# Anti-Racist Practice

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# Who We Are:

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**What are we covering today**

This is a massive topic… We're going to focus on:
● Critical Race Theory (and what this means for good practice)
● Practical - challenging your unconscious bias
● Intersectionality - personal experience
● Recent research - findings and recommendations for practice
● Book club (a plug!)

# Critical race theory: everyone's talking about it

- "an ideology that sees my blackness as victimhood and their whiteness as oppression ... I want to be absolutely clear that the government stand unequivocally against critical race theory."
  UK equalities minister Kemi Badenoch (2020)

- So what is CRT really?

- What relevance does it have for social work?

# A post-racial Britain?

"We no longer see a Britain where the system is deliberately rigged against ethnic minorities".

UK Commission On Race And Ethnic Disparities (2021)

- But obvious disparities still exist in economic expectations, health, well-being etc etc.
- What are we to make of this?

# The basics of CRT

- The goal of CRT is to critically explore race relations in a broader context, transforming how we understand the relationship among race, racism, and power.[1]

- Critical race theorists are concerned with disrupting, exposing, challenging, and changing racist policies that work to subordinate and disenfranchise certain groups of people.[2]

[1]Delgado & Stefancic (2001); [2]Milner (2008)

# Racism is endemic

- Not only the "crude, obvious acts of race hatred,"...
- but also the "more subtle and hidden operations of power that have the effect of disadvantaging" minority ethnic groups.

- **Structural racism**: the systems, social forces, institutions, ideologies, and processes that interact with one another to generate and reinforce inequities among racial and ethnic groups, regardless of individual intent
- **Institutional racism**: the policies, processes, behaviours, or attitudes of organisations that lead to discriminatory outcomes, regardless of individual intent

Gillborn, D. (2006). Critical race theory and education: Racism and anti-racism in educational theory and praxis. *Discourse: studies in the cultural politics of education*, *27*(1), 11-32.

# Critique of liberalism

Critique claims of

- Neutrality

- Objectivity

- Colour-blindness

- Meritocracy

# Telling stories

- 'Counter-storytelling' - telling the stories of people whose experiences are not often told

- A means of challenging 'majoritarian' stories of racial privilege and furthering the struggle for racial reform

- Stories as an essential tool for survival and liberation

# Linking CRT to social work

There is a big difference between being anti-racist and not wanting to be seen as 'a' racist. Equally, there is a category of people, who are more scared of being labelled as racist, than they are of actually being racist.

An individual (or organisation) that is anti-racist is much more likely to recognise why they themselves are potentially racist; understand how they have been socialised to be inherently racist and identify the benefits they receive from the existing racist structures.

Wayne Reid (BASW)

# Practice what you teach…
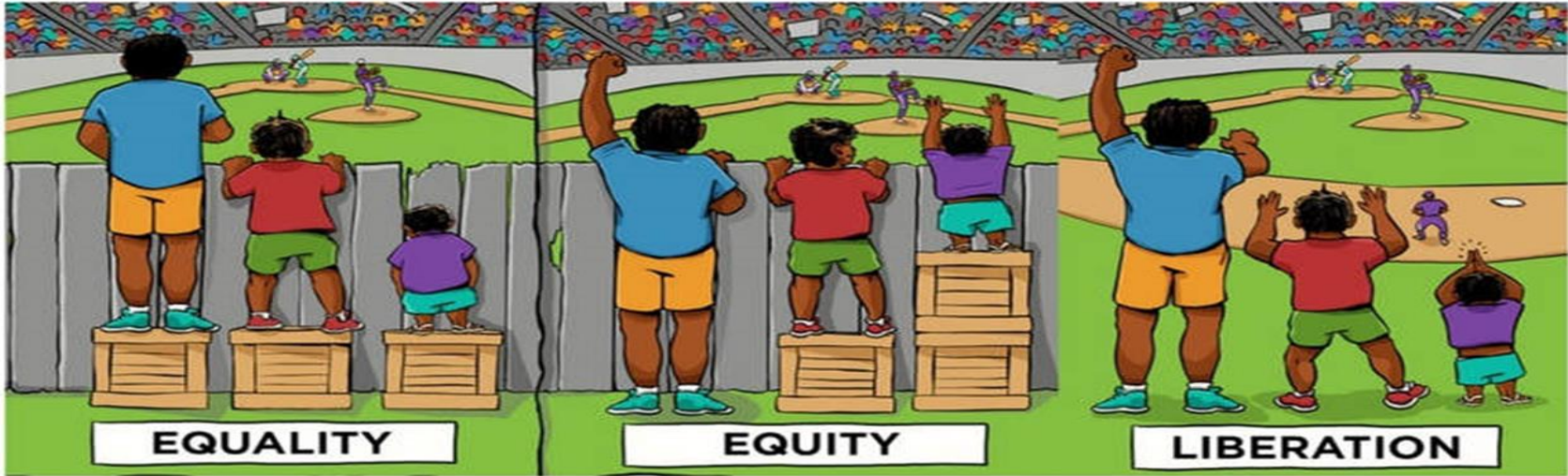


EQUALITY

This image depicts EQUALITY. All individuals are being treated equally with the same supports. It challenges the assumption that everyone benefits from the same supports. As shown, not all start from the same position; some have a height advantage.

EQUITY

This image depicts EQUITY. The people are being treated equitably. It demonstrates that when different individuals are given different supports, it makes possible for them all to have equal access.

LIBERATION

This image depicts LIBERATION. The barriers have been removed and supports are no longer needed. The inequity has been addressed.

# Challenging your Unconscious Bias - Shirleecia Ward

**Reflexivity**

- Educated in Eurocentric Education: Academic content, Academic sources and practice research is written from a Eurocentric perspective...
- How often do you reflect on how 'who you are' impacts on your practice?

# Your reflections through the CRT lens

- How do you think *your* race / ethnicity impacts on your practice

- What are the microaggressions that people from minority ethnic groups face in the workplace?

- How can we respond to people's experience of racism in society in our practice (including students on placement and colleagues).

- Whose responsibility is it to acknowledge your ethnicity and the students ethnicity  in terms of power and oppression?

# Intersectionality - Nikita Somaiya
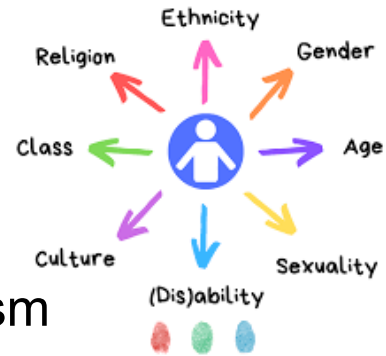
"The intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated"  (Crenshaw 1989)

Intersectionality is a lens for understanding problems
- ◆ Older South Asian women at risk of suicide
- ◆ Covid - 53.1% disabled women reported high anxiety

- ➔ Fluctuating and individual nature of intersectional experience
- ➔ Layering and compounding of the 'isms'

# Intersectionality - a personal account from Nikita
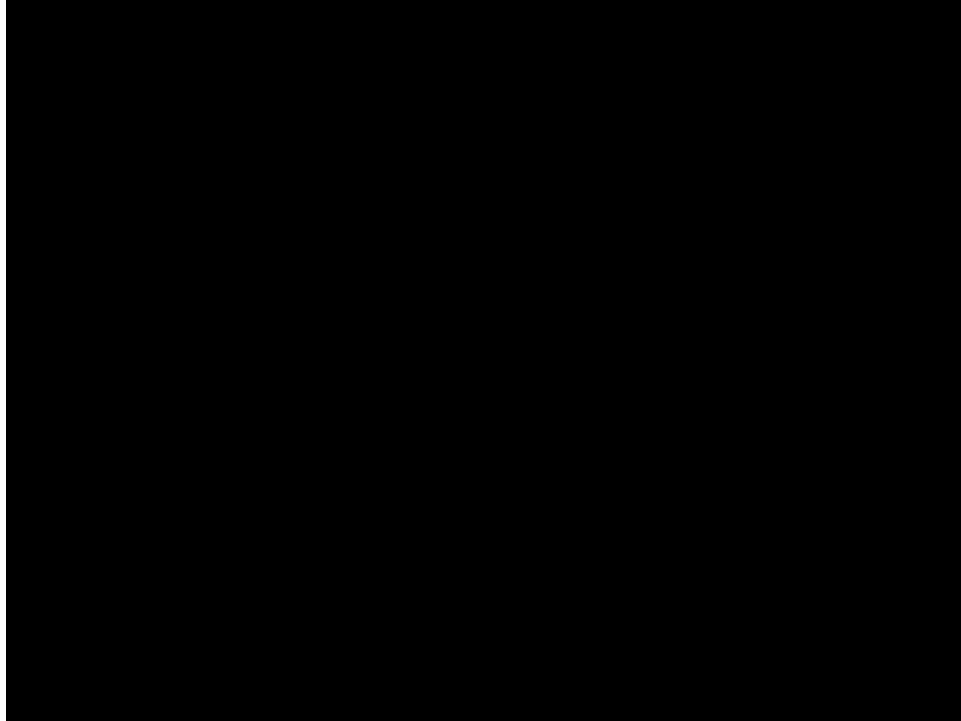
# Intersectionality - Think About:

- Which communities are served and which aren't? Why?
- Who gets to participate and who doesn't? Why?
- Who has access to resources and support and who doesn't? Why?
- Who's voices get heard and who's don't? Why
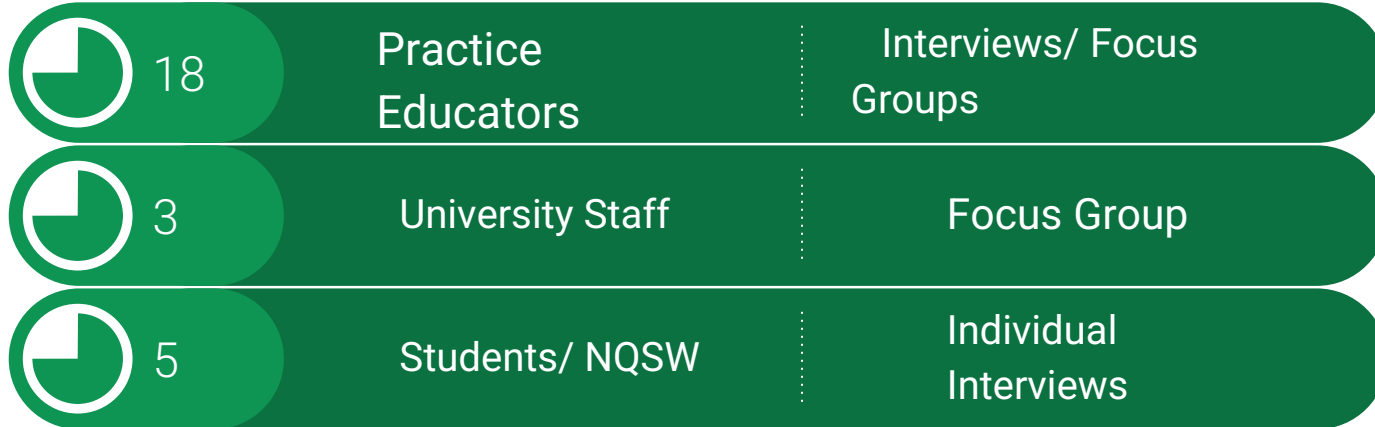
Diversity & Ability (2019)

Learn from people with lived experience - it is an active process

Aim to develop a positive & open approach to people of different backgrounds & experiences - tools (e.g. Mandela Method)

# Research: Supporting minority ethnic students on placement

- Funded by the university 'Widening Participation Fund'
- Aimed to understand the particular challenges that minority ethnic students might experience on Social Work placements whilst studying at York.
- Previous academic research and national data shows an 'attainment gap' for minority ethnic students across the Higher Education sector and in Social Work programmes specifically.
- Anecdotally, the social work staff at Uni of York felt similar issues were apparent on our programme, although acquiring hard data on attainment was difficult

# Research Design

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 18 | Practice Educators | Interviews/ Focus Groups |
| 3 | University Staff | Focus Group |
| 5 | Students/ NQSW | Individual Interviews |

# 1. Issues of diversity and racism

Recognition that many of our placements are not ethnically diverse:
*"And if you are someone who feels different in an all-white team, I think that must be incredibly difficult"* (PE)
*"Am I gonna be...not welcome.  I wonder what people's attitudes are going to be like"* (Student)

From Service users:
*"We know there is racism out within the community and...it's fair to say the student will encounter it"* (PE)

From other professionals:
E.g. being mistaken for other professionals/students from a similar ethnic group; assumptions made on basis of culture, race or religion
*"There was one student from a BME background and there was a lot more...questions that were being asked about their capability....That came from colleagues when it came to...doing work, and it was an interesting thing about, where is that coming from"* (PE)

# 2. Responses by placements

Recognition of need to challenge racism and protect and support students

But a range of views and uncertainty in how to do this

Complexities that can be involved in engaging some service users

*"The reality of being a qualified social worker, they are going to have to deal with…" (PE)*

Organisational support and guidance important to effective responses

Some wariness from students about reporting racism to placements/University:

*"I think the thing is, people didn't know how to respond to it." (Student)*

# 3. Acknowledging differences and identities

Treating students 'the same' versus acknowledging differences:

*"I think in the past we have pretended that it isn't an issue and we are colour-blind, and actually what we know is that that isn't helpful, we actually need to talk about difference." (PE)*

Exploring identity: emphasis on student reflection

Some PEs used techniques/models for discussing similarities/differences/power dynamics:

*"We mapped out...gender, geography, race, religion, age, ability, appearance, class, culture, ethnicity, education, employment, sexuality, sexual orientation and spirituality. And, because it covers all those bases, and that's what we are trying to do, to understand a family, so I thought it was a good way to model it." (PE)*

# 4. The role of culture

Some assumptions made about student capabilities due to presumed cultural differences based on ethnicity, nationality and/or religion

Deficit versus strengths based approaches

Team/organisational cultures and a sense of 'belonging'.

Being a 'cultural expert':
*"I think the team…wanted…her to kind of be the expert, in terms of…BME identity, and I perhaps was a bit complicit in that. So, I think she didn't feel comfortable, she didn't want that role, so we did some awkward conversations"*
*(PE)*

# Recommendations from the research: university support for organisations

- Provide training and resources for practice educators around anti-racist approaches to practice education
- Establish an ongoing book club for practitioners and academic staff around issues of race and diversity
- Additional recommendations have been made for teaching, research, and university policies and procedures

# Recommendations from the research:
# Best practice in organisations

- Develop specific guidance outlining expected response to student experiences of racism and discrimination
- Ensure that policies on race, diversity, and discrimination exist and are available to students
- Provide CPD opportunities on anti-racism for all staff and students on placement

# Recommendations from the research: all practitioners

- Engage with opportunities to learn about race, culture, and diversity
- Explore own race and identity
- Explore how race impacts students' placement experiences
- Adopt an explicitly strengths based approach to supporting students

# Book Project overview

- A potentially more effective and engaging way of doing diversity training
- Research tells us that narratives from novels/films are effective in increasing knowledge of diverse communities, promoting empathy, and reducing biases
- Overall aims are to:
  - provide a 'safe' forum in which to talk about race
  - promote dialogue about minority ethnic experiences in the UK
  - raise awareness of potential racial biases
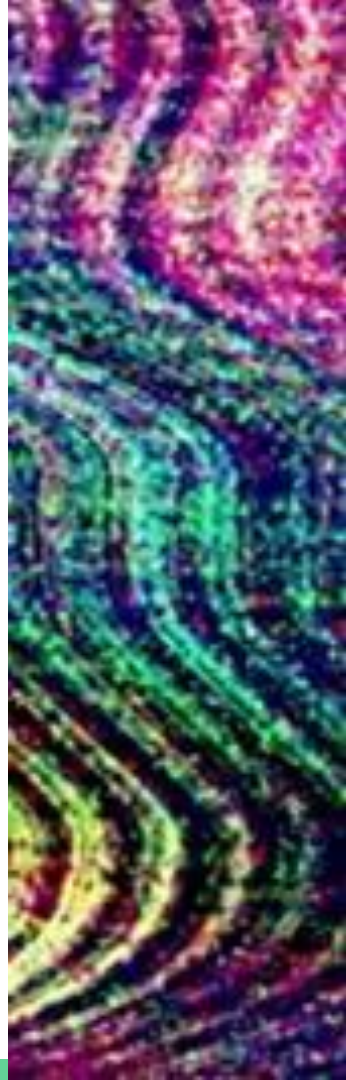
# What will happen?

Groups will initially run for six months (one meeting a month)

We expect that meetings will take place online

We will develop materials to guide the conversations

Groups can choose books/films (from a broad list) which we will provide for participants to keep

We will also provide CPD certificates for all participants
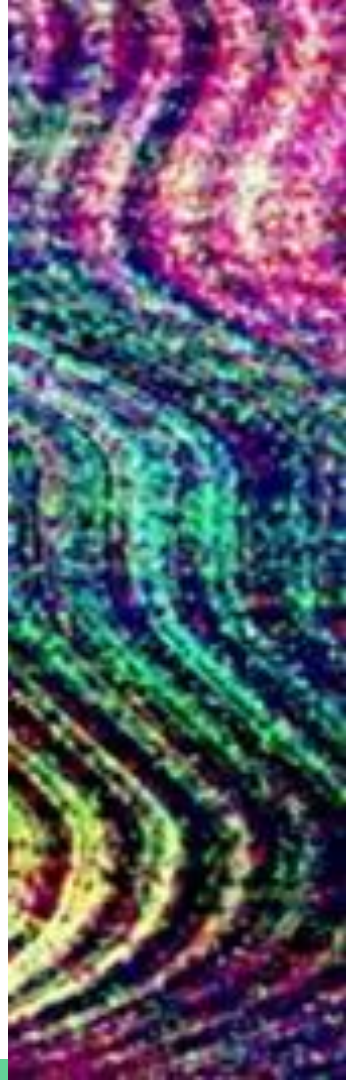
# The research part

We want to know if the groups are effective and if they work as we've designed them

We will ask group members to take part in:

Pre-post online surveys

Short online logs following each session

An optional qualitative interview
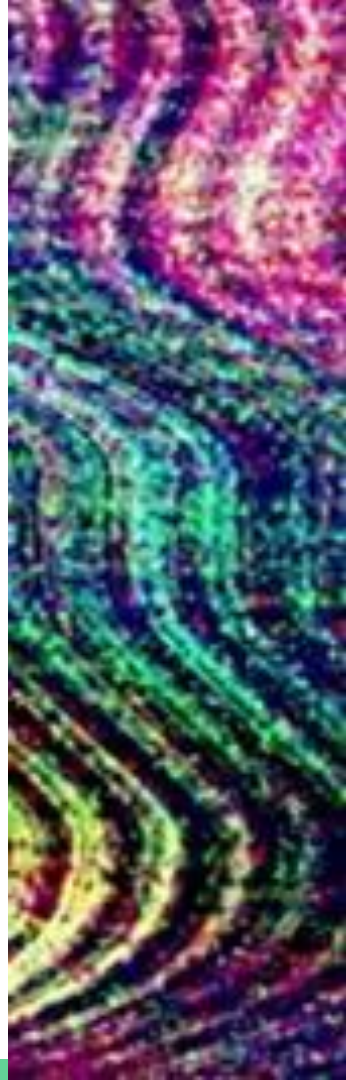
# The end result

At the end of the project we will produce a report about what we learned and a guide to running similar groups

We will also hold an end of project event for everyone involved
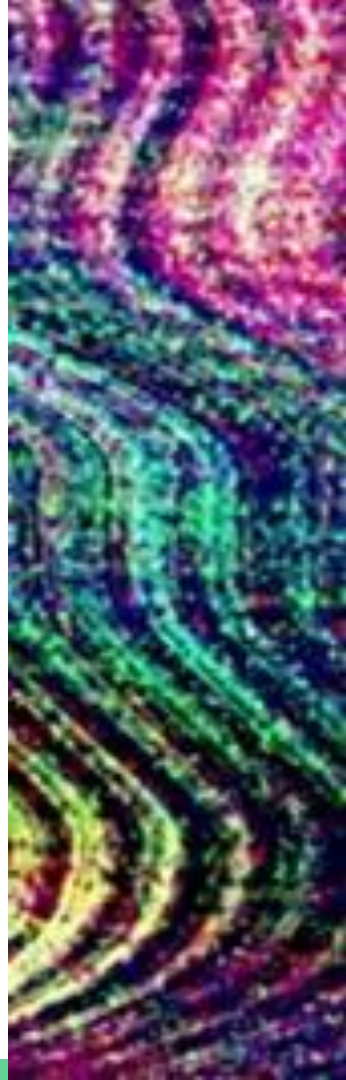
# Get reading…

Thank you for coming!
Any last questions?

# Helpful Resources:

# Becoming Anti-Racist Model



Becoming Anti-Racist Communities & Orgs.

**Fear Zone**
- I deny racism is a problem.
- I avoid hard questions.
- I strive to be comfortable.
- I talk to others who look & think like me.

**Learning Zone**
- I recognize racism is a present & current problem.
- I seek out questions that make me uncomfortable.
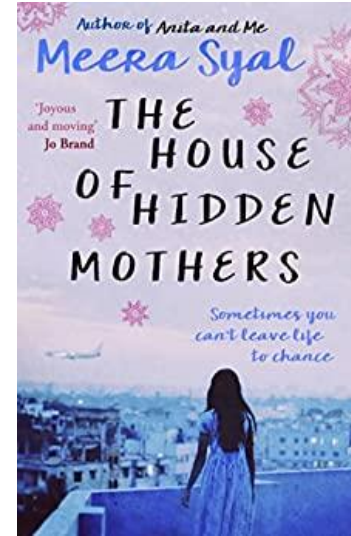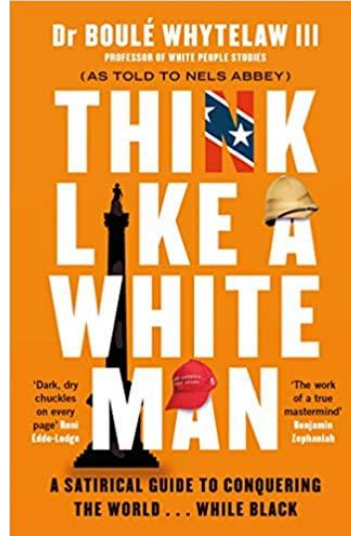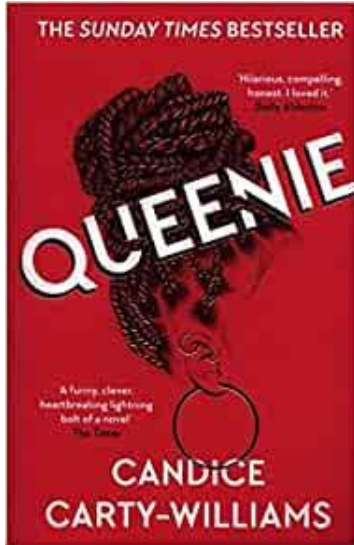- I understand my own privilege in ignoring racism.
- I education myself about race & structural racism.
- I am vulnerable about my own biases & knowledge gaps.
- I listen to others who think & look differently than me.
- I surround myself with others who think & look differently than me.

**Growth Zone**
- I identify how I may unknowingly benefit from Racism.
- I promote & advocate for policies & leaders that are Anti-Racist.
- I sit with my discomfort.
- I speak out when I see Racism in action.
- I educate my peers how Racism harms our profession.
- I don't let mistakes deter me from being better.
- I yield positions of power to those otherwise marginalized.

**Transformational Zone**
- We identify how some among us continue to benefit from Racism.
- We continually change and revise policies and promote leaders that are Anti-Racist.
- We embrace and continually learn from our discomfort.
- We support each other to speak out when we see Racism in action.
- We continually educate one another on how Racism harms our communities.
- We recognize and learn from our mistakes, and use them to motivate us to become better.
- We willingly yield positions of power and empower those otherwise marginalized.
- We actively embrace our diverse identities, intentionally engaging with one another and deepening our relationships.

A working adaptation based on Dr. Andrew M. Ibrahim's model