



Hotspots Map: Creating A Home Away From Home

Introduction

Black students are not flourishing at university as they should be. They are 50% more likely to drop out of university compared to their white and Asian counterparts and 12% less likely to get a first class degree compared to their white counterparts. These statistics cannot be explained away by their academic ability as evidenced by [Khan](#) who found that this attainment gap persists even when A-level grades are controlled for.

What are the reasons for these trends? Mirza (2018) found that loneliness and isolation can be a key factor in the poorer performance of black-heritage and other minority ethnic students.

So earlier this year we began a project in collaboration with the University of Manchester's widening participation team. The idea behind the project was to create an interactive map of culturally appropriate hotspots for black-heritage students. With this map we hope to show prospective students that there exists a black-heritage community in wider Manchester. A wider community to which they can feel connected to their culture.

The project was inspired by our own research as well as the current literature available on the experiences of black-heritage students at predominantly white institutions.

On the next page is a summary of that research and why we felt this project was so important.

Fish Out Of Water

The current trend is for black-heritage students to be highly concentrated at lower tier universities (HESA, 2021). When looking beyond the surface as to why this is occurring it becomes clear that many black students avoid highly selective Russell group and top-third institutions because they feel that they are 'too white' and not diverse enough (Kwakye and Ogunbiyi, 2019). When surveyed, our own A-level mentees state their level of anxiousness about the lack of representation at university at 7/10.

By making students aware of the diversity of their prospective university's city and the opportunities to feel connected to their culture, we believe that their fear of being an odd one out will be reduced and will encourage more prospective students to apply to the university.

The Great Connector

One of the points raised when conducting research for our '[Student Voice Report](#)' (2021), was the sense of connectivity achieved through food. One student raised the point of rarely being able to find food on or around campus that was not eurocentric: "If you don't have anywhere or anything to eat on campus that is something that you relate to...If you don't have spaces to practice your traditions or segments of your culture on campus, then that will impact your day to day life". Whilst there is definitely scope for universities to implement more diverse menus in the future, we felt that it was important to use this map to connect students with local businesses that were already able to offer them a culinary home from home experience.

Comforting Knowledge

We believe that it is important to show students that there is a whole array of businesses, societies, restaurants and more that are culturally appropriate in their university city. By connecting black-heritage students to these places, they will feel closer to their culture and less of a minority. Armed with this knowledge, instances of homesickness will be reduced and so too will the detrimental impact on the students' education.



Excellent Returns

A relatively small project like this can make a huge difference in making black-heritage students feel more welcomed.

We will be happy if this map makes even one black-heritage student feel less alone, less homesick and more connected to a community while they are at the University of Manchester.

You can access the map [here](#).

Thank you to the University of Manchester and the two wonderful students who helped us to populate this map.

Contact us



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