting career opportunities.

Risks:

- It is important to note that this study's emphasis focusses on the stories, thoughts and ideas of ASAW. However, there may be times when unintentionally discussion may risk triggering emotion, if this occurs participants can disengage from the dialogue and where required will be encouraged to either seek the appropriate signposted University support service and/or discuss with the Researcher's supervisors.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

All data storage relating to individuals and their contact details will be kept on a proven password-protected secure user area on a network system. Participants will remain anonymous in all documentation and transcripts; at the first meeting, participants will be asked to choose a pseudonym. Participants can ask for aspects of the recording during and/or after the event to be deleted. However, the consent form asks that you agree if you subsequently decide to leave this research project that your contribution up to that point can be included within the thesis write-up. Further to this, the following precautions will be taken:

- The only reference to the institution involved will be the use of the term 'Higher education institutions'.
- Pseudonyms will be used which conceal identity.
- The subject discipline and department will not be explicitly identified against each participant's pseudonym.

What will happen at the end of the research study?

All participants will be given the opportunity to comment on transcripts complete with the researcher's interpretation of their contribution post-meeting. Findings will be written up as an EdD thesis and aspects of the study will be disseminated in a variety of ways including the publishing of research papers.

What if I have a problem or concern?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, please contact me and I will do my best to answer your questions. Alternatively, you can contact one of my supervisors - Amanda.French@bcu.ac.uk and or Kate.Thomas@bcu.ac.uk

Who has reviewed the study?

The study has been reviewed by Birmingham City University Research Ethics Committee.

Contact for further information

You can contact me for further information by email:
Sukhwinder.salh@mail.bcu.ac.uk

Thank you for reading this information.

Date: 26/06/2020

Appendix 2

Name of researcher: Sukhwinder Salh

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RECORDED MEETING

Title of project:

What do the experiences of ASAW reveal about the role of networks in pursuing career opportunities in the field of Higher Education?

Please initial here

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. ☐

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason. ☐

3. I agree for my contribution within the group to be recorded and for the information to be used for the purpose of this study. ☐

4. I agree that any direct quotes from the study can be used in the research report and any associated publications and understand these extracts will be anonymised. ☐

5. I understand that the researcher may wish to publish this study and any results found, for which I give my permission ☐

6. I agree to take part in the above study. ☐

……..	…….	…….
Participant's Name	Date	Signature

……..	…….	…….
Researcher's Name	Date	Signature

Appendix 3 Interview Schedule

Preliminary Questions	**Question**	**Links to Literature / research**
Q1	What is your Age, ethnicity and Job title?	Ensure category chosen for research (ASAW) is met.
Q2	What stage of your career are you? ECR, Mid-career or Senior position?	Ensure aware of which stage of career in order to meet requirements of research objectives.
Q3	Confirm recording/ consent / share overall aim of research. Share visual of range of networks within HE before moving forward.	In line with Ethics – checking understanding.
Q4	Tell me about why you joined HE and your experiences in engaging with networks • Who and what type of networks • Who helped • What advice, if any	Motivations for joining HE, experiences and understanding of how networks have played a role in career.

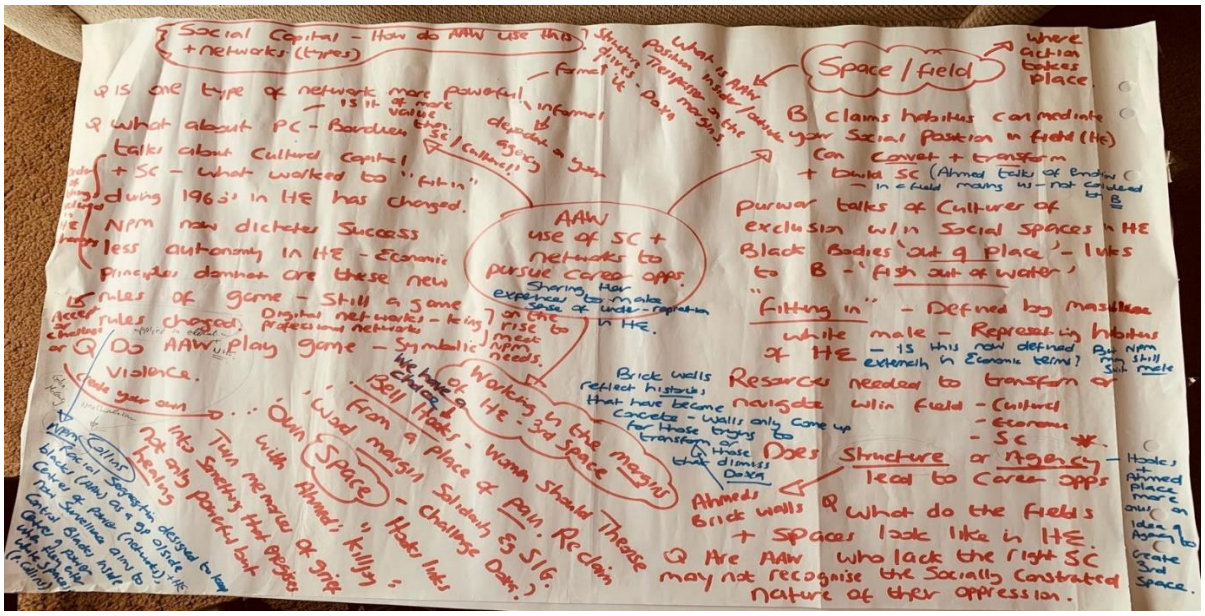
Network related questions	**Question**	**Links to Literature / research**
Q5	What do you think of the notion "it's who you know not what you know"	Social capital v Human capital
Q6	Would you say you are good at networking? • Any particular behaviours needed • Any role models of good networking • Any encouragement from within HE to join / participate in networks, if so which ones?	What behaviours are needed / used / which ones have been effective
Q7	When in a network, do you normally know everyone? • Is network with people of your own ethnicity?	Is network open / closed Homophily

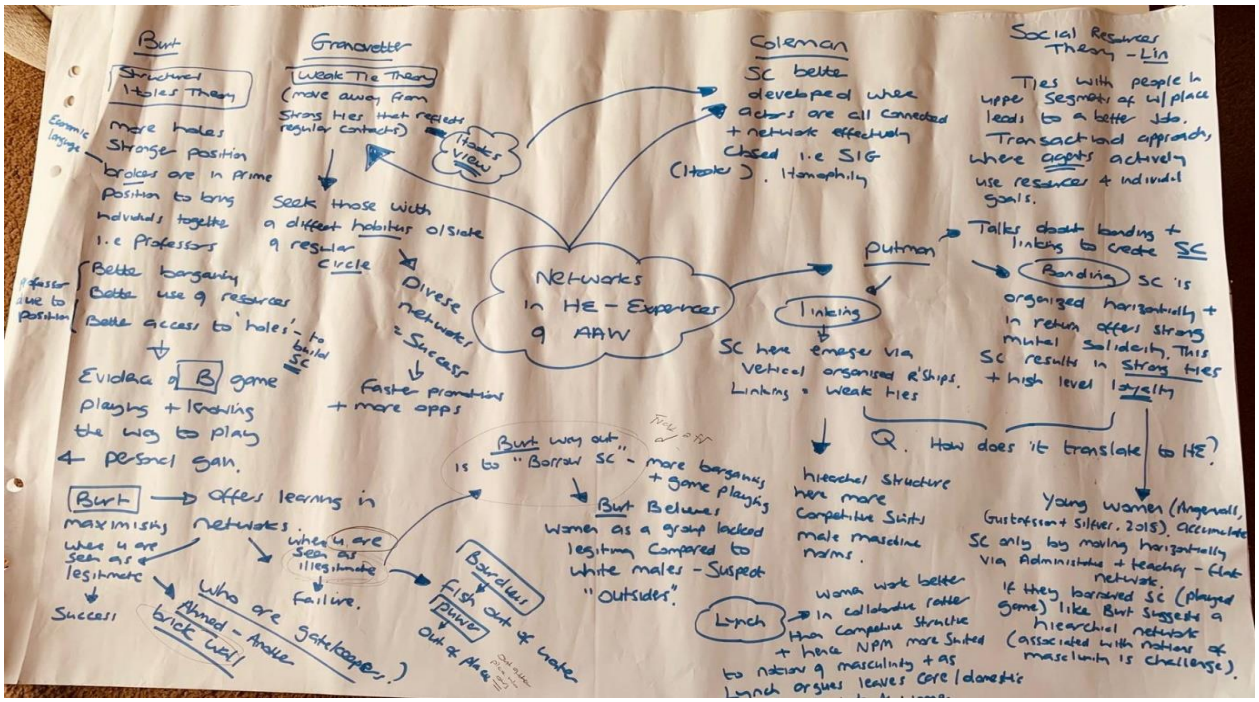
	• Is network within your own institution or external • Do you think you are missing anything in these networks i.e. knowledge, skills connections	
Q8	Within HE, what types of networks have you been part of? • Share your experience • How did you hear about them / gain access • What is your level of interaction • How do you know which networks are more valuable for your career • Whom, do you speak to in networks and how often do you use them? • What benefits, if any did you gain from engaging with networks	Has any of your experiences stayed with you or affected your approach to networks? Trust / knowing the rules/ getting access based on SC. Informal/ formal / professional networks – which are used, if any.
Q9	Within the HE sector, do you have contacts, connections or links that you rely on to perform your role? • Do you go to after work drinks • Do you lunch with colleagues • Coffee and work chats.	Contacts: Who are they? Background / what benefits have been gained. Do informal contacts offer any returns
Q10	What is your experience with digital networks • Twitter / linkedin / Academic.edu/ResearchGate	Does this offer better returns a more equal platform?

HE related Questions	**Question**	**Links to Literature / research**
Q11	Have you ever felt you have experienced unequal treatment / racism within HE? • Share the experience, what happened, who was involved – outcome • Anything that sticks with you?	Puwar / Ahmed / Hook/ Bhopal/ - "fitting in"
Q12	How has the changing landscape of HE (with NSS / TEF and REF) influenced career opportunities? • Are standards more objective • Who are the gatekeepers	Neoliberal environment good / bad in terms of fairness of opportunity.

	• What kind of work do you end up doing? (teaching / research / admin) • Has it helped career	
Q13	From your experience, is gender equality and race equality given equal priority within HE? • What is your understanding based on? • Have you heard of Aurora, REC and Athena Swan	Who benefits from these interventions – what is your experience
Q14	Do you ever feel you do not belong within HE? • When/where/ how do you manage it	Bourdieu / /Puwar /Brick walls
Q15	Do you have a mentor within HE? • Who/ benefits/experiences	Mentor v sponsorship
Q16	Do you think you work well in a competitive or collaborative environment?	Lynch – carer.
Q17	Have you ever been encouraged to apply for promotion? • By who? Outcome?	Sponsors?
Q18	Who do you talk to about research / teaching careers within HE?	Family, friends, peers or line manager.
Q19	Do you view after meeting buffets as opportunity to network • What is your experience in meetings • Do you have a voice	Fitting in

Appendix 4 – Mapping of data





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