Experiences of Black Students at the University of Northampton

Dr Patrice Seuwou, Dr Dilshad Sarwar, Professor Andrew Pilkington, Dr Marcella Daye

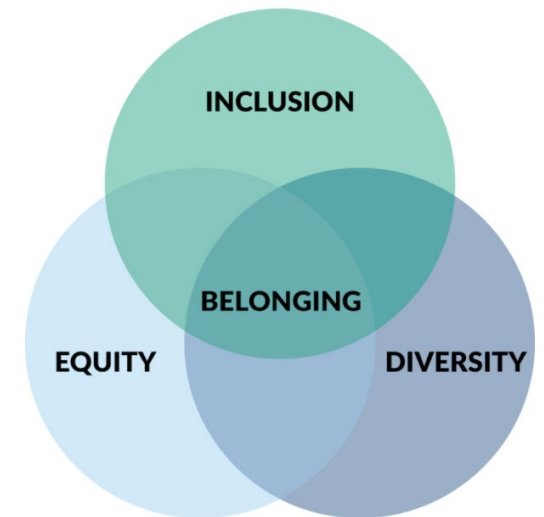## Faculty of Business and Law

18th June 2021

Annual Research Conference 2021

Social justice, Equality, Inclusion, Social mobility

Background & Motivations

- Higher education (HE) has the potential to improve the lives of the disadvantaged by enhancing social mobility (Vignoles and Murray, 2016).

- Key reformers :Wilhelm von Humboldt (1810); Cardinal John Henry Newman (1852)

- BAME award gap (Miller, 2016).

- The 1963 Lord Robbins report

- The 1997 Lord Dearing Report

- The 2021 Sewell report: Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities

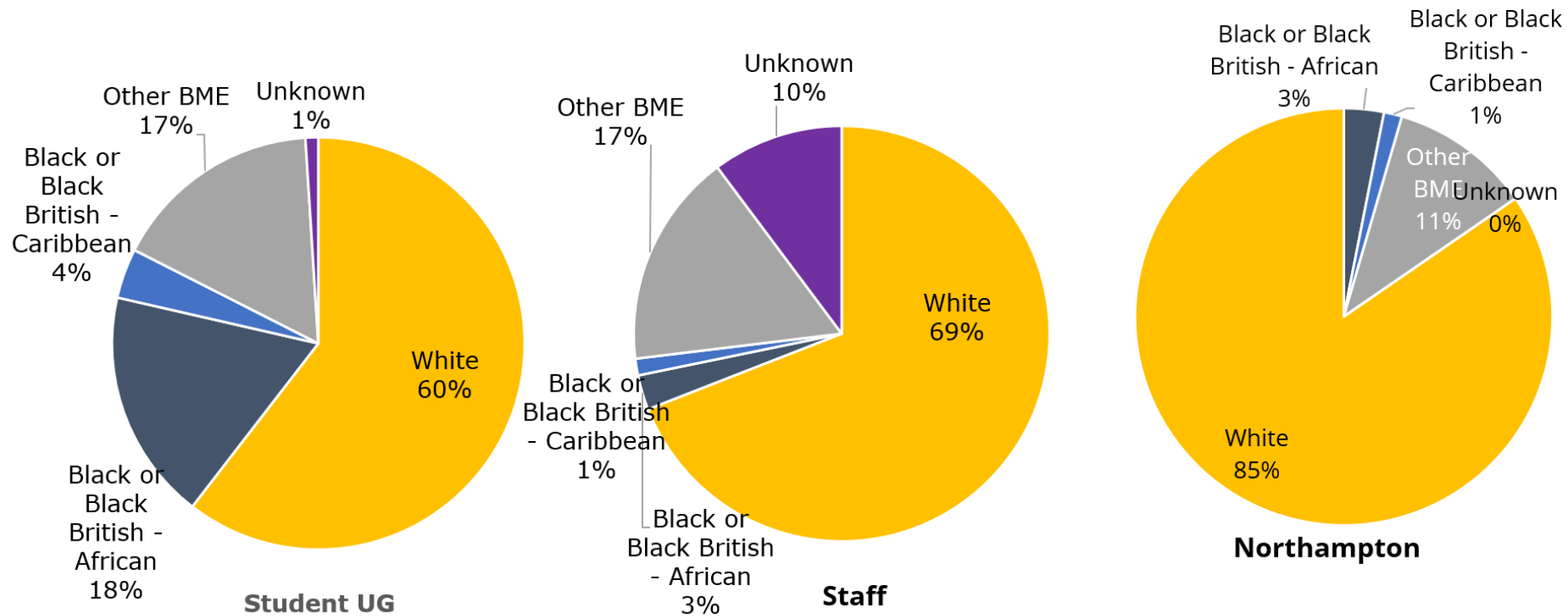- Substantial inequalities still persist throughout the student lifecycle

Characteristics of students of African descent in the UK

- Black British predominantly descendants of immigrants from Africa and West Indies – Roman period- Slave trade

- 2011 census: **1.85 million** of a total **Black population of 1.9 million (UK)** live in England with 1.09 million of those in London, where they made up **3 per cent of the UK's population**

- BME students are not a homogenous group, and due to the small number of African descent representation, it can be difficult to quantitatively analyse the results

- Large concentration in Alternative Providers & Post – 1992 Universities

- Lewisham, Southwark, Lambeth, Hackney, Croydon, Barking and Dagenham, Newham, Greenwich, Birmingham, Manchester

Attainment gap/Award gap – Less jobs opportunities

Comparison of ethnicity 2019/20 – intake, staff, town -- Data - UoN

Methodology Overview

- **Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)**
- Concerned with the detailed examination of human lived experience and the meaning of that experience as expressed by the individual in his or her own terms, without any pre-defined categories (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009).
- **Ontological position:** Social Constructivism
- **Epistemological position:** Interpretivism
- **Qualitative**
- **Sample Selection**
  - Purposive: African descent students (Post 92 Uni)
  - Homogenous - sharing similar characteristics
  - Size - 14 participants: data collection
  - Students at UoN
- **Data Collection Method**
  - In-depth interviews with participants at all level (Undergraduate & Postgraduate level)
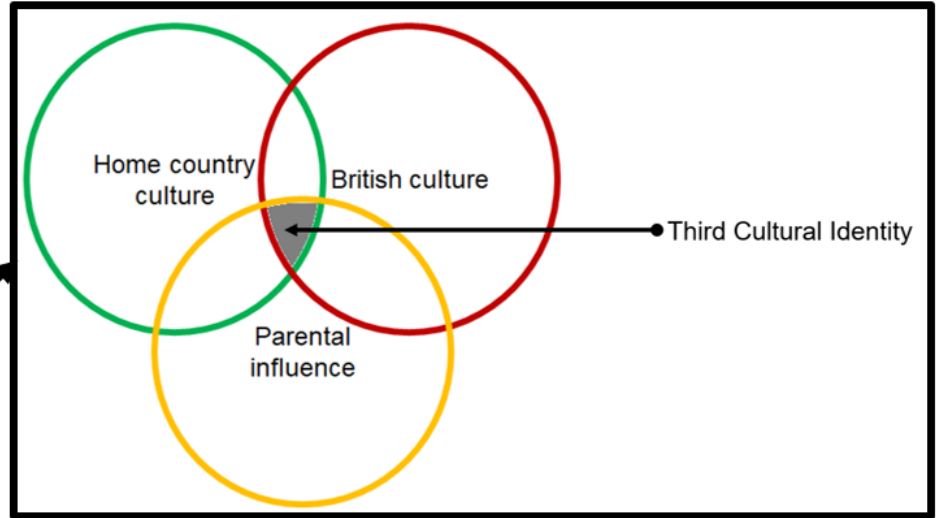- **Ethical issues**

Preliminary Results
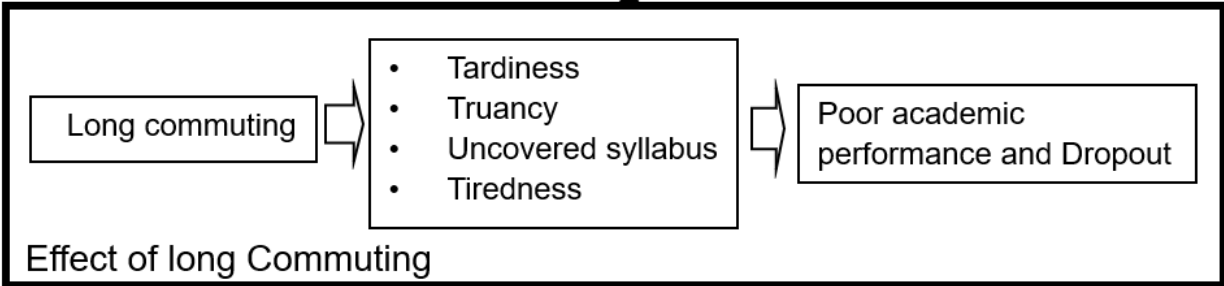
Psychological needs unmet
- Caring responsibilities
- Part-time employment
- Black tax
- The mainstream media narratives

Discrimination, racism and Self doubt
- Emotional scars from racism
- Increased anxiety
- Poor mental health outcomes
- Less favourable treatment

Home country culture · British culture · Parental influence · Third Cultural Identity

COVID-19 CORONAVIRUS

Experience of African Descent students in HE

Long commuting ⇒
- Tardiness
- Truancy
- Uncovered syllabus
- Tiredness
⇒ Poor academic performance and Dropout

Effect of long Commuting

Curriculum is not inclusive
- Difficulties to relate with the course
- Decolonise the curriculum
- Internationalisation of the curriculum

Positive Action

- Difficult conversations
- We should avoid the traditional 'deficit' approach, which views Black students' lower attainment as a consequence of their failure to adjust or adapt, or a lack of ability
- Let's educate ourselves once again
- Training on equality, diversity, and inclusion

In Conclusion

- The University of Northampton has the potential to offer all students life-changing and transformative experiences, but for this to become the norm for Black students, universities will have to undergo a significant transformation.

- In order for us to move forward as an institution, it begins with acknowledgement from all changemakers that there is a problem, then embracing the strategies for the implementation of effective solutions.

- We are an educational institution after all, let us begin by educating ourselves, understanding our past, thus we can better shape our present and future.

Bibliography

HM Government. (2017) *Building Our Industrial Strategy.* Green paper, www.gov.uk. Schwartz, S. 2004. "Fair Admissions

Kift, S., and K. Nelson. (2005) 'Beyond curriculum reform: Embedding the transition experience', paper presented at the *Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA) conference*, at http://conference.herdsa.org.au/2005/pdf/refereed/paper_294.pdf [accessed 08 Mar 2019].

Miller, M. (2016) *The Ethnicity Attainment Gap: Literature Review*, Widening Participation research & Evaluation Unit, The University of Sheffield.

Palmer, M., O'Kane, P. and Owens, M. (2009) 'Betwixt spaces: student accounts of turning point experiences in the first-year transition'. *Studies in Higher Education.* 34(1), 37-54.

Pilkington, A., (2020) Promoting Race Equality and Supporting Ethnic Diversity in the Academy: The UK experience over two decades, Strategies for Supporting Inclusion and Diversity in the Academy: Higher Education, Aspiration and Inequality. Crimmins, G. (ed.). Australia: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd., p. 29-48 19 p.

Robbins, L. (1963), *Higher Education: Report of a Committee*, Cmnd 2154, HMSO, London.

Stuart, M., Lido, C. and Morgan, J. (2009) 'The Impact of Social Identity and Cultural Capital on Different Ethnic Student Groups at University'. ESRC End of Award Report, RES-000-22-2485. Swindon: ESRC.

Sarwar, D. (2020) Critical Race Theory Impact on Black Minority Ethnic Students within Higher Education, Transnational Press London.

Sewell, T., Aderin-Pocock, M., Chughtai, A., Fraser, K., Khalid, N., Moyo, D., Muroki, M., Oliver, M., Shah, S., Olulode, K.,Cluff, B. (2021) Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities: The Report, Available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974507/20210331_-_CRED_Report_-_FINAL_-_Web_Accessible.pdf, Access 07 May 2021.

The Social Mobility Commission, (2017). *State of the Nation 2017: Social Mobility in Great Britain. London: The Social Mobility Commission*, Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/662744/State_of_the_Nation_2017_-_Social_Mobility_in_Great_Britain.pdf (Accessed on: 07 March 2019)

Vignoles, A., and N. Murray. (2016) *Widening Participation in Higher Education*. Education Sciences 6 (2): 13. doi:10.3390/educsci6020013

Thank you for listening

WE ARE NORTHAMPTON.AC.UK

Faculty: Business & Law
Subject Area: Business Systems & Operations

Dr Patrice Seuwou
patrice.seuwou@Northampton.ac.uk
Twitter: @Pseuwou