

Understanding Generation Z/M – Beliefs, Motivations and Student diversity : The Relationship between Friendship Groups and the Modern University Muslim Student Identities.

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Research Questions

- 1) How do 'non-traditional' and visibly homogenous Muslim student social groups organise themselves in HE spaces?
- 2) What are the possible rationales, for the students, for choosing to organise into distinct social networks at university?
- 3) How do these distinct socially organised networks (friendships) create/ affect their members' sense of belonging in HE?



Background Literature



- Neoliberalism is built on a single fundamental principle: the market is superior to all other forms of organisation. The free market is an idealized system in which the prices for goods and services are determined by consumers or in this instance students.
- Neoliberal educational discourses have had a major impact on the processes by which some individuals from traditionally underrepresented groups have found new opportunities to access higher education in particular ways, whilst others have been excluded from such opportunities. Brown (2013), highlights the emphasis on students as the main beneficiary of HE education which operates under a quasi market structure.
- Currently the 'BAME attainment gap' statistics show a 13% attainment in comparison to their white counterpart. The 'education' and related subject group had the largest attainment gap of 20.1% (Universities UK, 2019).

How do we tackle the gap?

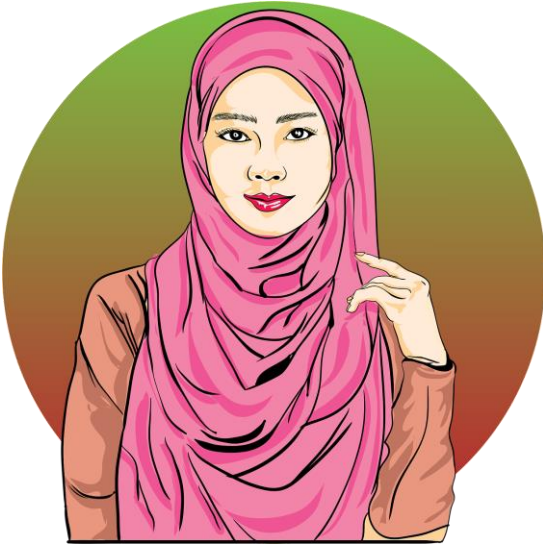


- Widening Participation Policies e.g. Aim higher
- A renewed focus on belonging: Thomas (2012) discovered that student retention and success relies on a multifaceted approach with emphasis on student interaction to foster greater sense of belonging amongst 'at risk' students.
- However Stevenson et al. (2016:15) discovered in their research, that universities generally failed to adopt a sense of belonging and this was not considered a cultural or ethnic issue but a 'general failure to engage and offer support to those in need'. The problem arises from a institutional top-down approach which relies heavily on quantitative data such as NSS results (Heron, 2019)



Prevent Strategy

Presented to Parliament by the
Secretary of State for the Home Department
by Command of Her Majesty



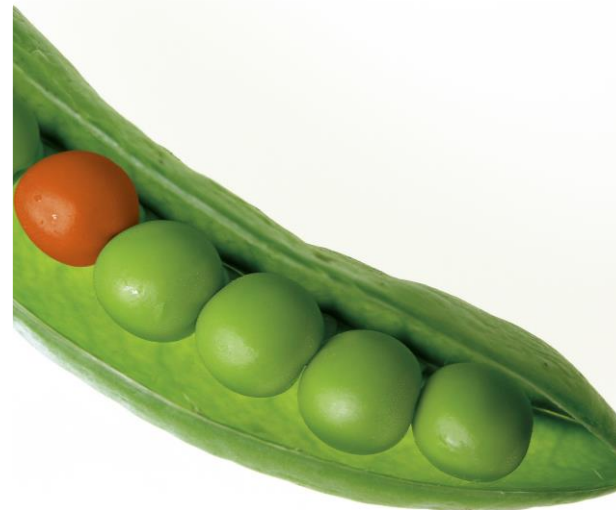
Why now? Why me?

- Generation M are the Muslim millennials, the global generation born in the past 30 years. Generation M has 'one over-riding characteristic, which is that they believe that being faithful and living a modern life go hand in hand, and there is absolutely no contradiction between the two,' says Janmohamed (2016).
- Insider status: Post-Constructivist, Marxists Islamic Feminist researcher



The Observed Phenomenon: Friendships

"like two peas in a pod" anyone 'who has shelled peas would know of course that peas are not only alike and that seeing them as being alike is already to overlook some important differences' (Ahmed, 2007).



Creative methodologies

- Reconceptualising transformative research methods such as feminist, decolonised methodologies
- Reducing researcher impact.
- Gaunlett (2011:4) thinking and making are aspect of the same process.
- Identity work is a constant negotiation so self-narration is paramount.





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Research Design



Participant Recruitment:
using purposive sampling
of students within my
teaching 'bubbles'.



Setting up a 'Listening
room' inspired by Heron
(2019)



Researcher sets up socially
distant physical or Teams
meetings. Provides cue
sheet where students will
share objects



Leaves student
participants for an hour
alone to discuss topics
provided



Review and reflect with
individual members.

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