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The Culturally Sensitive Curricula Scales (CSCS):

Measuring BAME vs White students'
Perspectives on the Culturally
Sensitive of the Curriculum

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Advance HE Surveys and Insights Conference 2021

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Terminology

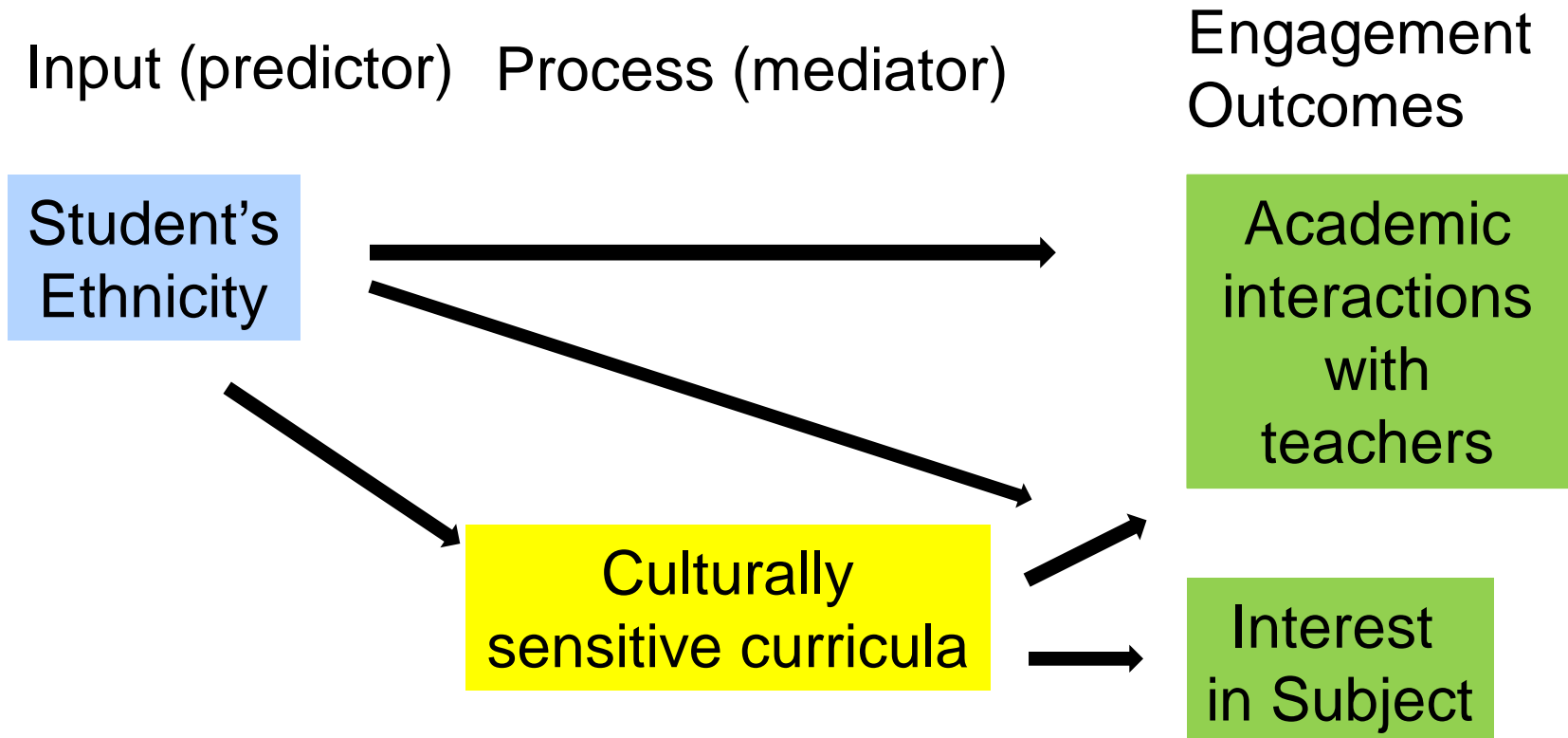
- BAME – Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic
- Student experience
 - Interest
 - Interaction with teachers



Background and Context

- Increased global attention to racialised inequalities
- Persistent racial equality gaps in the higher education
- Calls to diversify and decolonize higher education curricula
- Global response by universities to create more culturally responsive curricula
- Existing sector-wide surveys do not illuminate BAME student experience gaps

Conceptual Framework



Research Questions and Hypotheses

1. To what extent do students (particularly from Black, Asian, or minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds) perceive their curriculum as culturally sensitive?
2. What is the relationship between cultural sensitivity in curricula and students' engagement (defined as: a) interactions with their teachers and b) interest in their program of study?
3. To what extent does cultural sensitivity of the curricula explain differences between BAME and White students' interactions with teachers and interest in the subject?

Methods

- **Sample** $N=262$ (189 Female; 73 Male; 157 BAME; 100 White; 84 Black African; 15 Black Caribbean)
- **Survey**
 - ***Culturally Sensitive Curricula Scales (CSCS)*** – 19 items. 4-point Likert scale (1=*strongly disagree* to 4=*strongly agree*) in relation to their perceptions of the cultural sensitivity of their curriculum. 4 factors:
 - **Diversity represented (DR)** (8 items, $\alpha=.87$)
 - **Positive portrayals (PP)** (3 items, $\alpha=.81$)
 - **Challenge power (CP)** (5 items, $\alpha=.88$)
 - **Inclusive classroom interactions (ICI)** (3 items, $\alpha=.83$)

Methods

- **Diversity Represented** – focuses on how people from diverse backgrounds are referenced within the curriculum (Bryan-Gooden, Hester & Peoples 2019).
- **Positive Portrayals** – redressing stereotypical or negative misperceptions of people from diverse backgrounds that may distort how they are considered by society (Bryan-Gooden, Hester & Peoples 2019).
- **Challenge Power** – provokes critical thought and challenge dominant ideologies (Ladson-Billings & Tate 1995)
- **Inclusive Classroom Interactions** – focuses on the development of a learning environment accepting of cultural differences and respectful of different perspectives (Holgate 2016).

Methods

- ***Academic Interaction with Teachers*** – (6 items; $\alpha=.86$) 4-point Likert scale (1=*never* to 4=*very often*)

Sample item included:

- Communicated with teaching staff about assignments outside of taught sessions

- ***Interest in subject*** – (11 items; $\alpha=.88$) 5-point Likert scale (1=*strongly disagree* to 5=*strongly agree*) (Quinlan, 2019)

Sample items included:

- I am curious about this field in general
- Regularly I find myself thinking about ideas from lectures in this field when I'm doing other things

Methods

- **Analyses:**

- Principal Components Analysis to validate survey
- Descriptive statistics and t-tests
- Regression analysis with mediation analysis



Results

- BAME students perceived their curriculum as **less culturally sensitive on all four dimensions** of the Culturally Sensitive Curricula Scales than White students.
- All study variables showed **significant mean differences** between BAME and White students, with medium to large effect sizes

Sub Scale	BAME Mean	White Mean	BAME SD	White SD	MD	t	Cohen's d
Diversity Represented (DR)	2.661	3.106	.745	.530	-.445	-5.580***	.664
Positive Portrayals (PP)	2.200	2.964	.735	.662	-.764	-8.293***	1.080
Challenge Power (CP)	2.740	3.278	.878	.638	-.538	-5.294***	.678
Inclusive Classroom Interactions (ICI)	3.018	3.683	.786	.486	-.665	-8.380***	.970
Academic Interaction with Teachers (AIT)	2.957	3.250	.638	.652	-.293	-3.559***	.455
Interest	3.592	3.935	.599	.500	-.343	-4.766***	.610

Results

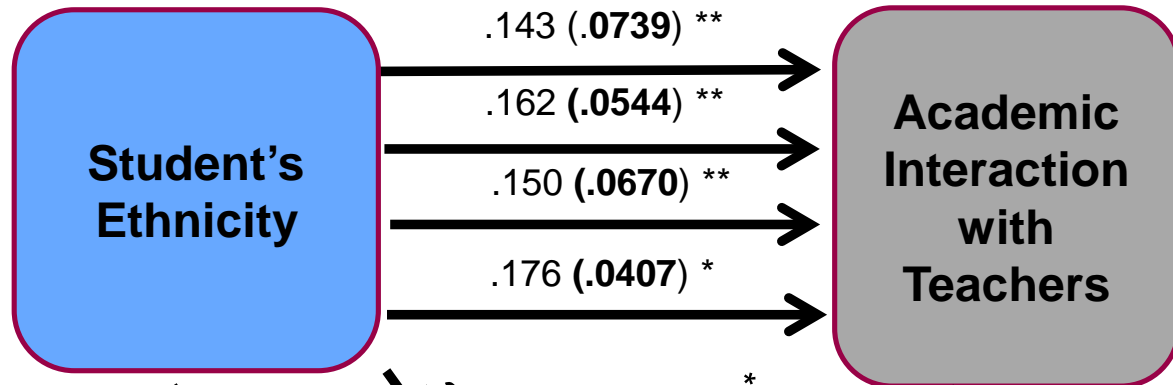
Pearson Product-Moment Correlations for the Study Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Ethnicity							
2 Diversity Represented	.306**						
3 Positive Portrayals	.446**	.459**					
4 Challenge Power	.306**	.574**	.417**				
5 Inclusive Classroom Interactions	.381**	.372**	.332**	.450**			
6 Academic Interaction with Teachers	.217**	.187**	.217**	.228**	.248**		
7 Interest	.305**	.214**	.223**	.226**	.207**	.330**	1

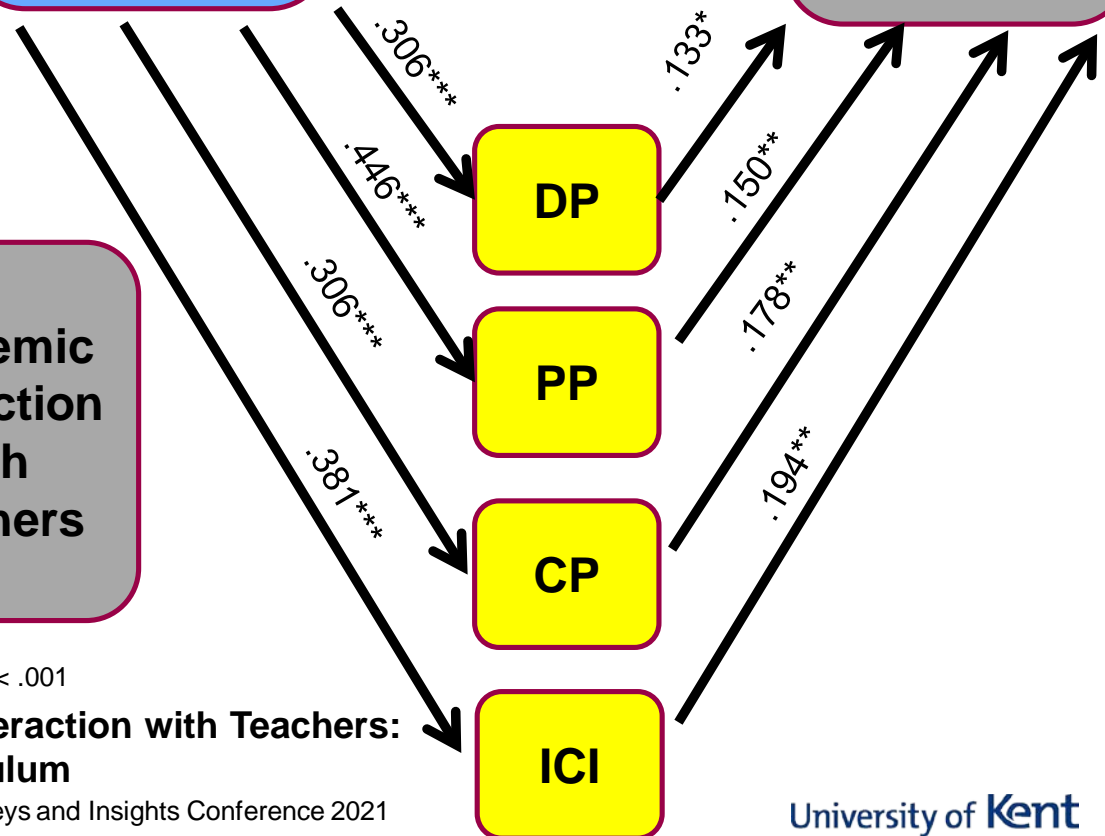
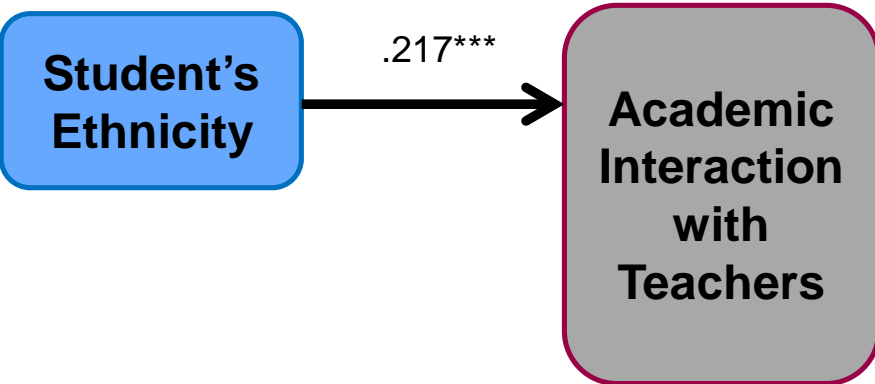
** $p < .01$ (2-tailed)

Results – Academic Interaction with Teachers

Mediator in Model



Mediator not in Model



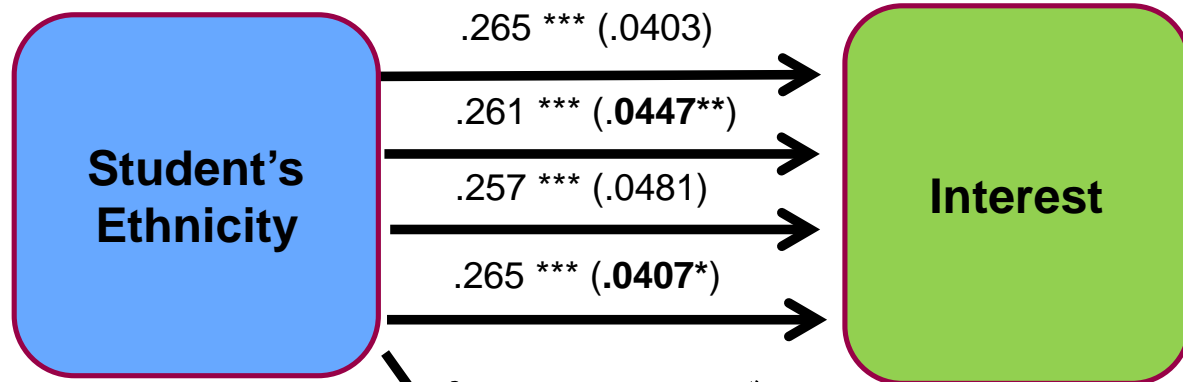
Regression: Standardized betas where *p<.05; **p< .01; ***p< .001

The Effects of Ethnicity on Academic Interaction with Teachers: Mediation by Culturally Sensitive Curriculum

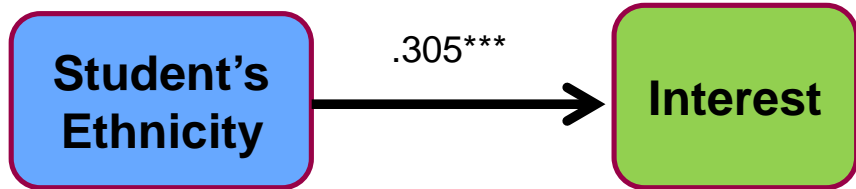
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Results – Interest

CSCS scales as mediators in model



Mediator not in model



Regression: Standardized betas where *p<.05; **p< .01; ***p< .001

The Effects of Ethnicity on Interest: Mediation by Culturally Sensitive Curriculum

Discussion

- BAME students had few interactions with their teachers and lower interest in their major than White students
- BAME students perceived the curriculum as less culturally sensitive
- Provides further empirical support for BAME students' qualitative reports of the Whiteness of the curriculum and its effects
- Culturally insensitive curricula helps explain gaps between BAME and White students' interest
- Supports calls for teachers to improve cultural competence and diversify curricula

Significance and Directions for Future Research

- The new set of CSCS makes an important conceptual and methodological contribution
- The CSCS provide a practical tool to support teachers' reflection
- Future research should investigate the relationship between culturally sensitive curricula and attainment
- The CSCS should be used in intervention studies
- See full contents of the instrument at this link: <https://bit.ly/3rT9u0P>
- For permission to use the survey or to collaborate on further research using it, please contact D.S.P.Thomas@kent.ac.uk and K.M.Quinlan@kent.ac.uk

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