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## **“You can’t be what you can’t see”: The lived experiences of Black and Minority Ethnic Physical Education teachers**

Despite increases in the ‘super diversity’ (Dagkas & Pearce, 2014) of many classrooms in English schools, the teaching profession does not reflect this heterogeneity. For example, only 14.9% of teachers identify as Black and Minority Ethnic (BME), despite 30% of pupils being from the same background (DfE, 2019). This situation is exacerbated within Physical Education (PE), where figures as low as 2.09% have been cited for BME teachers entering the profession (Flintoff et al., 2008).

The importance of BME teachers to the success of BME students is well documented; for example, research has demonstrated how young Black students gain better results and have an increased academic trajectory when taught by a BME teacher (Acosta, 2019; Dee and Gershenson 2017). Moreover, these practitioners can be key role models and provide positive lifelong experiences for their students (Blackshear, 2020; Gershenson et al., 2018).

It is notable that little research has been undertaken to explore why BME teachers remain underrepresented within PE, their motives for entering a profession that remains overwhelmingly White, and the experiences of those who enter the profession (although we note the work of Blackshear, 2020; Flintoff, 2013; 2015; Flintoff et al., 2008; Simon & Boyd, 2021). Set against this backdrop, our presentation reports on a study that draws upon PE Teacher Socialisation Theory and Critical Race Theory to explore six BME PE teachers’ lived experiences of PE. More specifically, the study addressed: (1) motives for and influences on choosing PE teaching as a profession (2) their experiences of PE Teacher Education (PETE) training; and (3) experiences of working in schools.

PE Teacher Socialisation Theory (Lawson, 1983a; 1983b) was utilized to gain a chronological understanding of the multiple issues that influence how PE teachers are socialized into and within the profession. Previous studies have identified various influences including PETE, recruitment processes, subject marginalisation, beliefs and perceptions, and workplace conditions (Richards & Gaudreault, 2017). The five central tenets of Critical Race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017) were also drawn upon including : the permanence of racism; Whiteness as property; interest convergence; critique of liberalism; and counter-storytelling. Taken together these theoretical resources enable a better understanding to be

gained of the six BME PE teachers' socialisation into and experiences of working in the PE profession.

Semi-structured interviews and participatory methods were utilised to enable participants to reflect upon and share their experiences (Aldridge, 2015). Specifically, the use of 'biographical time-lines' enabled the participants to provide a visual history of their teaching journey. Here participants documented a chronological map of events, memories, significant experiences, people, sports teams, and critical happenings. Along with the interviews this shed light on their early experiences of PE, PETE and working spaces. A storytelling approach and the use of counter stories were employed as a means of data representation. These offered a means of challenging the grand narratives that circulate within and about PE and PETE. That is, how dominant discourses of Whiteness operate to marginalize BME teachers whilst marking them as 'different' and 'Other'.

This research reveals how subtle, insidious and multiple racial microaggressions materialize in the everyday lives of BME PE teachers. In particular, unconscious bias, racial banter, and cultural insensitivities work to continuously position BME teachers as outsiders to the profession. Yet, these teachers also demonstrate the significance of their sporting and ethnic identities to their career choices. Moreover, these teachers articulated a moral and ethical imperative to be visible, offer positive representation, and be role models for their BME students. They articulate ways in which they mobilise their agency to make sense of their chosen career, whilst exploring avenues to challenge discrimination and make a difference to the lives of their BME students.

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