



**ENGAGING STUDENTS WHO IDENTIFY
AS UNDER-REPRESENTED IN
RESEARCH DESIGNED TO ENHANCE
THE EXPERIENCES OF UNDER-
REPRESENTED STUDENTS**

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Alt text: selection of images special to Rachael - the Humber Bridge, a supporting hand, a skyscraper office, musical theatre Performance, CrossFit crew and her dog, Rudy

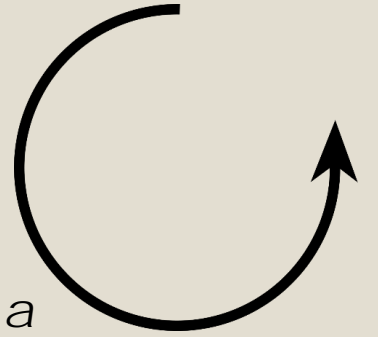


WHAT IS REVERSE MENTORING?

“... a reciprocal and temporally stable relationship between a less experienced mentor providing specific expert knowledge and a more experienced mentee who wants to gain this knowledge ... characterised by mutual trust and courtesy, it aims at facilitating learning and development of both the mentor and the mentee”

Zauchner-Studnicka *A Model for Reverse Mentoring in Education* International Journal of Educational and Pedagogical Sciences 11(3) 2017

WHY STAFF/STUDENT REVERSE MENTORING?



- Building on pilot study *‘It makes me feel empowered and that we can make a difference’: Reverse mentoring between international students and staff in legal education’* (2022) *European Journal of Legal Education* 3(1), 95-126
- Lack of ‘role models’ – important for representation
 - Need to develop understanding of **ALL staff** – not just the work of a few
- Dual benefit – **reciprocity**: transformational opportunities for mentor and mentee
- **Empowering individuals**: being heard, developing identity/values, increasing self-worth
- **Humanisation**: breaking down power, hierarchies and finding common ground

SELF-REFLECTION ON PARTNERSHIP

- **Positive experiences of:**
 - working with student research assistants
 - conducting research about students i.e. with students as participants
 - using student feedback/input to develop e.g. teaching
 - working closely with students who identify as under-represented
- **Missing pieces:** co-design and inclusion of student voices from outset to tackle criticisms of reverse mentoring as an intervention; building community online

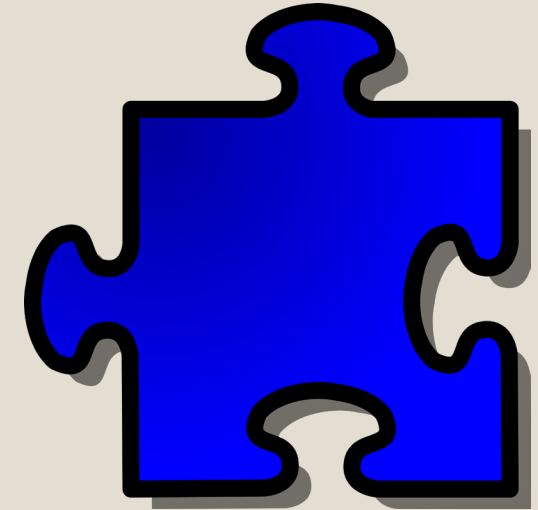


Image: blue
single jigsaw
puzzle piece

Phase 1

Co-design staff/student reverse mentoring scheme targeting 'under-represented' students and development of academic personal tutoring (APT) with research team of 15 'under-represented' students (self-identification)

Started with one question: Do you identify as under-represented? Me too ...

EXAMPLES OF UNDER-REPRESENTATION IN THE STUDENT TEAM

- between countries & cultures
- mature student
- outsider
- transgender man
- learning difficulties
- dyslexia
- ex-offender
- LGBTQU+
- being 'the odd one out'
- working-class
- disabled student
- hearing loss & deafness
- not a typical student

- isolation
- self-doubt
- middle-class/highly academic language
- Inadequacy
- doubts as to my capabilities
- fears of sounding different
- 'stupid'
- needing a job to pay for essentials
- invisibility
- South American
- first language is Spanish
- find it hard to connect
- feel invisible
- woman in STEM
- ethnicity
- "others"
- Latino/Hispanic students
- doesn't identify with binary gender

- low-income household
- raised by a single mother
- completely financially independent
- no support or 'safety blanket'
- black woman
- not from the UK
- upbringing
- cultural dysphoria
- hardships
- British Pakistani
- child of immigrants
- students of colour
- 'posh', white & middle class students
- out of place
- I do not fit in
- worry for fellow black students
- oldest student on my course
- feeling out of place

EXAMPLE WEEKS 7 AND 8

TOPIC: Research methods - collecting data from students/staff who take part in the reverse mentoring

Which methods should we use to collect feedback and reflections from reverse mentoring pairs? (Methods should be focused on bringing out student voices and experiences and staff learning/development)

What questions will be asked of them?

How often should we collect feedback/reflections?

Should they be individual/pair/group reflections or a mixture?

In week 8, you will pilot the research methods you have designed/decided on with another sub-team and gather feedback to develop your ideas

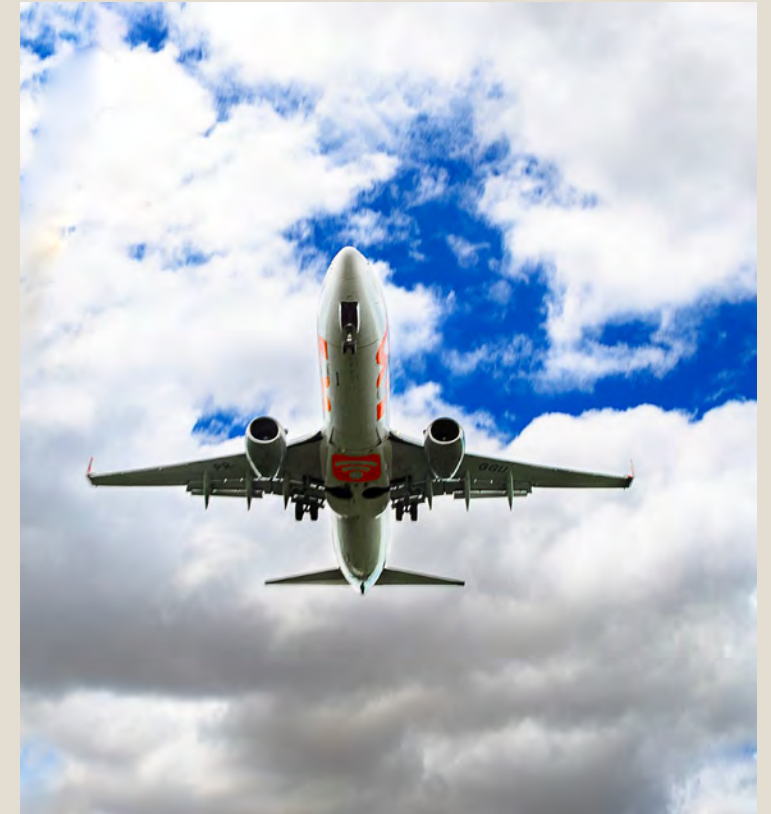


Image: shot from ground of aeroplane flying overhead in cloudy sky

WEEKLY ONLINE REFLECTION

Adapted from Gibb's reflective cycle and Barbara Bassot's book 'The Reflective Journal':

Description and feelings

- Some questions to consider: *What was I trying to achieve this week? What did I contribute? How did it make me feel? Why did I do what I did? What assumptions did I make? What were the consequences (for me and others)? How did I/others feel?*

Evaluation

- Some questions to consider: *what went well? What didn't go so well? Why?*

Conclusion

- Some questions to consider: *How has the work this week contributed to my knowledge? Contributed to the project? What have I learned that I can apply to similar/different situations?*

Action

- Some questions to consider: *what will I try to do better next week? What will I consider next time? What strategies could I adopt to move forward? How will I put my learning into action?*



Image: cloudy sunset and red sky with tree being reflected in lake/water

INTENTIONALLY FACILITATING WELLNESS THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

- **Autonomy**

- Set up of co-creation work: choice, freedom, creativity, self-direction
- Strength of own voice/views
- Space to develop identity/values and integrate project values - alignment

- **Relatedness**

- Opportunities to bond, connection through focus of research, internalisation of project's values/aims

- **Competence**

- Recognising value of lived experience, reflecting on skills, having something to contribute, anticipating/recognising impact

Level of needs all influenced by own sociocultural context – vital to project

Deci and Ryan (2000)



Image: pink heart with 2 human outlines curving round the outside edges



How did students who self-identify as under-represented experience contributing to co-design of a project seeking to improve experiences of under-represented students?

BUILDING COMMUNITY BEYOND DISCIPLINE

*I just loved how we worked together and how **we really had each other's back.***

*I think generally I would not have been able to open up with people so easily and so quickly, but the project was ... made so good that I could come out and share my thoughts and feelings. So **I shared a really good bond with my sub team***

*we were able to kind of go beyond the boundaries of just like colleagues and **we became friends, and now we're hanging out** and that's really nice because I think working on the project, having those in-depth discussions is what allowed that dynamic to build.*

*Talking about **topics that normally you don't discuss**, it's topics that people would feel they need to hide. So I really, really valued that community we had*

SENSE OF BELONGING TO THE PROJECT AND ONE ANOTHER

... understanding that they can empathize with me ... creates a really special bond, doesn't it?

being underrepresented, you often feel like invisible or it's like there's no one like you ... it was just really, really nice to, I guess have that sense of community ...

*it's almost ... **a support group** which is really nice when you don't ... know a lot of people that necessarily have had similar circumstances to yourself*

*[the project] ... made it clear like being an international student, and being a woman studying engineering, it's not that easy, and even though I couldn't find someone with the same background as me in this project, it didn't matter because **we all could relate in some sense.***

*I've always felt so out of touch with that part of my identity that concerns my position here [at Uni] getting to know that other students have the struggles that I do **makes me feel like I belong a little better.***

SELF CONFIDENCE – NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

*I definitely got better at being able to say I'm not comfortable with this. I've been feeling confident enough to voice an opinion when it's not just going along with the flow. And **I never thought I'd be able to do that. I was really proud of myself** for being able to ...*

*it **gives me more confidence** in the career that I'm wanting to pursue ... to be able to take part in research and kind of understand the ins and outs of it have **provided me with experience that I wouldn't have been able to get** because I have no connections with anyone*

*The kind of people in this project **let me grow** ... having these conversations and like **making this impact** ... I learnt ... **if I put myself out there**, then good things can come from that.*

*I've learned that I can face challenges easily and I **can overcome them***

GENERATING IMPACT AND SHOWING CARE

*I feel like I'm actually like **doing something proactive** for the university and like **directly giving back***

*we were taking part in something, **we were being listened to...** for somebody like me that ... **felt a little bit invisible** that is really quite a big thing to feel*

*one of the things I've enjoyed the most is like how rewarding it is because you know that **you can try to help change someone's life***

*it's **a sense of pride** that we've come so far and I do believe that **we can and we will make a difference***

*It feels like **we've done something bigger than us** and we've been a part of something that can be even bigger than what it is now, like **it will grow and that feels really important***

SELF-EMPOWERMENT: TRANSFORMATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

*the time on the project has made me feel **incredibly empowered** and **I feel a massive sense of security in my underrepresentation** because I feel like I've had an opportunity to utilise it and to put it towards something that really matters and it's easier for me to kind of accept it and to talk about it if I've got this feeling that it's going towards something better and ...might help other students in my position ... makes me feel really good.*

*to join in something like this, **I feel like I've put my mark on something***

*I also want to pursue a career in academia and it kind of seemed quite daunting, the fact that it's like very middle class Cis men are like at the head of it, that kind of put me off of it, but **to realise that there's like research going on within that's trying to break down those binaries...** it's given me more confidence that the university as a whole is trying to change.*

*it always felt easier just to not tell [people about my disability] ... talking so much about it on the project has really helped improve change that feeling ... I've ... been talking more about it with people in my wider life ... and it's a really liberating feeling. **I don't feel as ashamed or self conscious about it as I used to***

CO-DESIGNING ACROSS DISCIPLINES

- Find connecting factors and make time for them to grow
 - Create micro-communities, avoid silos
- With supportive and encouraging facilitation (not micro-management!), interdisciplinary staff/student research communities can facilitate belonging, wellness and inclusion
- Meaningful longer-term relationships may blossom through co-design/partnership work
 - Need everyone to be committed and willing to be uncomfortable and vulnerable
- Pay/reward students
- Involve students in design from the outset



Description: hands connected together to make a circle

RESEARCHER REFLECTIONS



- ‘Success’ doesn’t have to mean *everyone* joins in – visibility/sharing/inspiring is important
- Belonging and mattering work must transcend disciplines, be led by and centred on under-represented voices – this doesn’t have to mean ‘boxing in’
- There is power in creating staff/student communities with shared goals/visions
 - More chances to speak about who I am = becoming more comfortable with who I am
 - Sense of belonging to individual identity (micro) and to/with staff body (meso)
- Build communities of under-representation and platforms for under-represented voices to lead
 - Sense of belonging to/with peer community (meso) – shared identities
- Get students involved in research about them and for them at all stages, not just as participants
 - Sense of belonging to/within institution (macro)
- **Staff/student partnerships have so much potential – be part of the change!**

WHAT'S HAPPENED SINCE

- Keynote panel at Student Education Conference 2023
- Invited to run a student workshop for LLM module: Intercultural Business and Organisational Communication
- Promotion and further opportunities for poetry - contemporary comparative literature course
- Invitation to speak at NUS Liberation conference and Digital Education conference
- Co-presenting at conferences (upcoming – JISC Change Agents Network conference in May)
- Other roles: EDI Student Champion; School Rep/Learning Champion
- Phase 2 of project – happening now!



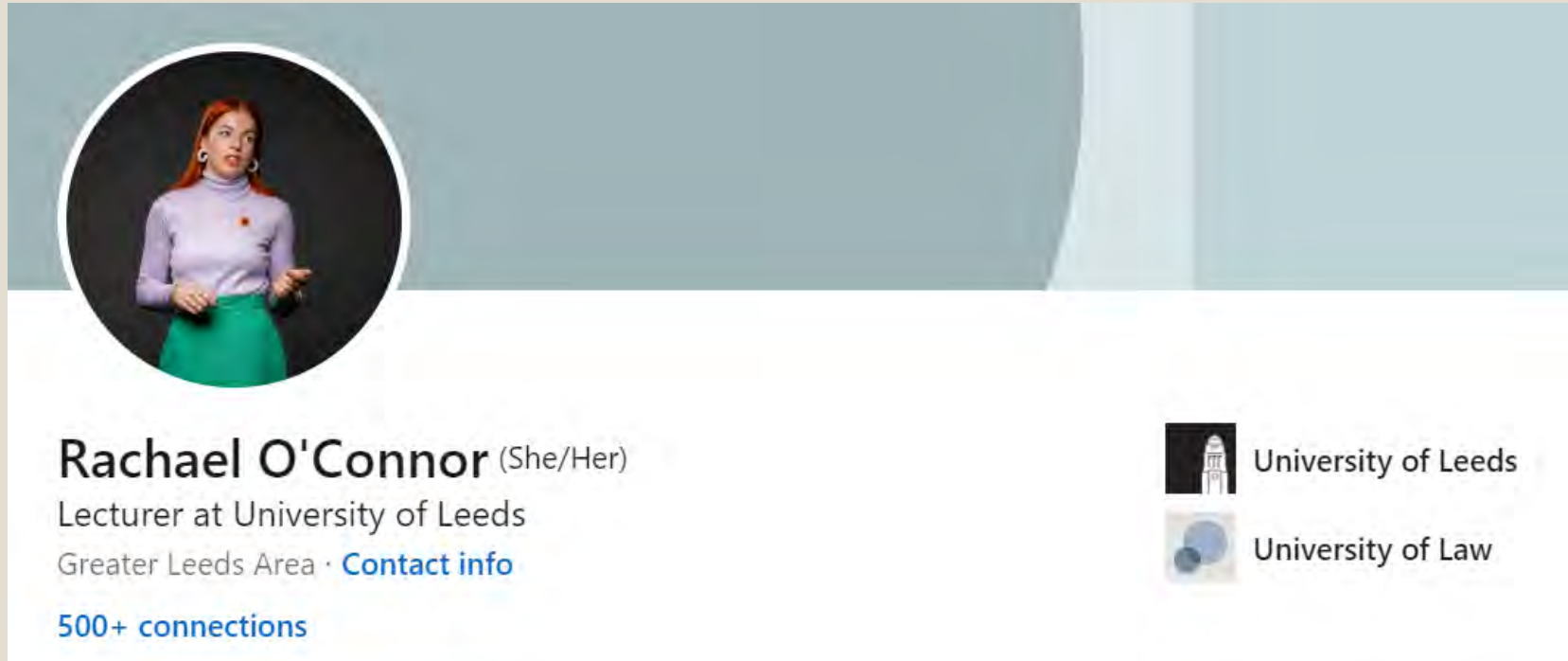
Description: a selfie of Rachael and some of the students who co-designed this project together

LITE Fellowship: Phase 2

Run co-designed staff/student reverse mentoring scheme to influence academic personal tutoring policy institutionally

Wrapping up now ...

Thank you! Please connect with me ...



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