

6F6Z3101H Human Geography Dissertation

Navigating Complexity: An Exploration of BAME Experiences within Geography

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Declaration of originality

This is to certify that the work is entirely my own and not of any other person, unless explicitly acknowledged (including citation of published and unpublished sources). The work has not previously been submitted in any form to the Manchester Metropolitan University or to any other institution for assessment or for any other purpose.

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Abstract

This research explores the experiences of Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students studying Geography. It also examines the perspectives of Geography as a white discipline and assesses the impacts of decolonial strategies within Manchester Metropolitan University. This is important because the perceptions from ethnic minorities have been neglected in Geography research, it contributes to postcolonial debates on giving voice to marginalised voices and challenging dominant colonial narratives. Adopting a poststructuralist and postmodernist approach, this study uses qualitative methods in the form of semi-structured interviews to gain insights on the perspectives within Geography from university staff and BAME students. The findings reveal the complex and nuanced nature of BAME student's experiences studying Geography. Feelings of exclusion and marginalisation are felt by students at differing levels, highlighting the importance of the intersectionality of identities. Examining perspectives of Geography as a white discipline shows the impact Geography's colonial past has on students, also revealing present cultural attitudes towards Geography. Evaluating decolonial strategies employed within university uncovers the positive impacts and limitations it has on diversifying the curriculum. The findings contribute to theoretical debates on race, power and knowledge within Geography and offers insights for academics and educators seeking to create a more inclusive and welcoming environment within Geography.

Chapter 1- Introduction

Geography has shaped the way we see and navigate the world; it is a site of knowledge production and reproduction. However, due its ties to colonial legacies it has neglected and overlooked the views of the marginalised (Johnston and Sidaway, 2004). This dissertation is a contribution to postcolonial debates which attempt to diversify the discipline through decolonial strategies and focus on the lesser-known marginalised voices. It will explore the experiences of Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students studying Geography in university, unravelling the complexities of power dynamics in relation to race and knowledge.

During the colonial period, research was used to promote and justify imperial power. The discipline of Geography developed and contributed to this via exploration, cartography, and teaching. Fundamental principles were influenced by the western imperial lens and colonial thought (Griffiths and Baker, 2019). Decolonialising Geographical knowledges refers to undoing the effects and removing traces of colonialism

within this discipline (Kobayashi, 2020). It is an ongoing complex process and despite efforts being made to decolonise Geography, it is still seen as a white discipline. The whiteness of Geography refers to the underrepresentation of non-white, indigenous voices in the discipline reflected in the staff, students, and research. In 2018, 88% of Geography students were white (Plaister and Thomson, 2019). These low figures are also reflected in staff numbers where only 8.2% of all staff are BAME and the proportion in Geography is only 4.3% (Deasi, 2017). The whiteness also refers to the normalising of white privilege and culture that is lived and practiced within the discipline (Kobayashi and Peake, 2000). Postcolonial scholars refer to this as a 'problem space' as this white discipline reflects and reproduces colonial legacies, reinforcing the dominant racialised narratives of western power (Jazeel, 2017). This creates barriers for BAME students in Geography, as it limits their opportunities for success. Desai (2017)'s report shows that 11.2% of BAME students received a first compared to 16.9% of white students. This discourages BAME students to go onto postgraduate study, thus it is important to address these issues. However, there is limited research that examines these challenges faced by BAME students within Geography and a lack of focus on giving a voice to these neglected perspectives. Centring BAME experiences will bring to light these issues and contribute to the decolonial imperative by showing the impact pedagogical strategies have within university.

The primary aim of this research is to explore the experiences of BAME Geography students. This will show the complexities within challenges they face and will examine the perceptions of both staff and students on Geography as a white discipline. Through the use of semi-structured interviews, it will analyse the decolonial strategies within university from the perspectives of both staff and students, to assess their impact in promoting diversity. This research has significant implications for theory and practice within this discipline as it provides an in-depth and nuanced understanding of race, power, and knowledge production within Geography. The critical evaluation of decolonial strategies will unfold the complexities of this imperative and provide insights on how the discipline could improve, to promote inclusivity and equity. These insights provide a valuable contribution to postcolonial debates and awareness on the critical need to diversify Geography.

This dissertation will lay the framework of the research by starting with a comprehensive literature review on colonial legacies, decolonising within academia and will end by justifying the importance of centring BAME student voices. This will lead onto the research objectives followed by the chapter discussing the philosophical and methodological approach. The following chapter is an analysis and discussion of the results from the interviews. The final chapter concludes the research findings, providing reflections and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2- Literature Review

This literature review contextualises my study within the Human Geography discipline. Acknowledging the colonial legacies ingrained in geographical knowledge production, this review will delve into the historical development of postcolonial geographies to uncover how colonialism continues to influence contemporary geographic discourse. It then examines the debates on decolonising Geography, investigating theoretical frameworks and pedagogical strategies aimed at challenging colonial biases within the discipline. Additionally, the review critically evaluates decolonial approaches implemented within universities, particularly their impact on the experiences of BAME students. By synthesising these strands of literature, the review contributes to ongoing discussions within Human Geography about the necessity of decolonising the discipline and bringing in the voices of BAME students.

2.1- Development of Postcolonial geographies

Postcolonial geographies interrogate the relationship between geographical knowledge and colonial power. Postcolonial scholars' critique dominant narratives and knowledge production arguing it was shaped by Western power. During the period of European imperialism, the West had significant power and resources which allowed them to explore and dominate territories around the world. This power allowed the West to impose their ideologies, language, and culture upon indigenous populations (Johnston and Sidaway, 2004; Ryan, 2004). Edward Said's research on Orientalism illustrates this process. He argues that the West defined their identity and power through the construction of 'The Orient', this is a form of Imaginative Geographies. The 'Orient' was seen as being opposite and 'other' to the West and negatively characterised as inferior and uncivilised. They framed the non-western people and culture as subordinate and exotic, justifying their imperial control. This othering reinforced power dynamics as the West saw themselves as enlightened and superior (Said, 2003). Colonial discourses through the sharing of white culture sustained this narrative and legitimised imperial control. The messages portrayed through art and literature framed colonialism as beneficial and natural (Morrissey et al., 2014). Geography played a significant role in this through exploration, cartography and teaching which promoted imperial citizenship (Ryan, 2004). Griffiths and Baker (2019) adds that it legitimised racial differences by mapping non-white areas as marginal and subordinate. Research and knowledge production was driven through this Eurocentric perspective, which marginalised and dehumanised ingenious people around the world (Griffiths and Baker, 2019; Smith, 2021). Therefore, this shows how power relations can create dominant narratives and shape universal truths.

The history of marginalising indigenous voices led to the construction of Eurocentric knowledge, and this is still present within academic discourses. Colonialism still 'continues to shape and inform geographic inquiry, research, and teaching, as well as the departmental spaces we inhabit' (Fritzsche, 2021 pp.171). Stanek (2019) refers to this as epistemic coloniality, where the foundations of the modern world have colonial

history ingrained within them. He discusses how the period of enlightenment and renaissance was influenced by colonial violence and encounter. Events such as the enslavement of Africans and conquering of the Americas influenced famous scholars' thought and philosophies. Modernity is closely linked with coloniality because experts in the contemporary world govern and control knowledge-making institutions. They claim and control dominant truths which sustains the colonial matrix of power (Stanek, 2019). This is why it is important to take a critical approach when engaging with Geography.

Postcolonial geographies involve moving away from the western perspective of one universal truth and to ask questions, disrupt assumptions, methods, and frame of thoughts. It requires bringing diverse perspectives into research and giving voice to the marginalised (Sidaway, 2000). This critical approach has led to the growth of feminist, queer and race geographies. However, many race geographers argue that the discipline has not been critical enough and requires a fundamental shift, just like feminism has had on Geography (Kobayashi and Peake, 2000). Johnston and Sidaway (2004), argue that race geographies are limited to a sub-discipline, whereas feminist geographies have had a larger impact on all aspects of the discipline. The Eurocentric view is present within all the different geographical disciplines, so postcolonial thought is essential and should be a critical theme throughout all disciplines (Jazeel, 2017). This research is a significant contribution to these debates as exploring BAME students' experiences is a focus on those lesser-known marginalised voices and will unravel the impact of these colonial influences in Geography.

2.2- Decolonising Geography

Many postcolonial scholars have put out a strong call to decolonise geographical knowledges in order to undo its colonial influences (Esson et al, 2017; Daigle & Sundberg, 2017; Jazeel, 2017; Radcliffe, 2017). Recently the Royal Geographic Society (RGS) held an event in 2017 to encourage discussion and spread the call on decolonising geographical knowledges. This discipline needs to challenge and move away from the essentialist western perspectives. Pulido (2002) explains that geographical research is predominantly influenced by the experience of whiteness and when non-white research and voices are explored it is still done through the western lens. This makes Geography a white discipline, in which whiteness is experienced in various aspects of Geography from academia to its students (Radcliffe, 2017). Therefore, bringing in the perspectives from people of colour is vital for a decolonial approach as that will enrich and diversify Geography (Pulido, 2002). Clayton and Kumar (2019) further support this imperative by stating geographers need to engage with minor southern knowledges a lot more and Jazeel (2017) argues this approach needs to be mainstream throughout Geography to decolonise the discipline.

The decolonial approach of engaging with knowledge from lesser-known areas can be criticised for undermining fundamental theoretical knowledge of Geography. Standish (2019) explores this debate in his research, where he presents the argument that decolonising Geography can deny students from accessing

these disciplinary knowledges by constantly rejecting and critiquing them. However, he provides a response, by calling for a social realist approach to Geography. This means understanding when and where knowledge has come from and acknowledging that it is shaped by power and social structures. He agrees that disciplinary geographical knowledge is valuable in understanding the connections between humans and the environment and that it can contribute to new knowledges, providing solutions to real-world problems. But there should be a balance of acknowledging where knowledge was produced and the value of it to shape the understanding of the world. This approach along with bringing in the voices of indigenous authors and activists are keyways of decolonising Geography (Standish,2019).

Although, many academics and researchers have taken this decolonial approach, Tuck and Yang (2012) argues that decolonisation has become a metaphor, it is very easily inserted into debates but prevents actual decolonising from happening. They state: “It recentres whiteness, it resettles theory, it extends innocence to the settler, it entertains a settler future” (Tuck and Yang, 2012:3). This quote explains that the focus of decolonisation has moved away from the indigenous. Current strategies are relieving the settler to feel any feelings of guilt and not giving up or changing anything. The way to avoid this problem is to refocus on who decolonising is for and by taking effective action. Esson et al. (2017) argues that there should be more emphasis on decolonising institutions and praxis over just the geographical knowledges. This will avoid recentring the white, privileged and expose the oppressive structures within the discipline. The emphasis on action over acknowledgement is vital for this movement. This approach is complex but the focus on transforming institutions like universities is a good start. Baldwin (2017) argues that universities are key sites where academics can practice decolonising. This justifies my research approach of focusing on university staff and students, this research will explain and address the impacts decolonising the curriculum has had on Geography.

2.3 Decolonising strategies within academia

‘Racism and colonial-modern epistemic privileging are often found in student selection, course design, curriculum content, pedagogies, staff recruitment, resource allocation, and research priorities.’ (Radcliffe,2017,p.331)

This quote shows that the colonial history of Geography is heavily reflected within universities even today. It is also present in the physical spaces of buildings (Griffiths and Baker, 2019; Cassiani, 2021). Universities are the centre of research and knowledge production, addressing the whiteness of Geography and diversifying the curriculum in these institutions can make a meaningful difference in decolonising Geography. Stanek (2019) lists benefits of diversifying Geography courses, these include encouraging critical thinking for students by challenging the dominance of Eurocentric knowledges. Also, promoting an inclusive and comprehensive understanding of the world by engaging with marginalised voices.

Introducing and incorporating race geographies into courses and diversifying reading lists are effective decolonising strategies but it can also oversimplify the issue. It can become superficial and absolve guilt as Tuck and Yang (2012) argue and it ignores the racially problematic institutional structures in higher education. Stanek (2019) argues that a decolonial approach requires understanding the colonial matrix of power and how to challenge these knowledge paradigms to foster inclusive knowledge production. This is further explained by Harvey and Russell-Mundine (2018), who call for a paradigm shift, they suggest incorporating indigenous geographies into courses should be consistent with indigenous ways of seeing and being to make a meaningful impact. This requires reforms to the curriculum and larger efforts to change institutional arrangements. Laing (2020) explains that the politics of knowledge production and the privatisation of universities hinders decolonisation efforts. This approach is challenging because of universities historic and present forms of institutional racism (Alderman et al, 2019; Esson, 2018). Both Laing (2020) and Esson (2018) argues that there should be a focus on how the discipline is taught not just diversifying the reading lists. It should go over and beyond by destabilising existing practices, engaging with social movements, and making space for decolonial activities. Students and staff need to challenge the power structures within university and engage with wider society through activism. This is how decolonising the curriculum should take place within academia.

In reality the suggestions put forward by these researchers can be difficult to incorporate within university and there is a lack of research that explores the impact and challenges of these strategies. Some papers relate the potential concerns associated with these approaches. For instance, it can essentialise the view of the other when students write about indigenous topics. Engagement can also be very challenging and emotionally difficult for students due to its complexity and sensitivity (Kobayashi, 1999; Carter and Hollinsworth, 2017). Daigle and Sundberg (2017) used some of these approaches to implement a decolonising praxis within the classroom. They crafted the curriculum away from Eurocentric perspectives and this was done by inviting community activists and critical race scholars to talk about their expertise. The students had an assignment to bring their own life experiences into the course content. They concluded it was an unsettling process for both staff and students. Students found it hard to engage with the content and build trust with each other because the course was subjective, individuals related differently to the course (Daigle and Sundberg, 2017). Therefore, there may be a reluctance with taking a decolonial approach due to these complexities. However, because of the limited literature on this topic it is difficult to come to a definitive answer. Also, the papers mentioned are from the perspective of educated academics and scholars, this only paints a bias picture of decolonising efforts and the impacts it has. Students' perspectives are overlooked especially those from ethnic minority background. The exploration into BAME students studying Geography would be a vital contribution to these decolonising debates

because learning from these experiences will show if decolonising efforts within university are working and how they can be improved.

2.4- BAME student experiences

To further emphasise the importance of addressing this gap in literature, this section will explain the importance of exploring the BAME student experiences within university. There has been a lot of research published showing the gap in recruitment and attainment between ethnic and non-ethnic students. There is a 18.4% gap between the percentage of white students and Black students awarded a First or 2.1 in their degree (2020/21). 19% of academic staff with a known ethnicity are BAME (Universities UK, 2022). In relation to Geography Desai (2017)'s report shows that 11.2% of BAME students received a first compared to 16.9% of white students. Only 8.2% of all staff are BAME and the proportion in Geography is only 4.3% (Deasi, 2017). These factors discourage BAME students to go onto postgraduate study. The significant underrepresentation of BAME staff and students within Geography has led to lower degree results for BAME students (Stanek, 2019). This affects the knowledge production and creates unsupportive environments for BAME staff and students.

The lack of representation may influence student's choice to study Geography. Currently, studies show that students from BAME backgrounds make a rational choice when picking their degree choice. Due to the barriers, they face in Higher Education (HE) they choose subjects which have more secure career prospects and financial stability (Codioli McMaster, 2017). The choice of studying Geography has not been explored through the lens of BAME students, research into students' perspectives can provide vital information into these barriers and how to tackle these inequalities.

Incorporating the student voice into research is very valuable, especially when analysing the impact of pedagogy strategies. Research has found that studying students' experiences can provide valuable insights into the quality of education, contribute to academic success and well-being of students (Lyz, Golubeva and Istratova, 2022). Incorporating and acting on students' feedback can lead to innovation and improvements in the curriculum and teaching quality (Cunningham, Christie and Antoniadou, 2022). Student experiences cannot be undermined especially when taking a decolonial approach in higher education. Alderman et al (2019) concludes in his research of using anti-racism pedagogies that it's imperative to engage with the students' voice and incorporating their stories to change pedagogy. This is especially important when the goal to decolonise is to diversify the discipline by engaging with diverse experiences.

Recent research that has explored the BAME student experience have used various methods such as focus groups and diary entries. These approaches provide a safe space for students from minority ethnic

background to share their experiences and feelings towards university. These studies have focused on disciplines beyond Geography such as the STEM and medical field. Bale et al. (2020) and Hammond et al (2019) carried out focus groups and had similar findings in relation to BAME student experiences. These findings include students feeling isolated and facing different forms of racism. They also comment that the lack of diverse staff and the curriculum being Eurocentric impacted their university experiences adding to the sense of not belonging to their discipline. These findings are further supported by Nicolson (2022) who used diary entries to understand the student experiences studying Science and Engineering. She noted down similar themes regarding sense of belonging within university, identity safety and engagement with the curricula. She also highlights some of the positive experiences such as the social learning aspect of university. The purpose of these findings from these studies is to get a deeper understanding of issues that are affecting students from BAME backgrounds, so that the university institutions can take a proactive approach to tackling the issues of inequalities that universities have been facing for a long time. Universities have a big influence in shaping the experience for BAME students, but it requires support from different levels from financial to institutional support (Lim, 2021). These studies have found potential ways to improve diversity through listening to the suggestions of BAME students. These solutions include increasing diversity within staff, taking a cooperative approach with BAME students to create opportunities for more diversity and having authentic celebrations of different heritages and cultures. These approaches strongly link to the decolonial approaches highlighted by Esson (2018) and Laing (2020). Therefore, this illustrates the value of listening to students' perspectives as a way to decolonise Geography.

2.5- Summary

In conclusion, this review has explained the development of postcolonial geographies and how this discipline is ingrained with colonial influences. It has underscored the need to decolonise Geography and how that can take place within academia. The final section showed the value of bringing in the students' experiences to improve diversity and inclusion which are reflective of decolonial approaches. The gap was established that there is a lack of focus on the impact of decolonial strategies especially when it comes to student experiences within Geography. The student experiences that were explored in current research were not from the discipline of Geography. The challenges that are faced with incorporating current decolonial initiatives to address the whiteness of Geography has also been neglected. This research will aim to address all these gaps through analysing the experiences of BAME students studying Geography.

Chapter 3- Aims and Objectives

Research Aim: To critically analyse the experiences of BAME students studying Geography

Research Objectives:

- To describe the experiences of BAME Geography students
- To examine the perceptions of academic staff and students regarding Geography as a 'white discipline'
- To assess the efforts and impacts of various strategies to decolonise Geography

Chapter 4- Methodology

This section will discuss the methodological approach I took for the research. Firstly, it will explain and justify the philosophical approach I took, then discuss why I chose semi structured interviews as my research method. It will then explain the data analysis approach I used, followed by ethical considerations.

4.1 Philosophical Approach

I used a qualitative approach with my research because this is the most suitable for capturing rich and nuanced data on perspectives on students and staff. My study was guided by postmodernism and poststructuralism. These approaches reject the notion of one universal truth, rather focusing on finding the meanings behind them (Aitken and Valentine, 2015; Shrumer-Smith, 2002). It also deconstructs discourses on power relations and knowledge systems which fits with my objectives of examining the Eurocentric perspective that dominates geographical knowledges and the power dynamics that shape the curriculum. Poststructuralism acknowledges otherness by focusing on geographies of sexuality, gender and race (Nayak and Jeffrey, 2011). It also focuses on how practices create identities and power relations as Couper (2015) states that identities are not fixed but are shaped through space and relations. This complements my research as I will be focusing on BAME student experiences and bringing attention to these voices that have been neglected in Human Geography debates. Using these theoretical frameworks allows the exploration of how BAME identities are shaped through the university and how diverse perspectives are sustained and contested within Geography.

4.2 Data collection method

I chose semi-structured interviews as my primary method; this qualitative approach is favoured by postmodernists and poststructuralists. Initially, I intended to carry out focus groups with students because it can facilitate collective discussions and reveal shared experience as well as promote empathy between participants (Gomez and Jones, 2010). However, despite efforts to recruit participants I received limited responses so focus groups were not feasible. This proves the lack of diversity within Geography justifying the need for this study. Furthermore, Gomez and Jones (2010) argue that focus groups have a risk of

creating discomfort when discussing sensitive topics, semi-structured interviews provide more confidentiality justifying the suitability of this method.

Another key advantage of semi-structured interviews is that they are useful in investigating behaviours, opinions, and experiences of individuals (Clifford et al, 2016). This method was chosen over surveys and structured interviews because of its flexibility. The interviewees can explain their complex, multilayered experiences in their own words allowing the researchers to gain rich data that other methods cannot attain (Kitchin and Tate, 2013; Flowerdew and Martin, 2005). This method also allows the researcher to get further explanations from the interviewees by probing or asking for clarifications whilst staying within the research themes. This allows the researcher to gain further depth and explanations of the interviewee's experiences (Hoggart, Lees and Davies, 2002).

4.3 Participant selection

My aim was to get as many different perspectives as possible to tackle the different objectives. Current research on decolonising knowledges within academia have come from the perspectives of scholars with less focus on the impacts on student experiences. In order to gain a wealth of valuable data on different perspectives, I interviewed both students and staff. I used purposive sampling to select the participants for my interview. This sampling strategy ensured diversity in participant backgrounds and perspectives to get a comprehensive exploration of my research objectives (Gomez and Jones, 2010). I chose students who self-identify as black, Asian and ethnic minority and study Geography. However, due to the lack of BAME students within Geography I had to widen my search and opened it to environmental science because of its similarities and overlap with Geography. I even reached out to Geography graduates and masters students to get more of a representative sample. The academic staff I interviewed were all from white ethnicity so to ensure I got a wider perspective I interviewed staff members part of the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusivity team (EDI) to take part in my study.

4.4 Formation of the Interview schedule

I constructed my interview schedule using a systematic approach to ensure it addressed the research objectives and provided flexibility for participants to express their views in-depth. Firstly, the comprehensive literature review informed my key themes and issues related to my research objectives. From this I put together open-ended questions to explore participants experiences and perceptions regarding Geography. Then I sought advice from my supervisor who is an academic scholar that has experience with qualitative research methods. This feedback helped refine my interview schedule, ensured it captured the complexities of the research themes and confirmed its appropriateness to ask participants. I carried out a pilot study with a staff and student to test the schedule and check its clarity. Feedback from

this was used to refine my questions, adjust the sequence, and helped build confidence in my interviewing technique.

I carried out 12 semi-structured interviews with students and academic staff. Some of these interviews took place in person and others online. I allowed this flexibility to suit the participants requirements. Flowerdew and Martin (2005) comment that having participants talk in their own 'territory' allows for a more relaxed conversation. During the interview process I recorded all the interviews so that I can concentrate and be present during the conversations. These recordings gave me the advantage to listen to the interview again during analysis to pick up ideas that I may have missed (Flowerdew and Martin, 2005).

4.5- Data analysis technique

I ensured rigorous analysis by using thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This approach consisted of familiarising myself with the data through transcribing and initial coding of the responses. This was followed by identifying themes within the codes and then reviewing the themes by finding connections between the data. I then defined the themes by linking them to the wider literature. This iterative process ensured reliability through evidencing it with the theory (Clark et al., 2021).

4.6- Reflexivity

This methodological process has been criticised by positivists, arguing it has researcher bias. For instance, the researcher through their prolonged conversation can shape the responses of the participants. However, I maintained reflexivity throughout the research process by acknowledging my own positionality, biases, and assumptions.

I understand that my values have shaped this research process, and I am not detached from it. The post-structuralist approach allows this reflexivity and acknowledges the positionality of the researcher in shaping knowledge production (Hoggart, Lees and Davies, 2002). Adopting this approach allows me to reflect on my positionality. I am a student with a minority ethnic background, my values have influenced the research process and findings. I shared this same identity with the participants, this can either be an advantage or disadvantage (Gomez and Jones, 2010). In my case it was positive because relating to the participants made the conversation empathetic and relatable. Therefore, this process is not representative. Flowerdew and Martin (2005) explain that interviews are not designed to be representative, but it is an illustrative sample. This means that this process cannot be replicated, and the results are unique.

Gomez and Jones (2010) also encourage researchers to engage in self-reflexive analysis, which is why I employed Reflexive journaling to document reflections on the research process. I found that my study was an organic process, I learnt and developed my understanding of this research topic from each interview. This developed my approach and interviewing technique allowing me to ask more specific follow up

questions to gain more nuanced and detailed answers. This allowed me to gain more deeper insights into the experiences of my participants. This reflexivity enhanced transparency and the validity of the study.

4.7-Ethics

Before carrying out my study I obtained ethical approval. I provided the participants with an information form, highlighting the research aims, risks and benefits. They were encouraged to ask any questions regarding the study before participating. This was followed by a consent form to prove they voluntarily agreed to participate. I assured them that they had the right to withdraw at any time. I ensured to keep the research confidential by keeping all the findings secure and anonymous. Additional measures such as assigning pseudonyms for each participants ensured confidentiality and anonymity of the participants.

4.8- Summary

This chapter has explained and justified my philosophical and methodological approach. Adopting a poststructuralist and postmodernist approach with carrying out semi-structured interviews, proved to be the most suitable technique for my research study. This is because of its flexibility in allowing the researcher to obtain rich, nuanced data relating to experiences whilst staying within the research themes. Variety of perspectives were gained via purposive sampling and the interview schedule was developed using a rigorous process informed by the literature and academic advice. Thematic analysis was employed to ensure validity and reliability with the findings. I acknowledged my influence on the study through reflexivity and reflection. Finally, I ensured my study was ethical by obtaining approval and following various ethical steps to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. The next section discusses my results from the interview analysis.

Chapter 5- Result and Analysis

This chapter presents the findings and discusses the themes that emerged from my semi-structured interviews. This analysis provides insights into BAME students' experiences, perceptions of these students and academic staff regarding geography as a white discipline and assess the efforts to decolonise the curriculum. Three key themes emerged from the data these are: intersectionality of exclusion, lack of representation and the final theme initiatives, impacts and improvements.

5.1 Intersectionality of Exclusion

This theme encapsulates the experiences of the student participants feeling a sense of isolation and marginalisation when studying Geography. All the participants expressed these feelings, but the levels of exclusion and the context differs between them. This is one the most prominent themes that emerged

during the interviews which reflects the inequalities and the discrimination BAME students experience in their course. An example of this is Student B commenting on her sense of belonging in the lecture room:

"I feel like I don't really belong here. You feel a bit left out, you walk in and everybody's white, you're just the only black person... you feel apart even if people talk to you" (Student B, Human Geography Graduate)

These comments of exclusion are echoed in all the different interviews. They all feel a sense of alienation due to coming from a minority ethnic background whilst the majority of the class are white. The participants made comments on how most of the class got along well with each other, forming groups and this created a divide of minority ethnic students and white students. Student D describes:

"you can sort of see the difference in the classroom. People who aren't ethnic just stick with each other" (Student D, Environmental Science 3rd Year Undergraduate)

Student E felt 'awkward being alone' when it came to group work. Even if attempts are made to integrate, the students found it difficult because they 'can't relate' to the other students. These experiences relate to literature regarding the process of othering, Crang (1998) explains that sharing the same culture creates a common bond and sense of belonging, individuals that do not fit into that culture are left out. In this case ethnic minority students feel left out as they do not fit into the predominantly white culture. The layout of the classroom and group formations reflects the 'us' and 'them' concept as 'Colour divides the class fundamentally' (Kobayashi, 1999: 180). The student culture involves practices such as drinking and clubbing which further exclude many of the ethnic minorities. Some of the participants exclaimed that it was a struggle to befriend and socialise with white students because of this. Hall (1995) states that cultural practices construct and sustain identities, the differences in cultural practices make the students feel more excluded. This also applies to the relationship BAME students have with their lecturers. The participants talked about how differently lecturers would interact with non-ethnic minority students and themselves. Student A says:

"I found it strange at first because I see a lot of my other fellow students have great rapports with all of the staff and just talk to them freely... I'm still scared to speak." (Student A, 3rd year Geography Undergraduate)

However, some of the participants commented this was not always the case. Student C got along well with her personal tutor because of her tutor's research background, 'she was very attentive to the fact that I was a minority student' (Student C, Human Geography Graduate). She also said that she would not have the same experiences with a lecturer that was a white male. This shows the impact level of understanding has

with sense of belonging. This is further illustrated by Student D who recalls going on a fieldtrip during Ramadan and feeling excluded due to the comments being made to her, *'people did not respect or understand my religion'* (Student D, Environmental Science 3rd Year Undergraduate). This links with literature discussing how geography should be a place for all cultures and ethnicities. Pulido (2002) calls for Geography to be made comfortable for people of colour by accommodating to them and not them having to fit into the white culture of this discipline. Therefore, the findings here show that level of understanding can influence sense of belonging.

Furthermore, my results show different levels of exclusion are felt by the student participants. For instance, Student C felt privileged as she could go out drinking to interact with other students, whereas Student B said it was hard to make friends because she could not go out to drink. This is because of different identities that intersect with their race. Student E recalls instances where she has been discriminated against due to her religion. During lectures she felt left out when covering certain topics, she felt uncomfortable with the way people looked at her because of her name and appearance:

"We do about terrorism. It's an awkward subject because we are Muslim. I used to wear hijab in university...the vibe was different, then when I don't, it also changes how people treat you...I kid you not the entire class including the teacher all turn around and turn to me! It's such an uncomfortable feeling." - (Student E, Geography Graduate)

There is also an example from Student G who is also physically disabled:

"Asian students need to work twice as hard. I feel like an outsider because I am wheelchair user everyone sits in groups at the back...Lecturers picked on certain students" - (Student G, 3rd year Geography Undergraduate)

These examples shows that gender, religion and disabilities as identities intersect with race causing different experiences of exclusion and discrimination, not all BAME students in Geography face the same experience. This relates to literature on intersectionality of identities, however there is limited research on the impact of this. Paur (2005) emphasises the need to understand the diversity of identities one can have and the different levels of oppression that comes from it. This is further supported by Bhakta (2019) who argues that there is very limited discussion on the intersection between race and disability, which adds to the feelings of 'invisibility' disabled academics and students from BAME backgrounds experience in universities. Whilst other student participants saw going out for drinks as a barrier to socialise, Student G comments *'I would be happy to go to bars not to drink but to socialise'*. She was willing to go to these places because of the stronger feelings of isolation she felt due to her disability as well as her religion and ethnicity. Bhakta (2019) states that multiple identities lead to multiple levels of exclusion. Therefore, my

results are a valuable contribution to debates on othering and identities because it shows the complexities of exclusion when it comes to the intersectionality of identities in BAME students experiences.

5.2- Lack of representation

This theme is about the participants discussing the lack of diversity there is within Geography and why they feel it is a white discipline. The students expressed frustration due to the absence of BAME perspectives in Geography reading lists and research. For example, Student C remarks:

"I always always look at the participant list. How many black, Asian or minority groups have they interviewed? Geography research is very narrow minded, people that conduct it are probably middle-class white people, who then interview middle-class white people. It's not fair... it's quite sad because I feel forgotten"- (Student C, Human Geography Graduate)

This quote shows that Geography research is not representative as majority of the studies neglect the views of ethnic minorities. The Eurocentric perspectives still dominate Geography making it seem like the other perspectives from BAME scholars are not valued and ignored. Student A discusses how she must actively look for these papers from BAME scholars, as most of the ones available are centred around the Eurocentric perspective. Student E criticises that some lecturers only reference articles from the western perspective, *'there's two sides to a story and I feel like it needs to be shown properly.'* (Student E, Geography Graduate). She argues that because of her background and upbringing she is aware of the perspective that has been overlooked. The student participants feel it is their duty to bring attention to these marginalised views. Student A says it's an *'innate need'* to represent her culture. However, they tend not to speak their views to avoid feeling even more excluded, they are *'afraid of being an even more of an outcast'* (Student C, Human Geography Graduate). The staff participants are aware of the lack of diverse perspectives:

"A lot of our knowledge systems are based on the global north and western past colonialism...I just interrogate all the examples that I'm using and ask is this a fair distribution?"- (Staff A, Reader in HE and Pedagogy)

Most staff do try to incorporate diverse perspectives into their lectures, but not all staff share the same attitudes. Student A attempted to encourage lecturers to diversify their reading lists, but she was met with *'pushback'*, saying *'They didn't seem too keen for that'*. These experiences reflect what is discussed about in literature that there is a lack of engagement with southern and indigenous perspectives within Geography (Clayton and Kumar,2019). The white composition of Geography leads to a lack of need or desire to interrogate Geography (Paulido,2002). This links with Student F saying:

"If it's taking this long for the reading list to change, it is more of a representation on the lecturers and their education"- (Student F, Geography Masters Student)

This clearly shows the colonial influences within geography and university as these institutions were built on western and Eurocentric power, they shaped the discourses and knowledges (Radcliffe, 2017; Laing, 2020). Stanek (2019) mentions that there needs to be an understanding and awareness of the colonial matrix of power in institutions in order to decolonise the curriculum. Both staff and students acknowledge the links that geography and academia has with imperialism as Staff D says there are '*deep settled reasons why universities were set up in the first place*'. These discourses of knowledge, power and race are enriched by my findings because my analysis explores the impact the lack of representation in Geography has on the feelings and experiences of BAME students.

My findings have an additional contribution to the debates on the lack of representation in geography. A lot of the literature discusses the colonial past that influences the whiteness of Geography but I found that present attitudes of ethnic minority people also affects this. The lack of representation within geography affects the number of BAME students choosing Geography and vice versa. The students say that Geography being white put people off choosing it as its '*less inviting*' and not a '*black thing to do*'. Student B says:

'I think definitely knowing that it's a very white subject, you know you're gonna be left out. The fact that it is so white would make you feel like do I really wanna do it?' - (Student B, Human Geography Graduate)

This reflection shows how BAME students would approach picking their degree subjects. Students from BAME backgrounds and their families have different cultural attitudes when it comes to pursuing a degree, which makes them question if Geography is for them. All the participants relate to the fact that the majority of ethnic families focus on degrees that have a clear career path, as student F explains if her '*other friends of African origin told their parents they were going to do Geography, they would say no*'. This reflects the cultural difference between ethnic and non-ethnic families. Literature shows that ethnic background influences degree choice. Ivy (2010) found that family influences were the strongest motivators on choice whereas it was least influencing factor for white applicants. This research complements the students' participants experiences of families questioning their degree choice. Student C says, '*it is a massive barrier and parents can influence their children to go into business, accounting and medicine*'. The reason for this pressure is cultural expectations and norms of those from ethnic minority backgrounds. Studying prestigious subject such as law and medicine is a sign of respect and a way to honour BAME parents for their struggle of establishing themselves in Britain (Lightbody et al., 1997). BAME students make rational decisions when it comes to degree choices and choose subjects with more secure job opportunities

and high financial return (Codioli McMaster, 2017). Staff A was told that Geography not having an ‘*obvious career path is a big barrier for some cultures*’. These cultural attitudes give a unique insight into why there is a lack of BAME people doing Geography. This in turn leads to less Geography scholars and then less research from BAME backgrounds (Mahtani, 2004). Therefore, these discourses add to debates discussing the whiteness of Geography as it is not just the colonial history, but it is also present cultural attitudes that is a reason for the lack of diversity. The next step is to discuss what is being done to diversify Geography and its impacts.

5.3- Initiatives, impacts and improvements

This theme will explore current initiatives to challenge colonial legacies and promote inclusivity within Geography. Both the academic staff and student participants discussed its impact and suggest improvements to help decolonise the curriculum. This theme emerged as participants discussed different interventions and pedagogical strategies within university. The most prominent strategy discussed was to broaden and diversify reading lists. Staff B discussed how he made it a priority to add different perspectives to critique the western concepts in modules such as political and critical Geography:

“I think it's really important to show images of black geographers. Alongside their critique because it does make it visible to people..., you can do research as a black person in feminist Geography” -
(Staff B, Reader, Human Geography Senior Lecturer)

My findings show that there is an increased engagement and openness from staff to learn about decolonising and diversifying the curriculum. Staff C (Human Geography Lecturer) recalls a time when he made changes to his slide after a student challenged him regarding the lack of focus on different religious perspectives. Staff C also deals with field trips and showed willingness to adjust and cater for students from different religious and cultural backgrounds. These examples show the academic staff's attitude to receiving feedback and opportunities to develop for the students. Furthermore, the university has a decolonising toolkit, which has resources to help staff take a decolonial approach to their lectures. Staff D (Reader, Researcher, Advisory Board Member) says the universities decolonising toolkit is the most popular resource used by staff and said:

“There is an improvement in students' sense of belonging from what I hear anecdotally because they start to see themselves more in what they're learning” (Staff D, Reader, Researcher, Advisory Board Member)

These examples are real life illustrations of the decolonial approaches discussed in literature. For instance, Standish (2019)'s Social Realist approach where he argues it is vital to question and critique fundamental knowledge production. My results add value to these debates as it shows the impact these approaches have on students. Both the staff and students agreed that this had a positive impact on engagement, as BAME students tended to gravitate towards race and political geographies. Student C said she *'disconnected'* with lectures that just focus on white, European knowledges and staff have seen *'more students doing work on race geographies'*. However, it also brings to light the challenges associated with these approaches. Some academic staff participants, such as Staff C mentioned they were aware of the decolonising toolkit but have not actively engaged with it themselves. They argue it is hard to fit in due to time constraints and balancing different duties. Another staff mentioned that there is a risk of *'initiative overload'* due to the number of initiatives the university pushes. The impact of the decolonising toolkit is *'limited due to practical reasons'*. In reality the staff want to improve their teaching approaches but struggle to do so due to various academic pressures. Domash (2015) discusses the pressures on academic staff and calls for help to recognise the whiteness within Geography by getting training and support. Staff A suggests organising face to face training that fits into staff meetings but emphasises it's a long-term initiative. Current literature lacks the focus on the real-life challenges academics face when trying to incorporate decolonial approaches.

Furthermore, the student participants have expressed appreciation for the efforts taken at university but argue that the reading lists should be broadened in other areas of the discipline especially the historical and physical side of Geography, as those are seen as *'restrictive'* and *'less diverse'*. Also, not all the students were aware of these attempts being made, many of the pictures and videos lectures engaged with were overlooked. Student C suggests a more impactful approach would be getting guest speakers from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds to talk about their experiences:

"they should get different speakers that are able to share voice on the black experience or the Asian experience as a researcher, it would encourage so many people and it would also shed a light to white students... You know so many voices are lost in Geography" - (Student C, Human Geography Graduate)

These suggestions are in line with Laing (2020) and Daigle and Sunberg (2017) approaches of actively engaging with indigenous knowledges and not just the reading lists. Decoloniality is more about praxis than just discourse (Laing, 2020). However, again my results add value to these debates as it highlights the complexities of why this is difficult. Staff B explains the budget issues with bringing in guest speakers in university and explains that:

“guest speakers can just feel very tokenistic...they are often used as a kind of fig leaf or you know it's a form of Race washing in a sense”- (Staff B, Reader, Human Geography Senior Lecturer)

This is a valid critique, there is limited research that examines the complexities of using indigenous researchers as guest speakers. However, Harvey and Russell-Mundine (2018) discusses how to avoid tokenistic presentations by valuing indigenous knowledges as equal to other knowledge systems. Engaging with indigenous communities needs to be integrated in a meaningful way into the curriculum through open dialogue and collaboration. Coteaching and creating safe spaces for discussions will ensure voices are heard and respected. These suggestions require restructuring the curriculum to create authentic engagement with indigenous communities (Harvey and Russell-Mundine, 2018). As discussed, there are challenges in restructuring the curriculum due to limited resources and the existing racialised foundation of universities (Laing, 2020). These approaches require utmost sensitivity and collective action (Esson et al, 2017). These discourses question if it is even possible to do this, the participants also comment on how complex the process is to ‘unlearn’ and restructure academia. Staff D says:

“Decolonisation probably means ripping it up and starting again... I don't think it is possible because you really have to look at the historical context of your discipline and understand universities role in that.”- (Staff D, Reader, Researcher, Advisory Board Member)

Although there is this view that is shared within literature and the participants, both staff and students have hope that the discipline is changing and suggest practical ways to make this happen. My research suggests the best way forward that both students and staff agree with is to create better engagement between themselves. Student D comments that she is happy to engage with staff to help diversify and create meaningful impact. Staff A says that there should be:

“a lot more partnerships with students, a lot more recognition of the value and expertise of our international students... when you make your curriculum more human in that way, that is challenging colonial thinking.”- (Staff A, Reader in HE and Pedagogy)

This is supported by Staff D who advocates for a collaborative approach between staff and students, learning from each other and bringing value to sharing experiences. The literature proposes to transform power structures within universities through political interventions and social activism, but these approaches are difficult (Esson et al, 2018; Laing, 2020). Stanek (2019) discusses that collaboration is important in decolonial education because it draws on diverse perspectives, enriching the learning experience. It can create spaces for critical reflection and co-creation of knowledge which challenges dominant colonial structures. This links with the responses from the participants on collaboration between staff and students to create a more authentic, inclusive approach to teaching and learning.

Listening and valuing the suggestions of students will lead to more focused and impactful changes in pedagogical strategies. For instance, the university has many societies catered for people from different ethnicities, religious and cultural backgrounds. This was appreciated by the student participants as those are safe spaces to practice one's identities. However, they critiqued that they were distant from departments, and could not advocate any changes within the curriculum. This made it seem pointless for some students to take part as it would seem like *'a tick box rather than an authentic engagement'*. Staff D says:

"The BAME ambassador network needs to have more visibility within governance structure... I get a lot of meetings and I don't see students in the room and everything we do should be for our students" - (Staff D, Reader, Researcher, Advisory Board Member)

These findings show ways to improve current approaches within universities to promote diversity. My results argue that BAME voices should be heard and used to make changes. There is value in taking these perspectives as highlighted in literature stating that this can improve students' experiences (Alderman et al, 2019). Memon et al (2020) argues that researchers and academics should learn from and support student activism, building communities contributes to decolonising efforts. This supports Staff C suggestion of focusing on community building much earlier in the curriculum. Student F says having these discussions and taking these actions much earlier *'will make the discipline of Geography more appealing and inviting for BAME students.'* Supporting student's activism and involving them in decision-making has much more impact than top-down institutional approaches, Student A relays that:

"the grassroots groups despite not having a lot of money they will do whatever it takes to get you to where you need to go which is so much more than elitist groups can do for you." - (Student A, 3rd year Geography Undergraduate)

All these suggestions are in line with literature that emphasises centring marginalised voices and engaging with activism is crucial for decolonising efforts (Esson et al, 2018; Laing, 2020). Therefore, my research shows how to do this within university by focusing on student perspectives and encouraging more of the grassroots student-led projects approaches. These are tangible and vital ways to decolonise the curriculum and promote a more positive and inclusive experience for BAME students.

Chapter 6- Conclusion

In conclusion, the aim of my research was to explore the experiences of BAME students studying Geography. It underscored the importance of centring BAME voices and experiences within Geography education in advancing decolonising efforts and provided key insights to decolonial debates and practice

within Geography. These findings have brought to light the complexities of experience, showing the diverse perspectives on the white discipline, and delved into the reality of decolonial strategies within university.

This analysis of BAME student experiences showed that despite Geography being a diverse subject, students still feel very excluded. They feel isolated due to the dominance of white culture expressed in the makeup of the staff, students, and curriculum. The lack of understanding of their cultures further leads to feelings of alienation and in some case discrimination. However, these feelings are nuanced and multifaceted dependant on the intersectionality of identities of BAME individuals. Furthermore, the lack of representation exacerbates the feelings of exclusion and not belonging. The Eurocentric perspective that dominates Geography makes the BAME perspectives look underrepresented and under-valued. Academic staff are aware of this problem and attempt to incorporate lesser-known indigenous knowledges into their lectures. Students also feel responsible to represent the marginalised voices but can feel more excluded when doing so. This research unravels that it is not just the history of colonial legacies forming this white discipline but also cultural attitudes from BAME backgrounds that leads to less ethnic minorities studying Geography. There are cultural factors such as family influences and career choice that affects degree choice and prioritises other degrees over Geography. As a result, the lack of BAME people choosing Geography leads to less BAME researchers in the Geography field resulting in less studies from ethnic minority backgrounds. Finally, the decolonial initiatives within university have a positive impact on BAME students to an extent. My study highlights the realities and complexities of incorporating these within university. For example, there are practical reasons such as time and lack of support that restrict staff to engage with decolonising toolkits. Also, engaging with indigenous knowledges and perspectives in lectures lead to more engagement but is mostly overlooked by students. The students argue for more effort in other areas of Geography such as physical and historical geographies, also wanting more active effort such as brining guest speakers. Even bringing in non-white guest speakers has complexities as they can feel tokenised. These findings provide valuable insights into the reality of taking decolonial approaches within university; it is not a straightforward process and does not always have the intended impacts.

The literature suggests decolonising requires a thoughtful, authentic integration; this can be done by restructuring the curriculum. This is a difficult and somewhat impossible task for the geography department; however my research shows the best way forward is to refocus the efforts towards students by engaging with them more. A more authentic inclusive approach to teaching and learning is required where student inputs are valued. Students should be encouraged and supported by staff to be at the forefront of diversifying initiatives and encouraging more of the grassroot student-led projects. This can have an impact in disrupting colonial power dynamics within Geography and the university. Through

valuing student perspectives especially those from minority ethnic backgrounds, it will create a more positive and inviting environment within Geography.

The implications of this research are beneficial for researchers and academics as it contributes to an inclusive and nuanced understanding of Geography education through the lenses of BAME students. Firstly, I have found that by carrying out this research it has had a positive impact on the participants. The students felt valued and enjoyed discussing their experiences, student A said it *'filled a part of her heart'*. The staff responded positively as well they all said they will engage with decolonial efforts more to create a more inclusive environment for BAME students. Examining these diverse perspectives within Geography has identified some of the barriers this discipline faces. These insights can be used by policymakers, educators, and academics to challenge colonial narratives and make geography more inclusive and welcoming. Theoretically it has advanced debates around understanding of race, knowledge, and power within Geography. It has challenged the essential notions of identity and sense of belonging and highlighted the importance of intersectionality regarding BAME experiences. It has shown not only the impact of colonial history on geography but the current cultural attitudes that impacts the whiteness of this discipline. It has informed the ongoing efforts to decolonise and promote diversity within geography and uncovered the complexities associated with it.

These insights can be further explored by expanding the research site to more universities encompassing more perspectives will further develop the debates on identities and intersectionality. The research can also take a longitudinal approach by monitoring the impacts of decolonial strategies within universities. This can involve discourse analysis on university strategies and strategies adopted by other geographical organisations such as the RGS to assess the impacts.

This is a small but vital step towards a more inclusive understanding of Geography education. The complexities that have been revealed through sharing the struggles of BAME students should be a cause to put more effort into challenging dominant power structures. There should be a celebration of diverse voices and an increased integration of diversity into geography to make it a more inviting and diverse subject for all. It shows how institutions can adopt more inclusive strategies that focus on an authentic engagement between staff and students to challenge the colonial legacies and celebrate diversity.

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Appendix



28/10/2023

Yahya Sayed

Human Geography

Department of Natural Sciences

Science and Engineering

John Dalton Building

Manchester Metropolitan University

Tel: 07478766852

Consent Form for online interview

Title of Project: Exploring the lived experience of Muslim and/or BAME geography students	
Name of Researcher: Yahya Sayed	
Participant Identification Code for this project:	
	Please tick box
1. I confirm that I have read and understood the participant information sheet for the above project and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the interview procedure to the researcher/s.	☐
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason to the named researcher.	☐
3. I understand that my responses will be sound recorded and used for analysis for this research project.	☐
4. I agree to an online interview	☐
5. I understand that my responses will only be used for analysis for this research project.	☐
	☐

6. I agree to undertaking an online interview and interaction with mutual respect and politeness.	☐												
7. I understand that my responses will remain anonymous in the research project.	☐												
8. I agree to take part in the above research project.	☐												
9. I understand that at my request a transcript of my online interview can be made available to me.	☐												
<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="border-top: 1px solid black; width: 33%;"></td> <td style="border-top: 1px solid black; width: 33%;"></td> <td style="border-top: 1px solid black; width: 33%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Name of Participant</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Date</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Signature</td> </tr> </table> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="border-top: 1px solid black; width: 33%;"></td> <td style="border-top: 1px solid black; width: 33%;"></td> <td style="border-top: 1px solid black; width: 33%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Researcher</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Date</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Signature</td> </tr> </table> <i>To be signed and dated in presence of the participant</i>					Name of Participant	Date	Signature				Researcher	Date	Signature
Name of Participant	Date	Signature											
Researcher	Date	Signature											

Consent Form for in-person interview

Title of Project: Exploring the lived experience of Muslim and/or BAME geography students Name of Researcher: Yahya Sayed Participant Identification Code for this project:	
	Please tick box
10. I confirm that I have read and understood the participant information sheet for the above project and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the interview procedure to the researcher/s.	☐
11. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason to the named researcher.	☐
12. I understand that my responses will be sound recorded and used for analysis.	☐

for this research project.

13. I agree to an in-person interview. ☐

14. I understand that my responses will only be used for analysis for this research project. ☐

15. I agree to undertaking an in-person interview and interaction with mutual respect and politeness. ☐

16. I understand that my responses will remain anonymous in the research project. ☐

17. I agree to take part in the above research project. ☐

18. I understand that at my request a transcript of my interview can be made available to me. ☐

Name of Participant	Date	Signature

Researcher	Date	Signature

To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

Online Participant Information Sheet

Study Title:

Exploring the lived experience of Muslim and/or BAME geography students

Invitation to research

We would like to invite you to take part in a research study here at Manchester Metropolitan University. Before you decide on whether or not to take part, you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. This information sheet will explain to you why the research is being done and how you will be involved. Please take your time to read the following information carefully.

Why have I been invited?

You have been invited to take part in this research because we believe you are the perfect participant to provide us with the necessary data that will help us understand the complexities and challenges regarding decolonising geographical knowledges. Also, to give us an insight of lived experiences of BAME geography students. There will be 4 or 5 other participants taking part in this study. You have been invited as we believe you understand the subject we are researching and have experiences in the area we are focusing on.

What does this study aim to do?

This study aims to bring attention to the different perceptions and experiences minority groups face within geography. It will explore the importance and complexities within decolonising geography. It will also assess the impacts of the efforts to decolonise geography.

Do I have to take part?

Participation in this research is completely voluntary. It is not compulsory for you to take part, however, if you do it would be of great help to us. If you choose to withdraw, your withdrawal in this study will be of no detriment to you and you are not required to give a reason as to why. This participant sheet and the consent form should provide you with the necessary information for you to decide on whether or not to participate in this study. You will be asked to sign the consent form to show you have agreed to take part.

What will I be asked to do?

We are inviting you to participate in a series of interviews online where we will ask you about your own experiences studying geography. The interviews will be conducted in an online format via Zoom. The interviews will take around 20-30 minutes, from which the responses will be used by the researchers to support in the research study. No prior preparation will be required from you, only that you answer the questions honestly. The questions will be around your own experiences studying geography and how you feel about the attempts to decolonise geography. We will ask all other participants to do the same. The interview will be recorded using an online software recording system and stored securely on the MMU OneDrive. This means the data will be secured according to the policies and security MMU offer. We will brief you before the interview begins to confirm you are ready to take part and we will debrief you after the interview is over to answer any unanswered questions you may have. At any point, if you change your mind about participating you are able to, please let us know.

Are there any risks if I participate?

Commented [JH1]: More detail is required here. How will it be stored and how will it be secure?

The only risks involved with participating is related to computer use as the interview will take place online. These risks include eye strain, back aches, neck aches or headaches due to poorly adjusted monitors or prologued computer use. These risks can be avoided by communicating with us if you need a break during the interview and ensuring that you are sitting comfortably with your monitor, mouse and keyboard positioned in a way that is comfortable for you.

Are there any advantages if I participate?

This research is unpaid. The responses and information you provide the researcher with will be highly useful and valuable in the research which aims analyse the lived experience of Muslim and/or BAME students studying geography.

Informed consent

The online interview will be recorded with your consent (as signed in the consent form) so that we can look back at the data throughout our research. If you would not like us to record the interview, you can opt out in the consent form.

What information about me will you collect and why?

The data we will collect about you will be regarding your experiences studying geography and your opinions regarding decolonising this discipline. This data is necessary for the research study because we aim to analyse the responses we receive to find patterns and identify any similarities between the different responses given by the other participants. We will collect data on your age and ethnicity to help categorise and organise the different responses from the other participants. Your responses and input will help answer our research objectives and we will reference and draw conclusions from your responses in our final report.

How will my information be stored and how will you look after it?

Your information will be kept entirely anonymous, stored on the Manchester Metropolitan University One Drive which means the data will be secured according to the policies and security the university offers. All information which is collected about you during the course of the research project will be kept confidential and any of your responses we use in our final research study will be anonymised.

How will you use my information?

We will use your information in our study to help answer our research aim. We will keep you anonymous when referencing your responses by using identifiers. We will be analysing your attitudes and emotions as well as key information you provide us with regarding your experiences with studying geography.

Will my data be sent anywhere else, or shared with other people or organisations?

Your data will stay with us and not be shared with anyone apart from the researcher.

When will you destroy my information?

We will destroy your information on 26/04/2023.

Data Protection Law

Data protection legislation requires that we state the 'legal basis' for processing information about you. In the case of research, this is 'a task in the public interest.' If we use more sensitive information about you, such as information about your health, religion, or ethnicity (called 'special category' information), our basis lies in research in the public interest. Manchester Metropolitan is the Controller for this information and is responsible for looking after your data and using it in line with the requirements of the data protection legislation applicable in the UK.

You have the right to make choices about your information under the data protection legislation, such as the right of access and the right to object, although in some circumstances these rights are not absolute. If you have any questions, or would like to exercise these rights, please contact the researcher or the University Data Protection Officer using the details below.

You can stop being a part of the study at any time, without giving a reason. You can ask us to delete your data at any time, but it might not always be possible. If you ask us to delete information we will make sure this is done. If you ask us to delete data after this point, we might not be able to. If your data is anonymised, we will not be able to withdraw it, because we will not know which data is yours.

The way we look after your information is ruled by UK law. Under UK law, we need to have a very good reason for using your information (this is called a 'lawful basis'). Sometimes, we might also want to use sensitive information about you, like information about your health, religion and ethnic background. This is called 'special category information'. We collect all this information from you to help with our research, which aims to benefit everyone (this means that it is in the 'public interest').

You have the right to make choices about your information under UK law. If you have any questions or would like to ask us to do something with your information, you can ask the researcher or a parent or guardian, or someone else at the University. Contact details are shown towards the bottom of this document.

You can stop being a part of the study at any time, without giving a reason. You can ask us to delete your data at any time, but it might not always be possible. If you ask us to delete information we will make sure this is done. If you ask us to delete data after this point, we might not be able to. If your data is anonymised (where we take out your name and any other information that lets us know the information is about you), we will not be able to delete it, because we will not know which data is yours.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

Your results will be used in the analysis of the research study. The results of the research study will not be published and will be destroyed on 26/04/2023. If you wish to be provided with a copy of your transcript, please provide us with your details and we will be in contact.

Who has reviewed this research project?

MMU Human Geography staff will be responsible for reviewing the research.

Who do I contact if I have concerns about this study or I wish to complain?

Manchester Metropolitan Data Protection Officer dataprotection@mmu.ac.uk

Tel: 0161 247 3331 Legal Services, All Saints Building, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, M15 6BH

Researchers: Yahya Sayed

If you have any questions regarding this research, please contact Yahya Sayed at 20052134@stu.mmu.ac.uk who will address any concerns you may have. If you have any further questions and do not wish to contact the researcher then please contact Julian Holloway at j.j.holloway@mmu.ac.uk.

UK Information Commissioner's Office

You have the right to complain directly to the Information Commissioner's Office if you would like to complain about how we process your personal data:

<https://ico.org.uk/global/contact-us/>

THANK YOU FOR CONSIDERING PARTICIPATING IN THIS PROJECT

In-person Participant Information Sheet

Study Title:

Exploring the lived experience of Muslim and/or BAME geography students

Invitation to research

We would like to invite you to take part in a research study here at Manchester Metropolitan University. Before you decide on whether or not to take part, you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. This information sheet will explain to you why the research is being done and how you will be involved. Please take your time to read the following information carefully.

Why have I been invited?

You have been invited to take part in this research because we believe you are the perfect participant to provide us with the necessary data that will help us understand the complexities and challenges regarding decolonising

geographical knowledges. Also, to give us an insight of lived experiences of BAME geography students. There will be 4 or 5 other participants taking part in this study. You have been invited as we believe you understand the subject we are researching and have experiences in the area we are focusing on.

What does this study aim to do?

This study aims to bring attention to the different perceptions and experiences minority groups face within geography. It will explore the importance and complexities within decolonising geography. It will also assess the impacts of the efforts to decolonise geography.

Do I have to take part?

Participation in this research is completely voluntary. It is not compulsory for you to take part, however, if you do it would be of great help to us. If you choose to withdraw, your withdrawal in this study will be of no detriment to you and you are not required to give a reason as to why. This participant sheet and the consent form should provide you with the necessary information for you to decide on whether or not to participate in this study. You will be asked to sign the consent form to show you have agreed to take part.

What will I be asked to do?

We are inviting you to participate in a series of interviews in-person where we will ask you about your own experiences studying geography. The interviews will take around 20-30 minutes, from which the responses will be used by the researchers to support in the research study. No prior preparation will be required from you, only that you answer the questions honestly. The questions will be around your own experiences studying geography and how you feel about the attempts to decolonise geography. We will ask all other participants to do the same. The interview will be sound recorded using an online software recording system and stored securely on the Manchester Metropolitan University One Drive. This means the data will be secured according to the policies and security the university offers. We will brief you before the interview begins to confirm you are ready to take part and we will debrief you after the interview is over to answer any unanswered questions you may have. At any point, if you change your mind about participating you are able to, please let us know.

Are there any risks if I participate?

The only risks involved with participating is related to travelling to the interview location. These risks include injuries if you trip over objects or slip on spillages. These risks can be avoided by walking carefully through well-lit areas, including stairs and being aware of your surroundings. First Aid will be available from SafeZone app or Security via 2222.

Are there any advantages if I participate?

This research is unpaid. The responses and information you provide the researcher with will be highly useful and valuable in the research which aims analyse the lived experience of Muslim and/or BAME students studying geography.

Informed consent

The interview will be sound recorded with your consent (as signed in the consent form) so that we can look back at the data throughout our research. If you would not like us to record the interview, you can opt out in the consent form.

What information about me will you collect and why?

The data we will collect about you will be regarding your experiences studying geography and your opinions regarding decolonising this discipline. This data is necessary for the research study because we aim to analyse the responses we receive to find patterns and identify any similarities between the different responses given by the other participants. We will collect data on your age and ethnicity to help categorise and organise the different responses from the other participants. Your responses and input will help answer our research objectives and we will reference and draw conclusions from your responses in our final report.

How will my information be stored and how will you look after it?

Your information will be kept entirely anonymous, stored on the Manchester Metropolitan University One Drive which means the data will be secured according to the policies and security the university offers. All information which is collected about you during the course of the research project will be kept confidential and any of your responses we use in our final research study will be anonymised.

How will you use my information?

We will use your information in our study to help answer our research aim. We will keep you anonymous when referencing your responses by using identifiers. We will be analysing your attitudes and emotions as well as key information you provide us with regarding your experiences with studying geography.

Will my data be sent anywhere else, or shared with other people or organisations?

Your data will stay with us and not be shared with anyone apart from the researcher.

When will you destroy my information?

We will destroy your information on 26/04/2023.

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THANK YOU FOR CONSIDERING PARTICIPATING IN THIS PROJECT

Manchester Metropolitan University



Risk Assessment Template

Assessment Ref No. and version: YS/26102023/Manchester	Assessed By: Yahya Sayed	Approved by: <i>Julian Holloway</i>	Date of Assessment: 26/10/23	Review Date: <i>(e.g., 1 year, or sooner if there is significant change)</i> Date last reviewed:
		Checked By: Jon Binnie		
Location(s): Manchester		Activity: <i>My project is an empirical study using qualitative research methods including focus groups and in-person and online interviews with BAME students and university lecturers to analyse the lived experience of BAME students studying geography. The aim of the project is: 'To critically analyse the lived experience of BAME students studying geography.'</i>		
Overall assessment of the risk of harm or ill health after control measures have been implemented: <i>(Tick the highest risk indicated in the Risk column below)</i>			☒	1 - 3
			☒	4 - 6
			☐	8 - 12
			☐	15 - 25
Other risk assessments and/or COSHH related to this activity: <i>(include links to relevant risk assessments, including risk assessments provided by visitors)</i>				

What are the hazards? <i>(What could cause harm?)</i>	Who might be harmed and how? <i>(People types and types of injury)</i>	Control Measures <i>(i.e., What has been implemented to reduce the likelihood and impact of harm?)</i>	Likelihood (L)	Impact (I)	Risk Rating (L x I)	Is any further action needed? <i>(i.e., controls to be implemented to reduce the risk further)</i>
Slips and trips	Staff and students may be injured if they trip over objects or slip on spillages Bruises, sprains and strains, cuts and grazes	- General good housekeeping. - All areas well lit, including stairs. - No trailing cables or leads. - Staff keep work area clear e.g., no boxes left in walkways, deliveries stored immediately - First Aid available from SafeZone app or Security via 2222.	3	1	3	- Better housekeeping e.g., on spills. - Toolbox talk to be delivered on the use of wet floor signs.
Weather related hazards Extremes of temperature	Staff and students may get sunburn or hypothermia. Risk of dehydration	- Dress appropriately for the weather. Use sunscreen to protect against sunburn. - Dress suitably for cold or wet weather, use warm clothing or waterproofs. Wear appropriate footwear, for icy, muddy or uneven surfaces.	1	2	2	

What are the hazards? <i>(What could cause harm?)</i>	Who might be harmed and how? <i>(People types and types of injury)</i>	Control Measures <i>(i.e., What has been implemented to reduce the likelihood and impact of harm?)</i>	Likelihood (L)	Impact (I)	Risk Rating (L x I)	Is any further action needed? <i>(i.e., controls to be implemented to reduce the risk further)</i>
		Consume water in regular intervals particularly when hot				
Traffic-related hazards	Staff and students Risk of injury or death from collision with motor vehicles, trams and cycles	- Make sure roads, tram lines and bike lanes are clear of vehicles when crossing - Only cross at pedestrian crossings. - Do not conduct data collection on the public highway, on tramlines or bike lanes.	1	5	5	
Research participants could become hostile, aggressive, abusive or seek to cause harm.	Staff and students Specific communication difficulties associated with research locality i.e. conversing with people who may have no or limited understanding of English.	- Make sure in-person data collection takes place in public space. - Do not undertake research in private space such as a	1	3	3	

What are the hazards? <i>(What could cause harm?)</i>	Who might be harmed and how? <i>(People types and types of injury)</i>	Control Measures <i>(i.e., What has been implemented to reduce the likelihood and impact of harm?)</i>	Likelihood (L)	Impact (I)	Risk Rating (L x I)	Is any further action needed? <i>(i.e., controls to be implemented to reduce the risk further)</i>
	Certain research topics may be sensitive or emotive and lead to tension and conflict.	research participant's private home. • Use good communication and interview technique. Word questions carefully and sensitively. • Treat research participants with courtesy and respect to develop a good rapport with them and minimise risk of tension and conflict. • If research participants become hostile. Terminate the social interaction and interview and withdraw from the social situation • Lone working is prohibited on group field research groups. In-				

What are the hazards? <i>(What could cause harm?)</i>	Who might be harmed and how? <i>(People types and types of injury)</i>	Control Measures <i>(i.e., What has been implemented to reduce the likelihood and impact of harm?)</i>	Likelihood (L)	Impact (I)	Risk Rating (L x I)	Is any further action needed? <i>(i.e., controls to be implemented to reduce the risk further)</i>
		person research must be conducted with another person. - For independent dissertation research lone researchers must tell a responsible person the location details of the research site(s) and the expected return time from the field. - Carry a fully charged mobile phone.				
Risk of terror attack	Staff and students could be injured or die in terror attack.	Familiarisation with the National Police Chiefs' Council 'Run, Hide, Tell' protocol in the event of a terror attack: https://www.npcc.police.uk/NPCCBusinessAreas/WeaponAttacksStaySafe.aspx	1	5	5	

What are the hazards? <i>(What could cause harm?)</i>	Who might be harmed and how? <i>(People types and types of injury)</i>	Control Measures <i>(i.e., What has been implemented to reduce the likelihood and impact of harm?)</i>	Likelihood (L)	Impact (I)	Risk Rating (L x I)	Is any further action needed? <i>(i.e., controls to be implemented to reduce the risk further)</i>
		- For non-UK research sites, see the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) foreign travel advice for details of the current terrorist threat level: https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice				
Prolonged use of computer can lead to poor posture, back ache, headaches and eye strain.	Staff and students	- Ensure that the seat is properly adjusted for viewing monitor and operating keyboard and mouse comfortably. - Make sure the space under your desk is free of clutter so that you can move your legs.	2	2	4	
Poorly adjusted monitor can lead	Staff and students	Ensure that the angle of the monitor and brightness is	2	2	4	

What are the hazards? <i>(What could cause harm?)</i>	Who might be harmed and how? <i>(People types and types of injury)</i>	Control Measures <i>(i.e., What has been implemented to reduce the likelihood and impact of harm?)</i>	Likelihood (L)	Impact (I)	Risk Rating (L x I)	Is any further action needed? <i>(i.e., controls to be implemented to reduce the risk further)</i>
to eye strain and neck pains.		adjusted to reduce glare and eye strain. Try to ensure that the screen is not facing windows or other sources of direct light.				
Without regular comfort breaks there is a risk of dehydration.	Staff and students	- Take regular comfort breaks where necessary. Do not spend more than two hours at the computer without a break. - Keep hydrated.	2	2	4	
Prolonged typing can lead to discomfort and possible carpal tunnel syndrome.	Staff and students	- Take regular comfort breaks where necessary. Do not spend more than two hours at the computer without a break. - Ensure that there is space in front of the keyboard so that	2	2	4	

What are the hazards? <i>(What could cause harm?)</i>	Who might be harmed and how? <i>(People types and types of injury)</i>	Control Measures <i>(i.e., What has been implemented to reduce the likelihood and impact of harm?)</i>	Likelihood (L)	Impact (I)	Risk Rating (L x I)	Is any further action needed? <i>(i.e., controls to be implemented to reduce the risk further)</i>
		you can rest your hands while not typing. • Keep your wrists straight while typing. • Do not overstretch your fingers on the keyboard. • Maintaining a soft touch on the keyboard and mouse. • Make sure the mouse is within easy reach so that do you overstretch. • Make sure you sit upright and close to the desk so that you do not overstretch to reach the mouse.				
Electricity shock from unsafe equipment	Staff and students	• Check that all electrical equipment is safe to use. Do a	1	5	5	

What are the hazards? <i>(What could cause harm?)</i>	Who might be harmed and how? <i>(People types and types of injury)</i>	Control Measures <i>(i.e., What has been implemented to reduce the likelihood and impact of harm?)</i>	Likelihood (L)	Impact (I)	Risk Rating (L x I)	Is any further action needed? <i>(i.e., controls to be implemented to reduce the risk further)</i>
		visual check before use. Do not use damaged equipment.				
Trip hazard from electric leads and cables connected to the computer.	Staff and students	Check that all electric leads cables connected to the computer do not obstruct movement of the researcher.	2	2	4	
Online research participants respondents becoming agitated or abusive	Staff and students	- Use good interview technique to develop and maintain rapport with research participants (e.g. avoid insensitively worded questions). - Use good moderator technique in online focus groups (e.g. avoid insensitively worded questions).	1	2	2	

What are the hazards? <i>(What could cause harm?)</i>	Who might be harmed and how? <i>(People types and types of injury)</i>	Control Measures <i>(i.e., What has been implemented to reduce the likelihood and impact of harm?)</i>	Likelihood (L)	Impact (I)	Risk Rating (L x I)	Is any further action needed? <i>(i.e., controls to be implemented to reduce the risk further)</i>
		- In the event of harassment or abuse go offline and contact a friend or guardian - Document the incident of abuse and report this to a tutor (for students), line manager (for staff) and/or the police. You may also wish to contact the Manchester Metropolitan University Counselling Service.				
Cyberbullying and online harassment in social media.	Staff and students	If you experience cyberbullying or online harassment, report it to your dissertation supervisor and/or the police. You may also wish to contact the Manchester Metropolitan University Counselling Service	1	2	2	

Risk Grading Matrix			IMPACT				
			Insignificant (1)	Minor (2)	Moderate (3)	Major (4)	Severe (5)
Health			<i>Requires short break from the work activity</i>	<i>Short period of ill health <7 days off work</i>	<i>Ill health requiring >7 days off work</i>	<i>RIDDOR reportable disease</i>	<i>Life changing or life limiting disease</i>
Safety			<i>Minor injury / first aid treatment</i>	<i>Injury resulting in <7 days off work</i>	<i>Injury resulting in >7 days off work</i>	<i>Major injury: loss of limb or broken bones</i>	<i>Injury requiring extensive rehabilitation or fatality</i>
Compliance			<i>Raised as Audit/Inspection observation</i>	<i>Raised as minor non-conformance</i>	<i>Raised as major non-conformance</i>	<i>Breach of legislation: reported to/visit from regulator</i>	<i>Regulator improvement notice, prosecution</i>
LIKELIHOOD	Rare (1)	<i>May never happen/only in exceptional circumstances (e.g., probability <0.1 %)</i>	1	2	3	4	5
	Unlikely (2)	<i>Not expected to happen but may occur (e.g., probability 0.1-1%)</i>	2	4	6	8	10
	Possible (3)	<i>Has happened before, may happen again (e.g., probability 1-10%)</i>	3	6	9	12	15
	Likely (4)	<i>Will probably happen (e.g., probability 10-50%)</i>	4	8	12	16	20
	Almost Certain (5)	<i>Expected to happen in most circumstances (e.g., probability >50%)</i>	5	10	15	20	25

Risk Rating	Action Required to Control the Risk
1-3	No action – no further action but ensure controls are maintained and reviewed
4-6	Monitor – look to improve at next review or if there is a significant change
8-12	Action – improve within specified timescale
15-25	Urgent action – Stop the activity and take immediate action to maintain existing controls rigorously

Action plan: <i>(insert actions identified in the last column of the risk assessment and assign an owner and deadline)</i>	By who?	By when?	Done
	Supervisor	xx/xx/xx	
	Manager	xx/xx/xx	

Student Focus Group Schedule

Introduction

My name is Yahya, I am in my final year of studying human geography. As an Asian Muslim student I felt I have had a different experience than a majority of other students studying geography due to my ethnic, cultural and religious background. I know I am not alone with this and I know share these experiences with other minority ethnic students like yourselves. I intend to delve deeper into this sensitive but vital issue within geography. The aim of this focus group is to explore the lived experience of Muslim and/or BAME geography students, to examine your perceptions regarding geography as a 'white discipline' and get your opinions on impacts of various groups to decolonise geography.

Background questions:

- Introduce yourselves, subject and year of study.
- Do you commute to university or live in student accommodation?
- Why did you decide to study geography at MMU?

Theme 1: Lived Experiences of studying

- Could you please describe your experiences as a Muslim and/or BAME student studying geography at MMU? Can you give any examples of significant experiences that have affected you?
- How do you feel your cultural or ethnic background has influenced your experiences in the geography program? Relationship with material
- Relationship with students- socialising, drinking etc
- Have there been any advantages or challenges associated with this?
- Have these experiences shaped your academic or personal journey?
- Relationship with lecturers

Theme 2: Perceptions of the 'white discipline'

- What does a 'white discipline' mean to you?
- In your opinion, do you perceive geography as a 'white discipline'? If so, how and why?
- Do you believe this perception of geography can/will change? Has it changed for you in any way?

Theme 3: Attempts to decolonise Geo

- What do you believe are the most significant barriers to inclusivity and diversity in geography education?
- What steps do you think can be taken to address them?
- Do you know of any or have you been involved with any initiatives, efforts, or organizations at Man Met that aim to decolonize geography or promote inclusivity and diversity?
- If so, what do you think of these efforts? Have they been effective for you?
- How do you see the role of the geography faculty and staff in creating a more inclusive and diverse environment for students? What would you suggest they do to improve the experiences of Muslim and/or BAME students?

Geography Staff Interview Schedule

Introduction

My name is Yahya, I am in my final year of studying human geography. As an Asian Muslim student I felt I have had a different experience than a majority of other students studying geography due to my ethnic, cultural and religious background. I am sure you understand that the issue of the lack of diversity within geography is complex and important to address. I intend to delve deeper and understand the complexities and challenges behind this issue. The aim of this interview is to examine your perceptions regarding geography as a 'white discipline' and get your opinions on impacts of various groups to decolonise geography.

Background Questions:

- Please introduce yourself and your role within the department
- How long have you been working at MMU?
- Can you give a brief summary of your specialty and research?

Theme 2: Perceptions of the 'white discipline'

- Do you think the experience of studying geography differs for different ethnic cultural groups? If so how and why?
- What are your opinions regarding geography as a white discipline? How would you describe the significance of this issue within the discipline?
- In your view, is there a perception of geography as a 'white discipline' among students? How do you think this perception impacts the field and the students?

- Are you aware of research that discusses the whiteness of geography? What is your opinion on what has been published?

Theme 3: Attempts to decolonise Geo

- What steps have you taken or seen taken within the geography program to promote diversity and inclusivity among students? What steps do you think can be taken to address them?
- What strategies do you use to create an inclusive learning environment? Are there any specific strategies or programs in place?
- What efforts have you or your department made to decolonize the curriculum and teaching methods within geography? Can you provide examples of initiatives or changes that have been implemented?
- Have you collaborated with or are aware of any external organizations, faculty committees, or student groups working towards decolonizing geography education?
- What has been the impact of these collaborations? If so, what do you think of these efforts?
- In your opinion, what are the key roles and responsibilities of geography faculty and staff in fostering diversity and inclusivity in the field? What are some strategies for improving the experiences of Muslim and/or BAME students?

University diversity team and STRIVE interview schedule:

Introduction

My name is Yahya, I am in my final year of studying human geography. As an Asian Muslim student I felt I have had a different experience than a majority of other students studying geography due to my ethnic, cultural and religious background. This issue of the lack of diversity within geography is complex and important to address. This is why I am interested in delving deeper into the experiences of BAME students and further understanding the complexities and challenges behind this issue. The aim of this interview is to examine your perceptions regarding geography as a 'white discipline' and get your opinions on impacts MMU has on promoting diversity and inclusion amongst students.

Background questions:

- Introduce yourself and your role within MMU.
- Can you give a brief discussion how you attained this role?

- Can you describe the mission and goals of the Inclusion and Diversity team/ STRIVE Team at our university?

Theme 3: Attempts to decolonise Geo

- What specific efforts and programs does the Inclusion and Diversity team lead to promote inclusivity and diversity within the university as a whole? Have there been any specific efforts for the Geography discipline?
- In your view, what are the key challenges or barriers that exist in creating a more inclusive and diverse environment in disciplines with a lack of diversity? How is the team addressing them?
- Can you share any successful initiatives or best practices that have had a positive impact on diversity and inclusion at MMU?
- What does white discipline and decolonise the curriculum mean to you?
- How does the Inclusion and Diversity team collaborate with other departments, faculty, and student groups to achieve its objectives, particularly in decolonizing geography education?
- What role does the Inclusion and Diversity team play in engaging with and supporting Muslim and/or BAME students particularly in geography, and what measures are in place to ensure their voices are heard?
- Are you aware of any specific challenges related to geography regarding diversity?
- How does the team ensure that the concerns and needs of Muslim and/or BAME students are considered when developing diversity and inclusion strategies?

- Can you provide insights into the team's future plans and objectives in promoting diversity and inclusivity within our university? Is there anything specific for Geography Education?
- What can students, faculty, and staff do to collaborate effectively with the Inclusion and Diversity team and support its efforts in geography education?
- How do you see the role of research, like the one I am conducting, in contributing to the work of the Inclusion and Diversity team and the broader goals of inclusivity and diversity in geography?

Ending:

Thank you for taking part in this interview/focus group. Your inputs have been very valuable.

[Interview Transcript Example](#)

Y: Can you give a brief summary of a research that you've done yourself and it's specialty.

T: I probably about half of that time that I've worked here, the first half that is, um, i was very much a physical geographer doing researching rock, weathering and slope instability and things like that. But um, since that time, I've switched my research, it's mainly educational research now and I research a range of topics around education for sustainable development. Different types of, approaches to learning how active learning and query-based learning, flexible assessment. And aspects of EDI equals university inclusion as well.

Y: It's nice. Sounds very good. Um, so, so in your experiences of teaching geography, Um, Are able to perceive, do you see that there is, um, The, the different students kind of have a different experience Studying geography, depending on their ethnic or cultural background.

T:Um, I, It's very difficult for me to know, you know, to kind of get inside individual students head to know how they experience things. And, I've certainly noticed that, you know, compared to other subjects in this department. And in the faculty we seem to have a very *white* cohort. Yeah. Um, but in terms of their experience, On personally not aware, you know, I've not been made aware of any individuals and Having a different experience to others.

Y:Okay. Yeah, and so you see that there is the lack of diversity and there is research that calls, you know, geography, a white discipline. So, um, what is your opinion regarding geography, being a white discipline? And how would you describe the significance of this issue?

T: Um, well, it certainly does seem to be a very white discipline. Um, the significance of that is that, you know, geography probably more than many subjects. It's about the world and the world is very diverse. And so, I think it limits The students experience of diversity within their own course. They're learning about diverse cultures all around the world, but they haven't got that within their own course. Um, and in my experience, when you do have diverse groups, And they work together, especially when they're working groups. Um, they learned so much from each other. We, we kind of almost don't need to do that much. They can learn so much from their own backgrounds and cultures and experiences their own knowledge and skills and share that with each other. and we don't have that diversity. Um, there is diversity in other areas, but that's one bit of diversity. That's just, it's just missing. I could speculate us to one of the reasons why might be because, because I've had wanted people that have told me this. And that might just be down to individuals. But um, It's the idea that You know, geography, unlike some disciplines geography doesn't have like one very obvious. Career path. When you come out, the other end, you don't qualify and become a geographer. You know, you could become a chemist, you could become a biologist but

you don't become a geographer. There's the so many different career paths that come out of geography. I absolutely believe that geography in, you know, with all the problems that we have in the world, is a really core discipline. But because it doesn't have that you know, you're going to go and do a degree in, you know, medicine become a doctor. You're going to go and do this become that. Um, I what I'm told is that there are some cultures that perceive that as a big barrier, you know, that you go to university to do a degree that will give you a trade a profession. And, and it just isn't obvious to, especially, if, if you haven't started geography, it's not obvious, What that is in geography