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## **Graduate Employability: Impact of Race & Gender in Nursing using 'QuantCrit' mixed methods**

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### **Research Domains**

Employability, enterprise and graduate careers (EE)

### **Abstract**

This paper will explore how an early career researcher has used a convergent social justice mixed methodology (Creswell, 2015) using a critical race theory and 'QuantCrit' framework (Gillborn et al, 2018) to expose the impact race and gender has had on the graduate employment success in final year nursing students.

Research aim: The purpose of the study is to analyse how student nurse employability and post-qualification employment are mediated through structures of gender and race.

Research questions:

1. How do gender and race mediate employability processes of student nurses?
2. How do gender and race mediate the employment outcomes of nursing graduates?
3. What influence has Covid-19 had on gender and race in all student nurse experiences in relation to employment and attrition?

The use of mixed methods will be strengthened and enhanced further by the use of 'QuantCrit' to explore hidden inequalities within institutions such as the NHS.

## **Full paper**

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Nursing itself is historically a white female dominated profession as identified by many researchers over the last decade (Puzan 2003, Blackford 2003, Scammell and Olumide 2012). This ingrained institutionalised racism and discrimination in the NHS persists despite policies and procedures being implemented with minimum impact and has been evidenced in abundance. (West, Dawson and Kaur, 2015; Priest et al 2015; Batnitzky, McDowell, 2011). The COVID-19 pandemic has raised again how institutional racism is a major concern globally and the NHS was once again put under close scrutiny when racial inequalities were further highlighted during the pandemic in many social contexts (Biddy, Everest and Abbs 2020). The lack of diversity in the NHS workforce and in leadership positions in the NHS has been highlighted in several studies and reports since the introduction of the Race Equality Action Plan (Kline, 2014; NHS Confederation, 2019; NHS WRES, 2019; West, Dawson and Kaur, 2015). The lack of role models and opportunities has an impact on student nurse recruitment and retention and the global shortages of nurses reflects the ongoing battle of the global nursing workforce. Ensuring that student nurses gain employment after graduation is essential for students to transition into the workforce as staff nurses' and consolidate their training. However, this journey is not smooth for minority student nurses as they face many obstacles and

challenges that white student nurses don't face to gain their first post as a staff nurse (Harris et al 2012). Universities therefore play a key role in this and need to work with employers to tackle issues together to ensure students are prepared for employment and have a smooth transition into the workforce of the future (Yorke 2006). In order to explore these issues, I need both a strong methodology and methods to unpick complex underpinning issues to challenge both practice and policies that impact on both Higher Education Institutes (HEI) and NHS recruitment that perpetuate racism and sexism.

This convergent social justice mixed methods research will be using critical race theory and 'QuantCrit' theoretical frameworks to carry out an in-depth analysis of the impact that race and gender has on graduate employment success within final year nursing students. The study will involve quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews / focus group interviews to explore individual experiences of racism and sexism within the recruitment processes into the NHS workforce.

In reviewing my progress so far 3 clear gaps were identified where my thesis will bring its own originality and create my own niche within the widening research communities of education, nursing, employment and critical race theory. These gaps include knowledge, theoretical and methodological gaps across the 4 key strands.

A clear knowledge gap was identified when researching for my thesis as the desired research findings don't exist so far when combining the key words such as gender, race, graduate employment and nursing in the UK. Limited literature and research came to light including limited research in the UK using critical race theory as a theoretical method as most is based in the USA. This knowledge gap will give a new and unique perspective and draw all 4 fields of research together.

A clear theoretical gap was also identified when it was discovered there is limited or no research using critical race theory in the UK looking at graduate employment using critical race theory and 'QuantCrit' so there is a large theoretical gap, and this research will generate new insights and new research strands to add to existing knowledge in many fields.

The methodological gap within the literature review was research on student nurses graduate employment and the impact of race and gender which is limited and under-researched within the UK using critical race theory and mixed methods. There is no research to date on student nurse graduate employment using 'QuantCrit'. These gaps will form the basis of how my research thesis will contribute to the wider research community, fill the niche and where my research will fit into the current literature surrounding both 'QuantCrit' and a mixed methods approach within my own field of employability.

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