



**Higher education opportunities for
Black, Asian and minority ethnic young people
in West Yorkshire**

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Executive summary

Go Higher West Yorkshire (GHWY), a consortium of 13 higher education (HE) providers across West Yorkshire, commissioned this research as part of its programme to ensure that HE in all its forms is open to all who can benefit, regardless of background; improving access to, success in and progression from HE, for those from underrepresented groups. In contributing to this, this practitioner-led research investigated how outreach practitioners can better support young people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds into and through HE.

Key findings

The findings from this project have shown a need for a more nuanced understanding of specific ethnic groups rather than an overarching 'BAME' category. The overall findings from the analysis of enrolment data, in the context of national and local populations, show that, on the whole, FE and HE populations in the participating FECs had greater representation of students from BAME ethnic groups, and show good progression of young people from BAME backgrounds. However, there are groups within the overarching BAME category that remain

underrepresented in FE and HE compared to national and local populations, namely those from Irish, Gypsy or Irish Traveller, and Chinese backgrounds. These findings only indicate the picture of college-based HE in West Yorkshire, although there is some indication that for those from Irish backgrounds this is also true of universities. Gypsy and Irish Traveller populations are low in the local population, and there were no HE enrolments from students from this ethnic group included in the data, and so further investigation may be warranted and welcomed.

Regardless of the findings indicated through the enrolment data, the perspectives offered by the students participating in this project have identified some recommendations for continued improvements in supporting young people from all BAME backgrounds, especially considering differences in institutional cultures and nuanced understanding of specific groups within the BAME umbrella category.

Existing research suggests that BAME students will seek universities and colleges that they feel are inclusive, celebrate diversity, and - with regard to cultural capital (most commonly understood as a set of behaviours and knowledge that signify membership of the cultural ruling class) - demonstrate respect for students' own practices and knowledge. Research (Reay, 1998; Ross, Archer and Hutchings, 2002) suggests that post-92 universities have generally been more successful in creating institutional cultures that are seen as welcoming to BAME students and respectful of their knowledge and cultures.

With this in mind, practitioners could consider Bourdieu's theoretical concept of habitus, which refers to socially ingrained behaviours that are shaped by those around us and more specifically 'institutional habitus', referring to the institutional culture of a university or school. Each student comes to HE with their own habitus and, for BAME students, this is often not reflected within the institutional habitus: students may find they don't 'speak the language' of HE providers and their procedures, for example. Key to approaches for developing welcoming institutional cultures, particularly for BAME students, is the building of a programme of cultural understanding, messaging, and representation. Working with young people and communities from BAME backgrounds is imperative to developing this

understanding and to designing effective outreach activity. For example, partnering with student societies can have a significant impact and can be powerful in effecting change.

It is important to emphasise, and make visible to BAME young people, that HE generally, and individual providers, are inclusive and accepting of difference, and that they celebrate diversity and difference. This could include steps to take account of the potential disconnect between individual and institutional habitus and to encourage open conversations about differences in attitudes, values, language and culture. In doing so, more inclusive forms of dialogue could be developed that encourage the expression of diverse student voices. This requires significant work, including ensuring that the cultural capital validated by institutions is not limited to a narrow, Westernised version of culture (for example, decolonising the curriculum). In doing so, outreach practitioners and institutional representatives need to work to develop relationships with individual and groups of students, that respect student voices and concerns. Developing personalised approaches will result in more effective and impactful outreach activity and intervention.

Recommendations for outreach

Contact with current students and alumni, as role models, has been highlighted as being of most value in outreach activity. It is felt that this would provide a welcomed perspective about courses of interest, the different routes to HE, and the student experience, with the first-hand experience being most relevant to potential HE students. In reference to alumni particularly, the students participating in this project identified that more examples of students and successful graduates from BAME backgrounds would be appreciated, with the success stories of BAME students being shared, not just with BAME young people but with all students.

Working with BAME students to inform the planning and delivery of outreach activity to BAME young people should be considered. However, literature (ECU, 2018) suggests that this must take into consideration that BAME students may experience a negative impact on well-being due to feeling overburdened by requests to act as mentors or role models.

Students reported that sessions at school/college about routes to HE, and what HE courses are on offer, were useful, particularly as there is a need to show the range of providers and subjects available and to move past racial stereotyping in subject choice. However, they indicated that these sessions should be supported by continued work with careers advisors, who are also seen as a valuable source of support, as well as signposting to informative websites. In addition, establishing further links with Student Unions and societies was identified as an area that could be valuable in supporting specific communities of students from different ethnic groups.

Project findings indicate that support networks, namely family or community attitudes and experiences, are a significant influence on young people's educational choices. While some ethnic groups consider progression to HE important, in other communities it is less valued, and in some cases treated with caution and a lack of trust. This again demonstrates the importance of nuanced, targeted, work rather than treating BAME as a unified category. Even when HE is valued, communities may lack knowledge about pathways to HE, and so working with communities is one way to engage with specific ethnic, and underrepresented, groups. Supporting parents, carers and communities in developing knowledge and familiarity with HE options will help young people who are considering HE where it is not typical of their family or community.

In addition, it appears that the parents of the first generation students in this project could not share relevant capital that would help the students in HE, as they were not familiar with HE themselves, hence parents did not feature highly as influential in decision making relating to HE. Multiple studies have demonstrated that a lack of cultural capital can be experienced as isolating and exclusionary for HE students from underrepresented backgrounds, especially those who are first generation HE entrants. However, those from underrepresented groups and communities, and from BAME backgrounds, may have other forms of capital that can be beneficial in HE, some of which may have been instilled by family members, such as resilience and motivation, and this should be recognised by HE providers.

Introduction

Equality gaps in education are persistent (Bhopal, 2016, p. 488) and so there is a higher education (HE) sector-wide objective to better understand the nature and extent of disaggregated racial inequalities to challenge and redress equality gaps (Stevenson, *et al.*, 2019, p. 5). This paper reports on a project that explored the educational landscape and opportunities for progression into HE for Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) young people, in an attempt to develop better understanding.

Go Higher West Yorkshire (GHWY), a consortium of 13 HE providers across West Yorkshire, commissioned this research as part of its programme to ensure that HE in all its forms is open to all who can benefit, regardless of background; improving access to, success in and progression from HE, for those from underrepresented groups. In contributing to this, this practitioner-led research investigated how outreach practitioners can better support BAME young people into and through HE.

Although Office for Students (OfS) data shows there is still a gap between access rates of students from the most advantaged areas and the most disadvantaged areas, more students from minority ethnic groups are attending and succeeding in university than 20 years ago (OfS, 2019a). Progress in access rates has been partly made in the context of BAME student numbers increasing by 17% since 2013-14 (O'Malley, 2019). However, despite this, and the increases in school attainment of BAME young people (Department for Education, 2015), research has found that BAME students are less likely to be admitted to elite universities (Boliver, 2016) and remain underrepresented at Russell Group universities (Alexander and Arday, 2015).

Although its use has been criticised (Bale, *et al.*, 2020; Singh, 2011), the term BAME will be used throughout this report. BAME students should not be considered a homogenous group (Davies and Garrett, 2012) and this project will explore the variations among different ethnic groups. For example, by evaluating the outcomes of Black students under the term BAME, the specific differences in the outcomes of Black students against their White or Asian and ethnic minority peers is hidden (Kettle, 2017). Understanding the variation among different

groups is also encouraged in the research of Stevenson (2018) who emphasises a need to explore disaggregated ethnicity. She identified variances in access, degree attainment and progression data, highlighting nuances in ECU (2017 and 2018) data by comparing 'Black' (access = 7.9%) with African groups (5.7%) and Caribbean groups (1.8%), (whilst recognising that such disaggregation still masks subgroups such as Somali and Yemeni) (Stevenson, 2018, p.28). Further research unpicking these variations may go some way to developing a nuanced and less problematic understanding of social, cultural and educational differences between ethnic groups, and help us to move away from 'BAME' as a category.

This project aimed to develop an understanding of how young people from various ethnic backgrounds can be better supported to progress to HE. This included gaining a greater understanding of the educational opportunities for BAME young people at school and college in post-16 / further education (FE), and in HE. The learning and understanding gained is to inform the development of effective support for BAME young people through HE outreach activity; to develop greater understanding of potential barriers to progression; and to develop insights into the role of parents, carers and influencers in supporting educational choices.

The research questions were therefore:

1. What subjects/courses do BAME young people study at school/college, and how are these choices offered and made?
2. What are the potential barriers to HE progression for BAME young people and how might HE institutions address these?
3. What understanding do BAME young people have of their future educational options and choices?
4. What type of outreach is already happening between HE and schools / colleges and can impacts be determined from this?

Literature Review

Schools and schooling are seen as key in the struggle for racial and ethnic equality and as a mechanism for cultural integration (Alexander, *et al.*, 2015, p. 4). However, issues of racial

and ethnic inequality in our schools remain pertinent (Alexander, *et al.*, 2015, p. 4) and there is evidence of multiple barriers, including conscious and unconscious discriminatory practices, facing BAME young people from nursery through to employment (Forbes, 2016; Singh 2020). These educational experiences impact an individual's life outcomes (Alexander, *et al.*, 2015, p. 4). The experiences of BAME young people in school in the last five years and longer will ultimately impact progression to HE now, so to understand these experiences and potential barriers will help inform the development of more effective outreach activity moving forward.

Schools

Alexander and colleagues (2015) stated that schools are significant in maintaining entrenched racial stereotyping and discrimination and that there are concerns over structural racism, poor teacher expectations and stereotyping, ethnocentric curricula and high levels of school exclusions (p. 4). Researchers (Gaines, 2005; Lander, 2015; Lander, 2011; Smith, 2012) have identified a number of factors linking to racism in schools, including media coverage about immigration affecting attitudes, ignorance and/or avoidance that racism exists, and teachers' lack of education and understanding about race, ethnicity, and racism. The result is that teachers are often ill-equipped to deal with real-life issues that present in the classroom and school environment. These can be exacerbated further with social constructions of stereotypes and labels.

Crozier and Davies (2008), Lander (2015), and Strand (2012) present examples including teacher low expectations of Black school students (and so being placed in lower sets), accusations of gangs among South Asian young people and those of Black Caribbean and Black African heritage, and South Asian students "sticking together" and failing to integrate, which teachers described as posing a threat to harmonious relationships in school. The risks posed by teachers' ignorance/avoidance and lack of education and understanding were highlighted by Crozier and Davies (2008) who provided the students with the opportunity to explain this behaviour in terms of defensive action against racist harassment and abuse.

Although there have been some gains in schools and performance has improved, especially among Bangladeshi and Pakistani students, the notion of a Black penalty in secondary school

has been raised (Shaw, *et al.*, 2016). Shaw and colleagues (2016) explain that despite starting school ahead with performance largely in line with national averages, Black pupils are reported to be the ethnic group with the lowest outcomes. This is also reported in FE data. Office for National Statistics estimates for 2017-18 show only 5.5% of Black students got 3 A grades or better – the lowest percentage out of the 6 aggregated ethnic groups (Education and Skills Funding Agency, 2019).

FE

The total percentage of BAME students in FE has risen from 13.3% in 2002-03 to 21.3% in 2017-18 (Education and Skills Funding Agency, 2019). This figure reflects learners in the classroom and work-based learning, apprenticeships, community learning, and learning by offenders (Education and Skills Funding Agency, 2019), including adult learners. This is reflective of national representation when compared to the most recent census data (2011) that shows 18.2% of all those over 16 years of age in England and Wales are from within BAME categories (Office for National Statistics, 2014a). In FE colleges (FECs), around 22% of 16-18 year olds are from BAME backgrounds, a figure that rises sharply for colleges in large cities (Forbes, 2016). Again, this is reflective of national representation that shows 20.6% of 16-17 year olds in England and Wales being from within BAME categories (Office for National Statistics, 2014a).

In terms of performance, in the 2018-19 academic year, students from the Chinese ethnic group performed highest out of all the ethnic groups with 25.7% of students gaining 3 A grades or better (Department for Education, 2020). Only 5.5% of Black students got 3 A grades or better, and students from White Gypsy and Roma, and Traveller of Irish heritage ethnic groups had no students achieving at least 3 A grades. However, this latter finding may be unreliable as it is based on a small number of students among White Gypsy and Roma, and Traveller of Irish heritage ethnic groups (Department for Education (DfE), 2020). However, the data used in the DfE report comes from the National Pupil Database and only includes A Level qualifications. Given the vast range of qualifications offered in FE and across a large range of FE providers, this does not reflect a true picture of the attainment and 'performance' of ethnic groups. Neither does it provide an indication of the educational preferences of BAME

students and students from ethnic groups. For example, patterns of settlement mean that in urban areas, the school population will often be predominantly Black and Asian (Alexander, *et al.*, 2015, p. 4) and so it may be fair to assume that these students may have greater access to a larger range of FE opportunities.

HE

There has been notable progress and success in increasing the access and participation rates of BAME students in HE (Bale, 2020; O'Malley, 2019). The Office for Students (2019a) report that most minority ethnic groups have accessed university at a higher proportion than the general population of 18 to 30-year-olds since the 1990s. Recent data shows students from the Chinese ethnic group had the highest entry rate into HE (66.3%) and have had every year since 2006 (UCAS, 2019a). White students have had the lowest entry rate (29.5%) and have had every year since 2007, with only a 7.7% increase in entry rates since 2006 (UCAS, 2019a). The biggest increase in entry rates is among Black students, up from 21.6% in 2006 to 41.2% in 2018 (OfS, 2019a). However, there remain HE 'cold spots', including marginalised groups who continue to have participation percentage rates in the single figures (Department of Education, 2018; Office for National Statistics, 2018). Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities are one such group (Department of Education, 2018; Office for National Statistics, 2018) and there is a need to further develop approaches to addressing their needs (OfS, 2020, p. 19).

The OfS (2019a) have identified some disparities that exist at provider level. As identified in the introduction, research has found that BAME students are less likely to receive offers or be admitted to elite universities (Boliver, 2016; Rehman, 2019) and are underrepresented at Russell Group universities (Alexander and Arday, 2015). Variations exist, including that 34% of Chinese pupils attend a 'high tariff institution', more than three times higher than the proportion of White British students (UCAS, 2019b, p. 5). Contrastingly, although Black 18 year olds are increasingly entering HE, this is mainly concentrated in low and medium-tariff providers (OfS, 2019a).

Elite institutions have indicated that BAME applicants are less likely to receive offers, as it is often the case that greater proportions of BAME students apply for highly competitive

courses (Rehman, 2019). However, Rehman (2019) states this only partially explains lower offer rates. Boliver (2016) suggests that part of the reason for lower offer rates may be due to admissions selectors unfairly rejecting a proportion of their ethnic minority applicants in an attempt to achieve an ethnic mix within the cohort that is representative of, say, the wider national population (p. 251).

The Russell Group, however, have reported improvements in reducing the gap in access, with the number of BAME students accepted to study at one of their universities increasing by 58% between 2013/14 and 2017/18; with 21.1% of placed 18 year olds in 2017 being BAME students (Russell Group, 2019). However, the intricacies of these improvements would be interesting to unpick. For example, in 2017, Oxford and Cambridge accepted entry of 17.8% and 22.1% BAME students respectively (Rehman, 2019). This indicated an increase of access for BAME students. However, increases at both Oxford and Cambridge relate to the admission of higher proportions of students from Asian and mixed-background minority ethnic groups only; in line with national trend (HESA, 2020; HESA, 2019). These are groups already represented so whilst the statistics show an increase in BAME students to these institutions, there remained some exclusion of the least represented groups, such as those from Black ethnic groups. Increased access rates of students from, for example, Black ethnic groups would demonstrate a demographic mix of ethnicities that is more representative of the population.

West Yorkshire

The population of different ethnic groups is not even across the UK (UCAS, 2020). For instance, only 1.7% of the young population in Yorkshire and Humber is in the Black ethnic group, compared to 20% of the young population in London (UCAS, 2020). The young population entering universities in West Yorkshire can be reflected in Table 1 below. This illustrates the numbers of 18 year old applicants that enrolled at the six universities across West Yorkshire over the last six years, from White and BAME ethnic groups.

Ethnic Group	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019

White	9500	9680	9135	9085	9475	8400
Black	295	275	290	300	305	305
Asian	1595	1705	1825	1990	1955	2215
Mixed	450	470	470	490	550	485
Other	65	85	90	100	120	105

Table 1: All places 18 year old applicants enrolled at GHWY six university partners (UCAS, 2020).

(Low level grouping defined by UCAS as: White; Black – Caribbean, African, Other Black background; Asian – Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese, Other Asian background; Mixed – White and Black Caribbean, White and Black African, White and Asian, Other mixed background; Other)

The figures show a gradual increase in students from BAME groups over recent years, with some disparities among Mixed and other ethnic groups in 2019 entry. The figures reflect the national picture described in previous sections, that access to HE for BAME students is increasing, with the Asian group being the most represented. The 2020-21 to 2024-25 Access and Participation Plans for the GHWY partner HE providers generally indicate good access rates of students from BAME groups. There are some specific targets made for increasing access of BAME students from six of the partners, two of which are subject specialist institutions. Interestingly, students from Asian backgrounds were noted as being the most represented. The intersection between ethnicity and low socio-economic backgrounds was also largely cited.

Intersectionality

Some intersect has been observed considering the rates of poverty amongst BAME communities being double that of White people (Weekes-Bernard, 2017). The intersectionality of class and ethnicity, as well as gender, are important and can provide further explanations of educational inequalities. Eden (2019) has highlighted that for many years models of social class have been the root of explanations around educational inequality. The difficulties faced by minority ethnic groups and their educational experiences of institutional racism and exclusion, have also been acknowledged, although to a much lesser extent (Eden, 2019).

The reinforcement of cultural values and attitudes, based on historical experiences and similar, may be transmitted by parents. If these values and attitudes are shaped by

educational inequality, historical discrimination and racism, this could be particularly influential on young people in their decision making. Couple this with being from a disadvantaged socioeconomic background, first generation HE entrant, or from another 'cold spot', for example, and this could have a particularly powerful impact on the decision making of BAME young people.

Methodology

The methodology was designed in light of the OfS's aim to provide equal opportunities to access and succeed in HE. It supports Callander's (2020) assertion that the work of the OfS to achieve this needs to be founded on rich insights from the lived experiences of students. Fundamental to the approach in this project was the involvement of students in being given the opportunity to discuss their experiences and perceptions. However, the Coronavirus pandemic resulted in the approach being adapted. Due to restrictions on contact with students directly, as a result of school closures during lockdown, the number of education providers and students involved in the research was limited, and the analysis of enrolment data was increased.

Participants

Education providers across West Yorkshire participated in the research including four FE providers, and three college-based HE providers. This involved the sharing of enrolment data as well as invitations to students to participate in questionnaires and telephone interviews. Eight FE students (six female, two male) and two HE students (both female) participated in the questionnaires. One FE student participated in a telephone interview. These numbers were much less than initially envisaged due to COVID-19 concerns and pressures. There is no direct contact between the researcher and the students in normal day-to-day activity so staff-student power relations did not impact the research.

Methods

Raw data was collected via anonymised statistical enrolment data provided by participating education providers, and also through student questionnaires and a follow up telephone interview.

Enrolment data

Education providers shared anonymised enrolment data for the academic year 2019-20. In total, 22,504 enrolment data sets were provided (post-16, 16-19 year olds = 20,740; HE = 1764), including a breakdown of student numbers by gender and ethnic group.

Of this enrolment data, 12,265 data sets were provided that also included course specific enrolment information (post-16, 16-19 year olds = 10 691; HE = 1594). All the data provided was aggregated into one data set for each stage of study, to aid in the anonymisation of data. For example, data for post-16 engineering (subject used for illustrative purposes only) from all participating education providers were combined to give an overall picture for that subject at that level. This minimised the risk of being able to identify students, or providers, on engineering programmes where there may be particularly small numbers enrolled. No identifying student information was collected, and education provider names have not been included in the results or analysis.

Data was then analysed against a series of census data to provide wider local and national contexts.

Questionnaires

In place of planned focus, invitations to participate in online questionnaires and follow up telephone interviews were distributed to students enrolled at participating education providers. The invitations to participate were distributed via relevant gate keepers at each education provider, along with informed consent, and only to those students giving the relevant GDPR permissions to be contacted via email for research purposes.

The questionnaires explored the influence of parents / carers in educational choices and whether they themselves held degrees. There was investigation of what subjects the students were studying, had previously studied, and/or planned next steps, and what influenced these choices. The questionnaires also asked questions around the perceived awareness of the options available at the time of making choices and about any information, advice and guidance received during the decision making process. There was also an opportunity to share

any further information about educational experiences that the students felt were important to them.

There was no direct risk of social harm to the students involved. However, the nature of the topic can provoke strong emotions, so all participants were signposted to the relevant wellbeing, counselling or support services prior to any discourse.

Telephone interview

On completion of the online questionnaire, students were invited to participate in a follow-up telephone interview. All students completing the questionnaire agreed to the follow up interview however only one student undertook this. This student was a female 18 year old who had just completed A Levels and was finalising her HE choices.

The interview aimed to explore further the responses from the questionnaire and to open up a student led discussion about the experiences of BAME young people in education and progression to HE. Finnegan *et al.*, (2014) stresses the importance of listening to student voices to bring to the forefront their perspective of themselves as learners and as people. In doing so, a far richer and more accurate source of knowledge is constructed and a more nuanced way of thinking about the interplay between structure and agency, and the relationship between identity and (in)equality, is possible (Finnegan, *et al.*, 2014).

Given the circumstances related to the Coronavirus pandemic and the ethical concerns of the OfS about progression discourse at a time when young people may be particularly anxious about their education and their future it was important to be cautious in the approach taken and to minimise unnecessary distress. This was heightened with the Black Lives Matter demonstrations across the world, promoting increased discussions of racial inequality. It was important that the questioning as part of the questionnaires and interview did not emphasise racism nor reinforce discriminative messages. For this reason, the focus was on enablers rather than barriers and the approach linked closely to that of appreciative inquiry.

Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative inquiry is a means to developing new ways of engaging participants (Morsillo and Fisher, 2007, p. 47). It focusses on asking an unconditional positive question to discover the best of what is and explore ways to create positive transformations (Ludema, *et al.*, 2001; Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999; Barrett, 1995). Simply put, it is about asking the 'what' questions rather than making assumptions. It is about discovering and appreciating the best of what is, to envision what could be, to co-construct what should be, and a destiny to sustain what will be (Ludema, *et al.*, 2001).

This was a particularly useful approach in this project as it allowed the discovery of what students considered to be the best of what is their experiences (enablers). In doing so, this opened up an honest and safe discussion about the barriers as a result. There was opportunity to then appreciate what they felt could be, in terms of support available to them in progressing to HE and making choices. Finally, there were elements of co-constructing what should be in terms of what would be meaningful support and outreach activity, supporting the objective for a student informed process.

Care was taken to interpret data and interview transcripts in isolation of specific contextualised knowledge and ways of thinking, common to the setting and its practices. There was conscious awareness of avoiding institutional ways of speaking, and assumptive use of acronyms / abbreviations. No assumptions were made about the data or terminology used; not applying meaning from common thinking and practices from the setting and reporting only what is disclosed by the participants.

In presenting the experiences of students it was important that the range of experiences were represented and confidentiality was protected (Henderson *et al.*, 2012). The action for confidentiality, as well as the students' rights to anonymity and to withdraw, were made explicit to the student so as to build trust, rapport and emotional stability. This allowed the student to feel safe to discuss their experiences freely. No student names or institution names have been used.

Bourdieu

Bourdieu's work around social class, habitus and capital may be useful as a theoretical lens through which to view the data collected as part of this project. Habitus plays a significant part in shaping individual's perspectives and their reflexive understanding of their experiences (Bourdieu, 1977). Bourdieu (1984) talks about habitus as an embodiment of thoughts and beliefs, a whole system of predispositions taught by the material circumstances of family upbringing and life, and argues that it is a person's habitus that organises the practices and dispositions of individuals within it. Although largely unobservable itself, habitus has been shown to have observable impact (Akram, 2012, p.46).

Habitus and capital are useful in helping to understand the intersectionality between class and ethnicity as well as the impact of cultural values and attitudes reinforcing predispositions of habitus and embodied cultural capital. Throughout his work, Bourdieu presented a need for classes to reproduce themselves (Thomas, 2002, p. 430) with his later work (for example, Bourdieu, 1999) suggesting a more complex view of social class, that recognises diversity, individual differences and habitus transformation (Reay 2004a, p. 434).

There are two ideas forming the basis for Bourdieu's argument around habitus. Firstly, is the need of classes and groups to reproduce themselves (Thomas, 2002, p. 430). Bourdieu emphasises that individual histories, family history, and class are influential to this process (Reay, 2004a; Reay, 2004b). Secondly, is the idea that in society certain classes and groups are dominant, and that access to educational opportunities is controlled by these dominant classes and groups (Thomas, 2002, p. 430).

Bourdieu (for instance, Bourdieu and Passeron, 1970) has been influential in highlighting how class systems reproduce and maintain privilege, identifying how social, economic and cultural capital are provided by families. This is to ensure children arrive within the education system already equipped to benefit from its knowledge and attitudes, while for other children school can be an alien environment (Eden, 2019). The reproduction of educational inequalities are therefore founded on the attitudes and values deriving from a family's class position (Eden, 2017). This may also be the case in the cultural and social capital accrued by BAME young people from the family's cultural values and experiences.

Capital may be considered as the products of an individual's interactions and relations; knowledge and ways of thinking. Bourdieu (1986) refers to an embodied state of cultural capital, in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body. In early development, parents and teachers can provide cultural capital by transmitting the expected behaviours, attitudes and knowledge needed to achieve in school and progress into HE and/or desired careers (see for example Bourdieu, 1996). Messages early in a student's educational journey can be important in developing cultural capital. The transmission of expected behaviours, attitudes and knowledge needed to achieve in school and for HE provides cultural capital. Bourdieu (1986) theorises that the transmission of cultural capital, embodied in the whole family, is the most powerful principle of its symbolic efficacy. Chamberlayne *et al.*, (2000, p. 81) indicate that 'personal' and subjective resources, which build self-confidence and other personality features in children, may also act as influential capital where other forms of capital are lacking.

Social capital is the collective resources that are linked to being a member of a group and an individual's social relations and how they connect with the network (Bourdieu, 1986). It is about social relationships and connections within a social network, such as being a member of a group, for example, the relationships with classmates. It is based on group memberships, relationships, and networks of influence and support. Bourdieu (1986) speaks of this as being linked to possession of a durable network of institutional relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition, which provides each member with collectively owned capital. It has been shown to enable students to overcome the internal and external problems that they may face (Thomas 2002 p. 435).

Thomas (2002 p. 436) identified ways that HE providers can play a role in promoting the development of such social networks, such as through student living arrangements, by the provision of appropriate social facilities, and via collaborative teaching and learning practices. Social capital is also endlessly reproduced in and through the exchange, of words for example, which it encourage and which presuppose and produce mutual knowledge and recognition (Bourdieu, 1986).

Analysis and Discussion

This chapter highlights the key findings from an analysis of the enrolment data provided by education providers, as well as the information gathered from the online questionnaires and telephone interview.

Enrolment trends

Analysis of the 22,504 enrolment records provides a picture of the ethnic backgrounds of students in FE and HE. The statistics generated (percentage of cohort from each ethnic background) using FE and HE records (22,504) were then analysed against wider local and national contexts using census data (Office for National Statistics, 2014b), to support discussions around ethnic representations in FE and HE. The percentage difference was calculated to assess if enrolment of each BAME category was bigger or smaller than that represented in national, regional, and local authority census data. This was carried out for FE (16-19 years of age) and HE (18+ years of age). Please see Appendix 1 for the raw data illustrating percentage difference from the census to the enrolment data.

FE

29.6% of FE students included in the enrolment data were from BAME categories. This is a higher proportionate representation compared to national census data (18.2%) (Office for National Statistics, 2014a) and local authority data for the participating FECs (15.7%) (Office for National Statistics, 2014b). Enrolment data for FE courses at the participating FECs was compared with the ethnicities of 16-19 year olds on the England and Wales census and the local authority census in which the GHWY partner FECs are located. FE enrolment of BAME students at the participating colleges was higher than BAME populations counted on the England and Wales census in 12 of 17 BAME categories and higher than the local authority census in 14 of 17 BAME categories. This suggests students from BAME backgrounds are, on the whole, better represented in FE at the participating FECs than within national and local populations.

The biggest positive percentage differences, where students from BAME categories were better represented in FE than in the local population, were within the White and Black African,

African and other Black categories. Compared to national census, students from Pakistani and 'any other ethnic' groups were better represented in FE.

Further analysis of 10,691 2019-20 FEC enrolment records helped to provide a localised picture of course specific FE progression, of both BAME and White young people. It allowed comparative analysis between subjects and ethnic minority groups, and a detailed table of results can be found in Appendix 2. Enrolment records included were of 16-19 years olds enrolled at four Sixth Form Colleges and FECs within West Yorkshire. The data included Level 2 and Level 3 study, made up of A Levels, vocational qualifications and apprenticeship provision.

The table in Appendix 2 shows that the FE student's enrolment records included in the data collection were largely from vocational subjects and qualifications such as BTECs (79.1%), with 12% studying A Levels (57.5% White British vs 42% BAME) and 8.9% enrolled on apprenticeship programmes (91.9% White British vs 7.2% BAME groups). This reflects only the provision offered at the four participating education providers compared to, for example, school sixth forms where A Levels may be offered more than vocational qualifications. Students from the White British group were noticeably higher in 23 of 30 subject areas, across all qualification types. Students from BAME groups had a higher number of enrolments in the subjects of Foreign Languages (100% BAME), and Science (68.9% BAME). However, the numbers enrolled on Foreign Languages were so small that questions of reliability are raised.

Students from Pakistani backgrounds were the most represented group with enrolments in 29 of 30 course areas, the highest in 24 subject areas. Pakistani was also the highest represented BAME group studying both A Levels and apprenticeships. The only course area with no enrolments of students from Pakistani backgrounds was Animal Care / Landbased.

HE

Enrolment data for HE courses at the participating FECs were compared with the ethnicities of all those 18 year old and over on the census for England and Wales, Yorkshire and Humber, the local authorities in which all the GHWY partners are located, and the local authority census in which the GHWY partner FECs are located. FEC enrolment data were also

compared against the UCAS applicants enrolled data (all placed 18 year olds only) for the six GHWY partner universities.

HE enrolment of BAME students at the participating FECs was bigger than populations in:

- England and Wales = 13 of 17 BAME categories
- Yorkshire and the Humber = 14 of 17 BAME categories
- Local authorities of all the GHWY partners = 12 of 17 BAME categories
- Local authority in which the GHWY partner FECs are located = 11 of 17 BAME categories

This strongly suggests that students from BAME backgrounds are, on the whole, better represented in HE at the participating FECs than within national and local populations. There is an indication that GHWY partners are succeeding in attracting BAME students to HE in the region; improving access rates of BAME students. Aligning with OfS priorities (OfS, 2019b), further research could explore the effectiveness of support for BAME students in terms of continuation, attainment and progression.

The biggest positive percentage differences, where students from BAME categories were better represented in HE than in the national and local population, were within the Bangladeshi, African, Pakistani, White and Black Caribbean, White and Black African, Other black, and Caribbean groups. It should be noted that the findings in relation to Bangladeshi and African populations represented at HE in FECs may be influenced by potentially untypically high numbers of students from Bangladeshi and African groups due to a specific partnership project between one of the HE providers and these communities. There was less representation of students of White backgrounds in the enrolment data compared to the census both nationally and locally.

Further analysis of 1,594 2019-20 HE enrolment records at the three college-based HE providers in West Yorkshire helped to provide a localised picture of course specific HE progression, providing comparative analysis between subjects and ethnic minority groups. However, the numbers per course were relatively small, compared to overall provision and populations within West Yorkshire, and so the analysis in relation to representation of ethnic groups across subjects is not particularly conclusive.

The table in Appendix 3 provides details of students enrolled on HE course at three college-based HE providers. Students from the White British group were noticeably higher in only 4 of 17 areas (Creative Digital Media, 76.1%; Digital and IT, 78.3%; Media Hair and Make-Up, 78.8%; and Public Services, 91.7%), whilst students from BAME groups were noticeably higher in Business (78.5%). However, as mentioned above, this subject area includes untypically high numbers of students from Bangladeshi and African groups. African students were also highly represented in Policing, Health and Social Care, Electrical Engineering, and Childcare.

Students from Pakistani backgrounds were one of the most widely represented groups across the included provision (12 of 17 subject areas), however this was along with students from Any other White backgrounds (16 of 17 subject areas), and much less of a noticeable difference than in the FE enrolment data.

Where representation in both FE and HE appear low compared to national and local populations are within Irish and Chinese ethnic groups. Gypsy or Irish Traveller is a group with only 0.06-0.07% representation in the Yorkshire and Humber and local authority populations and there were no enrolment records at HE identified for students from this ethnic group. Further enquiry to understand the perceptions and needs of young people from these backgrounds would be beneficial in the development of appropriate and effective support, and for practitioner learning.

When considering the six universities within the GHWY partnership, comparing UCAS data of all placed 18 year old applicants enrolled with participating FEC enrolment data, the 6 universities had slightly higher representation of White and mixed groups. They had notably higher representation of mixed and Asian groups compared to the population of England and Wales, and higher representation of all ethnicities except those within White categories than the population of Yorkshire and Humber and the local authority areas of the GHWY partners. What is of note here, is that the GHWY HEI data only includes 18 years olds whereas the census data includes anyone over the age of 18. In addition, the data provided by UCAS was

grouped into 5 ethnic groups within the BAME category unlike the other comparisons made, which considered more nuanced explorations using 17 ethnic groups.

The figures in the appendices 2 and 3 show an increase, from FE to HE, in the proportion of students from BAME backgrounds enrolled at the participating education providers. However, the type of provider, and subjects available at those providers, create a picture that may be different had school sixth forms and pre-1992 and Russell Group universities have been included, specifically if we are to consider the nuances within BAME groups. For example, students from Chinese backgrounds are represented less in HE than in the local population, yet recent data shows students from the Chinese ethnic group had the highest entry rate into HE (66.3%) and have had every year since 2006 (UCAS, 2019a). This indicates, therefore, that students from Chinese groups are less likely to enrol at college-based higher education than to universities. This, with the analysis and discussion above, raises the argument for more nuanced discussion about supporting BAME young people; discussion and practice that considers much more the variations among ethnic minority groups.

Student experiences and perceptions

The experiences and perceptions of young people from BAME backgrounds were collated via online questionnaires and a follow up telephone interview. The data collected from these were analysed using thematic analysis and with the adoption of Bourdieu's thinking tools of habitus and capital as a useful lens through which to view the data.

Support networks (family, peer, school, outreach teams) versus own strive

The influences impacting decision making among FE and HE students included both personal strive and support networks. Of the FE participants, 75% stated own aspiration and strive / motivation / passion as influential in their decision to progress to HE and in making the choices they did. This was also reflected in the HE student participants. Other influencers stated were:

- School / teacher (37.5%);
- Own research (25%);
- Family (12.5%);
- Peers (12.5%);

- Support worker (12.5%);
- Speaking to professionals in that area and research into the sector / industry (12.5%); and,
- Only option presented by school / college (12.5%).

Here we can see that support from school and/or teachers were cited as the biggest influence in making FE and HE choices. West (1996) describes that personal attention and recognition from tutors and institutions enables HE students to believe in themselves and to survive, and as making all the difference (p. 201). Further, Thomas (2002) highlighted that if students feel staff believe in them, and care about their outcomes, they gain self-confidence and motivation resulting in improved work (Thomas, 2002, p. 432). Further, the prioritisation of learning and teaching for students from under-represented groups enhanced the position of these students in the relationship with staff (Thomas, 2002, p. 432).

Finnegan *et al.*, (2014) say that HE students seek an environment that will respect and recognise them as people and that will treat them in all relations as such (p. 162). This ethos would also be valued in providing outreach activity for FE students considering their progression to HE. Further, real interpersonal forms of engagement that encourage a relationship that respects student voices and concerns (Finnegan *et al.*, 2014, p. 162) allow for cooperative behaviour and creative exploration of self and world (West, 1996).

Thomas (2002) proclaims that if an institutional habitus is inclusive and accepting of difference, and celebrates diversity and difference, students from diverse backgrounds will find greater acceptance of and respect for their own practices and knowledge (p. 431). These practices and cultures play an important role in students forming a positive learner identity and would be beneficial in supporting young people to consider HE as a viable option. The result may be improvements in access rates as well as higher levels of continuation on HE programmes. Reay (2003) also claims 'old' universities can learn from some of the new universities in terms of making non-traditional students feel welcome (p. 311). More specifically, local, post-1992 universities have been perceived to be places offering a chance to 'belong' and 'fit in' (Reay, 1998; Ross, Archer and Hutchings, 2002).

Working in these ways will help develop a sense of belonging and of familiarity. Using an example of a male Asian student from a recently completed EdD thesis (Tyssen, 2019), having a sense of security against bullying, harassment and racism was particularly important in progression and continuation. It was developed over time and involved the building of personal rapport and a sense of community. This feeling of security, particularly the security of being able to walk into a building and know people, plays a part in developing a sense of belonging (Thomas, 2002, p. 437).

Also important is the lecturers and institutional departments continually presenting the individuals' status as student, symbolically reinforcing the individuals' formal status as a student (Field and Morgan-Klein, 2010). Work from outreach practitioners should also work towards developing this symbolic capital by means of reinforcing the potential for progression to HE and to be recognised in the status of HE student. It helps the development of a sense of belonging and familiarity.

However, the support from schools and teachers can also be seen negatively in it being stated as 'the only option presented to me'. This was in the case of students being made to believe the school sixth form was the best or only option available for post-16 progression. This does not reflect the impartial advice expected of progression and outreach advisors. In addition, the FE student participating in the interview discussed how in some schools and sixth forms the options available are limited and that certain groups of students were actively encouraged to choose particular subjects that reinforced racial stereotyping.

Of concern, only half of the participating students felt they were aware of all the FE options available to them. For HE choices, 62.5% of FE students felt they were not aware of the HE options available, yet had made applications for HE. Factors they recall as helping in their decision making were:

- Undertaking research on websites that provided detail about courses (including UCAS and Unifrog);
- Their school / college facilitating sessions on next steps and moving on;
- Being part of the Students' Union and societies;
- Careers department at school / college; and,

- Learning about different providers and what they offered.

These students also stated that they would have liked to have had time with current HE students who could talk about the courses of interest and the different routes. They also would like to speak more to alumni who have had that first-hand experience.

Support and influence from family was not stated as a key influence across the 10 participating students (12.5%). Interestingly, seven of the 10 participating students (across FE and HE) were first in family to go to / be going to university. This lack of family progression to HE may partially explain the low citation of family as influential in educational decision making. Having investigated the experiences of 502 non-traditional applicants to HE, from six schools and FE institutions, Reay *et al.*, (2005) suggest that, even when parents are in middle class jobs, if there is little or no experience of HE such families are more insecurely positioned within the field of HE than when family members have experience of university (p. 62).

Research (for example, Knighton, 2002) has indicated that first generation status is more indicative of educational disadvantage than parental occupation or income (Quinn, 2004, p. 60). The parents of the first generation students in this project could not share relevant capital that would help the students in HE, as they were not familiar with HE themselves. Of note may be the varying degrees of transmissibility of forms of capital that may be used by parents (Chamberlayne, *et al.*, 2000, p. 81), especially those from working class backgrounds. The development of resilience, self-confidence and other personality features, as capital in children where other capital is deprived, may help explain how these students have decided to progress to HE and have the required personal strive to achieve raised aspirations.

There may be links to Bourdieu's theorisations around reproduction within social classes. For example, alternative forms of cultural, and social, capital may be linked to working class identity, and experience of racial discrimination, being reinforced outside the classroom. One 17 year old male, of White and Black Caribbean background, discussed this clearly. He was about to complete BTEC and was looking to start a degree in theatre or television and then progress into teaching underprivileged children:

"My dad told me from a young age things will be difficult for me and I won't always be the first person considered because of my skin especially going into

this industry as there's going to be times I'm purely gonna be picked for a role because they need someone to play a slave or because if they don't pick me they aren't diverse and the majority of the time the major roles won't be given to me because there aren't many black major theatre roles at the moment."

The advice being given by the father in this case reinforces messages and experience of racial discrimination and marginalisation. However, it appeared to also provide capital for the young person in the form of resilience, preparedness, self-drive, and ambition. These forms of capital would be useful to draw upon for progression to, and success in, HE where other forms of cultural and social capital may be lacking.

Finnegan and Merrill (2017, p. 314) argue that the interplay between personal and collective dimensions of identity is sociologically very important, and that students reconstruct class identities through education. The students here are attempting to do so. However, some students may not be able to reconstruct identity due to the strength of historic racial inequalities, working class identities and social influence. Identities are shaped by social, personal and institutional processes (Jenkins, 2000; Ferguson, 2009) and these personal and social influences in stories of discrimination can be powerful. This could be by way of reinforcing class identities and cultural attitudes, both positive and negative, towards HE, but also in relation to the accumulation of influential forms of cultural capital that support progression to HE.

In previous research, an example was given by a female HE student of Indian ethnicity who storied both her Nan and aunty as being traditional in their cultural attitudes; what she described as '*an Indian thing*' (Tyssen, 2019). Her family, particularly the females, were very strong in their views that children in the family should progress to university and into professional careers. Despite being from a working class background, all the females of the family in the student's generation were strongly supported to apply to university, including Russell Group universities (Tyssen, 2019).

This specific student did find continuation particularly hard due to the other commitments expected from her by the family, with a need to support the care of elder

family members, childcare of young siblings, and part-time work in the family business (Tyssen, 2019). This was also echoed by a male Asian student who described his parents having an expectation of him working in the family shop and perceived his parents' culture and working class background as being detrimental to his educational choices (Tyssen, 2019). Whilst entering university is seen as a cause to rejoice in many families of first-generation entrants, this in turn can create a burden of responsibility which weighs on the student; family expectations, debts and part-time jobs all help to drag these students down (Quinn, 2004, p. 68).

Finnegan *et al.*, (2014) found that working class students often told stories of support, or lack of support, from their family and/or significant others and said this impacted on them as learners (p. 154). This may explain why students from certain ethnic groups are seen to progress to HE at a greater rate than those from other ethnic groups. Biesta *et al.*, (2011) also suggests that it is possible that existing dispositions are so strong that learning and subsequent change in identity does not happen (p. 20). Where messages about racial discrimination and marginalisation, working class identities, and/or negative attitudes relating to HE are strong, this might make it particularly difficult for young people to draw on other forms of capital to support progression to HE or the development of an identity as an HE student.

Educational experiences

Considering social capital and the importance of an individual's social relations (Bourdieu, 1986) the interviewed student discussed feelings of isolation and marginalisation. She felt she had experienced instances of 'people like me don't do that subject or go there' and similar. She discussed experiences of racial discrimination and actively sought to become a member of groups and societies, including the African Caribbean Society, to gain shared experiences. Social capital has been shown to enable students to overcome the internal and external problems that they may face (Thomas 2002 p. 435) and this student felt joining the society meant she could assess if other students were experiencing the same as her and the ways in which they had overcome these challenges. Distinct negative and racially discriminative experiences were disclosed by two of the FE students participating in the project. The

inclusion of relatable role models and the development of an institutional community is also beneficial here.

The one FE student who participated in the interview was an 18 year old Asian female who discussed a number of experiences of racial harassment and discrimination:

“Throughout high school and primary school I received racism the same way any one, does through jokes not aimed at you, as well as people saying ‘oh can I touch your hair’; being told ‘I dont Like black people but you’re alright’.”

These experiences can have a significant impact on the attitudes, beliefs and choices of young people. ECU (2018) share concerns that:

“the damaging rhetoric that these issues of racial inequality are ‘in the heads’ of those from minority ethnic backgrounds runs counter to their lived experience and can be a source of both stress and distress, whilst myths, for example that we live in a ‘post-racial’ society can damage possibilities for change”.

Some students in existing research have described experiencing consequences on their well-being; being required to 'work harder' than their white peers, 'keep their heads down', or 'be silent in order to achieve (ECU, 2018). There were reports of feelings of marginalisation and a lack of confidence (Smith, 2019, p. 12). The impact of such experiences of racism and discrimination may have negative implications for participation and success in HE. Consequently, it is possible that these experiences may be discussed among families and communities, influencing the perceptions BAME young people and creating potential barriers to access.

The student interviewed in this project went on to give her opinions about why BAME young people may not advance into HE as a result of such experiences:

“Personally, I think many other psychological factors in education play a much stronger role in why so many BAME people don’t advance to higher education. I think many BAME people are aware of the options but are told not to pursue them. Many people in my opinion, are held back by (some) educators pre-conceived notions of what they can achieve”

This echoes the quote from the student on page 24 whereby his father had urged caution that he would not be first to be picked because of his skin colour. However, in this instance it

illustrates the potential detrimental impact, rather than motivating or aspirational impact previously discussed. Singh (2020) also claims that BAME students' behaviour in the classroom is more likely to be rated harshly compared to similar behaviour of White students. The impact of such experiences and perceptions have been reflected in existing literature. McAdams (2001) states that an individual's identity is formed by integrating their life experiences into an internalised story that provides a sense of purpose in life.

Reay (2004a) states that there is a tendency for students to behave in ways that are expected of people like themselves and so the impact of social disadvantage, and habitus, on attitudes of cultural inferiority can be ingrained in habitus and in daily interactions. Feelings of inferiority and not being capable may lead to students feeling like outsiders (Finnegan *et al.*, 2014, p. 157). Such feelings of not belonging or being out of place can lead to a lack of confidence in a student's learning, as well as feeling unsure about themselves in academic spaces (Finnegan and Merrill, 2017, p. 318).

Such considerations may have impacted on students positioning towards HE and the feelings of inadequacy towards universities that they storied. This may have been framed by habitus and schooling, where curriculum offer, organisational practices, and, less tangible but equally important cultural and expressive characteristics, may constitute an important part of institutional habitus (Reay *et al.*, 2005, p. 37). Students are differentially positioned in relation to institutional habitus depending on the extent to which influences of family and peers are similar or conflicting with those of the institution (Reay *et al.*, 2005, p. 38).

Worryingly, the interviewed student storied knowing of peers from ethnic backgrounds who have applied to HE and who have made a conscious decision to not indicate their ethnicity or who in fact have selected 'White'. She explained they had done so as they were of the belief that this would increase their chances of their application being considered, compared to if they selected a BAME ethnic group. This echoes findings from Stevenson (2018) that Black applicants to UK universities are 21 times more likely to have their applications investigated for suspected false or missing information than their white counterparts.

Conclusions

This final section will be draw together the findings and existing literature to inform opportunities and outreach provided by FE and HE providers; to inform the development of further effective support for BAME young people through HE outreach activity; to develop greater understanding of potential barriers to progression; and to develop insights into the role of parents, carers and influencers in supporting educational choices.

The overall findings from the analysis of enrolment data, in context of national and local populations, show that, on the whole, FE and HE populations in the participating FECs had greater representation of students from BAME ethnic groups, and show good progression of young people from BAME backgrounds. However, there are groups within the overarching BAME category that remain underrepresented in FE and HE compared to national and local populations, namely those from Irish, Gypsy or Irish Traveller, and Chinese backgrounds. These findings only indicate the picture of college-based HE in West Yorkshire, although there is some indication that for those from Irish backgrounds this is also true of universities. Gypsy and Irish Traveller populations are low in the local population, and there were no HE enrolments from students from this ethnic group included in the data, and so further investigation may be warranted and welcomed. Further, the findings suggest that GHWY partners are succeeding in attracting BAME students to HE in the region but further research could explore the effectiveness of support for BAME students in terms of continuation, attainment and progression.

Regardless of the findings indicated through the enrolment data, the perspectives offered by the students participating in this project have identified some recommendations for continued improvements in supporting young people from all BAME backgrounds, especially considering differences in institutional cultures and nuanced understanding of specific groups within the BAME umbrella category.

Implications for practice

Existing work that should continue, as students reported it as useful in their decision making journey, include working with schools and colleges to facilitate sessions about next steps, moving on, and what different HE providers offer. This is particularly needed to help show the vast range of

providers and subjects available and try to move past racial stereotyping. This should be supported by continued work with careers advisors who were also seen as a valuable source of support, as well as signposting to informative websites. There is some indication that further work with Students' Unions and societies could be valuable in supporting specific communities of students from different ethnic groups.

However, students in this project were clear that they felt contact with current students and alumni, who could talk about the courses of interest and the different routes and who have had that first-hand experience, would be valued in outreach activity. In particular, more examples of students and successful graduates from BAME backgrounds would have been appreciated.

Along these lines, Smith (2019, p. 14) proposed future approaches to improve the experiences and participation of BAME students on HE may also be applicable to outreach work to improve access rates of BAME students, but more so some specific ethnic minority groups within the 'BAME' category. Some suggestions include BAME students' success stories, with some focus on the student experience and employment, peer to peer support and/or buddying, and working with the students to inform curricular change (Smith, 2019). This was also reflected in Kettle's (2017) claim that a sense of cohort and shared experience makes a real difference when BAME young people come to apply to and attend university.

Key to these approaches is a fundamental aim of building a programme of appropriate cultural understanding, messaging, and representation. Working with young people and communities from ethnic backgrounds is imperative to developing this understanding and in designing effective outreach activity. Institutional community building, partnering with student societies, can have a significant impact and can be powerful in effecting change (Kettle, 2017). Reflecting this in outreach work may also be a powerful means of better understanding cultural differences, nuanced needs to approaches in outreach activity, and removing potential barriers. For example, Smith (2019, p. 12) reported that BAME students in HE had negative experiences in, for example, collaborative learning (group work) and that they had different help-seeking behaviours. It could be possible that this is also true of school and FE education and so may not be accounted for effectively in outreach work.

These are all approaches that could also be applicable to outreach activity, particularly working with BAME students to inform the planning and delivery of outreach activity to BAME young people. However, caution is urged given the ECU (2018) finding that students experience negative impact on well-being, partly with feeling overburdened by requests to act as mentors or role models.

Students participating in this project have shared stories of racism and discrimination, something also reflected in previous research where issues of racism and discrimination were raised and that these were not discussed, nor addressed (ECU, 2018). However, HE students have also criticised continued misguided interventions that built on racist stereotypes, a lack of acceptance that the causes of inequalities relate to race, and that small scale interventions which focus on policies and practises are perceived as being the easiest to address (ECU, 2018). Smith (2019, p.12) also found similarities in findings, with students reporting that HE practitioners make assumptions on the basis of appearance and name. If this is the case among HE institutions, it raises the question of the extent to which conscious and unconscious institutional racism may also influence those working in outreach and the focus and direction of programmes of outreach activity.

Development of an approach focussing on those delivering outreach, and working in HE would also be beneficial. Such things may include practice sharing and dissemination and working with staff to facilitate better understanding of how BAME students' academic self-concept is developed (Smith, 2019, p. 14). Providing staff with a means of better understanding the cultural differences and experiences of BAME students would be beneficial in improving staff education and understanding about race, ethnicity, and racism and the real-life issues that then may present themselves or be influential in educational decision making.

The findings from this project have illustrated a need for more nuanced understanding of specific ethnic groups rather than an overarching BAME category. It is important to emphasise and make visible that HE and individual institutions are inclusive and accepting of difference, and that they celebrate diversity and difference. In doing so, outreach practitioners and institution representatives need to work to develop relationships with individual and groups

of students that respects student voices and concerns. It takes time, but developing personalised approaches, that show individual recognition, respect, welcoming, and belonging will result in more effective and impactful outreach activity and intervention.

Rehman (2019) also advocates the need for greater understanding of the variations in access and participation among different ethnic groups, allowing for better adaptation and targeted intervention through outreach activity. Stevenson (2018) highlighted positive action approaches HE providers can take to overcome the effects of historic discrimination or low participation, education, training and welfare (p. 33). The example of students actively hiding their ethnicity on their UCAS application is an example of this. It involves taking steps to remove barriers in student outreach or admissions for groups of students underrepresented in particular subjects (Stevenson, 2018, p. 33). Removing some of these barriers will involve disaggregating ethnicity from the BAME collective to take a much more nuanced approach to outreach activity with greater tailoring or activity and interventions for specific ethnic minority groups (Kettle, 2017).

As well as work with young people, and ongoing developing of practice for practitioners, work with families, parents and carers would be helpful. The findings from the questionnaires and interview showed that there was little consideration of family as an influence in decision making and seven of 10 participants being first in family entrants. Family attitudes and experiences are powerful in the development of young people's habitus and capital and in turn influence their choices. Supporting parents, carers and families in developing knowledge and familiarity with HE options will help develop the required cultural capital in young people considering HE where it is not typical of their family or community.

Limitations

Due to the restrictions of the Coronavirus pandemic at the time of data collection, participation from education providers and students was much lower than anticipated. In addition, the type of education provider participating in the project provides only one perspective of the landscape for West Yorkshire. For example, enrolment data and students were not included from schools sixth forms or universities.

Future recommendations

Students as co-producers of knowledge about themselves is key to further developing nuanced and detailed understanding of the experiences and potential barriers to HE for young people from ethnic minority groups. Research needs to be much more student led and so further research involving the initially proposed focus groups, and potentially detailed student stories, would help provide this. Targeted, localised, research and engagement with young people from Irish and Gypsy or Irish Traveller ethnic backgrounds, as well as with parents, key organisations and community groups, would also be valuable.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Comparisons and percentage difference between enrolment data and census data

Appendix 2: FE (post-16, 16-19 year old) enrolment figures collected from the four participating FECs

Appendix 3: HE (post-18 year old) enrolment figures collected from the three college-based HE providers

Appendix 1: Comparisons and percentage difference between enrolment data and census data

	FE 16-19					HE 18 +															
	Proj FEC		Eng and Wales		GHWY FEC LA		Proj FEC		Eng and Wales		Yorks and Humber		GHWY LA		GHWY FEC LA		GHWY HEI				
	Proj FEC enrol data	Eng and Wales census	% diff	GH FEC LA census	% diff	Proj FEC enrol data	Eng and Wales cens	% diff	Yorks and Humb cens	% diff	GHWY LA census	% diff	GH FEC LA cens	% diff	GH HEI UCAS 18 yr old data	% diff Proj FEC	% diff Eng and Wales	% diff Yorks and Humb	% diff GH LA		
White	65.7	79.12	-16.96	80.52	-18.41	54.90	81.88	-32.95	87.52	-37.27	81.28	-32.46	84.82	-35.27	72.98	23.38	-16.86	-19.56	-19.66		
Irish	0.03	0.37	-92.18	0.3	-90.36	0.34	1.13	-69.90	0.6	-43.31	0.81	-58.01	0.84	-59.51							
Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0.07	0.14	-48.34	0.07	3.32	0	0.08	-100	0.07	-100	0.06	-100	0.06	-100							
Other White	1.91	2.86	-33.07	1.77	8.15	3.91	4.69	-16.60	2.54	54	8.69	-54.99	2.6	50.44	4.21	3.19	198.58	312.75	198.58		
White and Black Caribbean	2.04	1.55	31.58	2.01	1.47	2.38	0.49	385.91	0.42	466.89	0.63	277.93	0.66	260.75							
White and Black African	0.47	0.4	16.92	0.03	1458.98	0.51	0.18	183.45	0.1	410.20	0.14	264.43	0.15	240.14							
White and Asian	1.26	0.97	29.74	0.94	33.88	0.57	0.38	49.18	0.29	95.48	0.4	41.72	0.35	61.97							
Other Mixed	1.01	0.72	40.63	0.56	80.81	0.62	0.36	73.22	0.21	196.94	0.24	159.83	0.25	149.43							
Indian	2.41	2.37	1.72	2.58	-6.56	1.98	2.52	-21.26	1.26	57.47	2.29	-13.36	2.4	-17.33							
Pakistani	13.46	2.59	419.58	5.75	134.04	8.22	1.63	404.29	3.32	147.59	6.69	22.87	3.64	125.82							
Bangladeshi	0.74	1.08	-31.69	0.45	63.93	9.69	0.63	1438.71	0.31	3027.06	0.49	1878.34	0.25	3777.55	19.24	-9.25	177.23	212.34	76.35		
Chinese	0.24	1.02	-76.36	0.66	-63.47	0.34	0.75	-54.65	0.58	-41.36	0.52	-34.59	0.58	-41.36							
Other Asian	1.77	1.64	7.90	0.91	94.45	0.96	1.41	-31.65	0.69	39.67	0.92	4.75	0.82	17.53							
African	3.02	2.28	32.38	1.37	120.32	9.01	1.49	504.94	0.76	1086	0.98	819.76	1.1	719.42	2.65	-77.19	-9.86	87.94	33.17		
Caribbean	1.35	1.12	20.97	0.71	90.83	1.76	1.08	62.72	0.48	266.12	0.77	128.23	0.84	109.21							
Other Black	0.75	0.66	13.97	0.35	114.91	0.85	0.37	129.82	0.17	400.20	0.24	254.31	0.3	183.45							
Arab	0.85	0.48	77.80	0.43	98.47	0.45	0.36	25.98	0.33	37.43	0.36	25.98	0.32	41.72	0.91	-132.21	-3.19	31.88	7.06		
Any other ethnic group	1.65	0.64	158.41	0.34	386.41	1.76	0.58	202.99	0.36	388.16	0.49	258.65	0.43	308.69							

Appendix 2: FE (post-16, 16-19 year old) enrolment figures collected from the four participating FECs

Subject Area		White British	BAME	African	Arab	Bangladeshi	Caribbean	Chinese	Gypsy and Traveller	Indian	Irish	Pakistani	White and Asian	White and Black African	White and Black Caribbean	Any other Asian background	Any other Black / African / Caribbean background	Any other ethnic group	Any other Mixed / multiple ethnic background	Any other White background	
	% of total	% of cohort			% of BAME cohort																
FULL COHORT = 10 691		68.7	29.6	12.1	1.2	3.6	4.6	1	0.5	5.1	0.2	35.3	4.2	2	5.7	2.9	2.4	3.3	3.4	12.5	
A LEVEL	12	57.5	42	9.8	2.4	2.4	5.4	3.3	0	11.1	0	37	3.3	1.5	1.7	4.3	2	3	3.5	9.3	
APPRENTICESHIPS	8.9	91.9	7.2	1.5	0	5.9	7.4	1.5	2.9	8.8	0	22.1	4.4	0	11.8	1.5	1.5	1.5	11.8	16.2	
Animal / Landbased	1.2	89.4	10.6	0	0	0	7.7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	23.1	15.4	0	7.7	15.4	30.8	
Business	7.6	43	55.4	14.7	1.1	5.1	6.4	0.9	0	4.7	0	32	1.8	1.6	2.9	3.1	4.2	4.4	3.1	7.6	
Childcare	3.9	69.1	27.3	8.8	0	9.7	0.9	0	0.9	1.8	0	52.2	0.9	1.8	3.5	1.8	0	0.9	4.4	12.4	
Construction/Building	5.2	88.5	10.1	7.1	0	0	1.8	3.6	1.8	1.8	0	53.6	5.4	1.8	3.6	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	12.5	
Creative/Perform Arts	10.6	73.9	20.5	8.2	1.7	1.7	7.8	1.7	0.4	6	0.9	15.1	6	3	12.5	3	2.6	2.6	6	20.7	
Creative Digital Media	5.2	77.5	20.5	9.7	0.9	3.5	8	1.8	0	4.4	0.9	12.4	12.4	1.8	8.8	0.9	0	2.7	5.3	21.2	
Digital and IT	5	61.5	35.5	12.1	0	8.9	3.7	1.6	0	4.7	0	26.8	4.2	1.6	4.7	2.1	1.1	1.1	2.6	12.1	
Engineering	3.3	68.8	30.1	9.5	1	1	9.5	0	1	7.6	0	29.5	3.8	4.8	9.5	1.9	6.7	1	4.8	8.6	
Engineering-electrical	3.2	85.8	12.7	2.3	0	0	2.3	0	0	4.7	0	60.5	4.7	0	11.6	2.3	2.3	0	2.3	7	
Engineering-man/mec	1.9	91.7	8.3	11.8	0	5.9	5.9	0	0	11.8	0	41.2	5.9	0	0	5.9	5.9	0	0	5.9	
English (Lang/ Lit)	1.3	51.9	47.4	6.3	0	1.6	9.4	3.1	0	9.4	0	43.8	4.7	1.6	0	6.3	1.6	3.1	1.6	7.8	
EPQ	0.2	65.2	34.8	0	0	12.5	0	0	0	12.5	0	37.5	12.5	0	0	12.5	0	12.5	0	0	
Foreign Languages	0.1	0	100	33.3	0	0	0	0	0	16.7	0	16.7	0	16.7	0	0	0	0	0	16.7	0
Geography	0.1	64.3	35.7	20	0	0	20	20	0	20	0	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hair and Beauty	5.2	79.2	17.2	2.1	1.1	1.1	4.2	1.1	3.2	3.2	0	23.2	4.2	4.2	11.6	1.1	1.1	4.2	4.2	30.5	
Health & Social Care	11.1	62.9	35.8	17	0.5	4.3	2.8	0	0.2	2.4	0.2	39.5	5.7	2.8	5.2	2.1	2.4	3.3	3.3	8.3	
History	0.4	70.2	29.8	7.1	0	7.1	0	7.1	0	14.3	0	42.9	0	7.1	0	7.1	0	0	0	7.1	
Hospitality / Catering	2.4	78.9	17.6	4.4	0	0	6.7	0	0	2.2	0	6.7	2.2	0	8.9	0	0	6.7	2.2	15.6	
Law / Politics	1.3	56	44	12.9	0	0	6.5	3.2	0	6.5	0	40.3	3.2	1.6	3.2	1.6	1.6	3.2	3.2	12.9	
Mathematics	0.4	73.2	26.8	27.3	0	0	0	9.1	0	0	0	36.4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9.1	
Motor Vehicle	5.1	77.8	21.4	10.3	0	1.7	2.6	0	1.7	1.7	0.9	52.1	2.6	0.9	1.7	3.4	0.9	0	0.9	17.9	
Philosophy	0.1	50	41.7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	60	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	
Psychology	1.1	50	50	6.6	3.3	3.3	6.6	1.6	0	16.4	0	32.8	4.9	0	1.6	1.6	1.6	3.3	4.9	11.5	
Public Services	3.5	72.6	22.8	3.5	0	1.2	1.2	0	1.2	4.7	0	35.3	4.7	0	7.1	2.4	1.2	2.4	5.9	29.4	
Religious Studies	0.2	63.2	36.8	0	0	14.3	0	0	0	0	0	57.1	0	14.3	14.3	0	0	0	0	0	
Science	4.4	30.2	68.9	14.8	5.2	2.5	2.5	1.2	0	8	0	46	1.9	1.5	2.5	3.7	1.9	2.8	2.2	3.4	
Sociology	1.2	60.2	39.8	15.7	0	2	5.9	2	0	11.8	0	35.3	3.9	0	2	5.9	2	3.9	3.9	5.9	
Sport	5	71.1	27.1	21.9	0	3.4	6.8	0.7	0	3.4	0	24.7	4.1	2.1	11	1.4	3.4	4.1	2.1	11	
Teaching	1.2	69	30.2	10.3	2.6	7.7	10.3	0	0	0	0	38.5	5.1	2.6	5.1	2.6	0	7.7	2.6	5.1	
Travel/Tour/Aviation	2.9	64.4	33.7	13.5	1	1	1.9	0	0	1	0	21.2	5.8	3.8	3.8	5.8	6.7	7.7	2.9	20.2	

Appendix 3: HE (post-18 year old) enrolment figures collected from the three college-based HE providers

Subject Area		White British	BAME	African	Arab	Bangladeshi	Caribbean	Chinese	Gypsy and Traveller	Indian	Irish	Pakistani	White and Asian	White and Black African	White and Black Caribbean	Any other Asian background	Any other Black / African / Caribbean background	Any other ethnic group	Any other Mixed / multiple ethnic background	Any other White background
	% of total	% of cohort		% of BAME cohort																
FULL COHORT = 1594		52.8	47.2	20.8	1.1	22.7	3.9	0.5	0	3.6	0.8	17.3	1.1	0.9	5	2.1	1.9	3.9	1.3	9.2
APPRENTICESHIP	5	81.3	18.8	6.7	0	0	0	13.3	0	13.3	0	20	6.7	6.7	20	6.7	0	0	0	13.3
Animal Management	0.2	66.7	33.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100
Business	23.1	21.5	78.5	23.9	0	52.6	2.1	0	0	0.7	0	8	0	0.3	1.4	1	2.1	2.8	1	2.4
Childcare	4.7	64	36	25.9	0	11.1	14.8	0	0	3.7	0	14.8	7.4	0	0	3.7	3.7	3.7	0	7.4
Creative Arts	9.2	70.1	29.9	6.8	0	4.5	4.5	2.3	0	2.3	4.5	6.8	4.5	4.5	11.4	0	2.3	4.5	4.5	27.3
Creative Digital Media	4.5	76.1	23.9	11.8	0	0	11.8	0	0	5.9	5.9	5.9	0	0	0	5.9	5.9	5.9	0	29.4
Digital and IT	7.2	78.3	21.7	4	0	4	12	4	0	4	4	20	0	0	16	0	0	4	0	24
Engineering - electrical	0.9	66.7	33.3	40	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	0	0	20	0	0	0	0	20
Engineering - manf/ mech	1	62.5	37.5	16.7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16.7	16.7	0	0	0	33.3
Health and Social Care	7.3	50.4	49.6	46.6	1.7	12.1	1.7	0	0	1.7	0	24.1	0	1.7	3.4	0	0	1.7	0	5.2
Law	5	40	60	6.3	4.2	4.2	8.3	0	0	8.3	0	43.8	0	0	6.3	2.1	2.1	8.3	0	2.1
Media Hair and Make-Up	8.3	78.8	21.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	7.1	0	0	3.6	0	14.3	0	0	17.9	3.6	21.4
Policing	0.7	72.7	27.3	66.7	0	0	0	0	0	33.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Public Services	15	91.7	8.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100
Science	7	40.2	59.8	16.4	1.5	3	0	3	0	10.4	0	32.8	3	1.5	6	4.5	0	1.5	0	10.4
Sport	5.6	56.7	43.3	25.6	0	0	5.1	0	0	2.6	0	15.4	5.1	0	17.9	2.6	7.7	5.1	2.6	7.7
Teaching (incl PGCE)	10.4	66.9	33.1	10.9	7.3	3.6	7.3	0	0	7.3	1.8	43.6	0	0	3.6	3.6	1.8	1.8	1.8	5.5
Travel and Tourism	2.3	32.4	67.6	40	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	12	4	4	8	4	0	4	4	16