



Racial microaggressions on PGCE programme: implications for minority ethnic teacher retention

Antonina Tereshchenko, Alison Wiggins

Balbir Kaur, Olga Cara, Claire Pillinger (team members)

CPPR Lunchtime Seminar, 12 Dec 2022

Background

- Retention in the teaching profession is lower for people from all minority ethnic groups, and most significant ethnic disparities occur in the early career stages (Worth et al. 2022).
- Racism within educational institutions has a significant impact on retention of student teachers and teachers (Bhopal 2015, Tereshchenko et al, 2020, Kohli & Solórzano, 2012, 2018, Callender, 2020, Wallace, 2020).
- Centrality of mentor relationships in ITE and Early Career Framework (Hardman, 2020; Daly et al, 2021).

Applying Critical Race Theory to Racial Microaggressions

- Centred on the lived experiences to understand how everyday racism, and other forms of oppression, intersect to mediate life experiences and outcomes
- Microaggressions as reflections of macro racist structures and ideological beliefs that impact the lives of minoritized people

Pérez Huber & Solorzano (2015)

Racial microaggressions measure

- Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale (Nadal, 2011)
 - **Assumptions of Inferiority** (e.g. I felt that someone assumed that I would have a lower education because of my race or ethnicity)
 - **Second-Class Citizen and Assumptions of Criminality** (e.g. I felt that someone avoided me in social spaces because of my race or ethnicity)
 - **Microinvalidations** (e.g. Someone implied that people of all racial or ethnic groups experience the same obstacles)
 - **Exoticization/Assumptions of Similarity** (e.g. Someone objectified physical features of my racial or ethnic group)
 - **Environmental Microaggressions** (e.g. I observed people of my race or ethnicity in senior positions at my placement schools)
 - **Workplace and School Microaggressions** (e.g. I felt that a mentor or colleagues treated me differently to white teachers)

Survey participants ($N=42$)

- **Ethnicity:** 29% Asian, 38% Black, 26% Mixed/Multiple, 7% Other
- **PGCE Programme:**
 - Primary Education 29%
 - Secondary Mathematics 19%
 - Secondary English 12%
 - Secondary Languages 10%
 - Secondary Social Sciences 10%
- **Gender:** 83% female, 17% male
- **Age:** 40% \leq 25 y.o., 60% $>$ 25 y.o.
- **UK born:** 57% Yes, 43% No
- **UK compulsory education:** 71% Yes, 29% No
- **Location:** 68% London, 32% elsewhere in England

Interview participants ($N=14$)

- **Ethnicity:** 5 Asian, 4 Black, 1 Mixed Black and White, 4 Other
- **PGCE Programme:**
 - Primary Education 1
 - Secondary Mathematics 6
 - Secondary English 1
 - Secondary Chemistry 1
 - Secondary Psychology 2
 - Secondary Social Sciences 3
- **Gender:** 13 female, 1 male
- **UK born:** 6 Yes, 8 No
- **Location:** 14 London

1. Racial microaggressions on school placements

More commonly experienced microaggressions on school placements

- Inferiority assumptions
- Second-class citizen
- Workplace microaggressions
- Environmental microaggressions

Less commonly experienced microaggressions on school placements

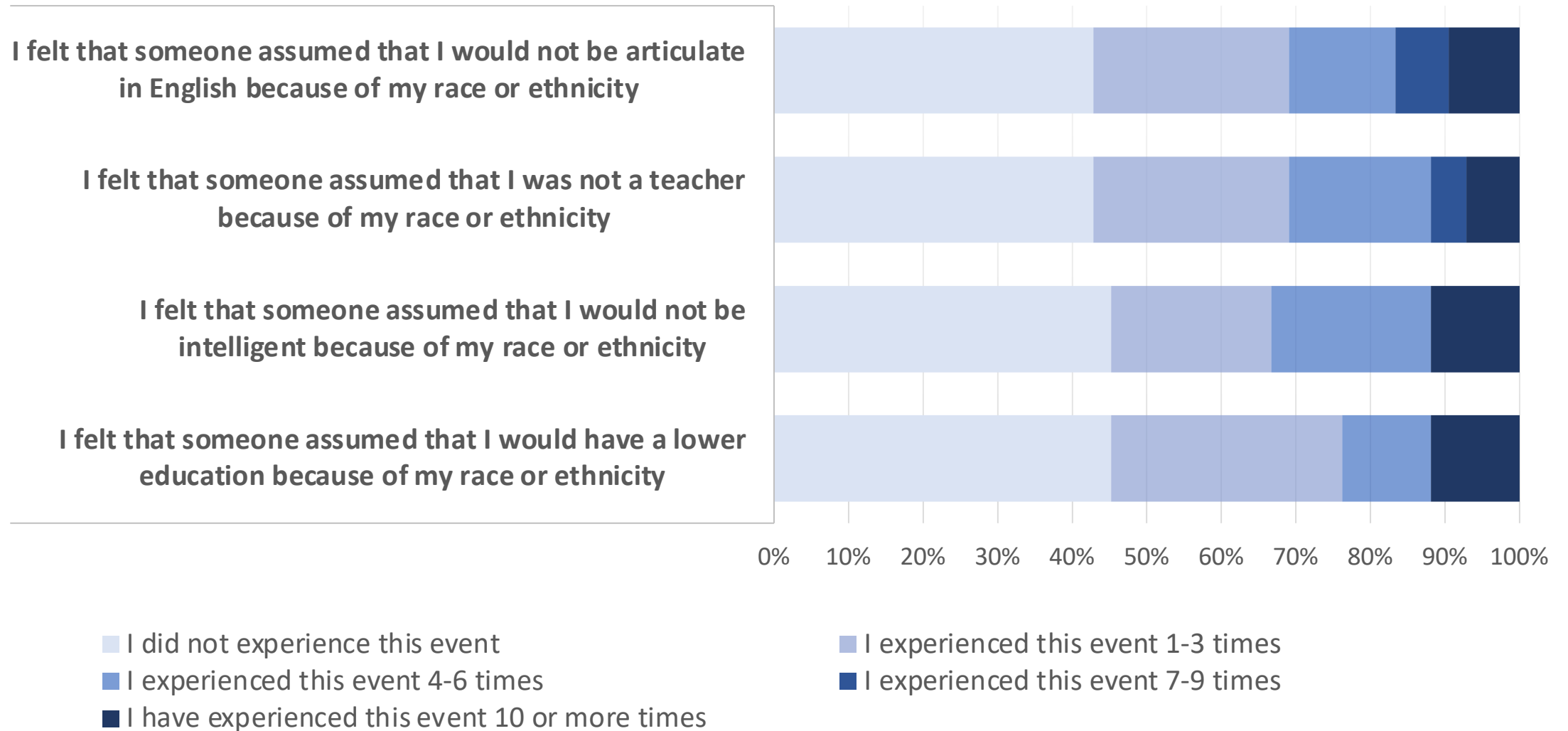
- Microinvalidations
- Exoticization/Assumptions of similarity

Assumptions of Inferiority

“It’s like every school I’ve been in they thought I was a student, every single time. I got shouted at by one woman who was like, “Where’s your lanyard. Where’s your mask?” (Black African, PGCE Social Sciences)

“... because of age and race ... where they ... they assumed I was a support because ..., but I was like no I’m here to teach. I think it’s more to do with maybe race, because generally in schools the majority of the diversity comes from the support staff.” (Black Caribbean, PGCE Psychology)

Experiences of inferiority assumptions (N=42)



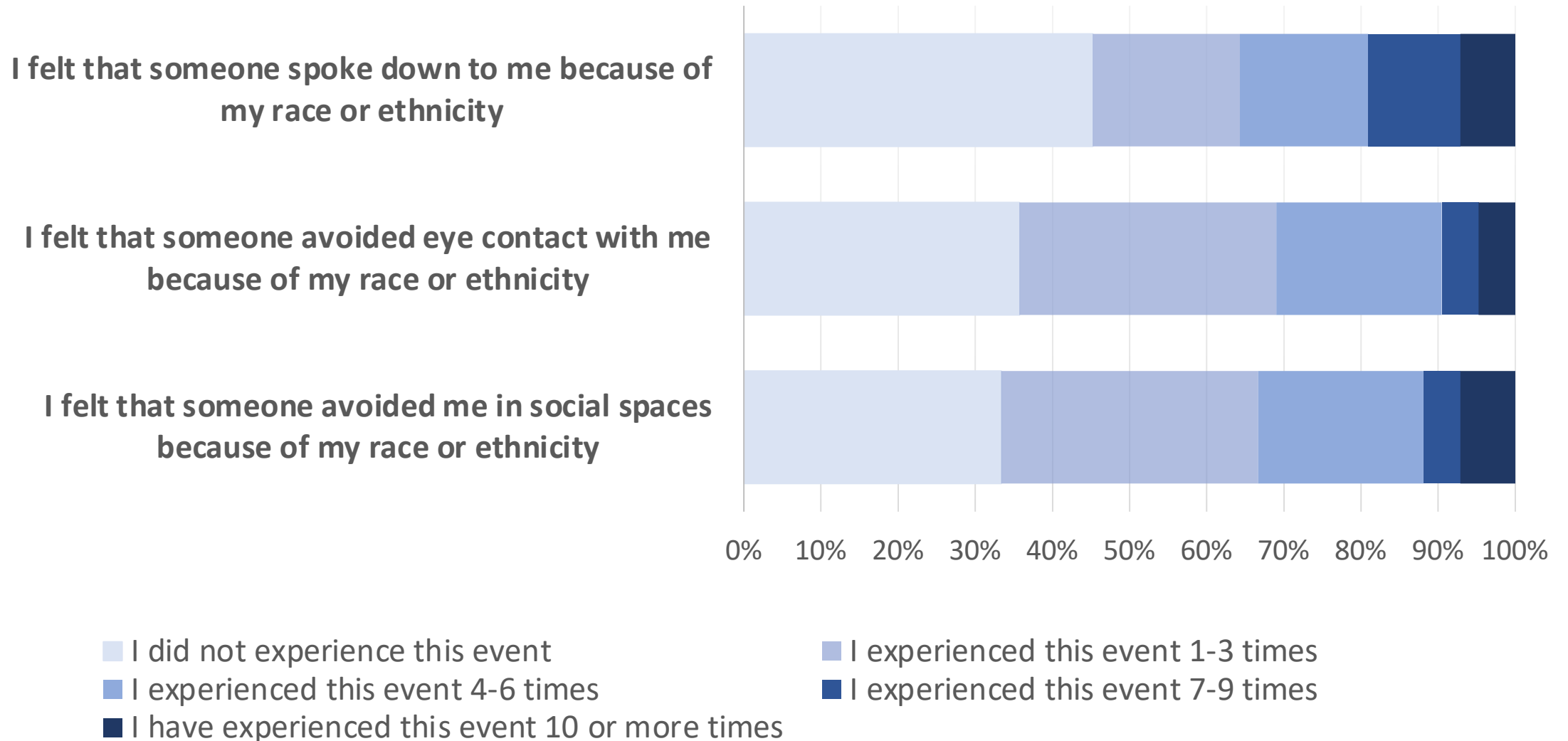
Second-Class Citizen

- **Invisibility and exclusion**

“Especially during the lunch time, they had a big kitchen, big dining room, loud laughs, talking, and I would sit all by myself, and no one cared.” (Black Caribbean, PGCE in Primary Education)

“When it comes to lunchtime, I do feel like a bit awkward sitting alone and just having food because sometimes I just feel reluctant to join other people’s conversations when I’m not feeling that confident.” (Chinese, PGCE Mathematics)

Experiences of being a second-class citizen (N=42)



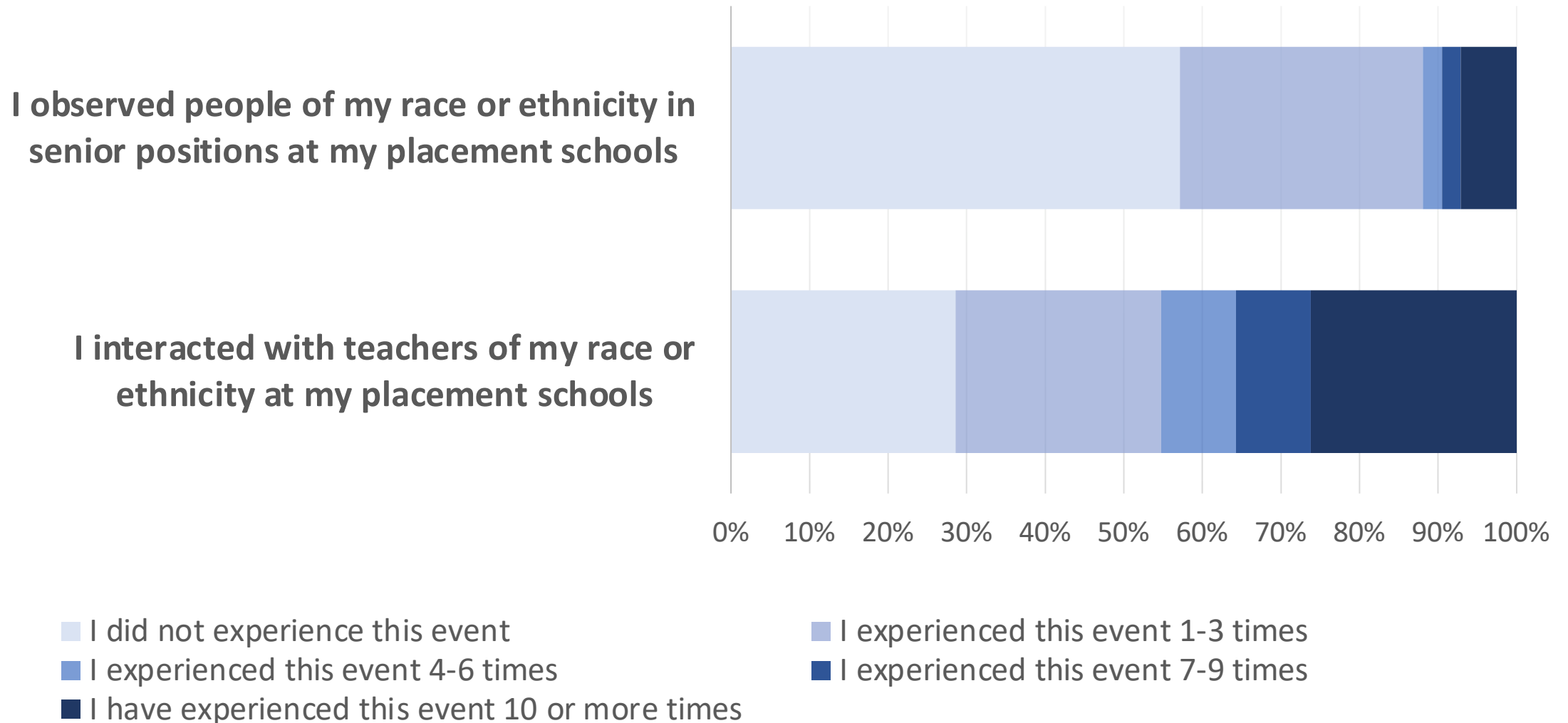
Second-Class Citizen

- **Alien in our school**

“The head of department [...] she was calling me Miss Bulgaria. I don’t know why it made me feel very bad but I hated it.” (Bulgarian, PGCE Mathematics)

“...always telling me that my communication skills are too low and that you can’t understand my pronunciations.” (Indian, PGCE Chemistry)

Experiences of environmental microaggressions (N=42)

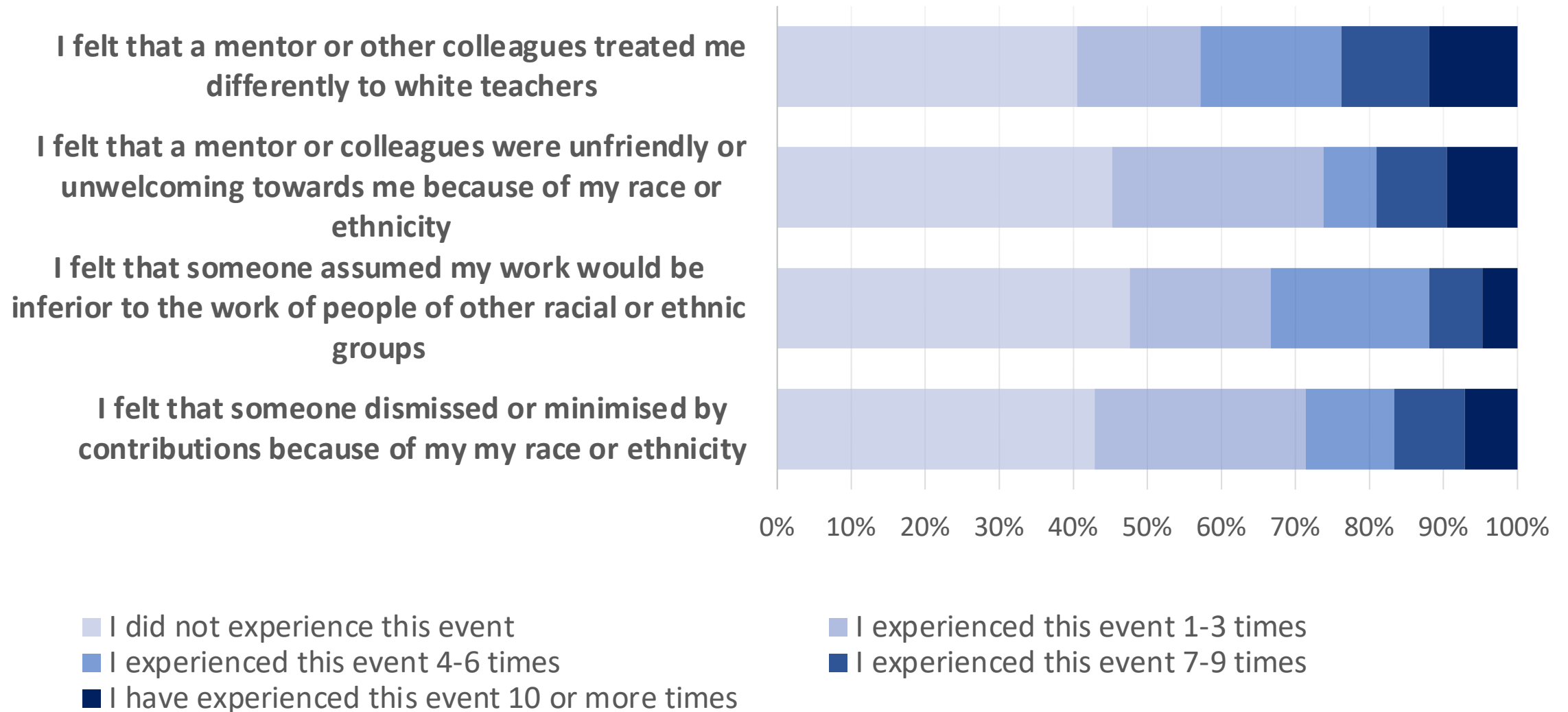


Environmental microaggressions

“My first placement was fine, the only thing that I didn’t feel comfortable was the fact that there was no senior managers that were ethnic minorities, so that made me feel like, am I going to be able to progress in this industry? I had that feeling, that was disheartening.”
(Pakistani, PGCE English)

“I think it stunts you, the idea of, ‘I’m going to be a teacher forever.’ You’re not going to be able to progress. It’s like, ‘Do I really just want to be stuck in one place for the rest of my life?’, because you don’t see anyone like you in the leadership team.” (Indian, PGCE Social Sciences)

Experiences of work-based microaggressions (N=42)

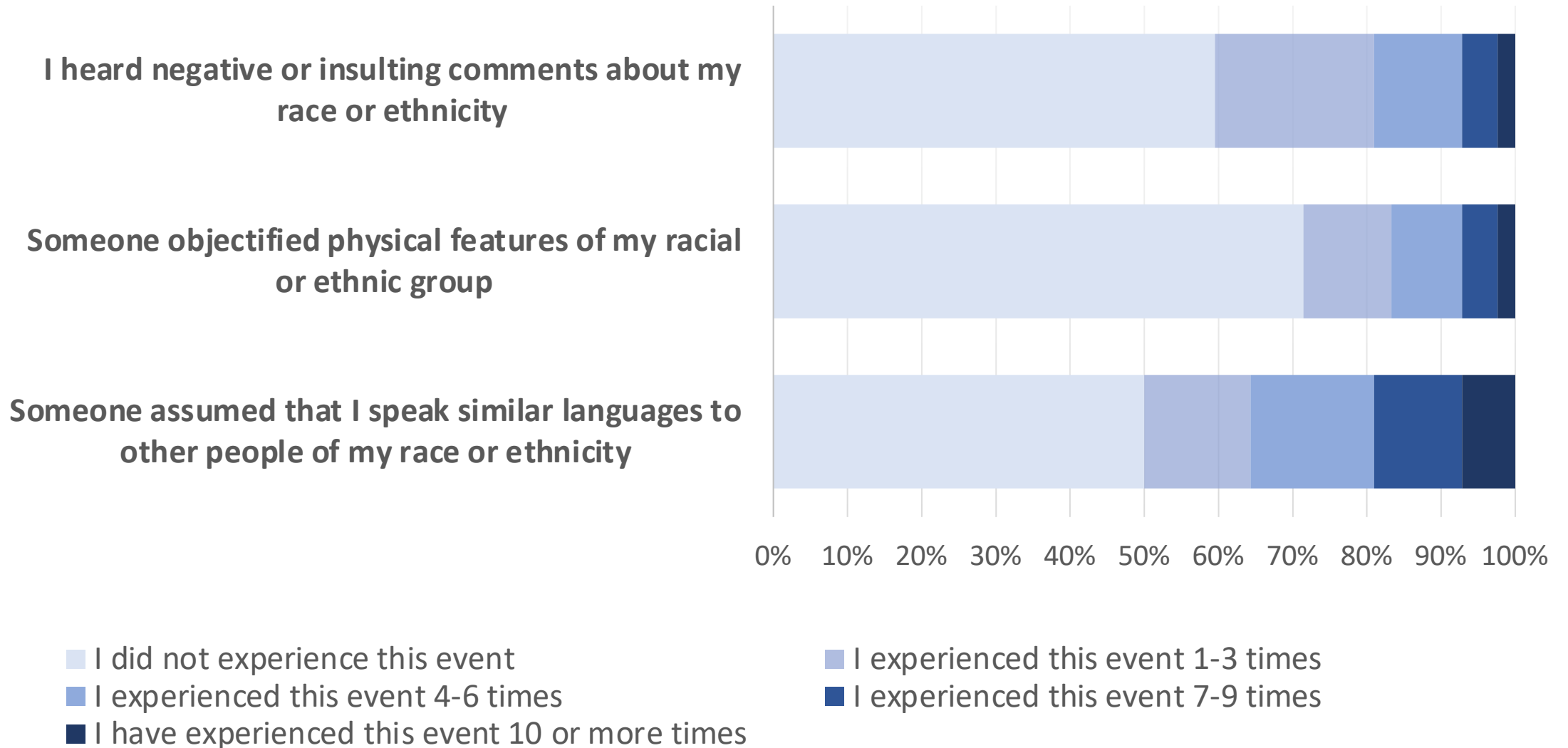


Workplace microaggressions

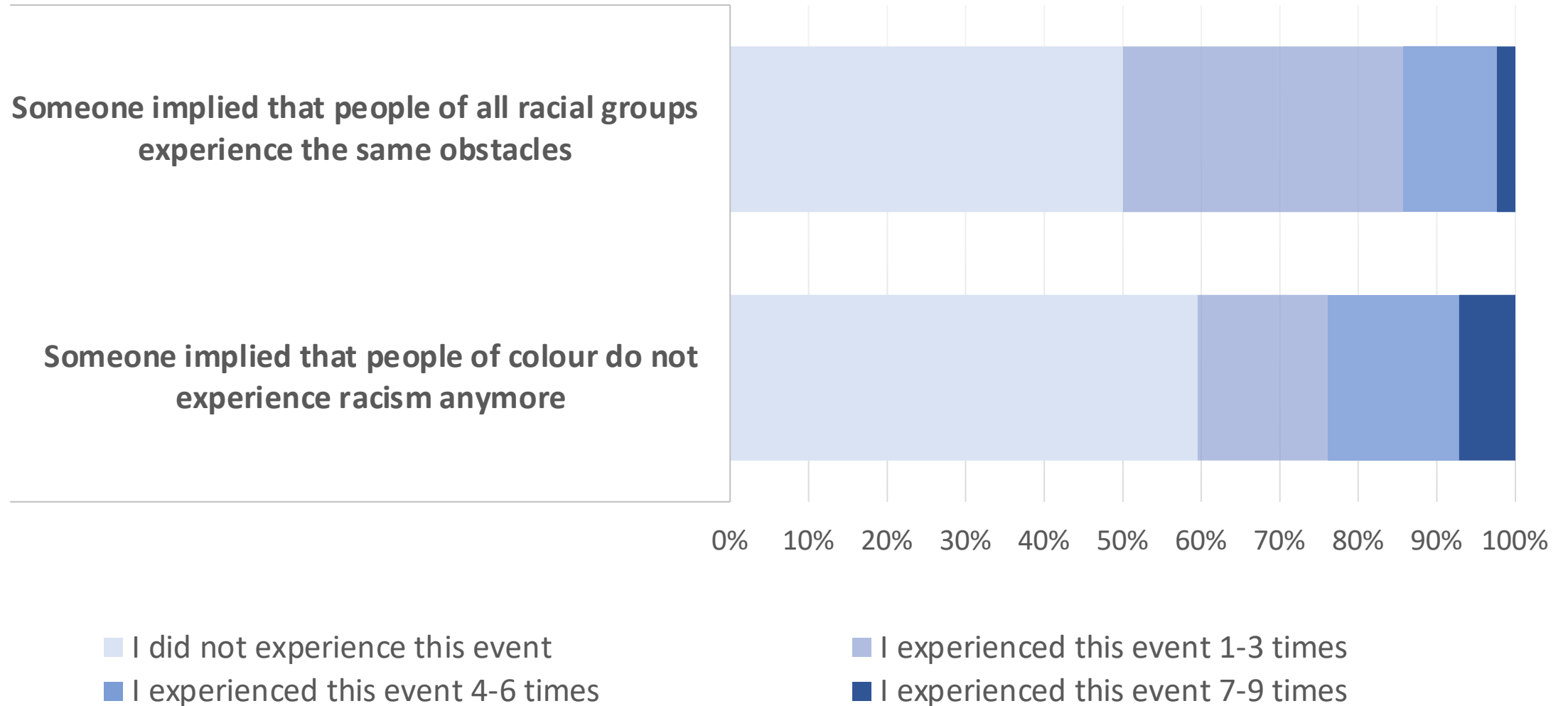
“Some of the teachers interrupted in the middle of my lesson and they talked about something that I didn’t explain very well or clearly, didn’t write down the objective or something like that. Actually, it’s better if they talk to me after the lesson.” (Chinese, PGCE Mathematics)

“She didn’t let me answer any of the students’ questions. [...] That made me feel less of a teacher and less of a mathematician.” (Albanian, PGCE Mathematics)

Experiences of exoticization or assumptions of similarity (N=42)



Experiences of microinvalidations (N=42)



2. Racial microaggressions on university
elements of the programme

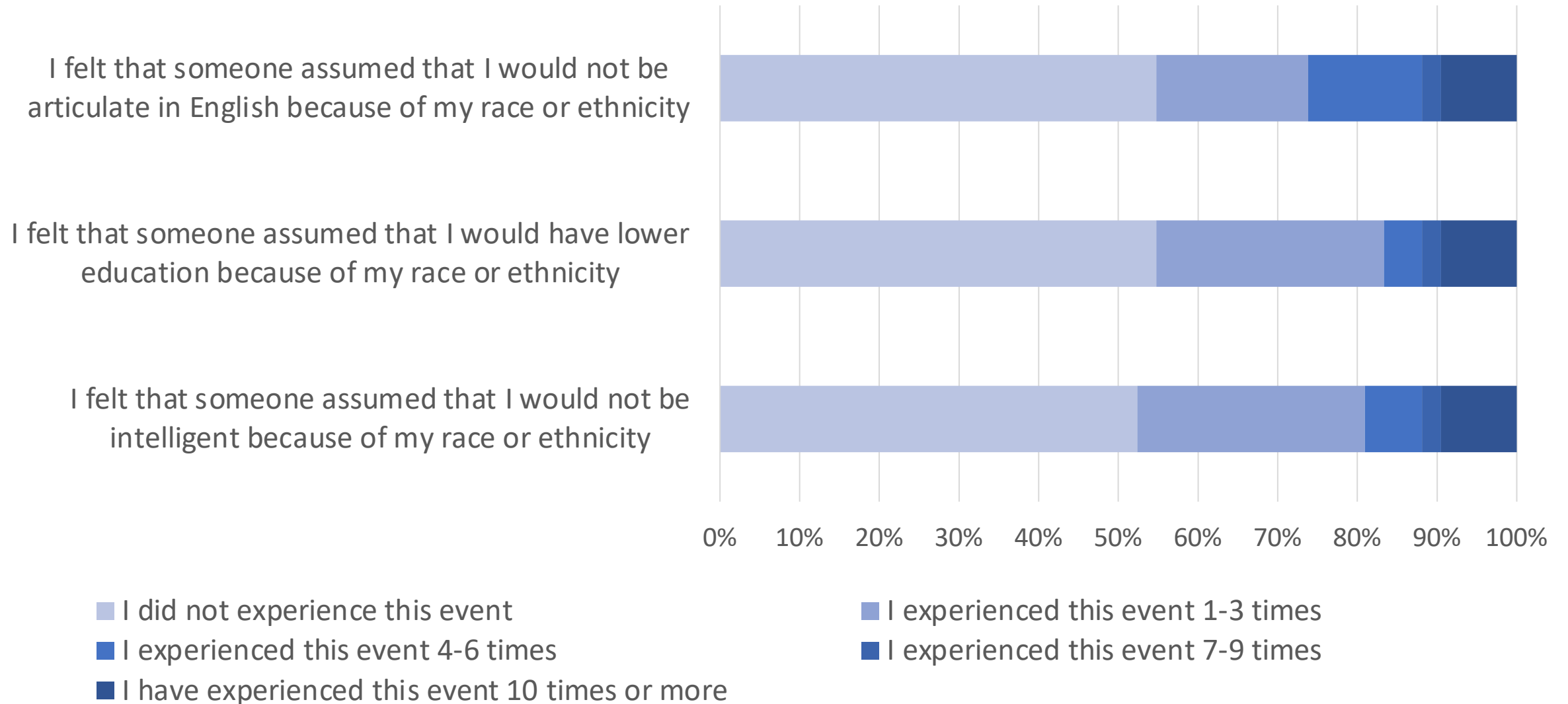
More commonly experienced microaggressions at University based learning

- Microinvalidations
 - 43% experienced once or more the implication from tutors that 'all racial groups experience the same obstacles'
- Inferiority assumptions
 - 42% experienced once or more an assumption that 'I would not be intelligent because of my race or ethnicity'
 - 42% experienced once or more an assumption that 'I would have lower education because of my race or ethnicity'
- Environmental microaggressions
 - 50% never interacted with tutors of the same race and ethnicity.

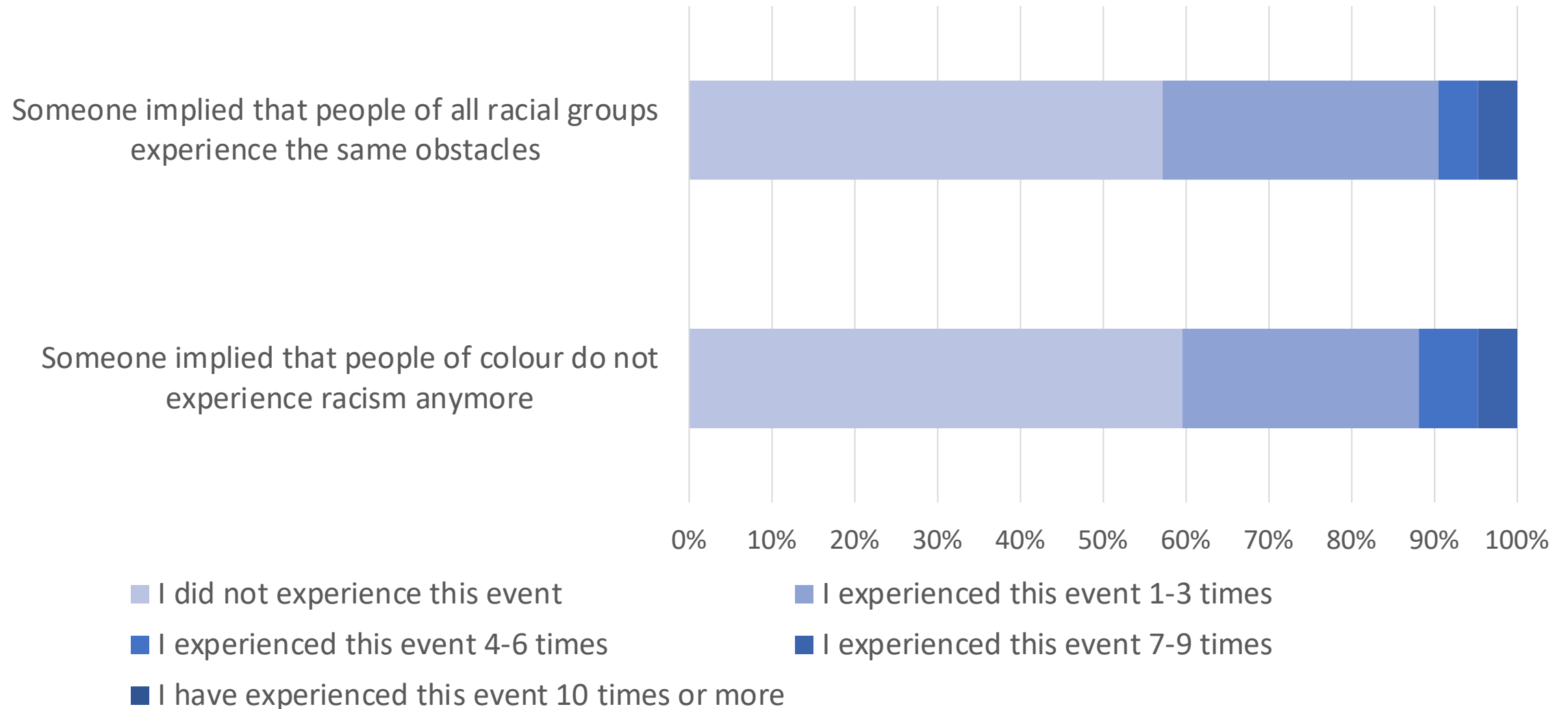
Less commonly experienced microaggressions on school placements

- University based microaggressions
 - 74% did not experience being 'treated differently to white students'

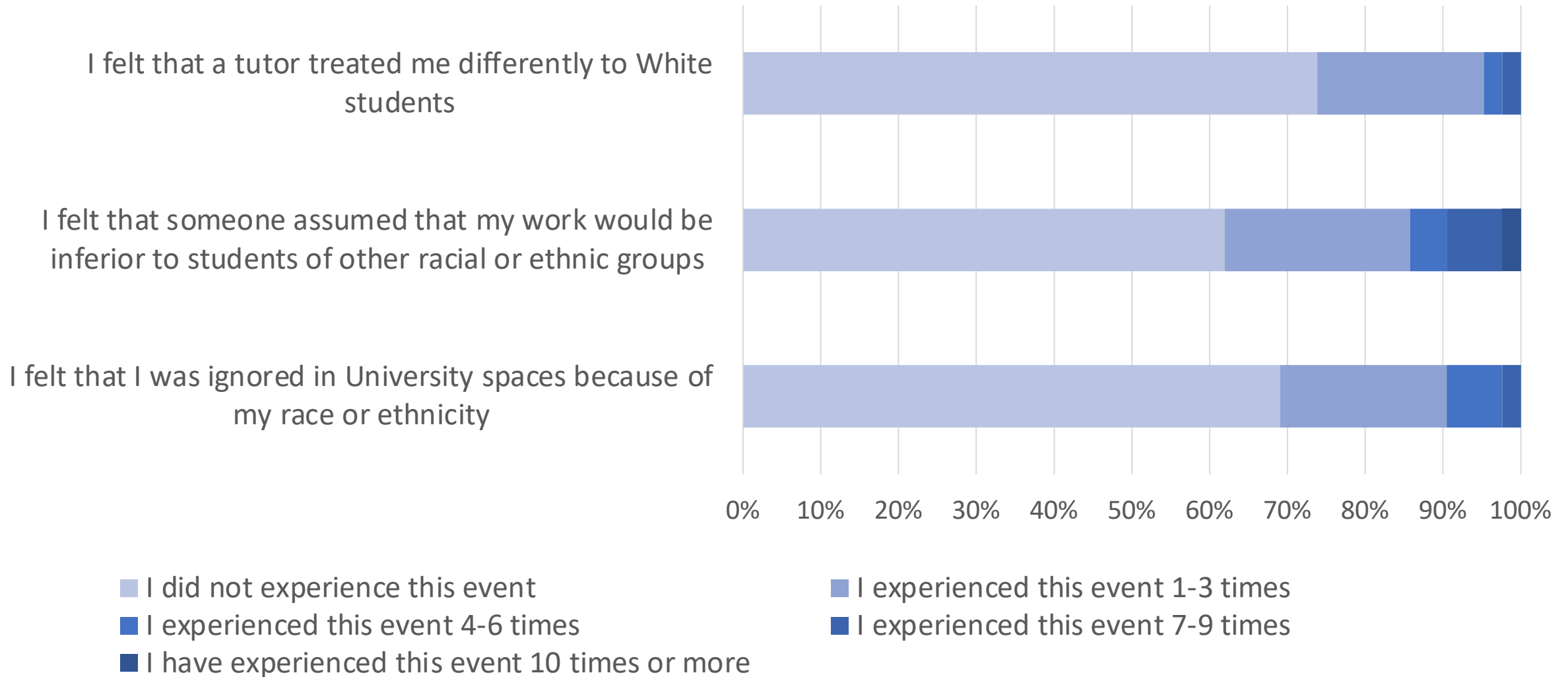
Experiences of inferiority assumptions (N=42)



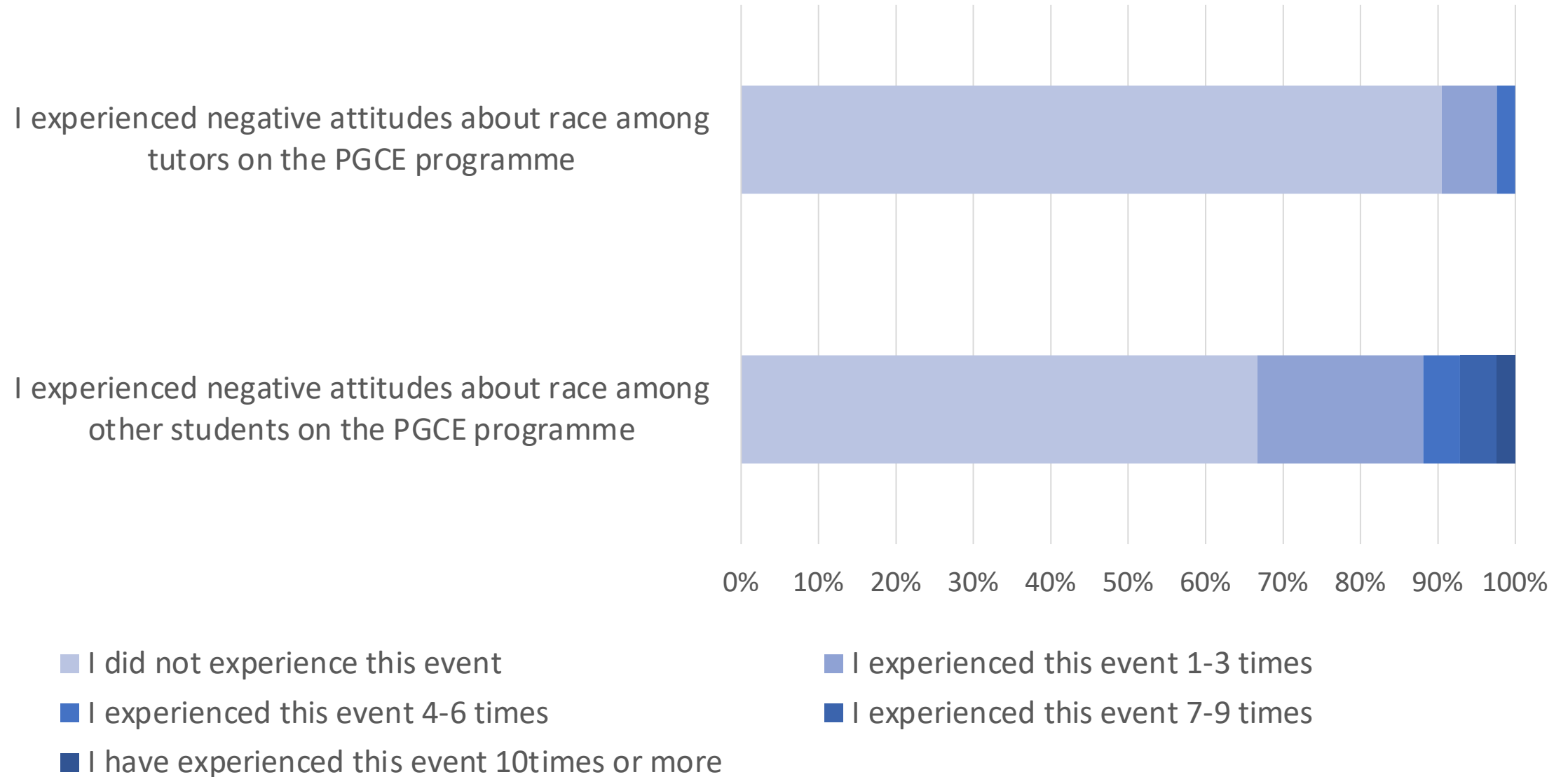
Experiences of microinvalidations (N=42)



Experiences of university based microaggressions (N=42)

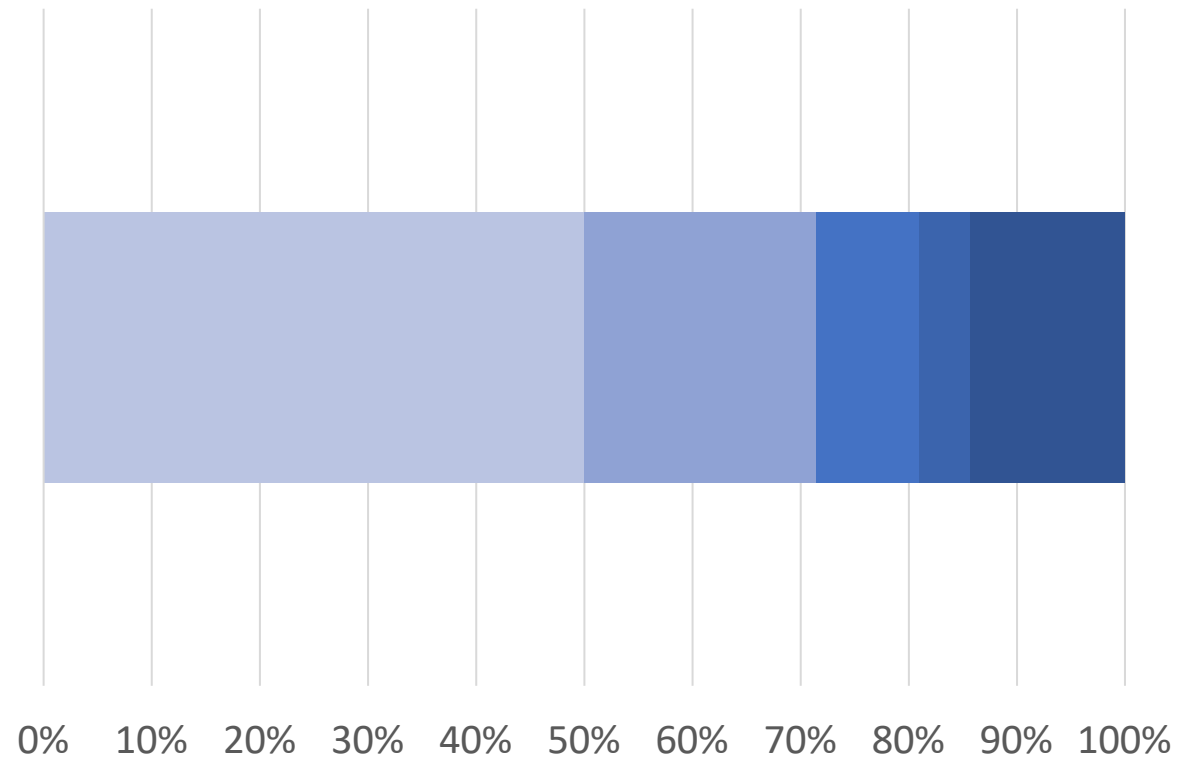


Experiences of negative attitudes about race (N=42)



Experiences of environmental microaggressions (N=42)

I interacted with tutors of my race or ethnicity on the PGCE programme



■ I did not experience this event

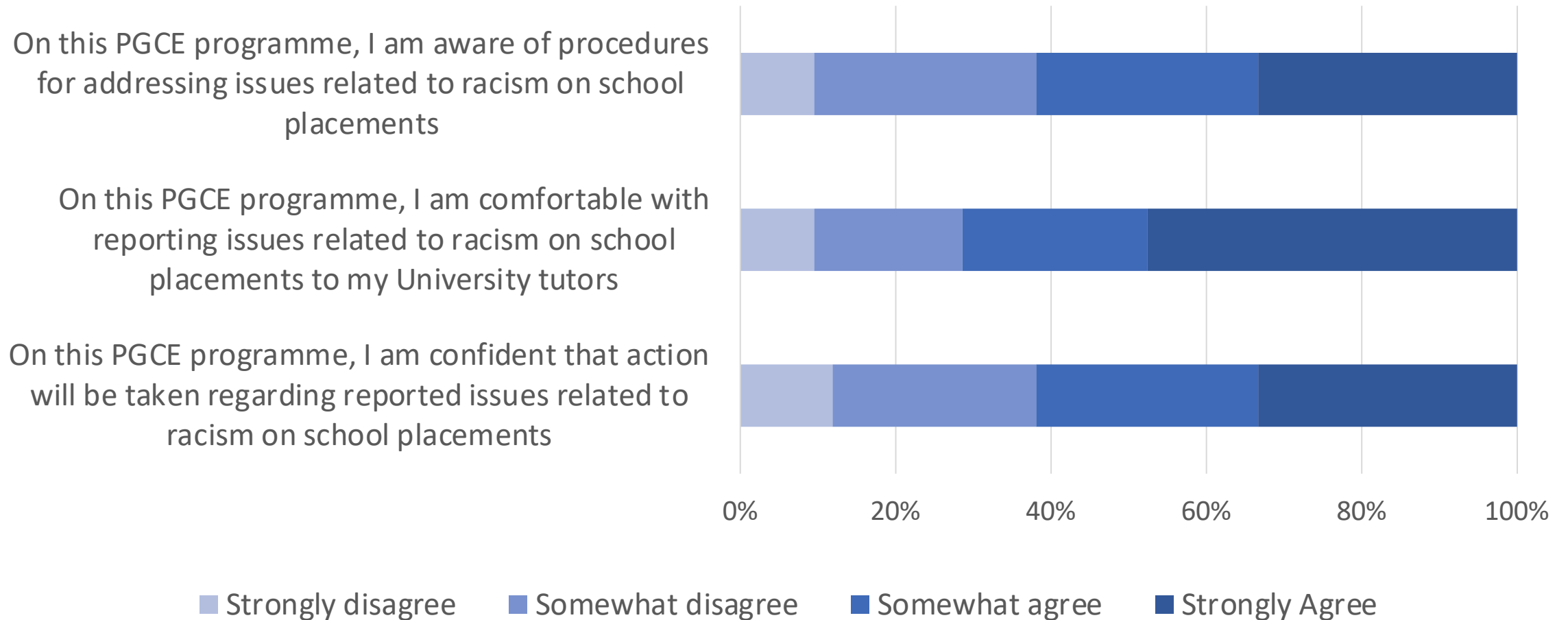
■ I experienced this event 4-6 times

■ I have experienced this event 10 or more times

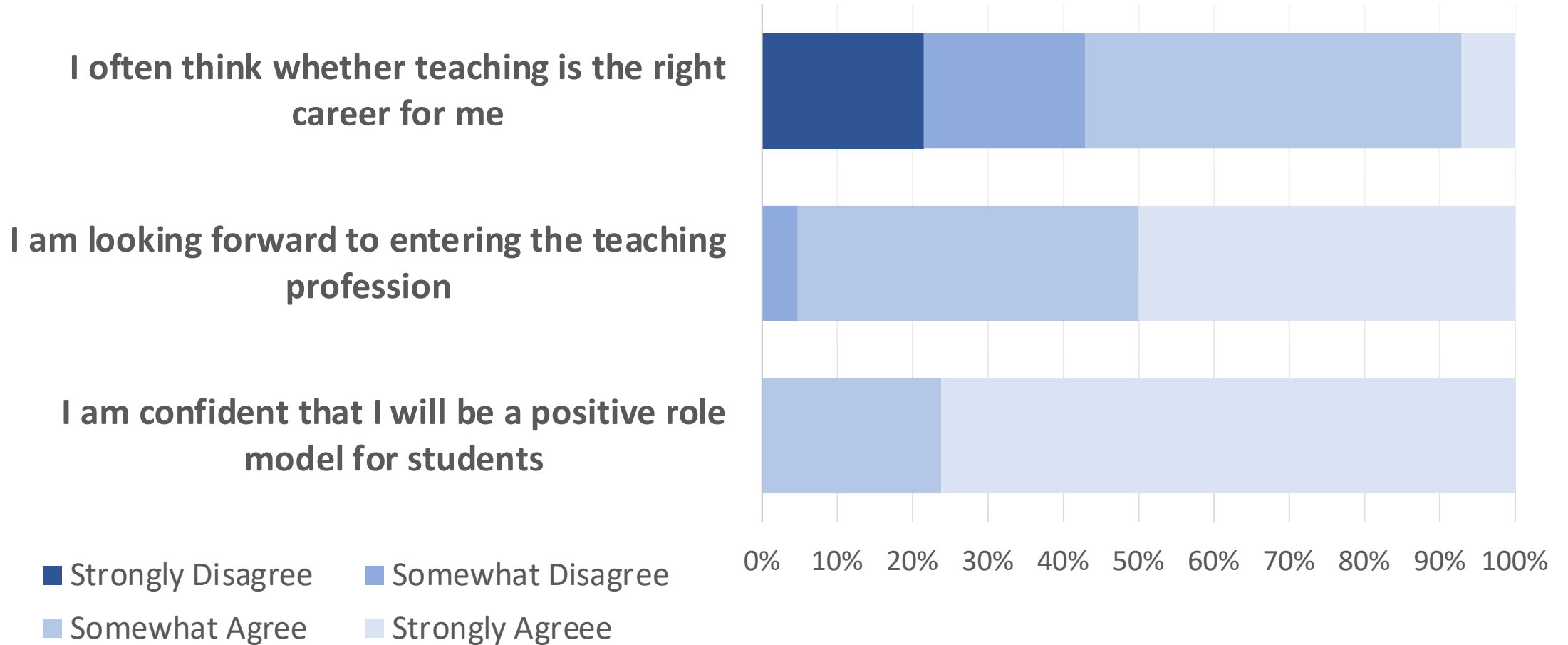
■ I experienced this event 1-3 times

■ I experienced this event 7-9 times

Support on your PGCE programme



Future outlook on teaching (N=42)



Thoughts on entering the profession

“So now we’ve all got jobs, I feel like also we’ve chosen these jobs based on certain requirements. I know I looked at the school and I was like, ‘How many people there look like me?’ or, ‘What are the kids there like? Is it ethnically diverse? What area is it in?’ You already have those requirements.” (Indian, PGCE Social Sciences)

“I don’t have to copy someone’s teaching style or talk or act or just be like someone else. I’m not going to be critiqued for that. Sometimes your mentors will tell you something, that’s not that you’re doing anything wrong. It's just not like them. So now, you don’t have those limits.” (Black African, PGCE Social Sciences)

Recommendations based on findings

- **AWARENESS:** Raising awareness of the scale and implications of micro-aggressions faced by students on PGCE programmes with BOTH PGCE tutors and School based mentors/PCMs (infographic/leaflet)
- **UNDERSTANDING:** “Increase staff and students’ understanding of racism, racial harassment and microaggressions, through training that is developed from an anti-racist perspective” (Tackling Racial harassment in HE - recommendation 6 : Universities UK, 2020)
- **REPORTING & SUPPORTING:** “Where these do not already exist, universities should develop and introduce clearly defined channels for reporting incidents of racial harassment, including the option for anonymous reporting where possible. Details of the system should be communicated routinely to all staff and students to encourage usage. The provision of appropriate support to the reporting party should be a key consideration in designing reporting systems” (Tackling Racial harassment in HE -recommendation 8 : Universities UK, 2020)

Recommendations based on findings

- PREVENTION: A clear statement in the Partnership Agreement with schools about racism towards visiting Black and global majority staff or students on placement detailing how to deal with racist incidents and reporting and recording racist incidents
- Ensure that anti-racism and anti-discrimination is part of all mentor development training and partnership management training
- Embed anti-racist practice and pedagogy in the PGCE curriculum at subject and programme level to develop the racial literacy of student teachers
- Add support with dealing with issues of racism to the student safety and wellbeing agenda
- Develop course and placement evaluation tools to give students the opportunity to share their experiences of racism (even if these were not reported) and use this information in monitoring, assessment and planning

Challenges/success

Challenges

- Severe shortage of placements
- Poor attendance to mentor development sessions
- Working with schools which do not have clear anti-racist policies
- Anti-racism not being on the agenda for schools in the same way as it is at some universities

Success

- Programme and subject specific anti-racist training
- Lead mentor scheme at UCL which will allow for peer learning on anti-racism
- More students willing to report and discuss issues
- Better reporting and recording of incidents
- Alison has FTE to support ST's experiencing racism on the secondary PGCE programme at UCL
- Bal has worked on embedding a student equality placement policy across ITE programmes that involve partnership management teams, senior leaders in school and mentoring .