Representation and Sense of Belonging for People of the Global Majority in Higher Education

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Abstract

This paper explores student perceptions of culture, representation, and barriers to success in higher education (HE) for People of the Global Majority (PGM). Many students who are People of the Global Majority in the context of UK higher education experience a variety of challenges while studying. One such challenge concerns culture and representations of culture and ethnicity. Whereas many studies investigate the experience of Students of the Global Majority and frame that through Critical Race Theory (CRT), more empirical studies are needed to explore these experiences with regard to culture and representations of culture and ethnicity at personal and institutional/ structural levels and how these link to multiple areas of student success, particularly awards and different elements of the curriculum such as learning and teaching approaches. This study addresses this gap and provides empirical results through the data collected via a survey method, which is also an underutilized method to map the feelings and perceptions of a large student cohort (N=441 – number of survey participants), with participants from a large post-1992 university.

An earlier unpublished study showed that students felt that an understanding of and shared experiences of ethnicity and the associated cultural heritage impacted their experiences in higher education, and this research explores this more deeply. Whilst this full research project covered representation of culture in the curriculum; cultural sensitivity in learning environments; the impact of culture and student backgrounds on higher education study; experiences of different teaching methods; and prior educational experiences, this paper focuses more specifically on representation and sense of belonging for Students of the Global Majority at one institution.

Introduction

There are many existing barriers to student success, particularly awarding gaps (also referred to as the attainment gaps), which can be linked to demographic disparities (Barriers to Equity in Student Success | EAB, 2019). These include family expectations and self-efficacy; financial barriers including internet access at home, the ability to afford course materials and technology, and a need to support dependents; climate including sense of belonging on campus, perceptions of inclusivity in one's course of study, and academic and professional staff diversity; and pedagogy and academic experience, including perceptions of representation within the curriculum.

This paper will explore barriers to student success with a focus on representation and sense of belonging for People of the Global Majority (PGM) students at one institution. It will explore the results of a student survey which sought to understand student perceptions of representation and culture in their learning and teaching experiences, and it will use a literature review to briefly examine Critical Race Theory (CRT) and the surrounding context of racial inequality in UK higher education.

Context and Rationale

The Research Problem

Many students who are identified as or identify as People of the Global Majority in the context of UK higher education experience challenges while studying such as funding (Arday, 2020) and mental health (Mind, n.d.). One of the challenges concerns culture and representations of culture and ethnicity at institutional, personal and group level (Arday, Branchu, & Boliver, 2021). Whereas many studies investigate the experience of Students of the Global Majority and frame that through CRT, more empirical studies are needed to explore these experiences with regards to culture and representations of culture and ethnicity at personal and institutional/ structural level and how these link to multiple areas of student success, particularly awards, and different elements of the curriculum such as learning and teaching approaches. The present study addresses this gap and provides empirical results through the data collected via a survey method, which is also an underutilized method to map the feelings and perceptions of a large student cohort (N=441 – number of survey participants).

This paper uses the following definitions:
Culture; "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by a man as a member of society" (Tylor, 1871).
Representation; standing for something, acting for something, and providing symbolism (Pitkin, 1967), or a reflection of an individual or group in a sphere that they do not currently occupy.
These definitions were chosen because they are broad terms that encompass the full arena of culture and representation, and reflect the author's understanding when conducting this research. Although this paper focuses on learning and teaching, it - and the continuous research surrounding it - considers the full experience of students which extends beyond the classroom.

This study aims to explore students' perceptions of how their cultural background aligns (or not) with their educational experiences, including representation in the curriculum and sense of belonging in their learning community. This project will focus on the experiences of representation and cultural heritage of students at one large post-1992 university in the South of England. This is particularly relevant as many

post-1992 universities have higher proportions of BAME students when compared to pre-1992 and Russell Group universities (Shilliam, 2015; Boliver, 2015).

The term ‘BAME’ means Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic. This paper endeavours to use specific terms to refer to the ethnicities being discussed, however any groupings will use the term ‘People of the Global Majority’ or ‘Students/ Academics/ Staff of the Global Majority’ which is increasingly common in this institution, acknowledges that certain cultures are globally more widely spread, and minimises reducing the group to another acronym (Aspinall, 2020; Wareing, 2019). This paper also uses the term “awarding gap” rather than “attainment gap” as this removes the focus from individual achievement and places it on institutional and systemic structures and disadvantages (Loke, 2020). Any external data will use the same labels as the original source.

Significance

In the UK, there are long-standing ethnicity gaps throughout the student lifecycle, including access, continuation, attainment, and progression (Office for Students, 2022 Loke, 2020). Whilst some of these gaps have improved over recent years, they are still significant, particularly for Black students (Office for Students, 2022). At this institution, these gaps regularly reflect the national data and often fluctuate, suggesting that attempts to address any issues do not have lasting effects.

Table 1 shows these different gaps in key aspects of HE experiences, in percentage points for 2020-21, or the most recent available year, as taken from the Office for Students dashboard (Office for Students, 2022). For access, this is the gap between 18-year-olds by ethnicity, and for continuation, attainment, and progression this is the gap between White and the listed ethnic groups. Figures in bold are statistically significant.

		Ethnicity Asian	Black	Mixed or Multiple	Other	White
All HEIs	Access	**-9.0**	**-3.9**	**-2.3**	**-1.1**	**16.2**
	Continuation	-0.2	**4.7**	**1.5**	**2.8**	
	Attainment	**5.8**	**17.4**	**2.5**	**8.2**	
	Progression	**3.8**	**4.7**	**2.9**	**3.9**	
This institution	Access	**-6.6**	**-5.2**	**-3.0**	**-0.9**	**15.7**
	Continuation	-2	-1	-1	2	
	Attainment	4	**19**	1	13	
	Progression	2	6	-3	2	

Table 1 OfS Ethnicity Gaps

This study hopes to contribute to the existing knowledge by exploring how cultural differences impact learning and teaching and the student experience, which may advance ways of addressing these gaps in student success, particularly in this specific

institution. Given the ubiquity of racism in the wider society, it should also be investigated specifically within education (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004).

Literature Review

Scope

Whilst methods of addressing ethnic inequalities in student success have traditionally focused on a deficit model (Williams, Cole, & Reynolds, 2020), this paper outlines CRT and uses this as a contextual framework to understand how structural racism, through lack of representation and cultural awareness at institutional level, is actually the driving force for these inequalities.

This means that the findings of the study can inform changes in the curriculum and practices at institutional level, rather than exclusively focusing on students and what students need to do. Arguably, it is at the intersection of the two – the student and the institution – that any necessary cultural change can be made in the curriculum and overall HE culture.

Critical Race Theory

This literature review will use CRT as the chosen theoretical framework to explore arguments on how representation and cultural awareness with regards to students' race, culture and ethnic background, or the lack thereof, impacts student success in higher education. By using CRT, we can explore whether there is institutional racism faced by Students of the Global Majority. This is important to understand whether there is any normalisation of a white centric society in the higher education learning and teaching environment; whether initiatives for People of the Global Majority only exist if they also benefit White people; and to use "counter story-telling" to listen to the voice of People of the Global Majority.

CRT examines the impact of race and racism as well as hegemonic White supremacy within a meritocratic system, and has core elements of activism to support the development of social justice (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). By using CRT, it is important to use this research as a contribution to active social justice and social change. This literature review explores some of the key tenets of Critical Race Theory and provides context to this paper.

Permanence of Racism

Decuir and Dixson succinctly summarise permanence of racism by saying:
"The notion of the permanence of racism suggests that racist hierarchical structures govern all political, economic, and social domains. Such structures allocate the privileging of Whites and the subsequent Othering of people of color in all arenas, including education" (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004).

This idea is threaded throughout this study. The Eurocentric curriculum and lack of diversity in reading lists reflects the hierarchy highlighted by DeCuir and Dixson, as does the literal hierarchy of staff within institutions, with not just a lack of Staff of the Global Majority but a more notable lack of senior Staff of the Global Majority.

The othering of People of the Global Majority is also demonstrated in multiple ways, particularly through the sense of community and belonging. As will be shown in the results discussion, although questions on community were fairly balanced in this survey (when analysed by ethnicity), they were countered by perceptions of cohort makeup, peer groups, and the ability to speak up or feel valued within an educational setting. Othering is also shown through microagressions; representation, or lack thereof; and the additional burdens and reliance placed on People of the Global Majority.

Interest Convergence and Benefits for White People

The idea of interest convergence, along with many of the origins of CRT, are credited to Derrick Bell who believed that
"The interest of blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interests of whites" (Bell Jr., 1980).

This idea suggests that opportunities are only given to People of the Global Majority if they also give benefit to White people. Affirmative action practices often ultimately benefit White people, and so the optimal option is to find the interest convergence, "where the interests of Whites and people of colour intersect" (Ladson-Billings, 1999).

This concept is continued by scholars who posit that anything that may benefit People of the Global Majority is only accepted when it does not disrupt "normal" life for White people who often have considerably different lives and priorities (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). Consequently, actions taken to improve the lives and experiences of People of the Global Majority are typically tokenistic and insubstantial to the communities they are meant to benefit (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004).

This means that, according to Critical Race Theory, policies and practices enacted by higher education institutions to improve experiences for Students of the Global Majority are only done so if they have no detriment to White students and staff. It is likely that methods of addressing gaps in student success are ultimately ineffectual, and campaigns led by People of the Global Majority such as Why is My Curriculum White will have limited success without buy-in from senior White staff and students (Muslim Engagement and Development, 2021).

Race as a Social Construct

The concept of race is often claimed to be a social construct that is not rooted in biology but reinforces a social hierarchy linked to, amongst other factors, skin colour (Gannon, 2016). The idea of race perpetuates prejudices with roots in slavery that still continue in social conditioning today (Du Bois, 1940).

By looking at the concept of Whiteness and White normativity, we can see the privilege that is afforded to White students and staff and positions People of the Global majority as 'other' or 'lesser'. The combination of Whitecentric curriculum and reading lists and White staff reinforce the idea that a 'normal' academic environment is a White space (Bhopal, 2019) (Williams, Cole, & Reynolds, 2020), and that access to resources within society, such as higher education, is an entitlement for White people that is reinforced by positions of power continually being held by other White people (DeCuir-Gunby, 2016; Burleigh & Burm, 2014).

This privilege is an example of White normativity in that it is invisible to White people, but not to People of the Global majority, and it is furthered as White students and staff have the ability to remove themselves from situations of inequality, a privilege that is not afford to their peers who are People of the Global Majority (Burleigh & Burm, 2014).

The construct of race also perpetuates exclusion for People of the Global Majority and reinforces the sense of hierarchy that places White people at the top and categorises others according to this (Ladson-Billings, 1999). Consequently, this White normativity needs to be challenged in order to address inequalities, including those in higher education (Arday, 2018).

Storytelling and Counter Storytelling

While some scholars are rejecting sharing their painful experiences (Sheik, 2022), these negative experiences and oppressions support the use of Critical Race Theory as an analytical standpoint (Ladson-Billings, 1999).

Counter-storytelling aims to refute generally accepted ideas held by majority groups (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012), and is a way to critically examine assumptions that reinforce racial stereotypes (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004).

This storytelling from People of the Global Majority also facilitates a sense of voice which can bring power to addressing racial injustice (Ladson-Billings, 1999), and highlights the oppressions experienced by these communities that systemic racism often hides and perpetuates (Delgado, 1990).

Storytelling is, again, also reflected in White centric curriculum and reading lists where the history and experiences of Authors of the Global Majority are erased when they do not maintain leading White concepts (Ladson-Billings, 1999).

The survey discussed in this paper is quantitative and therefore does not provide the same method of storytelling detailed above, however, it still facilitates the presentation of the voice of many People of the Global Majority and their educational experiences, including the detailed nuances and realities they face (Ladson-Billings, 1999).

Methodology and Research Design

Research Questions

This paper sets out to explore the following research questions:

- How do students perceive representation and culture in their learning and teaching experiences?
- Do representation and cultural sensitivity in the curriculum link to barriers to success for Students of the Global Majority?
- Are the educational experiences of Students of the Global Majority impacted by their cultural background and heritage?

Specifically, these questions consider the experiences of students at one large post-1992 university in the South of England.

Research Methods

This study used a survey of students at one higher education institution. A survey was chosen to gather feedback from a large number of students at the institution in order to provide a broad yet representative response, which was carried out by using Likert scales for many core questions (Nemoto & Beglar, 2014). A five-point scale was used to allow participants the opportunity to not give an opinion, reducing response bias (Croasmun & Ostrom, 2011). Using a questionnaire also meant that it took less time for participants to complete, resulting in a higher response rate, with reliable and standardised data (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2017).

A free text question was used at the end of the survey to allow students to provide any additional comments relating to cultural awareness in their learning and teaching that may not have been covered by the rest of the questionnaire (Peterson, 2000), allowing for more rich detail of specific lived experiences (Wong, 2008).

There are potential ethical issues with internet research and sensitive data collection, including data quality, confidentiality and anonymity, consent, and duplication (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2017). These issues were addressed through an ethical review and approval. An information sheet was provided to participants before the commencement of the survey which outlined the purpose of the study; what would be

required of participants; advantages and disadvantages of participation; withdrawal options; anonymity; data management; and researcher contact details.

In this paper, any potentially identifying data such as the name of the institution and city, and specific faculty names have been anonymised to aid in confidentiality for participants. Self-generated participant identifiers have also been used so that, should a participant wish to withdraw their data after submission, they could be identifiable on the production of their identifier (Yurek, Vasey, & Havens, 2008).

Survey Content

Core Questions

The survey questions were developed so that they could facilitate a broad understanding of students' perspectives of representation and culture in the curriculum whilst focusing on key issues. The representation and cultural sensitivity section examines how students feel represented in reading lists, higher education, and their fields of work; how minoritised groups are portrayed; and their sense of belonging. The teaching methods section looks at what methods of teaching students have experienced and have a preference towards. The learning environment and additional responsibilities section asks if students have suitable working environments, what other barriers they face to their learning, and what impact these barriers have. The prior education section explores types of schooling, qualifications, and achievements prior to higher education, as well as parental qualifications.

This paper focuses on the representation and cultural sensitivity section to link to representation and sense of community.

Demographic Questions

The key demographic questions covered ethnicity, domicile, and nationality to provide context about participants' cultural backgrounds in relation to their full survey responses. They also provided an opportunity for participants to reflect on their ethnic and cultural identity which may contribute to more considered answers in the rest of the survey. The demographic data allowed for analysis based on participants' individual attributes including gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, and disability. The demographic questions were taken from previous guidance on the collection of diversity monitoring data from AdvanceHE. This guidance was updated after the launch of the survey, but was still beneficial to ensure appropriate and consistent terminology. (AdvanceHE, 2022).

Additional Notes

Permission was sought and received from Thomas and Quinlan to use their Culturally Sensitive Curricula Scales (CSCS) (Thomas & Quinlan, 2021) to enable comparison

to existing sector research; however, this permission was given after the launch of this survey so has not been used. Any similarities in the questions are coincidental as this survey was written before the author was aware of the CSCS.

Recruitment

The survey was open to all students at the institution, excluding level six students (typically those in their final year of undergraduate study [What Qualification Levels Mean, 2012]) due to the institutional prioritisation of the National Student Survey.

The survey was disseminated by email by student information hubs who are assigned to specific Faculties across the institution. It was open from 21st March to 29th April 2022 and a survey reminder was sent to one faculty on 21st April due to a particularly low response rate.

Analysis

The survey was primarily analysed using Excel pivot tables due to the efficiency and ease of doing so (Miller, 2014), with some further quantitative analysis carried out on the Qualtrics platform. For simplicity of analysis, strongly disagree and disagree were merged, and strongly agree and agree were merged. As the area of focus for this study was culture, ethnicity was the primary breakout field, with some additional breakouts where relevant, including nationality, religion, and disability.

Qualitative analysis was conducted through coding on Nvivo to identify trends (Hilal & Alabri, 2013). 54 comments were coded as 68 references (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2017). There were three parent nodes; Negative, Neutral, and Positive, split into headline ethnicity groupings, following the same primary breakout as the quantitative analysis. Whilst there can be concerns about coding due to possible reduction of data (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2017), doing so allowed for broad themes from the additional comments, and different perceptions of Students of the Global Majority and White students, to be identified.

Recruitment

As recruitment was conducted by administrative staff, the exact number of students invited to take part in the survey is unknown. The full university population is typically around 25,000, although the invitation number is likely to be much lower due to the required exclusion of Level 6 students, and the expected exclusion of other cohorts such as those on short courses. However, using the maximum number of 30,000 as the population size, the response of 441 students still gives a confidence level of 96.5% and a margin of error of 5% (Raosoft, n.d.), meaning that the responses given can be broadly taken as representative of students at the institution (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2017).

Participant Makeup

There were 441 responses to the survey. Table 2 shows the breakdown of participants by ethnicity, both as a percentage and as a count. It also shows the ethnicity of the full university population to show how representative the sample is. White students were overrepresented, at 6.66% higher in the survey than the student records. Conversely, Black students were 6.67% less represented, and Arab students were 5.63% less represented.

It should be noted that the count for Arab students is particularly low, so they will be included in limited discussion throughout this paper. There will, similarly, be minimal reference to participants who chose "Prefer not to say" and "Option not listed" to allow the discourse and analysis to focus on known ethnicities.

Ethnicity	*Survey Percentage*	*Survey Count*	*Student Records Percentage*	*Student Records Count*
Arab	1%	6	7%	2123
Asian	15%	66	17%	5299
Black	16%	69	9%	2725
Mixed or Multiple	5%	24	4%	1173
Option not listed	1%	5	1%	411
Prefer not to say	1%	6	8%	2403
White	60%	265	53%	16219
Grand Total	100%	441	100.00%	30353

Table 2 Participants by Ethnicity

Results

Curriculum and Reading Lists

DaCunha argues that

> *"Creating a curriculum that focuses on inclusivity and intersectionality of race, sex and socioeconomic factors disrupts current assumptions about what is considered 'normal'",*

and that educational success is necessary for self-development (DaCunha, 2016). She also claims that the "achievement gap in part is produced as a result of the Eurocentric curriculum taught" (DaCunha, 2016), which correlates with the UK access and participation data previously presented in this paper which highlights gaps for People of the Global Majority. The first two questions of this study considered representation of culture and ethnicity in curriculum and reading lists.

Q4.2.1, "My culture is represented in my curriculum and reading lists", showed a lower proportion of Black, Asian and Mixed or Multiple students agreeing, with 17%, 27%

and 33% agree respectively. White students conversely had 60% agree with this statement. Q4.2.2, “My ethnicity is represented in my curriculum and reading lists”, showed similar splits with 25%, 24%, and 21% of Black, Asian, and Mixed or Multiple students agreeing with the question, and 64% of White students agreeing.

Lack of diversity in reading lists is also shown to disengage Students of the Global Majority as they are unable to relate to the White, typically male middle class, authors, are less likely to read these authors, and are more likely to identify bias in literature (Thomas D. S., 2022).

The Eurocentric curriculum that features heavily in Western education is a continuing issue (Banks, 2014) and failure to adequately address it means that “our learning spaces uphold White supremacy and allow for conscious and unconscious racial bias” (Ugwuegbula, 2020).

Additionally, Authors of the Global Majority are more likely to be listed as ‘additional reading’ rather than ‘required reading’, which presents text from White authors as truths, promotes epistemic injustices through subliminal messages (Thomas D. S., 2022), and presents these authors as the key contributors to academia and knowledge in the Global North (Williams, Cole, & Reynolds, 2020).

Stereotyping of Minoritised Groups

Q4.2.3, “Representation of minoritised groups is positive” and Q4.2.4, “I do not see stereotyping of my culture or ethnicity in my curriculum and reading lists” still show lower agreement for Black, Asian, and Mixed or Multiple students, but with smaller gaps of 10-18% for Q4.2.3 and 12-25% for Q4.2.4.

Whilst media representation is becoming more diverse (Rebora, 2019), stereotyping within the curriculum perpetuates ideas of stereotypes held by academic staff, reinforces these ideas amongst other students, and can impact the identity and self-worth of Students of the Global Majority (Graham-Brown, 1994), resulting in further inequalities for Students of the Global Majority (Williams, Cole, & Reynolds, 2020).

Q4.2.8, “Students and staff are mindful of saying my name correctly” showed similar agreement for White and Asian students at 75% and 73% respectively. For Black and Mixed or Multiple students, this dropped to 59% and 50% respectively. This could be higher for Asian students due to the common use of a second “English” name (Heffernan, 2013).
Lack of consideration for names is a common microaggression that can have a significant impact on individuals. Microaggressions refer to the daily overt and covert racism experienced by People of the Global Majority, which contributes to undermining and othering these individuals (Arday, 2020).

Academic staff

Q4.2.5, “I see people like me teaching on my course” shows much higher agreement for White students, with 76% agreement compared to 29%, 50%, and 25% for Black, Asian, and Mixed or Multiple students, and had the largest variance in scores for this whole survey, at 51%. %.

These figures vary more for Q4.2.7, “I see people like me working in my chosen field”. 81% of White students agreed with this statement, compared to 54%, 65%, and 33% for Black, Asian, and Mixed or Multiple students. Whilst Asian and, particularly, Black students saw an increase in representation in their chosen field compared to their teaching staff, Mixed or Multiple students saw little agreement for either of these.

The lack of teaching staff who are People of the Global Majority is, in part, due to the “leaky pipeline” of academia whereby large numbers of academics regularly leave academia at each new stage, from PhD to Postdoctoral study to early career researchers and lecturers. This is particularly high for women and People of the Global Majority (Williams, 2014).
The lack of teaching staff is particularly prevalent amongst Black and Mixed scholars. Data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) for the 2019/20 academic year shows that, of academic staff with a known ethnicity, Black, Mixed, and Other academics made up just 3% each (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2022).

This staffing data also highlights institutional racism (Bhopal, 2019) and the disparities of ethnicity breakdown at senior levels, with just 1% of senior academic or professor roles being Black academics, and 1% and 2% respectively for both Mixed and Other academics. This continues to impact students as the staff who have decision making powers and the ability to introduce change to benefit Students of the Global Majority do not understand or represent them (Bhopal, 2015).

Having academic staff that they can relate to also improves support for Students of the Global Majority as these staff are more likely to understand cultural expectations and racialised issues than White staff, and can provide familiarity in both pastoral and academic settings (Arday, 2015) In discussing the burden placed on Academics of the Global Majority, Doku notes that “BME academics also often find themselves making up for the lack of culturally competent support services in universities going above and beyond what is required to mentor, support and advocate for students” (Doku, 2019).

A lack of Academics of the Global Majority

> *“means that British scholarship is lacking a range of perspectives and therefore knowledge in terms of understanding society and the world we live in.”* (Andrews, 2015).

Andrews notes that fostering White-centric views in academia will also maintain societal inequalities and perpetuate unjust experiences for People of the Global Majority (Andrews, 2015)

Lack of representation in the curriculum will prevent students from recognising their own abilities. A study by Thomas highlighted perceived unrealistic aspirations, demonstrating the impact of lack of representation (Thomas D. S., 2022). By not recognising themselves in their role models they will not be inspired to think that they can have comparable achievements, potentially leading to demotivation and lack of success.

Community and a Sense of Belonging

Q4.2.9, "My feedback is valued by students and staff", showed 73% and 70% agreement for White and Asian students, and 61% and 50% for Black and Mixed or Multiple students. Feelings that feedback is not valued may also be linked to sense of community and the ability for Students of the Global Majority to relate to and trust their teaching staff.
"A lot of work on the BME attainment gap points to a lack of 'sense of belonging' at universities for BME students, and the effect that that may have on students' confidence to speak up about their educational experience should not be underestimated" (Doku, 2019).

Doku also highlights how Students of the Global Majority are often used by institutions; *"Higher education institutions often find themselves overly reliant on students' expertise to provide some of the answers to these issues"* (Doku, 2019),
often under the guise of student partnership projects. This is also reflected in my previous study on 'BAME' terminology where participants expressed their frustration at being used as a free data source and not seeing change enacted, as demonstrated by one student who said "if nothing is being done, why do you want to keep giving out that information? It's great saying, "We need to collect this information for this, for that," but nothing" (unpublished study).

Q4.2.10, "I feel part of a community of staff and students", was the most balanced question with 59%, 52%, 50%, and 67% agreement for Asian, Black, Mixed or Multiple, and White students respectively. Whilst the percentage of agreement was still higher with White students, the gap between scores for each group is smaller than other questions in this section. This may interlink with Q4.2.6, feeling represented amongst peers, and Q4.3, perceptions of cohort makeup.

There are higher percentages of agreement for all groups in Q4.2.6, "I see people like me studying my course", which has 82% agreement for White students and 74%, 61%, and 46% agreement for Black, Asian, and Mixed or Multiple students. This correlates

with Q4.3 which shows that Asian and Black students were more likely to think there was a higher percentage of Arab, Asian, Black, or Mixed or Multiple students on their course.

This could be due to the course makeup as course data at the institution shows concentrated pockets of Arab, Asian, Black, and Mixed or Multiple students. It could also be due to Arab, Asian, Black, or Mixed or Multiple students gravitating towards peers that they can relate to through cultural and ethnic similarities, skewing their perceptions of their course make-up (unpublished study). One reason for this is that "the developmental need to explore the meaning of one's identity with others who are engaged in a similar process manifests itself informally in school corridors and cafeterias across the country" (Tatum, 2017).

As well as an inclination towards friendships with similar peers, these figures may be affected by the universities that students attend, as Students of the Global Majority are "significantly overrepresented" in universities that are less traditionally academic and lower performing on league tables (Shilliam, 2015).

For questions 4.2.1 - 4.2.10, Mixed or Multiple students were less likely to agree in nine out of the ten questions, suggesting a lack of representation and cultural sensitivity. People of Mixed or Multiple ethnic backgrounds have been shown to have issues with representation and a sense of belonging due to "unique racial and ethnic needs and experiences that may bear on belongingness" (Chaudhari, 2016).

The core issues faced by Mixed race individuals were outlined by Chaudhari as;
"the perpetuation of monoracial norms, fluidity of students' racial and ethnic identity, and experiences of multiracial microaggressions were uniquely reflected factors that impacted mixed race and multiethnic students' institutional and contextual belonging" (Chaudhari, 2016).
Despite Q4.2.10 being more balanced in this survey, it is still Mixed or Multiple students who gave the lowest percentage of agreement, likely due to these barriers faced.

Conclusion

This paper has highlighted some of the discrepancies of representation and cultural awareness in higher education between Black, Asian, and Mixed or Multiple students and White students, and shown how this can impact student success and sense of belonging.

Black, Asian, and Mixed or Multiple students are less likely to encounter representation in their student experience compared to their White counterparts. This is both in the curriculum and reading lists and in course makeup and teaching staff. These issues

were particularly compounded for Mixed or Multiple and, to a slightly lesser degree, Black students.

Asian, Black, and Mixed or Multiple students are less likely to feel part of a community of staff and students than White students, but the opportunity to create a community amongst peers with similar cultural and ethnic backgrounds somewhat alleviates this gap.

The combination of different cultural backgrounds, lack of representation, and lower sense of belonging all negatively affect the chances of success for Black, Asian, and Mixed or Multiple students. The poorer experiences these students have both impact and are impacted by sustained gaps in access, continuation, attainment, and progression, as well as continued inequalities and systemic racism in higher education.

Whilst White students do face their own barriers, the impact caused by culture and ethnicity should be separately acknowledged and addressed to support the success of Black, Asian, and Mixed or Multiple students in higher education and reduce the gaps between these students and their White peers.

The other aspects of this study will also be published to expand on areas such as the impact of teaching methods, learning environments, prior education, and additional responsibilities facing Students of the Global Majority.

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