Lancaster University Management School

Lancaster University Management School:

Author Accepted Manuscript

Published in compliance with the 3 month Open Access requirement

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Please cite this paper as:

Sliwa M. Beech N., Mason K., and Gordon L. (forthcoming), Learning from Each Other: Why and How Business Schools Need to Create a 'Paradox Box' for Academic-Policy Impact, Academy of Management Learning and Education

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ACCEPTED FOR PUBLICATION | September, 2022
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QUADRUPLE-ACCREDITED, WORLD-RANKED

AACSB ACCREDITED · ASSOCIATION OF MBAS ACCREDITED · EQUIS ACCREDITED · SMALL BUSINESS CHARTER

‘That’s bang out of order, mate!’: Gendered and racialized micro-practices of disadvantage and privilege in UK business schools

Abstract

The existence of gendered and racialized inequalities in academia has been well documented. To date, research has primarily addressed the intersectional disadvantages faced by members of minority groups, with much less attention paid to the privileges experienced by dominant group members. This paper draws on 21 interviews and 36 audio-diary entries completed by a diverse group of senior higher education leaders who have successfully navigated the career ladder in UK business schools. By juxtaposing minority with dominant group members’ narratives, the study advances intersectionality research, offering a contextualized analysis of the micro-practices of both disadvantage and privilege in academia. Through a focus on how micro-practices perform differently for members of different groups, it foregrounds ‘obvious’ as well as nuanced differences that contribute to the accumulation of disadvantage and privilege throughout an individual’s career, and emphasizes simultaneity as crucial to understanding the workings of gendered and racialized disadvantage and privilege.

Keywords: academia, disadvantage, intersectionality, micro-practice, privilege

> *I have spent a long time forgetting about color, and forgetting about being female. Female less, color much more so, because I've not wanted to talk about it, think about it, and I didn't want anybody else to think about it or talk about it with me. Had I been less closed to ethnicity and my gender, I would have spent more time talking to women about these issues.* (Fiona, Mixed race, Woman, British)

Introduction

Across UK higher education institutions (HEIs), significant inequalities persist, affecting women and members of other minority groups and their entry to the profession, access to secure employment, and career progression (e.g. Bhopal & Henderson, 2021). The need to address these inequalities has been acknowledged by both national legislators and sectoral policy-makers. Legislative advancements are exemplified through the Equality Act (2010) which obliges universities to remove or minimize disadvantages experienced by people with so-called protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, and sexual orientation. Sector-level policy-making includes accreditation frameworks, such as the Athena Swan Charter and the Race Equality Charter, aimed at supporting universities' cultural transformation towards greater gender and race equality. Despite these legislative and policy efforts, the fact that only 28% of UK Professors are female and only 1% of UK Professors are black (HESA, 2021) suggests that overcoming inequalities in academia remains a major task.

This paper contributes to efforts aimed at fulfilling this task by building an intersectional, contextualized understanding of gender- and race-related inequalities, evidenced by cumulative micro-practices that constitute an individual's work experiences, shape careers and buttress the current structures which produce unequal gendered and racialized outcomes. It builds upon work that examines how structural inequalities in favor of men are created and perpetuated across all spheres of social life, including within higher

education (e.g. Sang & Calvard, 2019). Recognizing that academia is neither gender- nor race-neutral but rather, 'constructed around a male, white norm' (Bourabain, 2021: 251), the paper considers the effects of gender in conjunction with race. It adds to the voices of Management and Organization Studies (MOS) scholars who have instigated honest conversations about race-related issues in business schools (Bell, Berry, Leopold, & Nkomo, 2021; Dar, Liu, Martinez, & Brewis, 2020). By asking: *What insights into the workings of gendered and racialized privilege and disadvantage can we gain through exploring business school leaders' narratives of the micro-practices of their daily work?*, the paper contributes to efforts to understand, challenge and overcome both sexism and racism in business schools, seeing these two types of exclusion and discrimination as intrinsically connected in their effects on individuals, groups and structural outcomes.

Adopting intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) as a lens (Nichols & Stahl, 2019) enables us to examine how, in UK business school context, differences intersect at the point where multiple micro-practices perform and reproduce disadvantage and privilege. Similar to other researchers who have studied intersectionality in academia, we explore the relationship between micro-level privilege and disadvantage and the inequalities observed at the meso-level of organizations (Johansson & Śliwa, 2014; Strauß & Boncori, 2020). Consistent with a constructionist perspective, the starting position is that social structures both set the context for, and are reproduced and enacted through micro-practices. Micro-practices are understood to be the small, often seemingly insignificant socio-political actions of individuals performed through the active integration of materials, meanings and competence – for example, selecting a recruitment panel, or helping doctoral researchers develop their network – that cumulatively (re)produce social structures (cf. Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 2001). The outcomes of micro-practices may be different from the intentions of each of the individuals involved in the performance of a specific micro-practice. An exploration of how micro-

practices are performed focuses attention on both individual actions *and* the material and institutional conditions of their performance (cf. Callon, 2010), generating insight into how key moments of discrimination are constructed. This purview recognizes that even in situations where individuals do not deliberately act in a discriminatory manner, discrimination can still be an outcome of the micro-practice they are involved in. We argue that while it is important to seek structural change, for example, through developing fair and transparent recruitment processes, it is equally important to focus on how we might challenge and change the everyday performance of micro-practices *in situ*.

Previous research has addressed the intersectional experience of disadvantage and privilege of organizational members from minority groups, both in academia and in other types of organizations (e.g. Hwang & Beauregard, 2021; Rodriguez, Holvino, Fletcher, & Nkomo, 2016; Villesèche, Muhr, & Śliwa, 2018). However, with the exception of Sang and Calvard's (2019) study of migrant academics in Australia, little is known about the experiences of members of the dominant group, such as white British men in academia. The analytical approach deploys a method of juxtaposition (Marcus & Fisher, 1986; Sørensen, 2014) whereby accounts given by members of minority groups are juxtaposed with those of the dominant group. The study highlights how inequalities in academia – evidenced by the 'leaky pipeline' of academic career progression for women and members of ethnic minorities employed in UK business schools (Śliwa et al., 2021) – are perpetuated through the simultaneous, cumulative micro-practices of gendered and racialized disadvantages that women and members of ethnic minorities face, combined with the gendered and racialized privilege that white British men experience.

The paper contributes to research on intersectionality in academia through: 1) enriching existing intersectional analyses of disadvantage and offering an intersectional analysis of privilege in academia; 2) offering a method for mutually contextualizing the

micro-practices of disadvantage and privilege through juxtaposing minority and dominant group members' narratives; 3) highlighting the significance of the overall experiences of the micro-practices of privilege and disadvantage for a person's career self-narrative; and 4) emphasizing simultaneity as crucial to understanding the workings of gendered and racialized disadvantage and privilege. It also puts forward a set of practical recommendations for challenging and changing micro-practices in business schools.

The next section presents an overview of key ideas from the literature addressing gender- and race-related inequalities in academia, including research conducted from an intersectional perspective. The subsequent section discusses the methodology adopted in the empirical study, followed by an analysis of the micro-practices that contribute to the reproduction of gendered and racialized inequalities in academia. Finally, we discuss the contributions of the study, and outline recommendations for practice and future research.

Contextualizing gendered and racialized inequalities in academia

There exists a substantial body of scholarship addressing inequalities in academia, especially in relation to gender and race. The former, in particular, has attracted a significant amount of attention over the past two decades, with researchers discussing the disadvantages faced by women academics, and capturing them through rich descriptions and identification of phenomena such as the 'glass ceiling' (Morley, 1994) and the 'leaky pipeline' (Wickware, 1997). The literature on the 'leaky pipeline' of academic advancement highlights the decreasing proportion of women within the higher echelons of the academic hierarchy as an outcome of barriers in recruitment and career progression (van den Brink & Benschop, 2012), including informal processes of exclusion and devaluation (Fotaki, 2013), a perception of women as requiring special help (van den Brink & Stobbe, 2014), coupled with gendered understandings of academic excellence (van den Brink & Benschop, 2012), as well as of care and caring roles in the institutional context (Macfarlane & Burg, 2019). Unsurprisingly, the

topic of sexism in academia continues to attract the attention of scholars across disciplines, with repeated calls for the need to challenge and resist it, and with strategies for surviving it (e.g. Ahmed, 2015; Cole & Hassel, 2017; Crimmins, 2019).

In parallel but, largely, separate from research on gender, scholars have examined issues of race in academia, pointing to the pervasiveness of covert and overt institutional racism (Ahmed, 2007; Bhopal, 2016; Bhopal, Brown, & Jackson, 2015). Bhopal (2016) explains that covert racism involves cultural insensitivity towards and exclusion of ethnic minority staff from decision-making practices, as well as the reproduction and performance of the university as an elite, White space. Here, whiteness is understood as referring 'not only to the phenotypes but to the structures of and cultures through which power, dominance and privilege are transmitted', and through which 'social capital' is carried (Mahony & Weiner, 2020: 843). Alexander and Arday (2015) highlight the centrality of white privilege to the institutional culture of British universities as a key area affecting staff and students from ethnic minorities in UK HE.

Empirical studies show that both covert and overt racism are present in the workplace experience of non-white staff, for example in the form of microaggressions that are part of systemic, everyday racism (Johnson & Joseph-Salisbury, 2018). For instance, Bhopal et al.'s (2015) research participants refer to being excluded by white academics from accessing the social and cultural capital necessary for academic progression, with the result of being less likely to be put forward for promotion or appointed to senior leadership and management roles than their white colleagues. In this context, it is important to reflect on the relational aspect of the inequitable treatment of members of different groups: for example, if, indeed, non-white academics are *less* likely to be put forward for promotion, then white academics are *more* likely to be put forward. This implies the need for understanding how daily micro-practices of work in academia affect members of *both* minority and dominant groups.

Towards an intersectional understanding of disadvantage and privilege in business schools

Over many decades now, feminist writers have drawn attention to the differences in the experiences of black and white women (e.g. Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Breines, 2006; Hurtado, 1989; Terrell, 1940). Other aspects of diversity, such as age, also play a role in terms of how women are treated. For example, in different organizational contexts, including academia, young women are often subject to a sexualized form of sexism whereby it intertwines with both ageism and racism (Mahony & Weiner, 2020). Equally, older women can experience being cast in the role of 'mother' with associated assumptions that they should be taking care of, and supporting others rather than pursuing their own career or agenda (Macfarlane & Burg, 2019). Researchers have also highlighted the career progression disadvantages for migrant women academics, linking these to a combination of gender and being a migrant, as well as institutional sexism and racism (Ahmed, 2015; Gutiérrez-Rodríguez, 2016). An intersectional lens (Nichols & Stahl, 2019) is thus particularly valuable for building knowledge of gendered and racialized inequalities in academia.

The concept of intersectionality was first introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), to demonstrate that, to fully understand oppression, we must understand how multiple dimensions of difference intersect to produce specific outcomes of power relations. Intersectionality has been drawn on in studies of disadvantage in a range of contexts, including higher education (see Nichols & Stahl, 2019). In particular, research on intersectionality in HE has examined the intertwining influence of gender along with other categories of difference, such as race, ethnicity and being a foreigner, on academics' experiences at work and career progression (e.g. Bourabain, 2021; Johansson & Śliwa, 2014; Sang & Calvard, 2019; Strauß & Boncori, 2020). Bourabain (2021) draws on intersectionality to investigate the processes of everyday racism and sexism that affect the experiences of

doctoral students and early career researchers, and that eventually lead to the decreases in the proportion of women and members of ethnic minorities among the higher academic ranks. Her research sheds light on the 'major and small practices that are too ambiguous to decide on whether or not they are racist' (Bourabain, 2021: 250). With a focus on German HEIs, Shinozaki (2017) examines, from an intersectional perspective, the career progression of non-German academics. Her findings suggest that non-German academics' 'access to career progression is mediated by multiple social divisions' which include both 'juridical citizenship' and 'gender', and point out that 'in their intersection these factors work to (re)produce social inequalities' (Shinozaki, 2017: 1326), ultimately leading to the highest proportion of German men and the lowest proportion on non-German women academics at the professorial level.

Johansson and Śliwa (2014) as well as Strauß and Boncori (2020) focus on the intersection of gender and foreignness in the case of women academics in the UK. Johansson and Śliwa's (2014) study draws attention to the link between global and institutional forces, such as internationalization of academia, and individual-level outcomes for non-UK born women academics. The authors show how a combination of factors such as ethnicity, race and the cultural and socio-economic distance between a given woman's country of origin and the UK contribute to the construction of different types and degrees of foreignness. Strauß and Boncori (2020), on the other hand, moblize the concept of the 'double stranger' – a complex, ambiguous position which signifies both being included and excluded, and belonging and not belonging – to discuss how being a foreign woman academic can result in the individual's exploitation but can also serve as a basis of resistance to it. According to Strauß and Boncori (2020), being a foreign woman academic makes a person particularly vulnerable to exploitation both as a female and as an 'outsider within', who is in the precarious position of only being conditionally accepted in the new environment. At the same

time, foreign women academics in their study have proactively used their positionality for the purposes of self-induced estrangement, to distance themselves from the exploitative work demands and to achieve a better work-life balance.

Of particular relevance to this research is Sang and Calvard's (2019) analysis of the experiences of migrant academics in Australian HE. Drawing on the notions of intersectionality, hegemonic masculinity and whiteness, the authors argue that white male privilege operates in the academic labor market – in that it both facilitates white academic men's migration and career progression in the host country – (re)producing the dominance of white Anglo male professors. Notwithstanding the contributions made by the extant research on intersectionality in HE settings, there is a need to understand, from an intersectional perspective, the gendered and racialized workings of privilege and disadvantage in academia through a *simultaneous* consideration of the micro-practices affecting both the minority and dominant group members.

Methodology

Participant recruitment

We used a purposeful sampling technique (Patton, 1990) to select business school leaders that could provide insights into the performance of the micro-practices of daily work in academia. All authors developed a list of potential participants – all of whom were senior academics, with a business school background, in universities across the UK – who were invited to take part in the study. By 'senior academics' we mean an academic who has achieved professorial level and held a formal, school- or university-level leadership position, for example, Dean or Associate Dean of School, Head of a research group or institute, or University Vice-Chancellor. Participants were recruited in this way until the research team considered their participant group was sufficient in size and diversity, including: an equal balance between the number of men and women; diversity in terms of self-identified

ethnicity; and a balance between participants from so-called 'pre-1992' and 'post-1992' universities. At the time when the research was conducted, five of the participants were employed at so-called 'pre-1992' and five at 'post-1992' universities but the majority of them had experience of working at different types of institutions. In total, 10 participants agreed to participate (Table 1). To maintain anonymity, participants' details have been grouped together rather than attributed to an individual.

Participant Details	**Groupings**
Gender	Women: 5 Men: 5
Self-identified ethnicity	Black: 1 Asian: 1 Mixed-race: 1 White non-British: 2 White British: 5
Language	First language not English: 2 First language English: 8
Type of institution	Pre-1992: 5 Post-1992: 5
Current Institutional position	Vice-Chancellor of University: 2 Dean/Head of School: 2 Deputy Dean of School: 1 Associate Dean/Director of Research: 4 Director of Institute/Group: 1

Table 1: Participant details

Data collection

We undertook a longitudinal narrative study which allowed for in-depth exploration of the of day-to-day micro-practices in the context of gendered and racialized disadvantage and privilege. The fieldwork involved: 1) an initial, professional life history interview (Johansson & Śliwa, 2014), followed by 2) audio diary entries for a two-month period and 3) a second 'exit' interview following these diary entries. Data collection occurred over a six-month period between July and December 2020. The second author was responsible for data collection, including interviews and reflexive diary sessions and communications with

participants. Due to ongoing COVID-19 restrictions, all material was collected virtually, using Microsoft Teams, Zoom, telephone and email.

We piloted the entry interview with three participants and sought feedback on their interview experiences, further refining and finalizing the interview questions by undertaking a second entry interview with one participant. The entry interviews focused on the professional life history of participants with particular emphasis on aspects of career development that pertained to participants' diversity characteristics. Participants were asked about: their career trajectories to date; their own definitions and understandings of equality, diversity, inclusion and respect (EDIR); any specific EDIR-related experiences; and perceived facilitators and barriers in systems and structures that they have encountered as their career progressed. This sensitized participants to EDIR issues in preparation for the diary phase of the study and exit interviews. The audio-diaries were a mix of independent recordings (recorded on participants' phone and emailed to the researcher) and facilitated reflexive audio-recorded conversations (via Teams/Zoom/telephone). In these audio-diaries, participants were asked to 1) describe their experiences during the past week that they perceived to relate to issues of equality, diversity, inclusion and respect, and 2) reflect on these experiences in relation to their own responses and how these experiences related to the systems and structures in which they were working. In the exit interview, participants were encouraged to reflect on: their experiences over the previous few months in relation to the diaries and EDIR issues they had highlighted, their experiences as a study participant, and whether their thoughts and perceptions had changed.

All participants that undertook the entry interview submitted at least one diary. One participant, after moving to another organization, did not complete the exit interview. We conducted 11 entry interviews with 10 participants lasting between 45 minutes and 108 minutes (average 57 minutes). All 10 participants submitted between one and six diary

entries. In total, 36 audio-diaries (of which 14 were reflexive conversations) were collected, lasting between 1 minute and 38 minutes (average 16 minutes). Exit interviews with nine participants were carried out, lasting between 24 minutes and 77 minutes (average 45 minutes). This totaled 1624 minutes (to nearest minute) of audio data. We considered this volume of data sufficient for the purposes of our analysis (Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora, 2016). The data set was transcribed by a confidential and experienced transcription service.

Data analysis

Data analysis was not a linear process. We adopted an abductive approach, moving back and forth between data and literature (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012). In so doing, we remained reflexive for the duration of the analysis, identifying and discussing common practices, and conditions of those practices that performed disadvantage or privilege, through a thematic analysis (King & Brooks, 2021). Emergent themes guided further and deeper reading. For example, when we identified being 'tapped on the shoulder' as commonly taking place in 'conference' conditions, we went back to the literature to see if particular sites of practice could act to disadvantage or privilege actors in their careers. Further reading revealed that informal settings had been reported as acting to both disadvantage members of certain minority groups (e.g. women and men from black and minority ethnic groups), and provoked certain types of practices through their situated performance (e.g. invitations to visit another's HEI or a 'tap on the shoulder' to step forward for a job).

Throughout the data collection and analysis process, the first and second author met weekly to share their unfolding understanding of the data, with all authors regularly discussing the analysis and emerging findings. Whilst acknowledging each participant's experience was unique, we worked to identify patterns across the data pertaining to disadvantage and privilege. We presented the emerging themes at two virtual workshops, allowing us to sense-check our findings with a diverse group: 83 UK business school

academics took part, in November 2020 and January 2021. Using workshop discussions that foreground how practices at a micro-level collectively act cumulatively to lay the foundations for and reproduce social structures, we now refocused our analysis on the micro-practices that performed the disadvantages and privileges in participants' everyday work, work experiences and career outcomes. It was possible to do this because the bundles of micro-practices that reinforce social orders of an organization (cf. Schatzki, 2001) were made palpable in participants' narratives of their day-to-day work experiences *in situ*.

Further, we were now able to juxtapose the narrated experiences of different participants in relation to patterned practices *in situ*. The method of juxtaposition, which was developed in critical anthropology (Marcus & Fisher, 1986; Sørensen, 2014), afforded a *defamiliarization strategy* (Sørensen, 2014), by juxtaposing observations and reflections from members of minority groups with observations and reflections from members of the dominant group in UK academia. The method of juxtaposition involves more than just comparison. Its power lies in '*rendering* situations comparable across place or time, thus forcing a change of perspective' (Pàl, 2008: 371). When the method of juxtaposition is adopted, the fact that the empirical material comes from multiple sites – in this case, from participants based in multiple organizations – is taken advantage of and becomes an asset for untangling complex issues (Westbrook, 2008).

The analysis juxtaposed quotes from different participants in different situations. These are not 'random' pairings; rather, they are all pieces of the same puzzle. Their choice was 'informed by our theoretical, political and personal predilections' (Pàl, 2013: 372). Placing the quotes side by side – i.e. making them comparable in the process of data presentation and analysis – draws attention not only to the pieces themselves but also to the puzzle they are part of: the reproduction of gendered and racialized structures of privilege and disadvantage in UK academia. Juxtaposing also surfaces the *simultaneity* of the micro-

practices through which the structures of disadvantage and privilege are recursively reproduced (see Discussion section).

In sum, the methodological approach has allowed us to bring together the multiple reflexive discussions within the research team in order to identify the core micro-practices that perform gendered and racialized privilege and disadvantage in business schools, and, as such, the micro-foundations of inherent gendered and racialized structures of inequality.

Micro-practices of disadvantage and privilege in business schools

We discuss three types of micro-practices that constitute structures of inequality in business schools: 1) promotion to academic and leadership positions; 2) receiving support (networking, mentoring, sponsoring) and 3) supporting others through challenging exclusion and discrimination. As senior business school academics, the participants had succeeded in securing several promotions and achieving an influential position in their institutions. They have experienced a range of situations in which their gender, ethnicity and other aspects of diversity have played a significant role in how others behaved towards them and how they responded. However, for many of the participants, reflecting on the gendered and racialized nature of their career and workplace experiences was not a common endeavor, and one that filled them with uncertainty about potentially 'feeling things that may or may not be there' (Fiona, Mixed race, Woman, British). Whilst everybody's career trajectory was unique to them, the empirical material reveals, on the one hand, the diverse experiences of women and members of ethnic minorities, and on the other, a set of similarities characterizing the experiences narrated by white British men academics in the sample.

Micro-practices contributing to promotion to academic and leadership positions

All participants have experienced universities' practices associated with being promoted to *academic seniority*, culminating in promotion to a professorial position. However, different practices and outcomes were experienced by different people. Within the study, particularly

favorable or unproblematic practices were experienced by white British men. The first juxtaposition, presented below, refers to the differences in two participants' experiences of the micro-practices of academic promotion. One of the participants is Gina, a non-British woman, and the other one John, a British man. Based on Gina's experience, academic promotion processes are characterized by 'vagueness' and 'changing goalposts', and result in confusion and the lack of certainty that the aspiring individual has the capacity to influence their outcome. John's quote points to the opposite experience of these processes: one of certainty and clarity, and conviction that there is a direct link between one's performance and behavior in the professional sphere, and the outcome of the promotion:

Promoting to academic positions	
White, Woman, Non-British	White, Man, British
The decision was made not to appoint me. The primary reason at the time was that ***I didn't have the volume of funding that they would want from a Professor****. When I then pointed it out that I was going for Professor in teaching and learning and there was no funding requirement in the job description,* ***they changed their feedback*** *to say I wasn't hitting the job description across many different areas.* (Gina)	***Certainly****, if you're on an education and research contract* ***there's a primacy of research in decisions over promotion****. And so,* ***I've been reasonably successful*** *in the area of research I've been in, and publishing with the* ***research networks*** *that I'm involved in… yeah, research and, reasonably* ***good in a team and try and be collegial*** *within that.* (John)

At the time of the interview, Gina had just been appointed as a Professor through a move to a different university after an unsuccessful attempt at securing promotion at her previous institution. For her, the experience of being denied promotion was not only personally disappointing but also frustrating and confusing, in that she received irrelevant and conflicting feedback from the internal interview panel. She concludes that the micro-practices associated with the formal promotion process (e.g. the meaning of promotion criteria), 'can really work against valuing diversity' (Gina). By contrasts, John – who secured Professorship in the same institution in which he began to work soon after completing his PhD – experienced the micro-practices of promotion as straightforward and supportive of the research and academic networking activities that he primarily focused on. Gina was left

‘wondering whether there was (…) a potential gender aspect’ underpinning the panel’s decision not to promote her, whereas John attributed his success to his ability to fulfil the research and publication criteria, along with demonstrating collegiality and teamwork skills.

The participants also had rich experiences of being promoted to leadership positions in business schools and universities. For these types of positions, it was generally recognized, and accepted, that ‘shoulder-tapping’ and other such micro-practices co-existed in parallel with official practices of advertising positions, inviting applications and assessing candidates against clearly defined criteria. As Joanne (Mixed race, Woman, British) argues: ‘At the end of the day, if you have a good track record and people know that you can do the job, people who’ve worked with you, for you or above you, identify if you’re good at something and whether you should come and join them’. By contrast to members of minority groups, promotion to a leadership position through ‘shoulder-tapping’ was much more frequent in the case of white British men. Below we present a juxtaposition of the experiences of the micro-practices of promotion to a senior leadership position by Joanne, a mixed race British woman, and Christopher, a white British man. As with the difference between Gina’s and John’s experience of academic promotion, Joanne’s and Christopher’s experiences of analogous micro-practices related to promotion to leadership differ greatly: whilst Joanne has encountered ‘shoulder tapping’ as a marginal micro-practice, much less significant for her progression than her performance achievements, for Christopher, this informal micro-practice has been the key promotion route he has experienced. In particular, the juxtaposition highlights how Joanne, who has experienced always having to try hard to achieve promotion, has been very self-conscious about anything – from her accent to her (leadership) track record – that, in her view, might potentially reduce or enhance her promotion chances. By contrast, Christopher had experienced promotion processes as informal and even happenstance, including a situation where he had obtained a senior position without having to

apply for it, without thinking about whether there were other candidates and how he compared to them, and, in fact, without even realizing that he was being interviewed:

Promoting to leadership positions	
Mixed race, Woman, British	White, Man, British
Yes, I have had taps on the shoulder before, but ***most of my main senior jobs have not been through that route*** *(…) I always remember in the early days this definition of gravitas, is my voice low enough?, have I got the right accent?, all of those components. But what I found is that if one has a compelling performance track record, that tends to blow other things out of the water.* (Joanne)	*I was invited to become [senior academic position]* ***and that basically happened in an informal meeting****, and I just got a phone call and somebody said, 'oh, do you want to come and have breakfast?', so I did. And I didn't realize that was the interview, but it was. I don't know if they interviewed other people, I think they probably did think about other people. But anyway, I was offered the job.* (Christopher)

Joanna's extract indicates an awareness that in some cases, appointment to a leadership position takes place through 'shoulder-tapping' and that there is a gendered as well as class dimension to who is chosen to receive a tap on the shoulder, as hinted at through her references to a 'low voice' and 'the right accent' as symbols of 'gravitas' expected of senior leaders. By contrast, Christopher's narrative of promotion to a leadership position points to experiences of micro-practices characterized by informality, such as a phone call conversation preceding a breakfast meeting which resulted in the position being offered to him. On the basis of the micro-practices she experienced, Joanne expresses a faith in meritocracy in academia (see also Śliwa & Johansson, 2014), with progression based on a 'compelling track record', whereas Christopher admits that what happened to him was 'probably not very EDIR'.

Micro-practices of receiving support: networking, mentoring and sponsoring

Networking, a widely recognized enabler of academic progression (Heffernan, 2020) – was also a practice that, according to the participants' narratives, not everybody was able to participate in to the same extent. Below, we juxtapose two extracts illustrating contrasting experiences of micro-practices associated with (not) receiving support through *networking*. Whilst Eric, a black British man, has experienced his career as an endeavor he has undertaken

without the support of a network, to Daniel, a white British man, the network of his academic contacts has provided nurturing and support over the years:

Networking	
Black, Man, British	White, Man, British
The factors that have been helpful to me have included the ability to ***withstand that aloneness*** *(…)* ***A lot of academia is a solo pursuit****, if you're courageously writing and doing such a lot of it, you do on your own (…) The first decade after I finished my PhD, I think,* ***I would and should have achieved a lot more****, in terms of research projects and publications,* ***with a little bit of help****, not even a massive amount but just a bit more help.* (Eric)	*I was recently appointed as editor of [journal]. I'm fairly sure it was because [X] put me forward, and [X] and I* ***know each other*** *reasonably well.* ***A lot of that kind of stuff happens in academia.*** *Academic* ***networks*** *(…) things like, at conferences, the* ***drinking culture*** *that (…) not feeling the same kind of risks as a woman might, for example* ***(…) going out and getting a little bit drunk with friends****, and having been brought up in that kind of space, and being able to engage in those kinds of activities that* ***creates networks and opportunities*** *that later come back and get you a senior editorship at The Journal.* (Daniel)

The contrast between Eric's and Daniel's experiences of networking is stark, with the former narrating his experience of academia as a condition of 'aloneness' and a 'solo pursuit', and the latter as involving profitable 'networks and opportunities'. Daniel shows an awareness of the gendered dimension of the micro-practices of networking, such as 'going out and getting drunk' which he recognizes poses 'risks' for women. However, Eric's example hints at the possibility that what Daniel calls in his interview an 'affiliation and descent model' also has a racialized dimension, as similar opportunities have been absent in Eric's career trajectory. Eric's experience resonates with Bell et al.'s (2021: 39) argument that black faculty in particular experience 'disdain' and 'disregard' in academia. Daniel's extract confirms a point frequently made about western universities being alcogenic environments, where alcohol consumption, even excessive, is not only widely accepted and expected, but also encouraged (Burns, 2021). Bonding through drinking alcohol together, be it at 'after work' events or at conferences is an important condition of the male culture associated with the 'academic boys club' (Fisher and Kinsey, 2014). It is a networking practice that is exclusionary of both women, because they are often not invited and/or, due to caring responsibilities, not able to

participate in it. This is also true for members of ethnic minorities, especially those where, for religious or cultural reasons, alcohol consumption is not acceptable.

The empirical material also gives insights into the different ways in which other micro-practices associated with receiving support are experienced by different people. Specifically, with regard to mentoring, the white British men in the sample tended to have benefitted from more 'hands on' help – given to them by other white British men – compared to women and members of ethnic minorities, for whom, where received, mentoring practices tended to be 'light touch', in that they would take the form of helpful advice. The juxtaposition below illustrates such differing experiences of Becca (a woman), and Hugh (a man), of the micro-practices of mentoring.

Mentoring	
White, Woman, British	White, Man, British
[My male mentor] made sure I was never pushed back by the men. (…) The men always stand forward and ignore you, and he never did. ***He used to whisper in my ear, 'why don't you put yourself forward for that, why don't you think about that?'*** *That's made a big difference, that* ***reassurance*** *and* ***reminding me that I could also****… when it hadn't occurred to me, made a big difference to me.* (Becca)	*What I found most useful was finding* ***somebody I could write with****, somebody who* ***I would learn about conferences*** *in business and management about, and that might have involved doing some work, helping* ***ensure I got to a conference*** *because they might have helped. They would* ***co-author a paper with me and*** *(…) help you* ***understand*** *some of the* ***formal or informal rules*** *while you're there.* (Hugh)

The above juxtaposition suggests that the micro-practices of mentoring perform differently for different people, and that there is a gendered dimension to their performance and effects: for women, they serve to encourage and boost the individual's confidence; for men, they result in academic papers co-written with a (senior male) mentor, as described by Hugh.

In more extreme cases, the micro-practices of receiving support went well beyond mentoring to reach a level of what we call 'sponsoring'. At one end of the extreme, there is experience of a complete lack, throughout one's professional trajectory, of a supportive senior academic who would facilitate a person's career. At the other end, there is experience of consistent, highly involved help from a senior academic with obtaining employment and

promotion, and creating opportunity for progression. The following juxtaposition illustrates the contrast between the narrated experience of a person who did not benefit from micro-practices of sponsoring and someone who has been on the receiving end of long-term, generous sponsoring:

Sponsoring	
Black, Man, British	White, Man, British
It feels as if I've been ***doing things against the odds****, rather than nurtured or developed or supported or mentored. I said this in my last appraisal with my line manager, that I don't feel very well supported, even now, I feel as if there could be better, sort of, facilitation. Even senior staff still would like to improve and develop, but* ***it feels very isolated*** *(…) It feels to me as if* ***I've always had to make my own way****, and it's been a matter of* ***my own determination*** *(…) and willingness not to be ground down, rather than, support in the form of courses and training or exemplars.* (Eric)	*The* ***primary reason why I moved*** *to [university] is* ***he moved*** *to [university] to become the chair of [discipline]. He asked me if I would consider moving and then, [for]* ***a decade of my career****, he was there for advice,* ***pushing me on, helping me out with research****. And so, whilst not formal in anyway...well, he was my line manager, but also felt more of a mentor really for quite a long period of time. That has been very significant in my career (…) We're friends, were friends at the time, still friends (…) There's* ***placing you in the right context for things****, giving one advice on career* (John)

Eric's experience of building a career 'against the odds' and against 'institutional barriers' is a recurring theme among other members of ethnic minorities in our sample. By contrast, John's reference to multiple micro-practices of sponsoring that he has benefitted from thanks to his relationship with a senior colleague – a personal friend, a line manager, a research collaborator, an adviser and a facilitator of the subsequent steps in John's career – is reflective of the experiences of other white British men. Participants from this group described the micro-practices of networking with, and receiving mentoring and sponsoring from other white British men. Similar to the findings of Sang and Calvard (2019), for members of the dominant group, gender and race intersected to produce organizational privilege manifested in pro-masculinity and pro-whiteness rooted in homosociality.

This helps explain why, compared to white British men, the careers of women and individuals from ethnic minorities in our study tended to progress more slowly. Their development was likely to involve, for example, the necessity to deal with being seen as a

'teenager' (Anna, White, Woman, non-British) and therefore not ready for promotion – regardless of competence and accomplishment levels. They were also more likely to ignore instances of exclusion and discrimination by adopting 'a single-track mind that it's not going to deter me' (Joanne, Mixed race, Woman, British). Further, as with Gina's example referred to earlier in the analysis, the career progression of women and members of ethnic minorities was more likely to require that they move to a different institution after being denied promotion in one organization, and that they proactively enter into and win in competition with others in formal recruitment processes. Overall, the material illustrates how being a white British man gives an individual a particularly strong advantage over others in terms of getting involved in and benefiting from professional networks and relationships. However, as discussed in the next sub-section, those who mostly benefit from the micro-practices of receiving support do not necessarily proactively get involved in the micro-practices of giving support to others.

Micro-practices of supporting others through challenging exclusion and discrimination

All of the participants held leadership positions which, arguably, equipped them with the power to challenge organizational inequalities and to use their own agency to influence the various micro-practices in which they were involved, towards making their organizations more equitable. Yet, the study shows that when it comes to challenging exclusion and discrimination, white British men found undertaking such actions difficult or even impossible. By contrast, the women and members of ethnic minorities in the sample, were more likely to take a proactive role within the micro-practices of supporting others through challenging exclusion and discrimination. The juxtaposition below demonstrates a contrast between the experience of Joanna, a mixed race woman, of supporting others through challenging exclusion and discrimination – here, in a job interview context – and that of Daniel, a white man, of feeling unable to do the same, even when he might be aware that his

avoidance of challenging inequalities and unfair treatment makes him complicit in the micro-practices of gendered and racialized exclusion and discrimination.

Supporting others through challenging exclusion and discrimination	
Mixed race, Woman, British	White, Man, British
I was on an appointment panel: four white men, apart from me. We'd got down to the shortlist of candidates and the first two guys were giving feedback on the shortlist of candidates and the one that I did recommend as top choice, the responses from both of those was that 'she came across as overconfident, arrogant and oversold herself'. ***I did actually pick them up on it and was quite explicit in picking them up on it, and interestingly she ended up being the appointment****, which is great. It surprised me because both of the individuals you'd have thought of as completely supportive of the EDI agenda.* (Joanna)	*I have a notion that I would speak out against these kinds of things, but what I found absolutely fascinating about this, from a dispassionate intellectual perspective, is that* ***I'm finding it really difficult to challenge it****. For one, the first time these sorts of things are said, I need* ***time to make sense out of why that made me feel really uncomfortable****. And secondarily, there doesn't seem to be* ***a very straightforward space for actually directly challenging these kinds of things****. What I probably should just say is 'that's bang out of order, mate!' and challenge it directly. But I find that I'm not doing it. And, of course, that's* ***where I then just become complicit****.* (Daniel)

Both Joanna and Daniel are aware of the need to support members of under-represented groups through 'naming and challenging' exclusion and discrimination. However, whilst Joanna uses her senior position to consciously practice challenging biased, damaging views and behaviors, for example towards women, Daniel remains silent when witnessing such behaviors. What emerges from the study is that members of the dominant group find it particularly difficult to 'name and challenge' inequality and exclusion and that members of minority groups are more likely to challenge inequality, sexism and racism in their institutions. There could be different explanations behind this non-action on the part of white British men. An obvious one is that challenging unequal and unfair treatment of women and members of ethnic minorities would ultimately lead to undermining their own privileged position in that workplace. Another reason could be that taking specific actions when one is involved in certain micro-practices – such as speaking up against observed exclusion and discrimination, for example, in shortlisting meetings or appointment and promotion panels – might involve standing up against other white British men, including those from whose

patronage and sponsoring these men have benefitted. Yet another reason might be, as indicated by Daniel, the lack of skills among white British men to both notice exclusionary practices and challenge them – perhaps due to the lack of role modelling by other white British men. On the other hand, a greater willingness and ability of women and members of ethnic minorities to challenge inequalities and to bring about positive organizational change could be explained by the fact that for a long time, members of the under-represented groups have had to fight to be heard and to be treated in a less unequal and more inclusive manner in the workplace. As such, they have developed the skills to challenge gendered and racialized injustice, especially as there is often an expectation within universities that members of minority groups would take responsibility for addressing diversity issues (Ahmed, 2009).

Discussion

At the outset of the paper, we posed the following research question: *What insights into the workings of gendered and racialized privilege and disadvantage can we gain through exploring business school leaders' narratives of the micro-practices of their daily work?* We discuss these insights by outlining the following contributions of the study: 1) enriching existing intersectional analyses of disadvantage in academia and offering an intersectional analysis of privilege in academia; 2) offering a method for mutually contextualizing the micro-practices of disadvantage and privilege through juxtaposing minority and dominant group members' narratives; 3) highlighting the significance of the overall experiences of the micro-practices of privilege and disadvantage for a person's career self-narrative; 4) extending the idea of simultaneity as crucial to understanding the workings of gendered and racialized privilege and disadvantage. The discussion of contributions, is followed by a set of recommendations for organizational practice stemming from the study.

Enriching existing intersectional analyses of disadvantage and offering an intersectional analysis of privilege in academia

The content of data excerpts selected for the purpose of the analysis is going to appear to some extent familiar to the reader. Just like the study participants, many of the readers of this article are likely to be business school academics, and it is possible that in their own professional lives they have observed or experienced similar situations to those narrated by Anna, Becca, Christopher, Daniel, Eric, Fiona, Gina, Hugh, Joanne, and John. In addition, the micro-practices described by participants whose quotes were placed on the left-hand side of each pairing are not dissimilar from other studies of intersectionality in organizations, and specifically in HEIs. As such, the study enriches intersectional analyses of disadvantage (e.g. Bourabain, 2021; Johansson & Śliwa, 2014; Strauß & Boncori, 2020) and contributes to understanding the so far under-explored issue of gendered and racialized privilege in academia (Sang & Calvard, 2019). In contrast to previous research, the unique aspect of the contribution of this research is that whilst other studies have tended to focus on the experiences of members of minority groups, such as foreign women (e.g. Johansson & Śliwa, 2014; Strauß & Boncori, 2020) or East Asian women (e.g. Hwang & Beauregard, 2021), our analysis combines the narrated experiences of minority group members, such as women and ethnic minorities, as well as members of the dominant group, i.e. white British men. In this way, the analysis has provided illustrations of the intersectional workings of micro-practices of both disadvantage and privilege.

A method for mutually contextualizing micro-practices through juxtaposing minority and dominant group members' narratives

The study makes a methodological contribution to existing intersectionality research. In the analysis, we have applied the method of juxtaposition (Marcus & Fischer, 1986; Sørensen, 2014). Presenting extracts from interviews with minority group members alongside those from the dominant group has allowed these two types of narratives to mutually contextualize one another. It also made possible capturing both the more 'obvious' and nuanced differences

in individuals' experiences. Such nuances usually remain either unspoken or are spoken about in a speculative way, as exemplified by one of the participants who commented on how, as she experiences different micro-practices at work, she keeps asking herself: 'if a man had said this, what would have been the likely response? or if this candidate in an interview panel was a man, what was the likely response?' (Joanne, Mixed race, Woman, British). Placing interview extracts from minority group members in juxtaposition with extracts from dominant group members brings about the effect of defamiliarizing both the former and the latter, and provokes reflections on what is 'normal' and 'desirable', and on the differences in the performance of micro-practices in relation to different gender and ethnic groups in UK business school settings. Through this methodological contribution, we respond to calls for contextualized studies of intersectionality (Hwang & Beauregard, 2021; Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012). We offer an approach to generating insights into analogous micro-practices experienced by minority and majority group members, drawing attention to the fact that all these micro-practices are part of the same context in which gendered and racialized structural inequalities persist (Bhopal & Henderson, 2021).

The significance of the overall experiences of the micro-practices of privilege and disadvantage for a person's career self-narrative.

Highlighting the importance of paying attention to the effects of both 'obvious' and nuanced differences in the performance of micro-practices – and thus, recognizing the significance of both for the reproduction of gendered and racialized inequalities in academia – is a conceptual contribution of the study. All participants have achieved a level of success and have worked hard to accomplish it. However, whilst everybody's experiences of the various micro-practices differ, our analysis has highlighted a pattern of differences between the narratives of members of minority groups, and those of the dominant majority. Specifically,

the narratives of the white British men tended to be less diverse than all other stories, and overall, give more insights into how micro-practices of advantage and privilege perform.

This is not to say that the micro-practices described by the women and members of ethnic minorities do not contain elements of advantage and privilege. For example, a woman can benefit from mentoring and career advice given by a man, even if not to the same extent as in the case of a 'sponsorship' type of mentoring which, in our study, a white British man spoke about receiving from another white British man. Further, whilst there were differences among participants in terms of the extent to which they were prone to questioning their own experiences, white British men's stories did not provide illustrations of such questioning. Moreover, they provided relatively fewer examples of participants naming and challenging instances of observed unfair and exclusionary practices than did the narratives of women and members of minority groups. In a similar vein, although not all participants spoke about micro-practices through which they themselves became undermined, examples of being undermined were hardly present in white British men's accounts. On the other hand, whilst everyone experienced a setback at some point, for women and members of ethnic minorities these setbacks were more frequent. Moreover, the participants' narratives suggest that opportunities and rewards are greater and come sooner and in a less onerous manner for white British men than for others. For example, white British men were more likely to be successful in internal promotion processes and/or through being appointed to leadership positions through the 'shoulder-tapping' route, without a formal interview process.

Overall, for the white British men, being on the receiving end of both the overt and subtle micro-practices of being supported, expected and enabled to progress resulted in self-narratives that, in general terms, can be seen as narratives about a smooth career progression through the ranks of seniority, characterized by a relative absence of the experience of self-questioning and being undermined. By contrast, the range of overt and subtle micro-practices

of disadvantage experienced by members of minority groups has resulted in self-narratives with a strong element of being undermined and questioned, as well as self-questioning. We see such differences in self-narratives as another aspect of gendered and racialized privilege.

The importance of the simultaneity of micro-practices of disadvantage and privilege for perpetuation of gendered and racialized inequalities at the meso-level of the business school

Another conceptual contribution of the study to the understanding of the workings of gendered and racialized privilege and disadvantage lies in drawing attention to the *simultaneity* of the micro-practices through which some people's privilege is reinforced whereas others become disadvantaged. Hwang and Beauregard (2021) argue that individual members of minority groups can simultaneously be privileged (for example, because they speak a sought-after foreign language) and disadvantaged (for example, because of being subject to cultural stereotyping). Our findings highlight the significance of a different type of simultaneity, i.e. the simultaneity of micro-practices. When considered at an aggregate level, thousands of academics are, on a daily basis, involved in thousands of micro-practices which in some cases perform disadvantage and in others privilege for them. These different micro-practices can be seen to operate simultaneously: at the same time – i.e. on the same day, during the same week of month – as one person receives a rejection in an academic promotion process, or needs to navigate the process of conference submission without anybody's guidance and support, another person, perhaps in a different business school, receives a positive promotion decision, or is guided in a conference paper preparation process by a mentor. As has been argued throughout the paper, these micro-practices are gendered and racialized, as members of minority groups are more likely to find themselves subject to micro-practices resulting in disadvantage for them and members of the majority group are more likely to be involved in micro-practices that produce and increase their privilege. This simultaneity of micro-practices means that a disadvantaged person is being disadvantaged not

only because of the unfair (negative) outcomes of certain micro-practices for them, but also because of the unfair (positive) outcomes of those micro-practices which produce privilege for others. Analogously, the privilege of a privileged person is being reproduced both through the unfair (positive) outcomes of certain micro-practices for them, and through the unfair (negative) outcomes of micro-practices which produce disadvantage for others.

When viewed at the systemic level, these micro-practices are the foundations and the 'molecules' from which the current system, with its structures of inequality, is built. These structures are already in place when individuals enter academia, and are not easily changed through individuals' behavior. Nevertheless, just as the micro-practices discussed here reproduce unequal, gendered and racialized effects, and contribute to the perpetuation of inequalities and exclusions in academia, so do interventions in how key micro-practices are performed, have the potential to transform these structures.

Recommendations for organizational practice

In the Introduction, we stated that the paper contributes to efforts to understand, challenge and overcome both sexism and racism in business schools. Hopefully, the analysis provides fresh insights that advance our *understanding* of sexism and racism. But how do we actually overcome these two interrelated types of exclusion in discrimination? The paper's focus has been on micro-practices, and these are manifestations of both individual actions and the underpinning material and institutional conditions of their performance. The recommendations below suggest how we might challenge and change the everyday performance of micro-practices *in situ*.

The findings point to the need for developing knowledge, empathy, skills and confidence – in particular in members of the dominant group – so that they *understand how and why* to intervene and *feel the need* for doing so. There is certainly scope for support and training aimed at developing the expectation and ability in all staff, but especially in members

of the dominant group, to name and challenge inequality, exclusion and discrimination. This support and training ought to be oriented towards emphasizing the role of empathy and reflexivity, and equipping people with the necessary skills, courage and a sense of urgency to act. Achieving success in this skill development would require moving away from the currently prevalent approach of online EDI training towards intensive, experiential workshops, bringing together a diverse group of participants, and utilizing methods such as, for example: 1) story sharing – to build an understanding of what it 'feels like' to be in a privileged/disadvantaged situation in the workplace; 2) 'exclusion and discrimination bystander training' – to learn about possible ways of intervening within different micro-practices where exclusionary and/or discriminatory behavior takes place; 3) Group Relations approaches, akin to those used within the Tavistock Institute tradition (Gould, Stapley, & Stein, 2004) – to encourage reflexivity about people's own positionality, privileges and prejudices. Such approaches would also involve role play and/or the experiential exploration of (conscious and unconscious) group dynamics – to provide the opportunity to practice, in a psychologically safe environment, recognizing, naming and challenging exclusionary and/or discriminatory behaviors.

We would also like to encourage staff in business schools – and more broadly, in universities – to take advantage, in discursive and material terms, of those aspects of the underpinning and institutional conditions of the performance of micro-practices in academia that can be usefully drawn on to support micro-practice change efforts. For example, in the UK context, it might be helpful to become well-versed in and learn to explicitly refer to the Equality Act 2010 and specifically to draw on the rhetoric of the Public Sector Equality Duty as a way of intervening within micro-practices. Similarly, it might also be helpful to promote within business schools the adoption of the 'All Welcome' (Śliwa, Taylor, Tyler, & Vohra, 2021) guide to inclusive and accessible organizing of academic events, sponsored by the

British Academy of Management and the Chartered Association of Business Schools, as a way of 'mainstreaming' inclusive ways of organizing in academic settings. The guide sets out the 'what', 'why' and 'how' of action in relation to academic event organizing, and, in offering specific 'tips' for what to think about when organizing events, can be a helpful tool for those who wish to make a positive cultural change in HEIs happen.

Another recommendation is that we all commit to a cultural shift whereby certain micro-practices of privilege, such as promotion through the 'shoulder-tapping' route, lose their legitimacy and acceptability. This cultural shift can, again, come through micro-practice interventions deliberately aimed at de-legitimizing micro-practices of privilege. For example, members of the dominant group could decline offers to be promoted outside formal processes; safe spaces could be generated to openly and routinely discuss and challenge gendered and racialized privilege and disadvantage, and situation- and context-specific solutions could be developed.

Whilst the above recommendations apply to all of us within the HE sector, cultural change requires a special commitment from leaders: to become open to reflecting on and changing their own ways of thinking and acting, to act as role models for others and encourage others to do the same. This includes personal learning and potentially identity work in which leaders reconceive not just what to do but how they came to have the position to make a difference. Here, it should be acknowledged that challenging the self-conception of agency is at best an uncomfortable process (Beech, Brown, Coupland, & Cutcher, 2021), and something that few people achieve. One approach that can be particularly helpful in addition to those outlined above is mentoring or what tends to be referred to as 'reverse' or 'reciprocal' mentoring in which leaders spend one-to-one time with people who have experienced disadvantaging micro-practices to learn about their impact on daily life and about the amount of work and effort that disadvantaged individuals need to spend in dealing

with the negative consequences. This personal engagement over time can enable the leader to learn in group settings and other forms of training more easily, and culturally can help with how they listen and interact. In order to stimulate cultural change, leaders could encourage active talent management – a debated term used here to denote a shift in practice from a presumption that 'talent' will somehow reveal itself, hence being open to privileging and disadvantaging perceptions and practices – through engaging in micro-practices that actively seek out and give recognition to all people's talents and contributions. Current approaches, such as annual appraisals and impression management are unlikely to be adequate, but micro-practices such as regular updates with staff, regardless of their diversity characteristics, could open up space for more inclusive and respectful ways of leading and developing people, and supporting their career progression. Of course, at present, not all HE and business school leaders might be willing to commit to such positive cultural change. Nevertheless, as this research has shown, some are, and it is important that they are called upon and become more skilled in acting in the ways we recommend.

Related to the point about leaders' role in cultural change is a need to develop better forms of performance judgement. The analysis revealed that academics and their managers/recruiters often struggle with performance judgements; of themselves and of others. Research based on large data sets has shown that there are gendered and racialized disparities, in favor of members of the dominant group, for example in terms of how lecturers are evaluated by students (Chàvez & Mitchell, 2020) and which researchers get invited to become members of editorial boards (Metz, Harzing, & Zylphur, 2016). We therefore recommend caution when using student evaluation data to make judgements about an academic's teaching performance. For micro-practices associated with research quality assessment, we suggest normalizing time spent reading and discussing research quality,

rather than relying on citations measures and journal ranking positions, and bringing back academics more centrally into promotion decisions.

Concluding remarks

In conclusion, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this research and outline future research directions. The study has been conducted within one national HE setting, and further work is needed in contexts beyond the UK. Further, the methodological approach has relied on what participants have said about the micro-practices they were involved in; it would be useful for future research to draw on ethnographic methods that would allow for accessing micro-practices as they happen. In addition, whilst we have attempted to provide as much insight and nuance as has been possible drawing on the empirical material gathered, future research is required to offer greater granularity, for example, into the possible differences between the micro-practices occurring within so-called 'pre-1992' and 'post-1992' universities in the UK context.

We call for further explorations of organizational micro-practices and their outcomes through an intersectional lens, and for juxtaposing the experiences of analogous micro-practices as narrated by members of different groups. More empirical research is needed, not least because, whilst this study has generated rich insights, the current sample size would benefit from extension through further studies. Finding people willing to think through and talk about practices of privilege and disadvantage is not easy, and while survey-based research might produce broad insight, this type of research aims to understand at a more micro-level how constructions are produced, performed and reproduced. Extending this work might, therefore, focus on further in-depth and ethnographic approaches.

In addition, to deepen insights into the differences in the workings of gendered and racialized disadvantage and privilege, we suggest extending the empirical focus beyond

studying the narratives of senior academics, to include early- and mid-career- academics as well as those who leave academia. These studies could usefully include an exploration of the reasons why academics, especially senior ones, are willing to participate in research project addressing issues of privilege and disadvantage, and why white British men find it difficult to challenge inequalities in the academic institutions they are part of. Finally, we would like to encourage researchers to explore in a more granular way the intra-categorical differences in the experiences of organizational micro-practices by members of different groups.

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