Exploring the Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority (BAME) Student Experience Using a Community of Inquiry Approach

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**Abstract** A ‘Community of Inquiry’ approach was used to explore the Black and Ethnic Minority (BAME) Student Experience in a University situated in the North of England. Research facilitators were recruited from the postgraduate student population to explore with participants their experiences of learning in the institution. It was found that some of the white academic staff were not confident in talking about issues to do with race and racism. It was also discovered that students from BAME backgrounds may be experiencing isolation in their accommodation, and on their courses whilst at the same time feeling they needed to ‘over perform’ in order to succeed. The cumulative effect of this could lead to students’ dissatisfaction and the non-continuation of their courses. The Community of Inquiry was effective in identifying possible strategies for improving the student experience.

**Key words** Black, Asian and Minority Ethnicity; student experience; community of inquiry; higher education; art and design

Introduction

This article reports on a project that explored Black, Asian and Minority Ethnicity (BAME) students’ experiences when they were studying at small a University in the north of England in 2018-2019. In particular, it evaluates a ‘Community of Inquiry’ approach that was taken when working with the project’s participants.

This research, funded by the institution, investigated the possible reasons for gaps in participation, retention and achievement of BAME Home undergraduate students in comparison to those of white Home students. This is a sector-wide issue. Statistics from the institution’s National Student Survey (2017-2018) suggested that 71% of BAME students were satisfied with their learning community compared with 83% of white students.

The University specialises in creative subjects such as art, design, film, music and creative writing. Currently, it has approximately 2000 students, mostly made up of undergraduates and a small cohort of 50 postgraduate students. In addition, a second campus provides Further Education courses in art and design. The percentage of BAME students in the University-wide student population was 11%. The BAME student group comprised of 61% Home students, 30% European students and 9% International students. Therefore, it can be seen that the researchers had a small pool of potential participants to draw from for the study. The number of academic staff from BAME backgrounds was even smaller. In the institution’s Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Report (2017-2018) the staff profile was recorded as 93% white 5% BAME and 2% who declined to share the information. Clay (2018) has talked about the difficulties Black and Asian people have in becoming academics within arts subjects and how this can negatively impact on the student experience. This will be examined in the findings section of the article.

In 2016/17, the difference in the continuation rates between BAME and White students was 2 percentage points; with 93% of white students and 95% of BAME students choosing to continue their studies. In 2017/18, there was a shift where only 83% of BAME students continued their studies compared with 90% of White students. Retention of BAME students was clearly an area of concern.

The increase in non-continuation is equivalent to six students, who withdrew or possibly transferred from their course of study between year one and year two.

In addition to this, the difference in attainment of a first or 2.1 degree classification (achievement) between white and BAME students in 2016/17 was 11 percentage points. This gap narrowed considerably in 2017/18 to 1 percentage point. Although this attainment gap appeared to be narrowing, it was possible that this decrease was temporary. In addition, if more BAME students had continued their studies, the achievement gap may have looked very different.

Nationally, there have been successes in increasing the participation of BAME students in higher education. Chinese, Indian and Black African groups living in the UK are more likely to have a degree than their white counterparts, however this could also be due to migration policies that require migrants to be highly qualified (Finney and Lymperopoulou, 2014). Although, this is not the case in all universities or subject areas (Stevenson, 2012). In the Equality and Higher Education Students Statistical Report (2018: 112), 98.4% of all UK domiciled students disclosed ethnicity information. Of those whose ethnicity information was known, 22.7% identified as BAME. 14.8% of Creative Arts and Design UK domiciled students were from BAME backgrounds compared with 85.2 % white (2018: 124). This suggests that the University where this project took place had even lower than expected participation (11%) from BAME students when taking the subject area into account.

These statistics gave an incomplete picture about the BAME student experience in the University. Participation was less than expected, more BAME students dropped out of their courses than white students and the attainment gap, although narrowing, was unstable. Further investigation was needed to explore why these trends were happening and what could be done to improve them. For example, did low numbers of BAME students mean that they did not feel a sense of belonging in the University, which Thomas (2012) has argued leads to some people dropping out of their courses? The project was designed to explore how being in a minority within a University would affect the student experience and to explore possible reasons for the non-continuation and attainment gaps.

These lines of inquiry reflected the Office for Students (OfS) seven key performance measures (in particular two-five) that identify significant sector-wide gaps in equality of opportunity between groups of students. Gaps in participation, non-continuation and attainment between white and black students are areas of concern that need to be monitored and addressed by institutions through their Access and Participation Plans. (OfS, 2020).

The project used the term BAME, which can be criticised as it disguises issues of intersectionality and obscures different levels of disadvantage. Singh (2011) was critical of categories such as BME and BAME as being broad and unstable because people inhabit a ‘super-diverse’ world where they have multiple-identities (Vertovec, 2006). In addition, self-described ethnic identity is not fixed and is socially constructed. Davies and Garrett (2012) pointed out that categorisation is flawed and BAME students should not be regarded as a homogeneous group.

As the participants would be drawn from a population where numbers in subgroups could be very small, it was decided that the researchers would continue to use the BAME category whilst being mindful that it was problematic.

The project team explored the possible reasons for low participation and gaps in retention and achievement by considering the experiences of students from BAME backgrounds. Their insights made a valuable contribution to this project, which entailed participation in six focus groups, comprising two-five participants that lasted about 1.5 hours. Overall, 17 students participated which is in line with the scale of other similar projects that explore BME student experience (Davies and Garrett, 2012; Clay, 2018).

The research method was designed using two important ideas. Firstly, it was important to create a space where participants felt safe to talk freely about their experiences without fear that this would affect their education or well-being. Therefore, people who conducted the focus groups were ‘research facilitators’ recruited from the postgraduate students and were from BAME backgrounds. The focus groups were carried out in meeting rooms situated away from the teaching and learning spaces. Secondly, it was important that the participants were able to identify what they thought were the important issues rather than being guided by prescribed questions. A Community of Inquiry approach was used to structure the focus groups so that the participants could identify the questions that they felt needed to be asked about their own experiences at the University (Lassonde and Israel, 2009).

Context

There have been some rigorous studies that have aimed to synthesise or bring together the research on the achievement and retention gaps between BAME and white students in higher education (Singh, 2011; Stevenson, 2012; Stevenson, and Whelan, 2013; Sanders and Rose-Adams, 2014). When taking into account students with the same entry qualifications, attainment gaps still exist and some universities continue to have issues in participation as well as achievement and retention. This challenges HE sector’s self-image as liberal-minded and progressive (Singh 2011; Saunders and Rose-Adams 2014). The creative arts subject area could also be assumed to be open to new ideas, different cultures and a diversity of outcomes (Hatton, 2003). However, Hatton (2015) has described art education as being conservative and exclusive, calling for the scrutiny and self-criticism of arts curricula and pedagogies.

Davies and Garrett (2012) carried out research in a small university with a low proportion of staff and students from BAME backgrounds. They argue that while there is a lot of research on the attainment gap, there is less on the BAME student experience. They maintain that there is a need for qualitative research to drill down into the themes that the quantitative research identifies. Smith (2017) argues that the attainment gap is strongly related to the teaching and learning at a university (Stevenson, 2012 and Office for Fair Access (OFFA), 2015).

Related to student experience are relationships with staff and the learning approaches used on the students’ courses. Staff interactions with students have been identified as a key variable in student success (Mountford-Zimdars at al., 2015). Some BAME students report feeling they get more support from family and peers than from teaching staff (Ferguson and Scruton, 2015). Racism may not be the result of overt prejudices and discriminatory practices but unconscious bias or implicit bias (Cornish and Jones, 2013). McDuff et al. (2018) talk about the need to use data to test the assumptions of University staff and their unconscious bias. They also pointed out the reluctance staff had to talk about the attainment gap.

However appealing it might be to identify one single major cause that could explain the BME attainment gap, all the evidence points to a complex range of differently connected factors being at play such as: previous educational experiences: curriculum content and design: teaching, learning and assessment approaches: the learning environment: and direct and indirect racism. (Singh, 2011: 24)

Burke et al. (2013) note that pedagogical practices may alienate working-class students and those from ethnic minority groups. Roberts’ (2011) study similarly emphasises the key role of pedagogy and the importance of acknowledging the different expectations of non-traditional students. Broadhead and Gregson (2018) made a similar point when looking at the signature pedagogies of art and design and how these can disadvantage some students. Signature pedagogies are the distinct approaches used to teach students in different subject areas.

Saunders and Rose Adam (2014) argued that the relationships formed between tutors and BAME students is an area for attention and research. This together with student and staff expectations could be an issue that calls for reflexive practice by those working in higher education.

Lecturers, tutors, etc. should be aware that their own expectations of students may be based on stereotypes and assumptions about what particular BAME groups ‘are like’ or the kinds of expected aptitude for particular activities, subjects, approaches etc. (Turney et al., 2006: 86)

There is evidence that some BAME students do not feel stretched due to teachers’ low expectations. The lack of intellectual challenge could be due to inadequate tutor contact time and the absence of BAME staff in the institution (Saunders and Rose Adam, 2014). Singh (2011) maintained that teacher bias and student/teacher expectations have been under researched in Universities. The evidence points to the need to carry out research on students’ experiences at university so that teacher expectations and unconscious bias can be challenged.

These assumptions need to be interrogated because often the higher education institution is constructed for young, white, middle-class students (Stuart et al., 2009; Bhopal, 2018). Exclusionary practices impact on the students’ sense of belonging at the institution, which in turn impacts on their willingness to stay and finish their courses (Singh, 2011). Perceived bias in reporting racism on campus has also led to issues not being addressed (Cousin and Cuerton, 2012; Bhopal, 2018). Wider societal issues are perceived by staff to cause the gap in attainment rather than institutional culture (Stevenson, 2012). This means that staff may feel that changing their own attitudes, actions and practices can have little impact. Systematic institutional-wide change is necessary to effect change (McDuff et al., 2018).

 There is a growing body of work on the BAME student experience (Osler 1999; Connor et al. 2004; Mai Sims, 2007; Jessop and Williams, 2009: Davies and Garrett, 2012). However, Smith (2017) and Davies and Garrett (2012) argue that there still needs to be more research into this topic.

Method

There were three main objectives of the research. Firstly, it sought to explore the student experience of home students from BAME backgrounds. Secondly, it would evaluate the effectiveness of the Community of Inquiry approach as a method of researching students’ experiences. Finally, the project would identify any recommendations that could lead to improvements in the student experience.

The project aimed to create a safe place where participants could talk about their educational experiences without any concerns that their comments could have a detrimental effect on their future learning. Berry and Lock (2011: 27) have stressed, “the importance of creating safe environments for issues of race, diversity and inclusive practices to be discussed.” Part of creating a safe space was the careful consideration of the researchers’ identities and backgrounds.

Panesar (2017:46) explained that, “as the only person in the [academic support] team ticking the BAME box – it felt both natural and pragmatic for me to undertake some research around the ethnic status of students using academic support.” Some studies have considered it important that any interviews should be carried out by an individual with a BAME background (Givens et al. 1999). It is argued that because the participants identify with the researcher they are more likely to share their experiences (Osler, 1999).

However, it could also be argued that it is the responsibility of all educators and researchers regardless of ethnic background to undertake research into the gaps in participation, retention and achievement. Researchers with BAME backgrounds should not feel an obligation to undertake this kind of work because white researchers are not engaging with the topic. Eddo-Loge (2017) has written about the ways in which “racism is a white problem.” Brookfield (2019) has pointed out that white people need to be the ones examining the ways in which they are complicit in retaining their white privilege rather than turning to black colleagues to raise awareness of racial issues.

Davies and Garrett (2012) employed a reflexive approach on their position as white British researchers. Researchers’ attitudes, values, skills and approach were seen to be more important than their ethnicity; nevertheless, a BAME researcher was an important part of that team.

In this study, the research team was made up of three research facilitators from Black and Asian backgrounds who were postgraduate students at the institution and two white researchers. It was agreed by the team members that creating a safe space was of utmost importance, so each of the six focus groups was managed by two of the research facilitators from BAME backgrounds. The people managing the focus group and the Community of Inquiry were described as research facilitators to indicate that work would be done ‘with’ the participants, not ‘on’ them. The authors of this article comprise the two researchers and three research facilitators.

The sessions were carried out in meeting rooms that were situated away from the spaces where teaching and learning took place. Potential participants were contacted directly about the project so that their teachers need not be aware who was participating in the project.

An approach based on creating a Community of Inquiry was used to structure the focus groups. This was so that after the initial discussion of the statistics that showed a gap in retention and final achievement between BAME and non-BAME students, the participants could then identify the questions that needed consideration rather than the researchers.

The participants were asked to explore and reflect on the reasons why some students’ experiences are not as positive as others’ were. It was very important that the participants felt confident that they could be open in their comments and observations. Their contributions were anonymous and individuals or particular courses were not identified in the final project report.

Community of Inquiry

A Community of Inquiry consists of a group of individuals who meet together in actual or virtual space and collaboratively engage in critical discourse around a particular issue. There is often a catalyst that initiates the discussion, which could be a question, some data or a provocation. The aim of the exercise is to construct new knowledge through personal meaning and group understanding (Garrison, 2007). Conventionally, a Community of Inquiry is an approach to teaching and learning used in many contexts (primary education, higher education, distance learning, online learning). Lipman (1991) argued that higher-order learning came out of a Community of Inquiry composed of teachers and students. Lipman (2003) claimed that a Community of Inquiry facilitated critical or reflective thinking. Dewey (1959) described education as the collaborative reconstruction of experience. In this instance, the aim was to explore the personal educational experiences of participants and to construct the meanings of this experience within the group of research facilitators and participants. Swan et al. (2009) have argued that constructivist approaches and community are necessary for creating and confirming meaning and are essential for achieving effective critical thinking.

The focus group structure was designed to create a safe place where people could share their experiences (Lassonde and Israel, 2009; Lipman, 1988). One criticism of the use of this method for this project is that the Community of Inquiry had to be quickly established within 1.5 hours and it would have been better to have run additional meetings with the participants and research facilitators so greater trust could have developed.

The Community of Inquiry process

The focus groups were structured and managed by drawing upon a Community of Inquiry process informed by the work of Lassonde and Israel (2009), and adapted for the context of the research project. One research facilitator managed the focus group while the second recorded the discussions. The research facilitators were trained in using this method so they felt confident in running the sessions. The main stages of the process are described below.

• Stimulus: Participants are given one A4 sheet with recent statistical data about gaps in participation, retention and achievement to consider.

• Absorption: Before anyone responds to the stimulus, everyone has an opportunity to think, absorb and reflect in silence.

• Conversation: In pairs, the participants share their first thoughts and feelings about the stimulus.

• Formulation of Questions: In pairs or in small groups, participants compose questions, which probe some aspect of the stimulus they found interesting.

• Airing of Suggestions: Once each pair has agreed on up to three questions, the questions are written on separate post-it notes and shared with the rest of the group. Sometimes there might be an opportunity to explore the range of questions considering common themes, key differences, or presumptions.

• Selection / Voting: The central inquiry question is voted for by the participants. As the community develops, they should explore and make explicit the criteria by which they are making their decision. A good inquiry question should be open; it should invite many different views; it should address an issue people think is very important.

• First Words: The discussion begins with an opportunity for the person who composed the question to explain why it interested them. (One research facilitator will take notes)

• Building Through Dialogue: Next, participants are invited to build on what others have said by taking turns to comment on the question and the contributions of others. This ensures everyone has a chance to speak. (One research facilitator will take notes)

• Final Words: At the end, everyone in the group is invited to reflect on the discussion and, write final comments on post-it notes. Everyone is thanked for their input.

• The written comments and post-it notes are then taken away to be analysed by the research team.

Identification of possible participants

Undergraduate Home students who identified as BAME were identified by the Registry Department. It was acknowledged that these groups are generalisations and may hide patterns associated with more specific groups. However, the size of the institution and practical considerations led to this compromise.

 In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, levels 4-6 describe the learning on an undergraduate degree. Level 7 refers to postgraduate study on a master’s degree. The potential participants comprised Higher Education students from different levels (4-7) and courses to ensure that individuals could not be identified in the data, due to the small numbers of BAME students in the overall student population and to prevent an individual being recognised in any resulting research narrative.

Informed Consent

Students were contacted and informed of the project through an emailed letter. The letter asked potential participants if they would be willing to take part in a research project that would investigate the experiences of students from Black, Minority Ethnic backgrounds and it should take no longer than 1.5 hours of their time. During that time, their thoughts and experiences about their education at the University would be discussed. The letter said that participation was voluntary and it would be very much appreciated as their stories could lead to an improved student experience for others.

The rationale for the request was given; that statistics suggested that students from some social groups were not as happy with their education at the University as others were. It was noted that it was important to explore the reasons why this was, so that improvements could be made so that all students could have a positive educational experience while studying their degrees.

 The students were assured that their comments would be anonymized in the reporting of the results. The project organisers were not in direct communication with tutors and course leaders about the project. The results would be reported to the general population of the University in such a way that individuals or particular courses and tutors would not be identified. Saunders and Rose-Adams (2014) have argued that creating a culture of blame could be counter-productive.

Data Analysis

The outcomes of the research process were a series of post-it notes and written comments taken by one of the research facilitators from each of the six Community of Inquiry groups. The five members of the research team were asked to identify themes that were consistent across all or most of the sessions from the written materials. A meeting then took place where each member of the research team proposed the themes they had identified. These were collated on a flip chart in order to reach an agreement as to what the common themes were. A similar process was undertaken to identify possible recommendations. The research team noticed that many of the themes were present across all the groups. Qualitative data analysis tools were not used due to the scale of the study (Sotiriadou, Brouwers and Le, 2014). The research facilitators played an integral role in analysing and interpreting the data because they were part of the Communities of Inquiry from where it was generated.

Findings

Themes that were discussed in most, if not all, of the focus groups were identified by the research team. Overall, there was some positive feedback about the participants’ educational experiences. There was also praise for individual members of staff who had managed their courses or resources well, ensuring that everyone was included. However, there were also areas of concern.

The Table 1 below summarises the agreed themes that came out of the six Community of Inquiry sessions. They included critiques of the curricula and difficulties relating to building positive social and learning relationships. There were instances where assumptions about race were made by staff who may have had the best intensions but had not reflected on their own white privilege.

Table 1: Themes

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| The lack of diversity in staff, students and the curriculum was apparent to the BAME students and this had an impact on their University experience.  |
| There was potential isolation in multiple areas of a BAME student’s life. They feel isolated at University; there also maybe isolation in their accommodation and their families may not be happy about them doing arts subjects. People in this situation are likely feel to vulnerable and consider leaving.  |
| Day-to-day isolation and feeling misunderstood can have an impact on mental health and well-being.  |
| Some academic staff did not facilitate the integration of BAME students with other students effectively. BAME students, when sitting together in the studio, perceived that staff did not engage with them as often as other groups. |
| Occasionally there was an assumption that people from particular social groups would want to make creative work about certain topics, for example, Asian women want to make work about the burqa or veiling. |
| There was a lack of confidence in addressing racial issues. Some educators did not seem knowledgeable about diverse arts practices, leaving some BAME students feeling misunderstood. Very occasionally, there appeared to be a lack of cultural awareness or sensitivity.  |
| Curricula were Eurocentric or America-centric.  |
| Some BAME students felt they had to work extra hard to prove themselves to staff and their families. |
| Some BAME students have experienced racism from other students, which the staff do not appear to challenge. Some students from more than one focus group said that there were few safe places to talk openly about race.  |

Discussion

The themes were repeated in the various focus groups that contained a diversity of individuals from different subject areas and levels. There was an area of tension around interpersonal relationships between teachers and students.

There appeared to be reluctance or lack of confidence in talking explicitly about race. This is partly in line with findings from the work of McDuff et al. (2018), who suggested the need to reflect on data to spark off conversations. However, within this context the students were aware of the reticence from white staff to address issues around race and to challenge unacceptable behaviour. This lack of open debate was identified by Millward (2019) in response to the Higher Education Policy Institute report, *The white elephant in the room: ideas for reducing racial inequality in higher education* (Dale-Rivas, 2019) where he said there was need for straight talking about the stubborn attainment gaps between some ethnic groups.

BAME students perceive a lack of engagement with them as students and creative people from staff, resulting in the students feeling that their work is misunderstood. Staff are responsible for making every student feel included and part of the educational experience. The lack of engagement of some white staff with the work of BAME students means that they do not feel academically stretched. Clearly, work needs to be done in building trusting and productive learning relationships. It is interesting that when staff are not as supportive as needed, peers and family step in to help, Broadhead and Gregson (2018) also found that non-traditional students made inter-generational friendships to overcome barriers in their learning. Academic staff, may be well meaning, but still have assumptions about BAME students that are not reflected upon. Some of these assumptions appear to be based on stereotypes, for example, expecting that Muslim women would inevitably want to make creative work about the veil or the burqa. Panesar (2017) and McDuff et al. (2018) have both argued that these unexamined assumptions can have a negative effect on student retention and achievement.

A student may find they are the only one from a BAME background on their course and are in danger of feeling isolated. The point was made that if staff were not engaging with them, this could compound their feelings of segregation. If they are also having issues with their accommodation and at the same time, their family is sceptical about them studying an art and design subject, then that student is likely to leave their course. The impact on a person’s well-being would be detrimental whether they decided to leave or stay at the University. Staff should recognise students in this position and make sure they are included in the learning and social culture.

The claims by the participants that the curriculum was Eurocentric and America-centric was not surprising when the vast majority of staff and students are white. However, the rich variety of visual cultures is lost when a narrow range of art, craft and design examples are referred to. Furthermore, a diverse curriculum produces a more inclusive environment for BAME students by demonstrating that BAME practitioners are valued and can achieve success, and by providing students with a greater range of creative and theoretical concepts that can be applied to their own work. In addition, engagement with diverse practices by staff will result in race and diversity being foregrounded as a topic of discussion. This should reduce the reluctance / lack of confidence of academics to talk about race. Diversity should also be apparent in the work by staff, students and external practitioners that is exhibited in the institution.

The Community of Inquiry process did lead to some recommendations that were proposed by the participants. Table 2 summarises them. It was interesting that ‘Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People about Race’ by Reni Eddo-Lodge (2017) in particular was mentioned in the groups as a powerful text to read.

Table 2: Student Recommendations for Improving Practice

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| A buddy system for BAME students so if they feel isolated socially and academically they, have someone to talk to and to share their creative ideas with.  |
| Specialist training is undertaken by all staff about how to recognise and deal with racist incidents; how to challenge racist assumptions; how to decolonise the curriculum; how to diversify the University learning environment. |
| Clear and transparent processes for reporting racist incidents, which may not be perceived by students as ongoing harassment. When an incident occurs, the outcome of any action by staff is fed back to the students.  |
| A forum where students can talk about these issues on a regular basis, maybe this could be part of the academic calendar. |
| All staff and Student Union should be encouraged to read ‘Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race’ by Reni Eddo-Lodge. [It is accessible, powerful and thought-provoking] |
| More work on display by diverse artists and students around the University. Also a calendar that highlights different cultural holidays for example, Eid. Perhaps this could be something that the Student Union undertakes. |
| Teaching examples reflect a wide range of diverse practitioners and practices.  |
| Teachers refer to reading lists of accessible books and resources in the library for BAME students [all students would benefit from engaging with this material].  |
| Course team leaders should be aware if they have recruited only one or two black or ethnic minority students and have strategies in place so they do not feel isolated. Ideally, more students from these social groups should be recruited.  |

Conclusions

In conclusion, the project was able to explore the experiences of students from BAME backgrounds. It was found that there were some core issues that needed to be addressed by the University. The project was also able to evaluate the Community of Inquiry approach and propose some recommendations.

The need for reflective practice by staff in relation to how they think about race is a dominant thread in the feedback from the Community of Inquiry focus groups. This project does not really address how to facilitate this as there are challenges in motivating people to change their practices and attitudes. For example, white staff may not recognise a problem around racism; they may feel despair that their actions will have little impact or they may feel a sense of fear or shame when confronting their own unconscious bias (Brookfield, 2019; Eddo-Loge, 2017).

By using the Community of Inquiry approach, the participants felt they had been given the space to talk about their learning experiences through the lenses of race, ethnicity and culture. The participants were expert witnesses in their own learning experiences (Brookfield, 1995) and were able to make private experiences part of a wider group discussion. However, it would have been beneficial to have recruited more participants and to have worked with the individual groups for a longer period of time. This would have given the participants and research facilitators an opportunity to develop greater trust and openness to opposing ideas needed to explore these complex issues fully.

The project revealed a lack of discourse around issues to do with race in the classroom or the art and design studio. The impact of this was that some students felt misunderstood and white staff continued to make assumptions about their students who identify as BAME. The Community of Inquiry structure allowed the participants to steer the lines of inquiry about their experiences while co-constructing knowledge with the research facilitators. The participants were able to discuss possible recommendations that may have an impact on the experiences of other students.

The recommendations were shared with the University’s management team who have acted upon them, setting targets for increasing participation from BAME groups. Strategies for encouraging staff to be more reflective about their own assumptions and their curricula were put into action through the University’s Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee.

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