



Personas: making mental health research more inclusive

A persona is a fictional character that represents a type of customer or user of your service or product.

We used these personas to help our workshop participants to visualise, imagine and empathise with some of the different experiences felt by the BAME young people we spoke to.

Use these personas in your own meetings, workshops and events to inspire those working in this area and help them contextualise the needs and experiences of this underserved audience.

In collaboration with

The Liminal Space

Persona #01: Pressures of racism, discrimination and stereotyping

Name: John



↑ Olivia Mathurin-Essandoh

John is a young Caribbean boy, living with his mother and sisters. He left school at 16 and is not working at the moment as he tries to figure out what he wants to do. He likes playing football and listening to grime music. He chats with his friends on Snapchat and Instagram and also enjoys watching Rap artists on Youtube.

He feels a lot of pressure; it's hard not to get roped into the gangs that operate in his local area and not get drawn into the drugs they sell. He also misses his father. He is struggling because he feels lost and has no one he can talk to; his friends will think he is soft and that he needs to 'man up'. He often feels angry because he tries to hide his feelings as he doesn't want his friends to think he is mad or crazy.

He has applied for jobs but with no luck and feels that racism and discrimination are stopping him getting on. He has been stopped and searched many times by the Police for no good reason, as have his friends. He thinks people assume that he will be aggressive and violent just because he is Black. That's why he would never go to the doctor about his anxiety and anger. He has heard stories that Black men get locked up because doctors don't know how to deal with them.

Persona #02: Pressures of cultural conflict / dual identities

Name: Raheema



↑ Olivia Mathurin-Essandoh

Raheema is a young South Asian Muslim woman living with her husband, child and parents in-law. She stays at home to take care of her daughter and her in-laws.

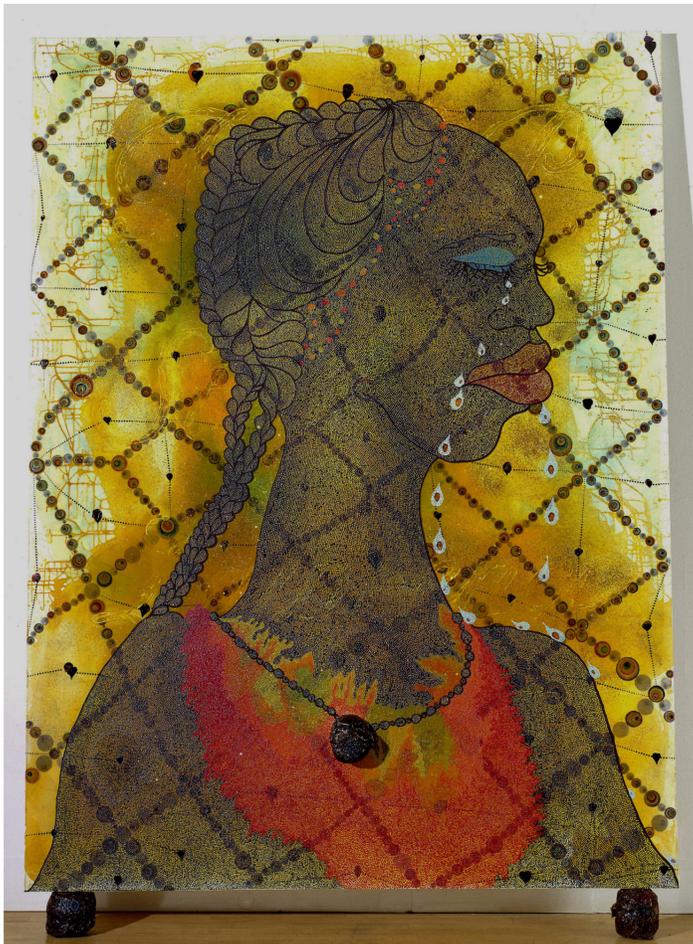
When she was younger, she loved hanging out at college with her friends, dressing the way they did and having a boyfriend. She wanted to look like everyone else. It was hard trying to fit in with her White friends, doing what they did and looking like them. She liked following people on Instagram, but she felt the pressure to look a certain way, which did not fit with her parents' expectations to dress conservatively.

She had an arranged marriage when she was quite young, so she didn't go to university. She feels that her life is all about what others want and she feels she has no identity of her own.

She has always had severe anxiety and her school got her in touch with a local support organisation which helped, but she couldn't tell her family as they wouldn't want her to talk to people outside the family because it would bring shame. When she got married, she felt it would be easier if she adopted some of the practices of her faith which helped her anxiety a little, but she is still feeling very anxious. She meets other mothers at the play-group, but she can't talk to anyone about her low feelings.

Persona #03: Pressure to live up to the stereotype of being a strong black woman

Name: Chantal



↑ No Woman, No Cry by Chris Ofili

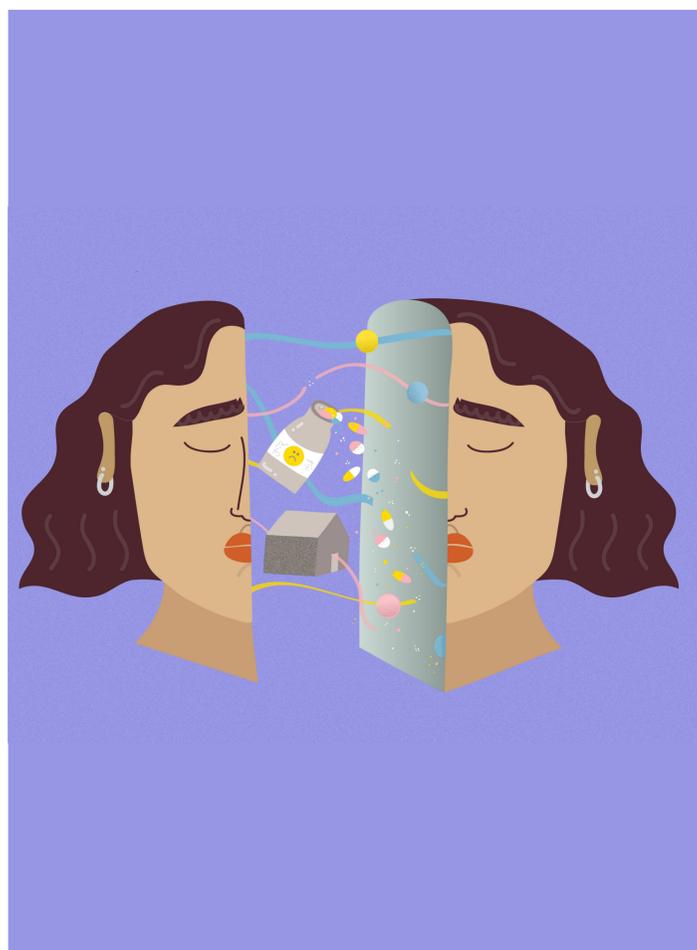
Chantel is a young Caribbean woman living with her mother and two younger sisters. Her mother works nights and Chantel is studying dance at college and has a part time job at a sports retailer. She hopes to open her own dance studio one day. She loves hanging out with her sisters, friends and boyfriend at the weekend; going shopping, getting her nails and hair done and clubbing. She also enjoys following and keeping up with the latest celebrity gossip on Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat.

She wants to be successful in her business and be a good role model for her sisters. She admires her mum but doesn't want to struggle like her. Her mum is a strong Black woman who tells her that her life was worse in her day, bringing up three children singlehandedly. She does not encourage Chantel or her sisters to express their feelings and tells them that life is about gritting your teeth and getting on with it.

Chantel feels that the pressure to be strong all the time is exhausting. She shuts down her feelings although she tries to talk to her boyfriend. He doesn't really understand the pressures she feels and tells her not to be silly, that Black people need to be strong and tough to get on, but she often feels very down.

Persona #04: Pressure to look a certain way

Name: Preet



↑ Erin Aniker

Preet is a young South Asian girl living with her parents and older siblings. She has a close group of friends at school who all aspire to do well. She loves hanging out with her friends, going shopping and trying out new makeup.

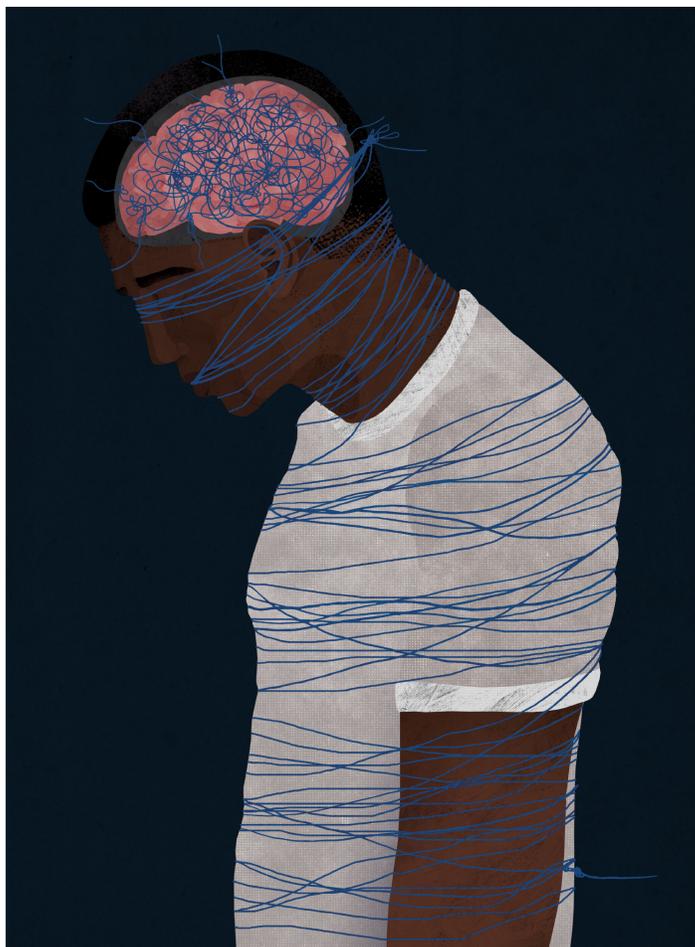
When she's not at school she spends most of her spare time following and watching celebrities on Instagram and Snapchat. She really admires the Kardashians; she thinks Kim is really beautiful and has watched loads of makeup tutorials on how to achieve the same look as Kim.

Her siblings have noticed that she is wearing a lot of makeup even when she is going to school and have tried to tell her that she doesn't need it, that she's beautiful enough without it. She doesn't believe them, and she feels that she can't go out without any makeup because she will look plain and ugly. She has also become very conscious of her weight, feeling that she is fat; so is very careful about what she eats.

She feels low and anxious most of the time. She shares this with her friends who are very supportive. Her teacher noticed a change in her appearance and behaviour and referred her to counselling to help her. Because she trusts her teacher, she has started counselling.

Persona #05: Parental expectations and pressure to succeed

Name: Femi



↑ Rachel Hill

Femi lives with his parents and older brother. He came to the UK from Nigeria about 12 years ago because his father wanted him and his brother to get a good education and career.

He has just finished his A levels at college and is getting ready to go to university to study Engineering. He likes going out with his friends, going to the gym and playing football as well as connecting with friends on Instagram and Snapchat. He goes to church on Sundays whenever he can; he likes listening to the pastor and meeting friends from his community.

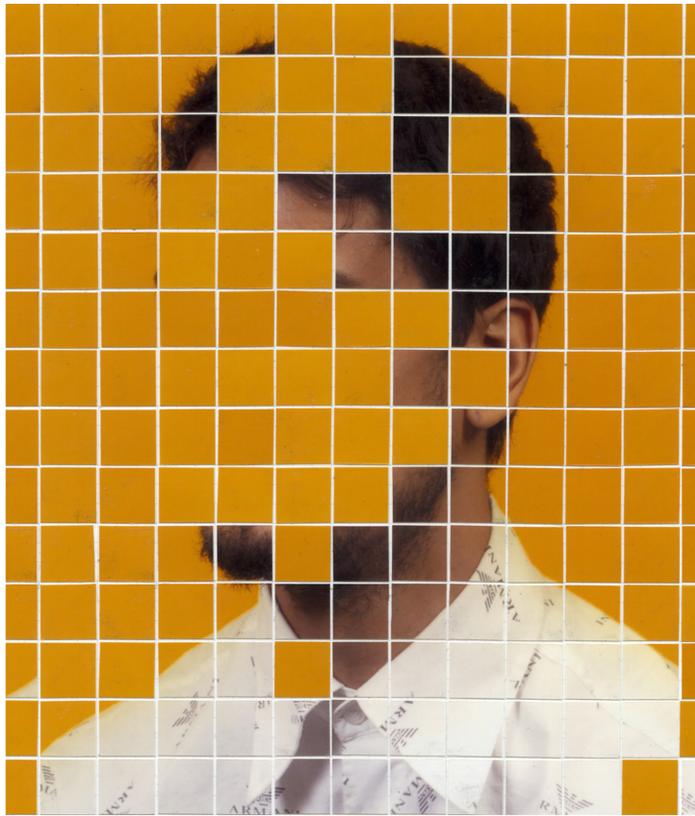
His father is strict and, growing up, he felt he missed out. His White friends would be out playing and hanging out, but he had to be in the library after school. His father said this was for his own good and to make sure he didn't follow a bad path in the future.

His brother has got a really good job as a solicitor and living up to his brother's success is very tough. His father wants him to have a profession like engineering or medicine and won't accept anything else.

He got really stressed before his A Levels because he knew he had to get good grades, otherwise his parents would be disappointed in him. His constant fear of failure makes him edgy and anxious as he feels no one understands what it's like. The pressure is made much worse because it will affect how the community and family back home will look and respect his parents. At school, his teacher noticed that he was stressed and suggested he get some counselling to help his anxiety. When he told his parents, they discouraged him from doing this as they felt that they did not want him to get labelled as someone who can't cope and that this might affect his chances in the future.

Persona #06: Pressure of identity and sexuality

Name: Dev



↑ Anthony Gerace

Dev is a young Indian man just starting his first job after graduating. He is the youngest of three brothers in a very close-knit family. His father has a very strong and commanding personality and what he says goes. He is much closer to his mother who was brought up in the UK but still has quite traditional Indian values when it comes to the roles of men and women in the family.

He loves hanging out with his friends, shopping and clubbing. He is very connected to Indian films, music and dance but still loves his hip hop and R&B music – he feels he has the best of both worlds in some ways.

But he is troubled by the fact that he has struggled with his physical feelings for men and knows that he is gay. He also knows that this is completely unacceptable for his family. All the men in his family are ‘real men’ and his father has extremely strong views about homosexuality, which in his eyes is dirty, wrong and not acceptable for Indians. He lives in a very close community and doesn’t know who he can trust and share his feelings with. The only time that he comes close to revealing his feelings is at work and when he goes out with some of his newer work colleagues.

He knows that he can never tell his parents as they would disown him, or just make him get married anyway.