

## **DEBORAH HUSBANDS**

Deborah Husbands is a Senior Lecturer and Doctoral Researcher in the Psychology Department at the University of Westminster, London, UK.

With an interest in intersectionality and specific focus on experiences of Black and Minority Ethnicity students, Deborah's research uses cultural narratives from Black female students to explore ways in which they construct identity in higher education. Her research draws on identity theory, social constructionism and feminist perspectives.



Following a career in project management, Deborah's re-entry into higher education began as a mature student in 2006. With a first-class honours degree in psychology in 2009, she was encouraged to continue in academe as a visiting lecturer with two universities. She completed a PGCHE in 2012 and was awarded the Elizabeth de Lowenthal prize for excellence for her portfolio submission. She is a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and an Associate Fellow of the British Psychological Society. Deborah has worked collaboratively on a cross-institutional project on students' sense of belonging, and provided evidence to the UK government on staff and student sense of belonging in higher education.

Deborah contributes to teaching and learning support at Westminster through module leadership, personal tutoring and running innovative outreach projects. She has been nominated for several teaching awards by students. She is the founding member for the Black and Minority Ethnicity Staff Network and chairs the Human Library Project, both at the University of Westminster. She is also regularly invited to speak at the university's Graduate School events for doctoral researchers, and has presented her research in several countries. Her interest in pedagogy extends to music practice and theory, with a focus on teaching young people with learning and behavioural disabilities. She is an affiliate teacher for the Associated Board of the Royal School of Music.

## ABSTRACT

Responding to intersectionality and perceptions of (in)equality: Black and minority ethnic students' experiences of identity construction in UK higher education

Emerging research in the US and UK points to issues for integration and degree award/attainment for Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) students in higher education. However, some students' experiences are not being fully explored or reported in the literature. This research learns from individual and collective voices of Black female students in UK higher education; specifically, those currently-enrolled at London institutions. Over three phases, a triangulated methodological approach is used to analyse narratives of experience from an intersectionality perspective. Emerging findings suggest that cultural, personal and social identity is being re-constructed and constrained 'at the margins' in an academic environment. 'Non-traditional' Black female students construct hierarchical 'hyphenated' Selves, while 'traditional' Black female students construct 'shifting' Selves in response to presenting contexts, vacillating between challenges for transitioning and realising aspirations for a future Self. This is a psychologically-taxing process with implications for retention, progression and achievement. Managing multiple Selves affects a sense of belonging, engagement with pedagogy and forming critical interpersonal relationships. The findings contribute to equality, diversity and inclusivity discourse and inform pedagogic practice in psychology, while disentangling perceptions of (in)equality of experience.