



# Black British Students: Do I belong?





Idea and  
Questions

Planning

Positionality

Theoretical  
frameworks

Methodology

Findings

Recommendations

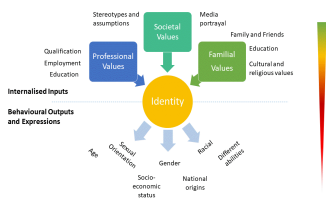
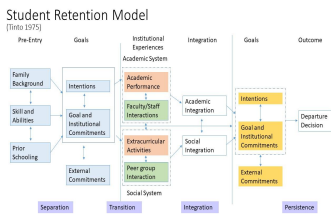
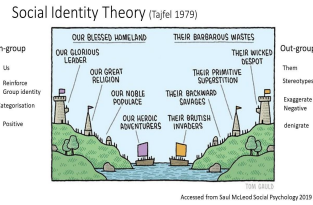
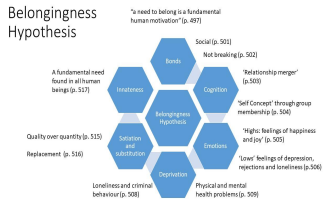


The story of my MEd thesis

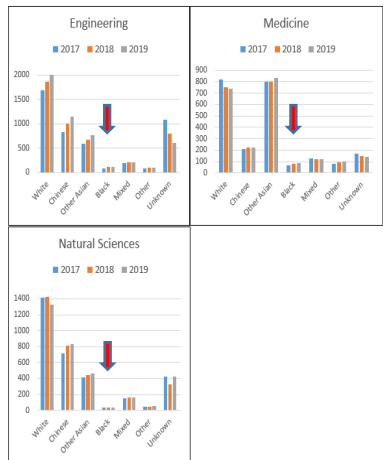
<https://tinyurl.com/y799u959>



# Domain of Theory



# Domain of Practice (Internal)



**Being Black British @ Imperial College**

Are you a Black British Student (BBS)?

Were you educated in the UK?

We are particularly interested in hearing your educational experiences of getting to and being at Imperial College. We would like to gain a better insight and understanding of your experiences on the way up!

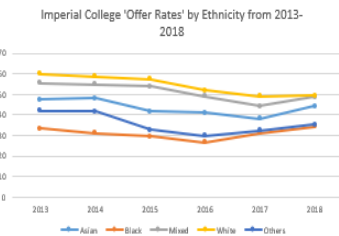
- How you got to Imperial College: How did you get to Imperial College?
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Interviews are scheduled for the week of the 11<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> February and 4<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> March 2018.

Selections on a first-come, first-served basis, so ACT NOW so that your voice and experiences are heard.

For more information, please contact:

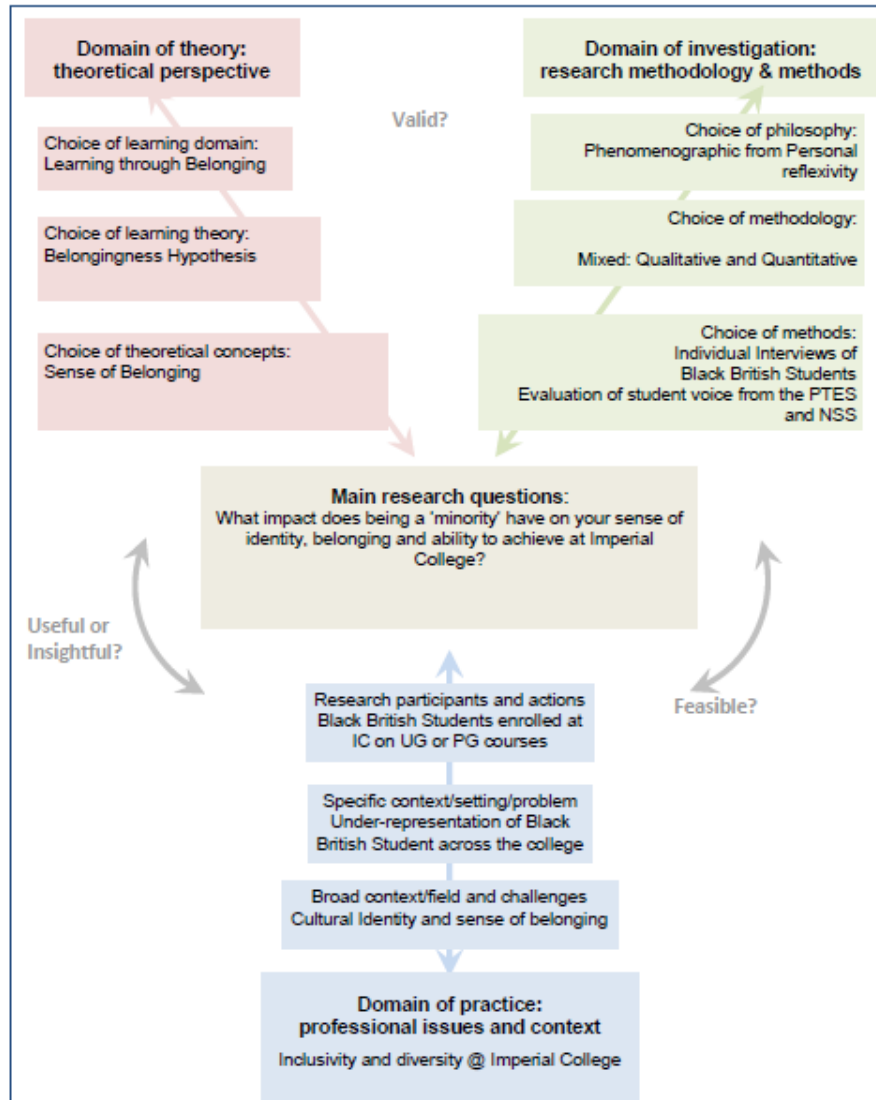
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# My Y-diagram

**Project title:** Being an Imperial College student: A phenomenographic investigation into Black British students' 'Sense of Belonging' at Imperial College

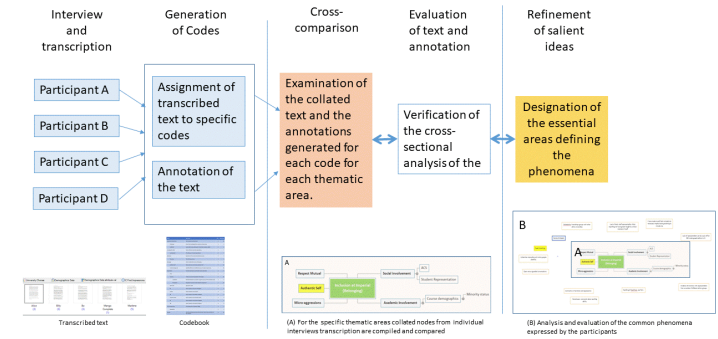
**Researcher:** Wayne A Mitchell



My Y-Diagram: Date: 04/11/18 Version: 1.0

# Domain of Investigation

## Schematic of Thematic Analysis Approach



# Domain of Practice (External)



Being an Imperial College student:  
A phenomenographic investigation  
into Black British students' 'Sense  
of Belonging' at Imperial College

Wayne A Mitchell



## Objective: *What does Imperial Say?*

*'we will foster an **inclusive and diverse community** where different backgrounds and cultures in staff and **students are cherished and celebrated**, and **their different cultural experiences and identities** are **embraced** in order to better prepare all students for an increasingly diverse and complex future work environment.....a culture that understands and embodies the values of diversity and inclusivity' (p3)*

Buitendijk, 2017

Learning and Teaching Strategy

"What impact does being a 'minority' have on Black British student's sense of identity, belonging and ability to achieve at Imperial College?"

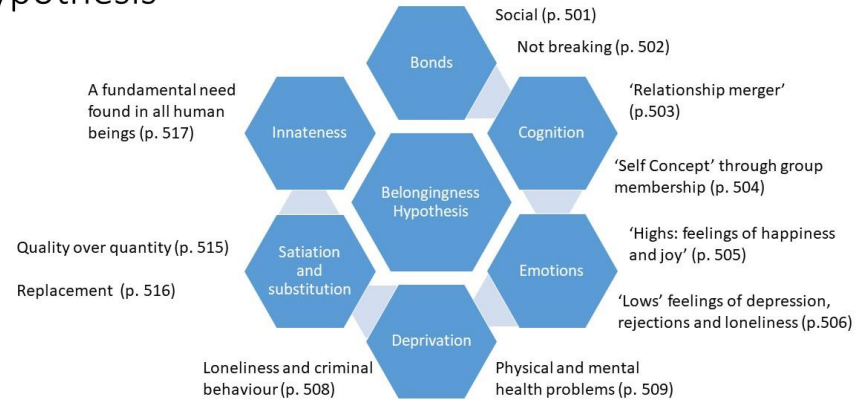
Research Question



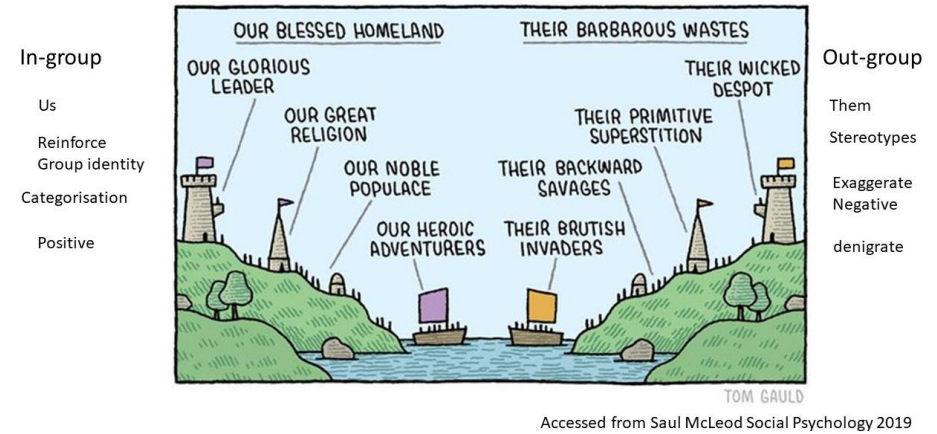


# Belongingness Hypothesis

"a need to belong is a fundamental human motivation" (p. 497)

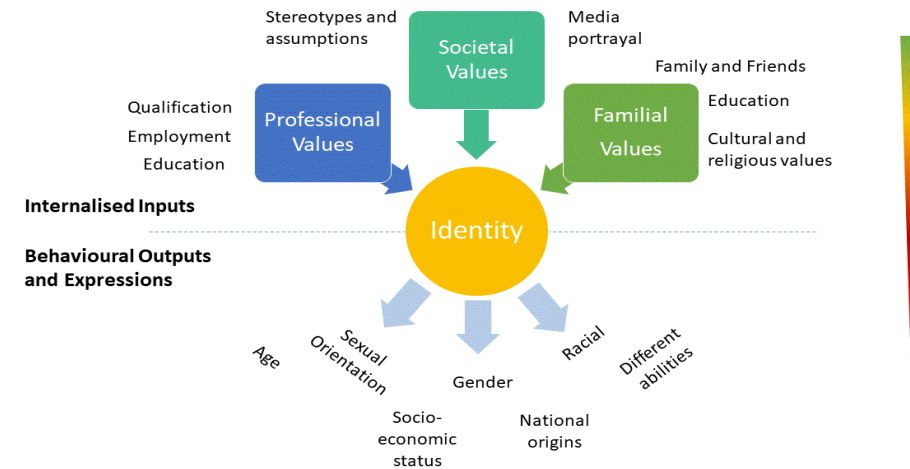
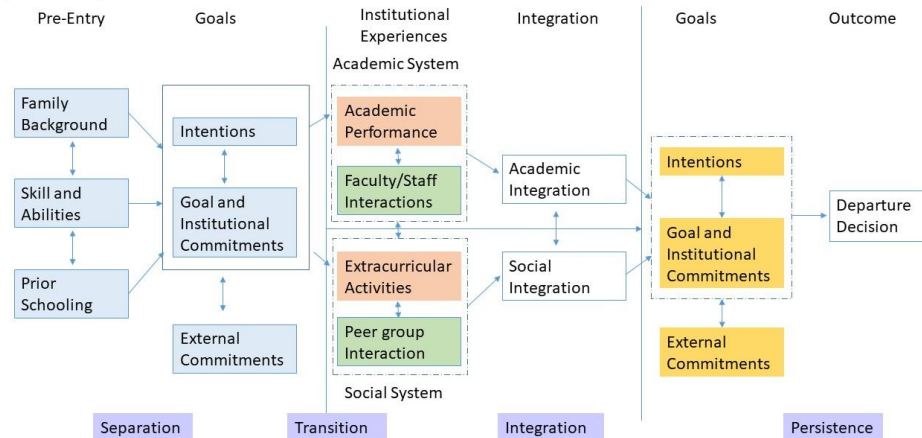


# Social Identity Theory (Tajfel 1979)



# Student Retention Model

(Tinto 1975)





## Being Black British @ Imperial College



Are you a Black British Student (BBS)?

Were you educated in the UK?

We are particularly interested in hearing your educational experiences of getting to and being at Imperial College. We would like to gain a better insight and understanding of your experiences in the areas of:

1. How you got to Imperial College: Your educational history?
2. What was your experience of the admission process?
3. What reaction did you receive from home and your community (Family and friends) at being accepted and attending IC?
4. Do you have a sense of inclusion within the IC community?
5. What impact, if any, has being a BBS at IC had on your 'sense of identity' both at IC and in your community?



If you are interested, willing and available to be interviewed (approximately 60 mins), then we would like to hear from you. We are initially looking to recruit and interview 8-12 participants.

Interviews are scheduled for the week of the 11<sup>th</sup> -15<sup>th</sup> February and 4<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> March 2019.

Selection is on a 'first-come, first serve' basis, so **ACT NOW** so that your voice and experiences are heard.

For more information, please contact



Expression of Interest

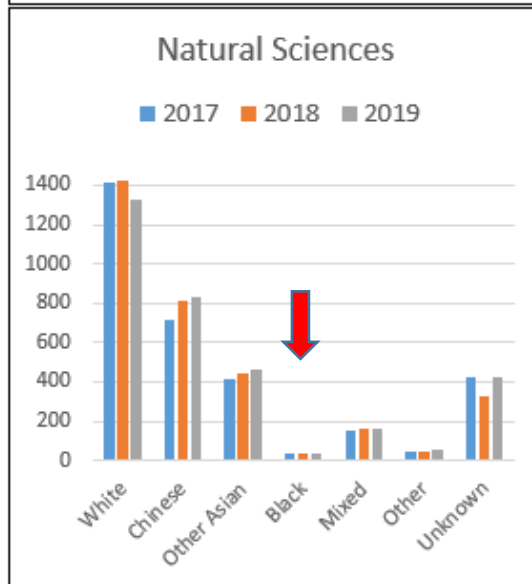
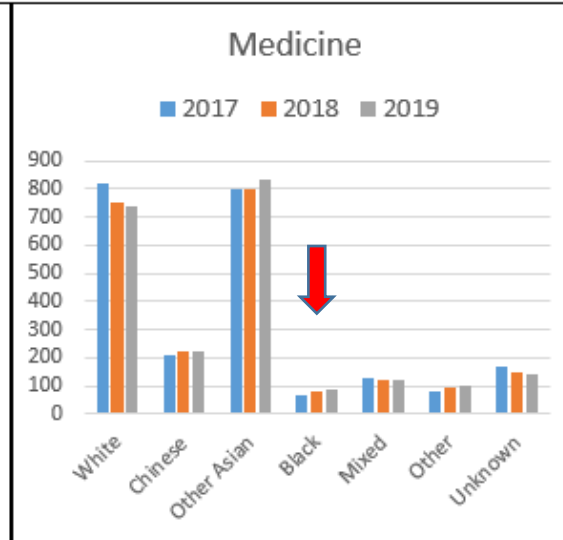
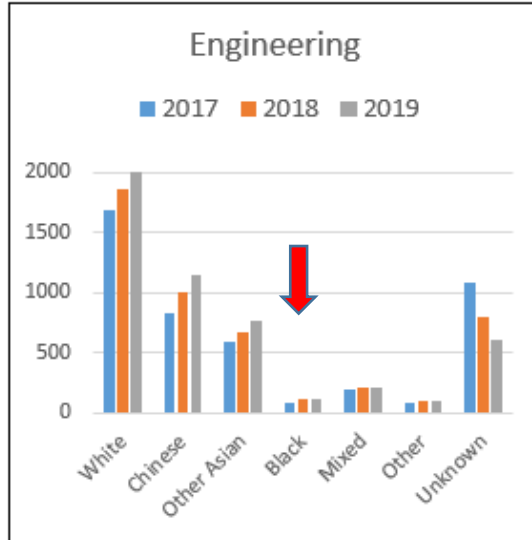
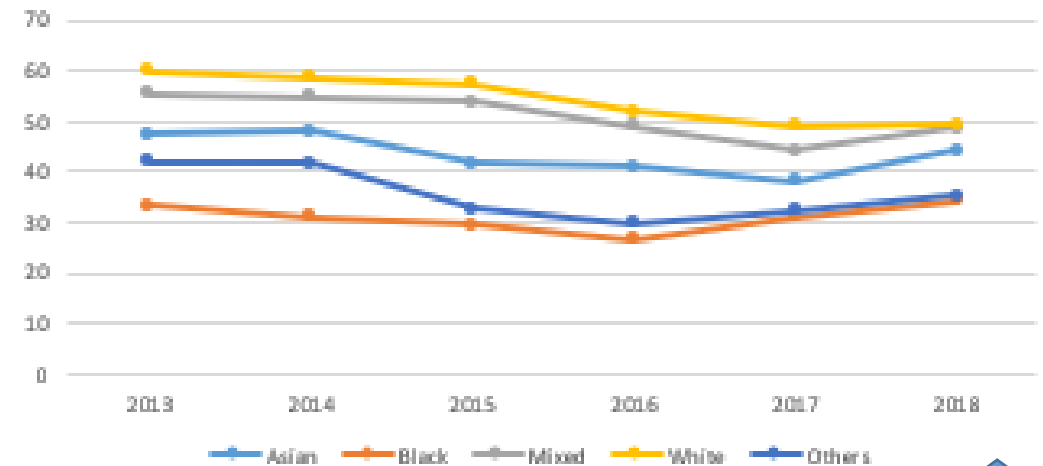
**Researcher:** Wayne A Mitchell

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**Phone:** 020 8383 2358



**gsu**  
Imperial College  
Graduate Students' Union

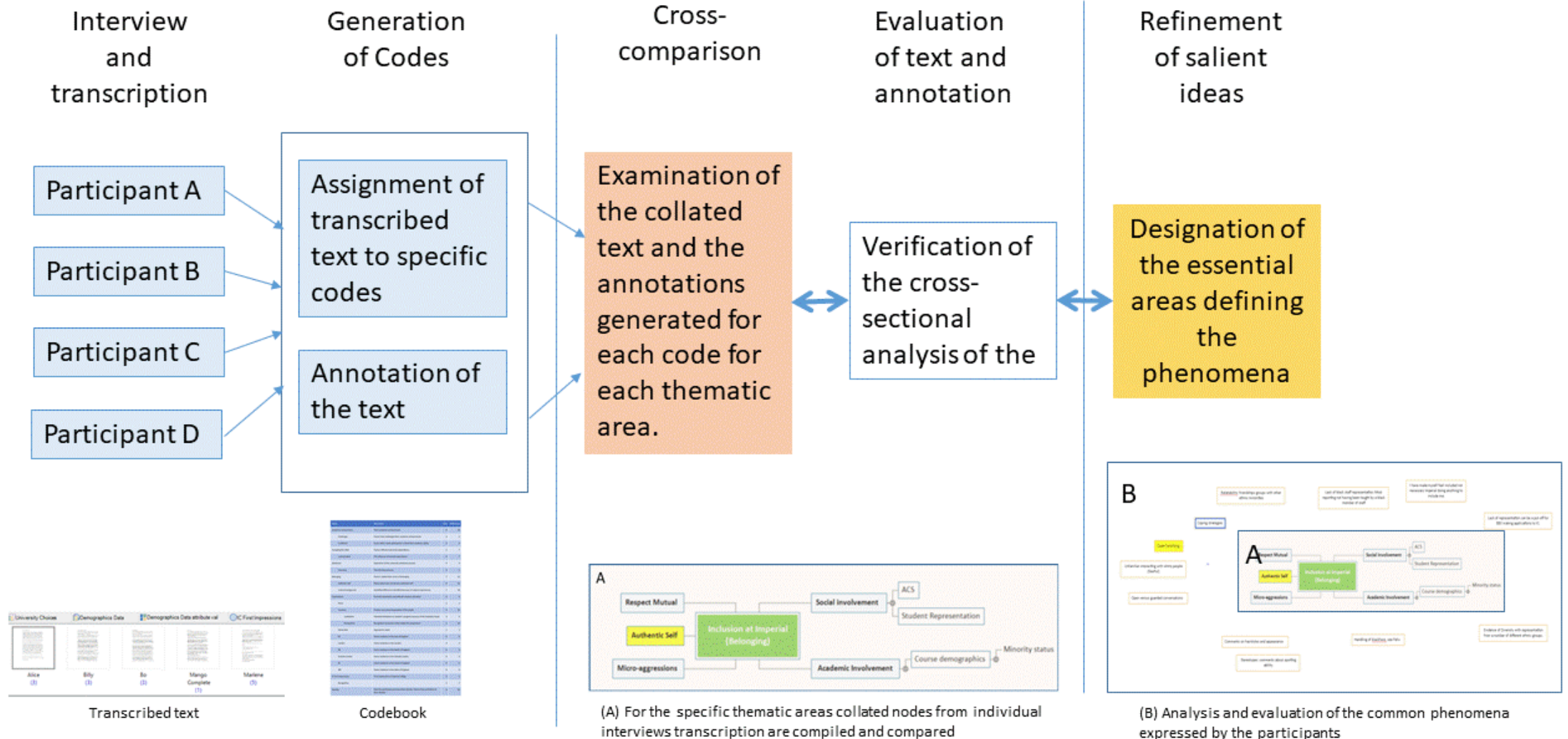
## Imperial College 'Offer Rates' by Ethnicity from 2013-2018







# Schematic of Thematic Analysis Approach





### RIP this Britain: With academic objectivity, Oxford Professor and population expert DAVID COLEMAN says white Britons could be in the minority by the 2060s - or sooner

By DAVID COLEMAN FOR THE DAILY MAIL  
PUBLISHED: 01:56, 28 May 2016 | UPDATED: 11:06, 28 May 2016



### 'I've got the best drinks cabinet anywhere in the country,' boasts Nigel Farage as he kicks-off UK wide tour on his big purple bus

- Ukip leader Nigel Farage pledges to 'make June 23rd Independence Day'
- He and his party colleagues will tour England and Scotland next week
- Farage's open-topped double decker bus features the slogan: 'We want our country back'
- He hails Boris Johnson as a 'nice guy' who will 'probably be the next PM'
- It is another sign he is angling for a job in a future Boris government

By HATT DATHAN, POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT FOR MAILONLINE

PUBLISHED: 18:18, 20 May 2016 | UPDATED: 11:52, 21 May 2016



Ukip politicians will tour England and Scotland next week in his open-topped double decker bus (pictured) which features the slogan 'We want our country back'



### Young Manchester City footballer, 20, on £25,000 a week splashes out on mansion on market for £2.25million despite having never started a Premier League match

By Anthony Joseph for MailOnline  
08:48 10 Jan 2018, updated 10:51 11 Jan 2018



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Good morning I just want to say, I am not normally the person to talk a lot but when I think I need my point to heard I will speak up. Regarding what was said at the Chelsea game as you can see by my reaction I just had to laugh because I don't expect no better. For example you have two young players starting out there careers both play for the same team, both have done the right thing. Which is buy a new house for there mothers who have put in a lot of time and love into helping them get where they are, but look how the news papers get there message across for the young black player and then for the young white payer. I think this is unacceptable both innocent have not done a thing wrong but just by the way it has been worded. This young black kid is looked at in a bad light. Which helps fuel racism an aggressive behaviour, so for all the news papers that don't understand why people are racist in this day and age all I have to say is have a second thought about fair publicity an give all players an equal chance.

View all 22,977 comments

Add a comment...

### Manchester City starlet Phil Foden buys new £2m home for his mum

- Phil Foden has set up a future in Manchester by buying his family a new home
- The teenage midfielder's parents were involved in choosing the house
- He is determined to keep the close-knit family together despite on-field success

By IAN HERBERT FOR THE DAILY MAIL  
PUBLISHED: 22:30, 4 October 2018 | UPDATED: 01:31, 5 October 2018



Manchester City's Phil Foden has set up his future in the area by buying a new house, thought to be worth around £2million, for himself and his family, Sportsmail can reveal.

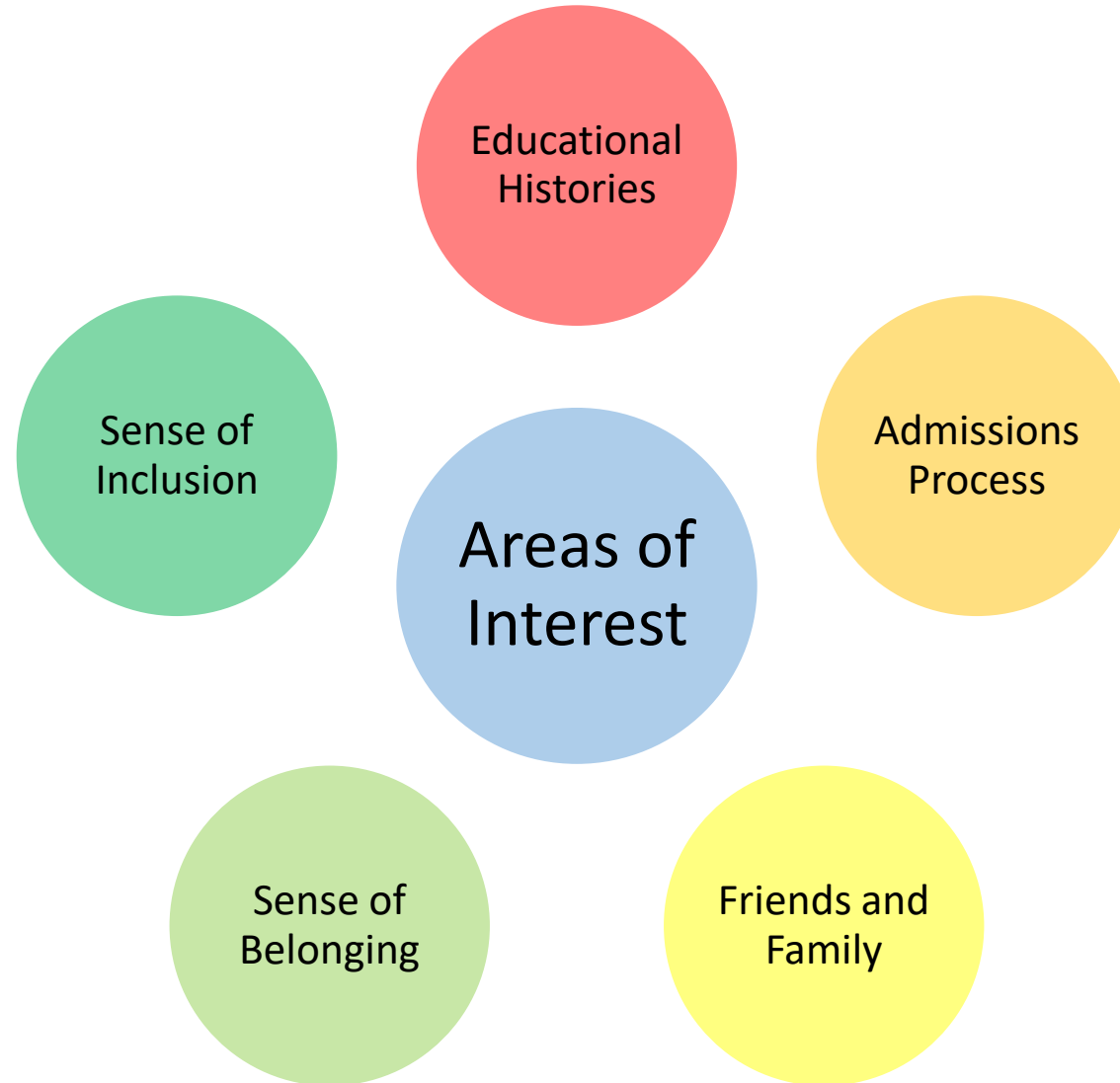
The 18-year-old's parents, Phil and Claire, are thought to have been involved in choosing the house and he is determined to keep the close-knit family together despite his emergence as one of England's outstanding talents.

The family are not wealthy, though Foden's success has allowed them to move from Edgeley, a modest Stockport suburb, to Bramhall, in affluent south Manchester, to be close to the independent school Foden has been put through by City.



Manchester City's Phil Foden has set up a future in the city by buying a new house







# Demographics



4



3



1



# Educational Histories

Private School

3

Grammar

3

Comprehensive

2

Most common University choice

Oxbridge 6

Most common Course Studied

Medicine 5

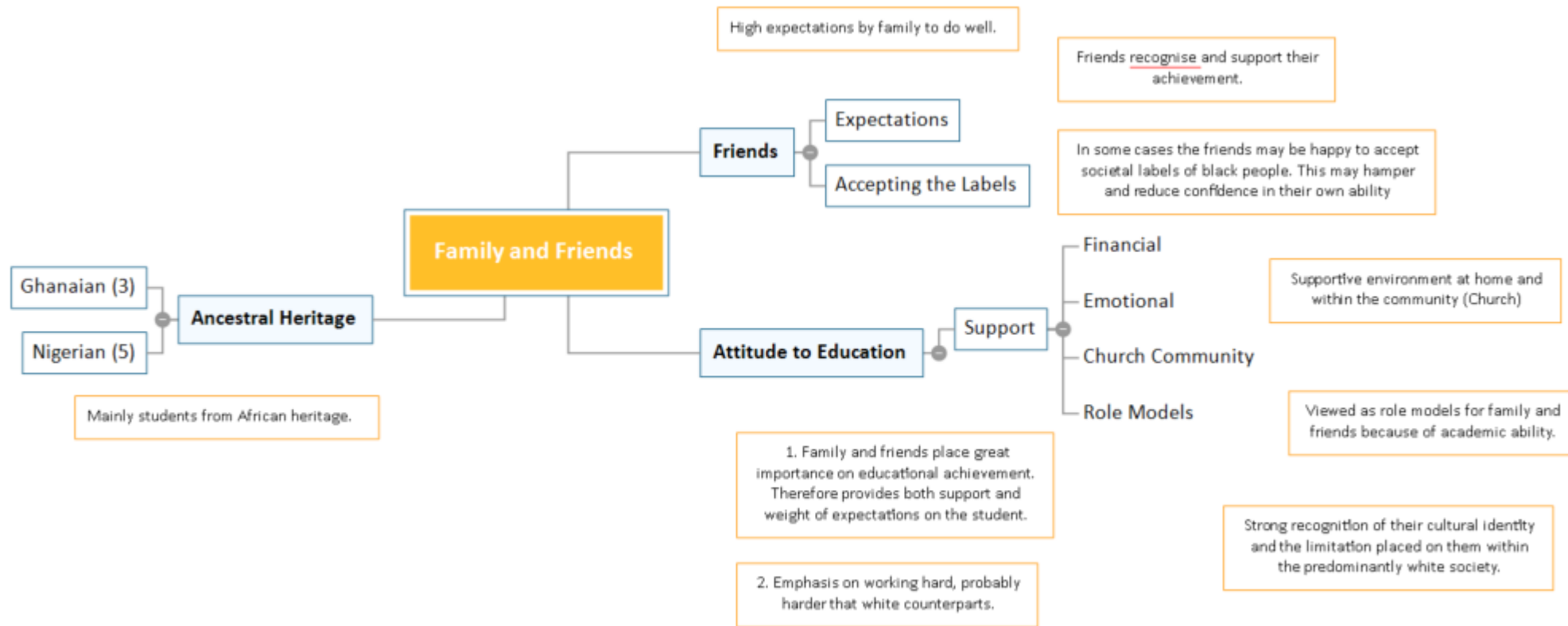
Year of study ranged:

Undergraduate 7

Recent graduate 1



# Family and Friends





# Sense of Pride

"And **I was very stubborn in that identity [Nigerian]** eventually I sort of let go of that and just associating with things that I don't, I didn't ascribed to my Nigerianess because to me Nigerians are very stubborn.... we work very hard..... we do those sort of things and in **terms of academia 'We Don't Take That lightly'**, we take that very seriously, it's not a joke". (S3)

Heritage

Academic achievement

Achievement for the family

So it was **really a nice achievement** and my family were **absolutely estatic, estatic** **absolutely estatic** my mum still brags about it here and there (S4)

"It was **really amazing** I felt that I done my family proud, it's one thing being the **first to go to university** it's another thing to be at a **prestigious University** something that you can be proud of and would you walk into a room there's a sense of cuz even if they don't know what subject you study, it's like a **sense of awe**, and wonderment which I've never received before in my past. (S4)



# Being in the minority

Most students report:

- They acknowledge and recognise being in the minority
- 1-5 blacks student in a year group of 200-300.
- Large number of black international students compared to BBS. But still not many!!
- Very few Caribbean students in their class
- Friendship groups tended to be with other ethnic minority groups
- Students tended not to attend union events as they felt they did not cater for their cultural needs.





# Do I Belong?

"I think in terms of sense of belonging (pause) I'll be honest with you **I don't feel like I belong** in terms of my degree, **I feel I belong in terms of my societies** the societies that I join up with." (S4)

Not built for me

Acknowledgement that it's a privileged to be in this environment

Deserve to be here but not sure if I belong?  
**(resilience)**

sometimes I don't know in the sense **that it doesn't feel like it's an institution that's built to favour me**, if that makes sense. Just because we are a minority, and **I have been put in an environment which is for them but isn't necessarily for me, but just I'm still lucky** to be in that environment, and to try to get the same benefits kind of thing so I never say that I feel, I feel comfortable here now like **I do feel like I deserve to be here but I don't know if I literally say that I belong here** if it's the place for me and it's the ideal environment for me as a black person because we are the minority and the whole institution isn't necessarily built to favour us, as much as other people." (S2)



# Identity

Most students report:

- Being hardworking, highly motivated
- Academic, smart
- Recognition of their blackness and cultural differences



# Can I be me?

*"they're [white-majority] in charge essentially they are the big people, they are the senior lecturers, they are the ones that will give you the jobs, so you need to be the type of black person that they like? Rather than the black person that you are, it may be the same but it may not be." (S5)*

Feeling that they have to self regulate in order to accepted by the dominant culture

*"so growing up in Nigeria I never placed my identity in being black or being you know an ethnic minority as some would say because I didn't think I was a minority everyone around me was black so that's not what my identity was placed. My identity mainly I would say growing up and reflecting .....was placed on my academic performance." (S6)*

Trans-Atlantic transition:  
Societal labels

*"that was jarring...one it was cold, but it was a very big jump.... almost like a step down in many ways a step-down in one way, I was used to being around all mostly black people, and you are very comfortable in that and I didn't ever, one thing that I always tell people is that I didn't realise that I was black until I got to the UK." (S3)*



# A Safe Place

*then **ACS is a way to relate to other people** to like celebrate my culture, I guess, and be around other people that are like me.  
(S2)*

*the **African Caribbean Society they're my second family**, like if I could call them my blood family to that extent I feel that that's where my identity lies (S5)*

*and I thank god that that I have those **two families the ACS family and a group of friends** that I've made in my course because honestly without them I don't think I would have enjoyed imperial (S5)*

## African Caribbean Society

**A place where the student do not feel in the minority. A place were they feel like a family**



7 Key points from the results:



# 1

Sense of identity: The current system has the effect of **magnifying the minority status** of the students and requires them to **conform to the predominant culture**, for whom it was designed, if they wish to fit in.



## 2

The high concentration and caliber of students, to some extent, stripped away part of their identity i.e. **their identity based on their academic achievement.**

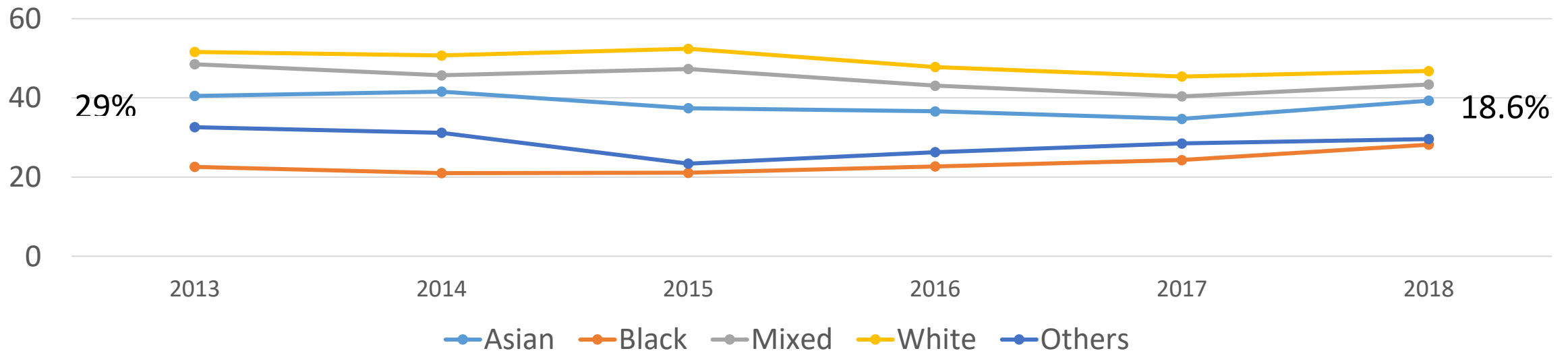
Often only replaced with their sense of isolation (being in the visible minority) as a Black British individual.



# 3

The current inequality in the admission of black students **exacerbates the minority status** of black students.

Imperial College 'Offer Rates' by Ethnicity from 2013-2018  
All Ages Applicants







# 4

**Under-representation of BME staff** is a reason why students may not have a sense of belonging. Most of the student stated that they had only had one or two (if any at all) lectures from a black lecturer during their 3-5 years of studies.

**I don't see anyone like me teaching us!!**



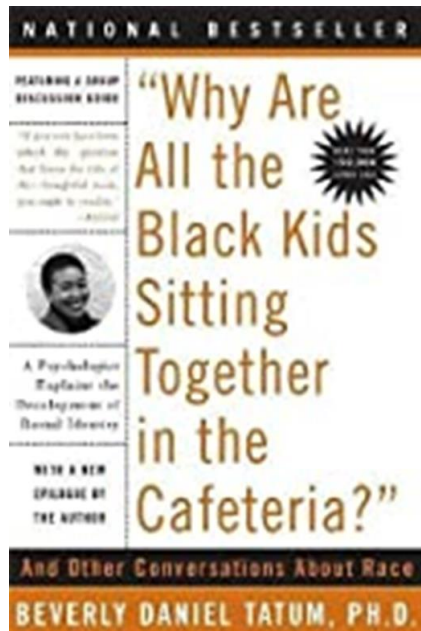
# 5

They felt the need to show the **acceptable face of 'Blackness'** as the system was designed to cater for the **needs of the 'white' majority.**



# 6

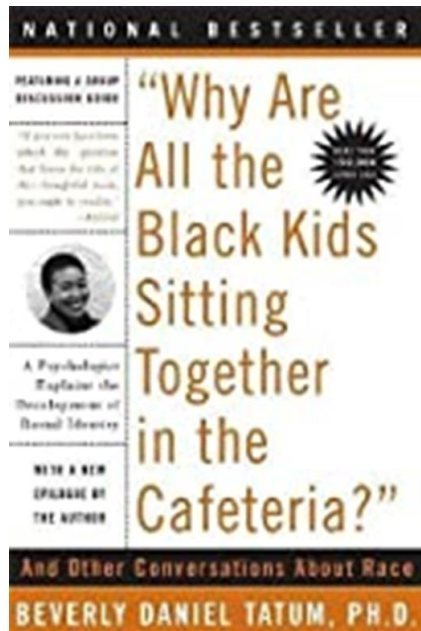
Student felt they could only be their **authentic self in places where there were people of their own cultural heritage** i.e. ACS. Places where they did not need to constantly explain about their cultural difference.





# 6

Student felt they could only be their **authentic self in places where there were people of their own cultural heritage** i.e. ACS. Places where they did not need to constantly explain about their cultural difference.

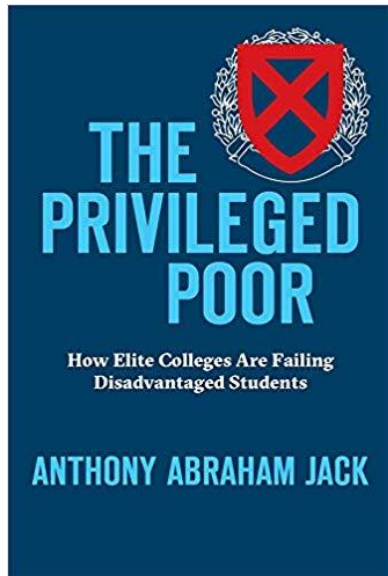




7

Student demonstrated resilience and recognize that hard work was needed to survive at Imperial.

Unfortunately, for some the experience was more about **surviving than thriving.**





# Recommendations

BAME UG and PG Open day (For Us By Us)

Admission Tutor Training: Admissions bias

Greater Academic Inclusion

Mentoring Programme for first generation students to 'Demystify the Institution'

Visual images of BAME alumni

Host BME events for Early Career

BAME in Academia: Monthly Lecture Series featuring BAME Academics



# Conclusion



Black British Students develop resilience and perseverance founded on the recognition that a bicultural competence enables them to navigate the obstacles which they encounter throughout the British education system.



# Conclusion



Their sense of belonging and identity is often focused externally to Imperial College or in 'safe places' such as ACS.

Despite the recognition of the need to work hard or harder than their peers, institutional barrier may prevent them from gaining access or achieving recognition of their potential.





# Acknowledgements

All the participating BBS students

Family and friends

Drs Jo Horsburgh and Sophie Rutschmann

EDU team

Work colleagues at Imperial College