From Student to Practitioner: Race, Racism and Social Work

Report for Cheshire and Merseyside Social Work Teaching Partnership & National Institute of Health and Care Research

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March 2023

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It's like

knock back after knock

back after knock back,

you feel judged, helpless,

it's really hard

(Research Participant)

There is much exciting work to be done when we use confession and memory as a way to theorise experience, to deepen our awareness as part of the process of radical politization. Often, we experience pleasure and joy when we share personal stories, closeness, intimacy. This is why the personal has had such a place in feminist discourse. To reaffirm the power of the personal while simultaneously not getting trapped in identity politics, we must work to link personal narratives with knowledge of how we must act politically to change and transform the world (hooks, 1989:110)

About us

We are three Black female social work academics, two of us work in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) within the Cheshire and Merseyside Social Work Teaching Partnership (CMSWTP), and have been involved in various research projects. One of us is a national Equality Diversity and Inclusion Lead for the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service. Our writing and research includes the areas of race, intersectionality and anti-oppressive practice over three decades. We have all been former students and practiced as social workers within the locality, and as such, our collective experiences provide a critical autoethnographic element to the research.

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Research Team

Andrea Newman is a Senior Lecturer at Liverpool John Moores University. She has a background in social work and is a registered social worker. Her involvement in social work education spans 30 years. She is passionate about participatory action research and intersectional approaches to research and evaluation. Her writing and research focusses on access, inclusion and participation of minoritsed individuals and communities.

Beverley Burke has been employed as a Senior Lecturer at Liverpool John Moores University since 1990. The experiences she gained working as a Youth and Community Worker and as a qualified Social Worker have shaped her teaching practice. Beverley's academic and research interests have informed several publications in the areas of anti-oppressive practice, anti-racist practice, social work values and ethics.

Philomena Harrison trained as a Psychiatric social worker and is currently a Senior Lecturer in Social Work at Liverpool Hope University. She has trained social workers since 1990 and during that period has written and researched in Anti-oppressive and Anti-racist practice. This includes providing training to social care agencies and presenting at conferences nationally and internationally on 'Race', cultural competence, Identity and mental health.

Katrina Igbinovia is Equality Diversity and Inclusion Lead at the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass). She has extensive experience in equality and engagement roles across the public sector. Katrina is a law graduate with post graduate qualifications in community development and social work. She holds registered social worker status.

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Notes on terminology

In this report we have used the term Black, Asian and Minoritised Ethnic people ('BAME'). We are aware of the contested and changing nature of all the language around talking about 'race' as difference – or indeed any other aspects of difference. We also appreciate the intersectional nature of people's lives/positioning/standpoints and their experience of oppression, resilience, healing and survival. The 'BAME' Over website has a very useful reflection and guide on the use of language in naming groups of people when considering the matter of 'race' (https://incarts.uk/%23'BAME'over-the-statement)

Executive Summary

This research report presents the experiences and perspectives of 'BAME' (Black, Asian and Minoritised Ethnic) social work students and practitioners within the Cheshire and Merseyside Teaching Partnership (CMSWTP) area as they navigate their journeys within social work programmes and the social work profession. The report which is in two parts reflects the two phases of the research undertaken.

The aim of the first phase of the research was to explore the lived experiences of 'BAME' students and practitioners of social work education and practice and make policy and practice recommendations to the CMSWTP. During the first phase of the research, focus groups and individual interviews informed by anti-racist and anti-oppressive research principles were used to facilitate the dialogue with students and practitioners. Our analysis of the rich narratives shared with us during this process evidenced very clearly how individual and institutional racism traumatically and devastatingly impacted on the learning experiences of students, as well as the working experiences of practitioners.

The initial findings of this first phase of the research very clearly indicated that it was important for 'BAME' students, and practitioners to be provided with a safe space where they could discuss issues that were important to them. Engaging in these discussions, regarding their lived experience and perspectives of race and racism within social work was also a positive experience for the participants. They put forward several ideas as to how changes could be made. The outcomes of this phase of the research informed the aims and objectives of the second phase of the research which was funded by the National Institute of Health and Social Care (NIHR).

The second phase of the research took the form of providing three networking facilitated discussion forums which provided an intellectual space where safe conversations could be continued regarding anti-racist practice and anti-racist initiatives within higher educational and social work arenas.

The following recommendations are informed by the findings of the two phases of the research. The recommendations in relation to students and practitioners capture not

only the essence of the conversations that we have had during this research journey but also highlight the need for urgent change to take place.

Recommendations: Students

Anti-Racism Charter

What seems essential for a framework for change within organisations is developing an Anti-Racism Charter to understand and respond to the harmful impact of racism on 'BAME' social work students. This was a theme running throughout the research with students. Such a Charter should be adopted by Local Authorities (LA), Higher Education Institutions (HEI) and other partners who engage with students. It would provide a clear message of 'zero tolerance' to racism and would include the following recommendations:

- The provision of safe spaces where students can share experiences, concerns, anxieties, access support and build individual capacity, and the development of specific support groups for students within HEIs and practice placement agencies. Organisations need to have systems where responsibility and accountability for 'BAME' students is addressed.
- Establish appropriate training for White tutors and Practice Educators to engage and support 'BAME' students to extend their knowledge around race and racism.
- Decolonise the social work curriculum to promote clear and effective anti-racist and anti-oppressive approaches. To achieve this the CMSWTP should commit to a specific project across all members to ensure there is a commitment and understanding of the process of decolonisation in learning and teaching. One stage could be to encourage peer reviews across Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and practice learning contexts regarding teaching and practice learning content on race, racism and anti-oppressive practice.
- Explore the role of White stakeholders and students in anti-racist engagement and action. The process might include scoping and reviewing good practice around anti-racism already developed by partnership

members. This would be shared across members within the partnership and in addition they should plan to draw on experiences of other organisations across the country.

Recommendations: Social Work Practitioners

The practitioners' experiences of racism during their social work training and again as practitioners provides the backdrop to the range of actions for change identified in the report. The following are some of the recommendations, taken from a more detailed list of recommendations informed by a number of themes generated by our analysis of the data . This reflects the importance of support for 'BAME' staff who work predominately in 'white' spaces, opportunities for personal and professional development in the light of the under representation of 'BAME' managers as well as the need to diversify the workforce.

Experience of racism and trauma

- Support and fund the development of specific support groups for 'BAME' practitioners and further for students whilst on placement.
- Engage in training to understand and appreciate the impact of the trauma of racism both within the workplace and on social work programmes.

Navigating white spaces: diversity and progression

- Diverse recruitment panels to include panel members from 'BAME' backgrounds and for panel members to have completed mandatory equality, diversity and inclusion training.
- Each Local Authority to develop a bespoke 'BAME' in-house funded leadership programme.
- Develop a system of consulting with 'BAME' staff on all matters which relate to good anti-racist practice. Urgently, explore the poor outcomes for 'BAME' social workers in terms of progression in the workplace.

Support and networking

- Development of a CMSWTP wide 'BAME' mentoring scheme available to 'BAME' students and social work practitioners.

- Set up a CMSWTP 'BAME' social work network with access to management structures in the Partnership.

Contextual Background

The under-representation of 'BAME' social work students and practitioners has been an area of concern for many areas of the UK for over the past three decades. Over the years there have been varying widening participation strategies to help address this problem. For example, as a local response, Liverpool developed positive action projects in the 1980's and 1990's, in an effort to increase the representation of 'BAME' students on social work programmes and 'BAME' social workers in the Local Authority. This initiative was the Black Social Work Project, as part of the Third European Anti-Poverty Programme in Liverpool (Rooney, 1987) and had some success.

Within the national context, the last five years has witnessed a steady increase in the number of 'BAME' students. The Social Work Education annual report published by Skills for Care in 2022 reported that the national distribution of 'BAME' students was 35%, an increase from 29% in 2009/10 (Skills for Care, 2022a). The number of 'BAME' students within the CMSWTP locality has always been lower than the national average, and the increase has been much slower. In 2017 the percentage of 'BAME' students enrolled on local social work programmes was 14%, 17% three years later and with a sharp rise of 100% increase in 2021 where numbers had risen to 34% (CMSWTP, 2022). This more recent sharp rise in the percentage of 'BAME' students coincides with the high increase of the number of international students enrolled on social work programmes. This changing local picture now resembles national statistics. However, figures for individual local Universities differ with the majority of 'BAME' students enrolled in predominantly two out of the four universities.

The factors leading to the recent exceptional rise of 'BAME' students within the CMSWTP area needs further investigation. Experiences from local admissions processes indicate that significant increasing numbers of international students has been the main reason for the increase in 'BAME' students. It is important to note here

that the very specific needs of international students require exploring and could be a topic for further research by the partnership.

This promising national and local picture of the number of 'BAME' students enrolled on social work programmes, does not translate to that of 'BAME' social workers and practice educators in the workplace, where numbers are significantly lower. National figures in September 2019 show that, 12% of children's social workers in England working for local authorities were Black, 6% Asian and 4% from mixed ethnicities, among those whose ethnicities were known, according to the annual workforce census carried out by the Department for Education (2019). Local figures within the CMSWTP are much lower with just less than 5% of children's social workers from 'BAME' backgrounds and just over 0.6% Asian and 1.4% from mixed ethnicities (of respondents with known ethnicities).

At the same time, amongst those whose ethnicities were known, 15% of adult social workers in English local authorities were Black, 6% Asian and 3% mixed ethnicities, according to the annual social services workforce report by NHS Digital (2020). DfE national figures for 'BAME' social workers for 2022 are currently at 29% (DfE) with local figures much lower at 7% of adult social workers from 'BAME' backgrounds. With 34% of students within the CMSWTP from 'BAME' backgrounds and only between 5% and 7% of qualified social workers in children and adult sectors respectively from 'BAME' backgrounds.

This evidence indicates that for those from 'BAME' backgrounds, the journey from student to practitioner is not straightforward. It suggests that 'BAME' students are either failing social work programmes, not applying for qualified social work positions or are 'failing' or 'being failed' at the applicant or selection and recruitment process. Research data reveals some of these disparities. 'BAME' students are more likely to fail to complete their social work course, with 32% of those leaving their courses identified as having a 'BAME' ethnicity (Skills for Care, 2019). The importance of having a more nuanced and granular approach to the racial and ethnicity backgrounds of students in the data is important as indicated in research studies

revealing that female students of Black African origin are deemed to be at the greatest risk of failure within 'BAME' groups (Hussein et al, 2008; 2009; Tedam, 2021). Further disparities emerge once working as qualified social workers, with racially minoritised social workers more likely to fail their ASYE (Carter, 2021), and be referred to fitness to practise than their white counterparts (Samuel, 2020).

The under representation of 'BAME' social workers in senior and managerial roles has been a long-standing issue of concern (Bernard, 2020; Hanley, 2021) highlighting systemic problems regarding progression. 'BAME' social care workers currently make up only 16% of all managerial roles in England (Skills for Care, 2022b). Only 6% of Directors of Children's services in 2023 were from ethnically diverse backgrounds (Staff College, 2023). This picture highlights an historical and current context, which is characterised by inequality, marginalisation and discrimination for 'BAME' students and social workers.

In addition to the well documented quantitative research evidence, we wanted to provide a platform from which to take a qualitative approach to explore the emotional, psychological and social impact of the reality of everyday lived experiences and perspectives of 'BAME' social work students (hooks, 1989; Bunce et al, 2021; Reid and McLean, 2021) and practitioners within the CMSWTP locality as they navigate their way through their social work journey.

This research project report is in two parts with the second phase of the research responding to some of the key findings emerging from phase one.
Further details of both phases of the research project can be found on the CMSWTP website.
Phase1: https://teachingpartnership.org/information/student-profiles-social-work-degree/
Phase2: https://teachingpartnership.org/information/from-student-to-practitioner-race-racism-and-social-work-phase-2/

Phase 1: From student to Practitioner: Race, Racism and Social Work

Research Project Aims and Objectives

Aim:

To explore the lived experiences of 'BAME' students and practitioners of social work education and practice and make policy and practice recommendations to the CWSMTP.

Objectives:

- To engage and recruit 'BAME' students and social work practitioners in reflective focus groups.
- To make policy and practice recommendations, identified by the research findings to the CMSWTP.
- To ensure that the research findings are disseminated to all academic and practice partners to facilitate much needed change.

Methodology

We drew on anti-oppressive research methodology (Clifford & Burke, 2009; Burke and Harrison, 2016; Rogers, 2012) to support an intersectional understanding of the experiences and perspectives of 'BAME' research participants. We adopted a participatory action approach to the research (Newman and McNamara, 2015) using our existing professional networks in addition to the CMSWTP networks to send anonymous survey questions to 'BAME' students and social workers to ascertain what important questions needed to be asked in the research. We used this information to develop our interview and focus group questions. Ethical approval was granted from the Liverpool John Moores University Research Ethics Committee.

We conducted one online student focus group, one online student interview, two online social work practitioner focus groups and one social work practitioner online interview.

Both students and social work practitioners made up a diverse group of participants in terms of age, race and ethnicity and location. Some students were still studying on their social work programmes, whilst others had recently gained their social work qualification. Social work practitioners had a range of years of social work experience, were located in different Local Authorities within the CMSWTP in a range of practice settings. The student focus group and interviews were conducted by the member of the research team who was a Masters student at the time of the research, and a social work practitioner. The social work practitioner focus groups were conducted by the University lecturers from the research team.

Students and social work practitioner focus groups and interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim and the data was analysed using a reflexive thematic analysis approach (Braun and Clarke, 2022). Focus group and interview transcripts were read independently by two of the research team and assigned initial codes. Further coding identified several themes which were discussed in the research team and initial themes were agreed. The initial themes and recommendations were shared with focus group and interview participants and their reflections and feedback were incorporated into the final analysis.

Findings and Analysis: social work students

8 students participated in the research with 5 students attending a focus group and three having an individual interview. They ranged from first year, final year and recently qualified students on undergraduate and post-graduate social work programmes within the CMSWTP area. Participants were primarily from two out of the four local Universities.

The 8 student participants included 7 women and 1 man and 2 international students from Africa and Asia, both of whom spoke English as a second language. The age range of participants was 24 years – 36 years and all participants identified themselves as heterosexual. One participant indicated a disability or long-term health condition. The research identified 4 key themes which are important in understanding the lived experience of 'BAME' social work students within the context of race and racism:

Themes
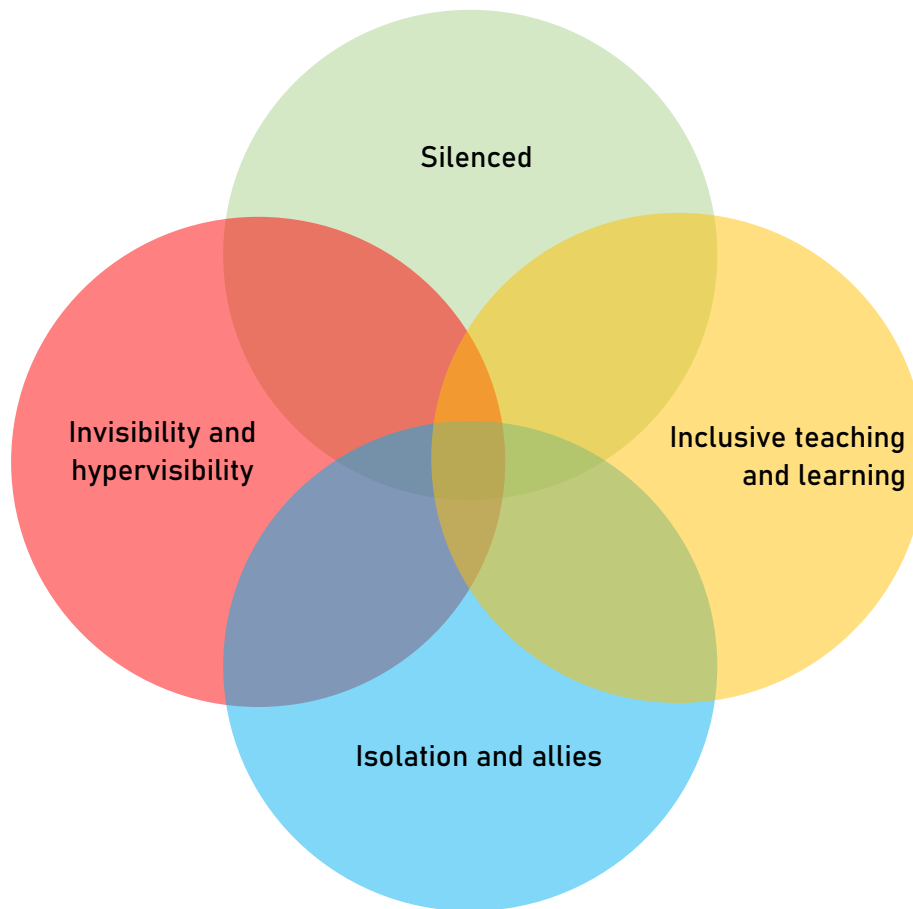
Silenced

One of the key issues highlighted by participants was feeling 'silenced' in both a literal and metaphorical sense. Some participants reported their views and perspectives were not valued in the same way as those of White students. Some participants also reported feeling overlooked or closed down during discussions. It was highlighted how this can be an impact of White Eurocentric approaches to teaching and learning styles which are embedded within HEIs. This can make the curriculum less engaging for 'BAME' students (Hillen and Levey, 2015). Participants also described feeling 'silenced' by racism and the fear of racism. They described how the negative impact of interactions with individual tutors resulted in them feeling apprehensive about contributing to group discussions. One participant felt demoralised after approaching a tutor for help:

> *During the first lecture she said nothing is too much trouble and please just let me know if you need any help or explanations or anything at all. At the end of the session I approached her and asked about some terminology. She told me it was simple stuff and she shouldn't need to explain something like that. She looked me in the eye and told me I should consider whether this was the right course for me. I realised the help she offered must be only for White students because I was the only non-white in the class. I have never spoken again in that class.*

Another participant talked about their experience of an assignment being returned to them with a disappointing grade. The participant felt they had been proactive by approaching the tutor for suggestions on how to improve. They considered the discouraging response they received was, at least in part, linked to their 'BAME' identity. This was because the participant became aware of White students who had made the same approach and received advice, support and encouragement from the same tutor:

> *Basically, she told me that I should actually be celebrating because I had actually passed the module and not to worry about anything more than that. It was clear to me that her expectations of me were pretty low and basically just scraping a pass is all I'm worth. I didn't have the right to be aiming any higher and she wanted to put me in my place…No, I wouldn't approach her again.*

Another participant who was an international student from an African country described their experience of the application process. The participant was informed their application had been successful and offered a place to study social work. However, the participant was later advised there was uncertainty about their level of English and the place would now be dependent on the results of proficiency tests completed via the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). The participant felt her accent seemed to play a part in the way she was perceived and people 'always seem to focus on the accent and choose not to listen to the actual words'. The participant described how the application process left them feeling apprehensive and self-conscious:

> *I thought to myself you've seen my application and qualifications and you've spoken to me already. But suddenly my English isn't good enough? What's that all about? I had one week to prepare for IELTS. I felt like I was drowning, but this was a lifeline. I told myself you can't mess this up. It was a frightening time.*

'BAME' students indicated they most value the support of educators who are available, responsive and prepared to go 'above and beyond' the core responsibilities of their role. Further research has highlighted the positive impact which educators can have when they empower 'BAME' students by ensuring their voices are heard within HEI structures. However, this responsibility can often fall on the shoulders of Black academics, who already have their own experiences of oppression and marginalisation in HEIs to contend with (Burke et al 2000). This also allows White staff the freedom to choose whether to involve themselves in any additional engagement activity or leave Black colleagues to deal with 'Black issues.'

Inclusive learning

Creating a welcoming and inclusive learning environment is a key aspect of students succeeding on any learning journey. However, some participants felt this aspect of their course was lacking. Participants talked about the 'whiteness' of the curriculum, how 'non white' perspectives were rarely considered and the desire for the curriculum to incorporate the work of more contemporary 'BAME' academics.

Even when the curriculum references 'BAME' people, some participants felt information was delivered using a 'cultural deficit' approach (Ahmad, 1990). This perpetuates stereotypes rather than engaging students in exploring and deconstructing them. Participants felt that students were not encouraged to interrogate 'BAME' related topics with the same rigour applied to other topics. The confidence levels of some tutors in relation to issues of race and racism was highlighted as a possible reason. One participant reflected on the content of their course so far:

> *The curriculum so far has been very White. The times ethnic minorities have been mentioned have been very few. But that might be better in a way. Do you*

> *know what I meant? Because the times we are mentioned it's bad, negative and well… I don't want my classmates thinking that's me and that's what I'm like. That concerns me a lot…it's like this aspect doesn't bother me. In reality, it's less hassle. If the curriculum is white, then so be it.*

They reflected on how inclusive the learning environment would be and whether the cohort would include students from a range of cultural backgrounds. Some participants were particularly apprehensive about being the only 'BAME' student in the class and described the relief of seeing other students 'who look like me' on the first day of the course. One student explained how she addressed feelings of anxiety:

> *I couldn't wait until the start of the course. No. No way. I just went on social media and looked for the students who were starting the course at the same time. Another Black girl had her photo on her profile. It made me so happy! I messaged her straight away and it gave me reassurance before the start. There's no way I would have connected with a White student in the same way……Thank God for social media I said to myself! We've been good friends ever since that first message.*

Isolation and Allies

The narratives of participants highlighted the isolation that 'BAME' social work students can experience and the way in which practice placements can magnify these issues. Placements pose challenges for all social work students as they should be receiving support from practice educators, but they are also assessed by them. In the case of 'BAME' students who may be subjected to racism from service users as well as staff on placement, they can find themselves feeling isolated and stressed at a time when their professional skills and capabilities are being observed and graded (Tedam, 2015).

One participant became emotional as they described racism they were subjected to during their placement. The participant feared that if they reported the racism they may be perceived as lacking in the resilience required for social work. They also feared it may jeopardise their progression or lead to greater scrutiny. The comments

of this participant also emphasise the importance of emotional support for 'BAME' social work students:

> *It was really awful. I was alone…you know just completely alone. None of the staff would speak to me or the service users. I recall a team meeting when a staff member arrived late. There were no chairs left and I was told to make way…to get up so the staff member could sit down. I was called names by racist service users and the staff did absolutely nothing. I cried to my husband every night. I would have given up long ago if it wasn't for him.*

Another participant offered a further example of the importance of a support network. The participant explained they were the only student from a 'BAME' background in their group. When they experienced a particularly challenging time during the course and felt particularly isolated, it was their White peers who supported them emotionally and built their confidence.

> *I felt very stressed and alone. I was crying in the canteen. I didn't care who was seeing me…Then my classmates came around me and said what's wrong. I told them I'm leaving the course, but they told me no, we won't allow it. You've got every right to be here and we will succeed together. Each one is White but that doesn't matter. I know they have my back.*

Invisibility / Hypervisibility

Some participants spoke about 'standing out' and feeling 'othered' in overt ways which left them feeling vulnerable and marginalised. In these situations, their 'BAME' identity made them 'hyper visible'; In other situations, participants described feeling ignored and excluded. In these situations, their 'BAME' identity effectively rendered them 'invisible'.

In terms of invisibility, one participant commented on the lack of acknowledgement of the emotional and psychological impact of racism, oppression and discrimination experienced by 'BAME' students.

> *There's been talk of racism in relation to service users and how bad it is for them…. But no mention on this course about 'BAME' students and how life is*

> for us….and of course we share some of the same struggles. I just think it's pretty obvious that we share much of the same racism as service users because we are all 'BAME'… But I'd say it's not really something that's acknowledged.

In other situations, participants described how their 'BAME' identity caused them to feel 'over exposed' or 'hyper visible'. One participant, who spoke English as a second language, described an incident during their placement which reflected these issues. A member of staff called the participant over and they were asked to support a service user on the basis the participant would find it easier to communicate. The staff member had (wrongly) presumed the participant's first language was the same as that of the service user. The participant shared their reflections on the incident:

> Ok, it was just a mistake. But it was embarrassing for me. [Name of staff member] just laughed as if it was nothing. No apology even. She even told another staff member about it later and they both laughed. I recall thinking if I was White she would not have done that.

Another aspect of 'invisibility' and 'hyper visibility' highlighted within participant narratives, related to the issues of 'Whiteness' and 'White Privilege'. Some participants felt there had been an absence of any meaningful exploration of these perspectives. However, an understanding of how Whiteness operates is key to understanding race and racism within the context of social work education (Christie, 2010) as well as understanding the power and control represented by White privilege (McIntosh, 1998). One participant commented:

> You know the way White is seen as normal. They don't see any reason to teach about it and I think that's why they don't seem to think there's any need to explore it. It's Black people and Black communities with the problems so the focus stays on us always.

Findings and Analysis: Social work practitioners

Two focus groups were conducted with 14 'BAME' social workers attending. One social worker attended an online interview. The 14 participants included 11 women

and three men. They each had between three to 20 years social work experience with a total of 104 years of qualified social work experience between them. More than half had completed their social work training within the CMSWTP area.

The research identifies 5 key themes which are important in understanding the lived experience of 'BAME' social work practitioners within the context of race and racism:

Themes

Experiences of racism and trauma

Reflections on the lack of diversity

Speaking out, taking action

Navigating white spaces: belonging and progression

Support, networking and safe spaces

Experiences of Racism and Trauma

Traumatic experiences are events, situations, and or/conditions that cause acute (short term) or ongoing physical, socio-emotional, and psychological strain. In the same way the experiences of everyday racism can leave the individual feeling their safety, emotional wellbeing and the very essence of self is threatened. The impact being referred to as 'racial battle fatigue' (Kinouani, 2021, Gabi and Gomes, 2022).

These experiences can lead to 'hypervigilance' which can impact on the individual's development in the workplace and on teaching programmes. One real example would be where an academic was 'accused' of just talking about 'race'.

'Race'/racism needs to be recognised as a an 'invisible' factor at the core of many unrecognised traumatic experiences. This is compounded by the lack of support in the workplace and on social work education programmes.

This was evident in some of the responses during the focus group conversations.

> *And they don't understand how we feel or the impact that, when someone says something negative to us regarding our race or our practice or whatever, that has on us. So, you're just sort of left, really. Unless you come home to speak to your family, you know, bring those kinds of issues back to the family.*

And

> *It's like knock back after knock back after knock back, you feel judged, helpless, it's really hard.*

Here participants were speaking about the impact of everyday racism and microaggressions experienced in the workplace. The organisational systems in place did not provide for any redress. The following example demonstrates the nature of those experiences. Here we see a situation where racist stereotypes and assumptions influenced a longstanding relationship.

> *I was supervised by someone I've known for over ten years, and she supervised me for six years, and she sent me a letter to go to a meeting, and that letter … she was asking me, as English is not my first language do I need an interpreter. And I'm thinking, 'Well, how can someone send me a letter like that when she knows that I speak English. I haven't got a hearing problem or anything else'. And I just asked her, 'Why did you send me such a letter?' and she said, 'Well, it's a standard letter'. And I am thinking, 'Well, it might be a standard letter, but you can take out that bit regarding whether or not English is my first language when you know English is not my first language.*

Further, it hints at how the racism is endemic and long lasting in the organisation. Leaving the individual feeling that some aspect of their difference is focused on and assumptions then made about their capacity to function effectively in the workplace. This creates a sense of helpless for the individual. The narrative also demonstrates the intractability of organisational systems and guidelines. What was seen as minor by the 'system' was experienced by a person of colour as more than a mere systemic failure. It is plausible here to suggest intergenerational racist trauma in the workplace. Any way forward must require organisations to work in an anti-racist way which takes into account the impact of its policies on the individual and thus the community with whom they may be required to engage.

A system that leaves individuals relying on their families; where they can discuss the impacts of racism is clearly not sufficient nor readied for change. Social care organisations need to take responsibility to manage and respond appropriately to the impact of racism which is both personal and organisational. To deal with the impact of everyday racism, on personal and organisational levels, the agencies need to implement anti-racist practices. This must be evident in policies and practices within the organisation.

Reflections on the lack of diversity

There has been ongoing concern in social work programmes across England as to the demographic of students on programmes. Participants commented in the focus group on their experiences of the lack of diversity on the social work training programmes they attended. In some cases, people felt that this experience of a lack of diversity in terms of race and ethnicity was replicated when qualified and entering practice.

This research has shown where there is need for change on social work programmes and in practice. Participants commented on their experiences as students and then as practitioners.

> *And the other group (placement) I did in the community where I live, and again that was … most of the workers were white, but because the community is diverse a lot of the service users came from different cultural*

> *backgrounds. So again, my experience regarding it really was completely different from my practice. Because when I came out to be a social worker, there were very few black social workers ………*

> *I mean what I can remember from university and my experience from a 'BAME' community is that we've had 90 students, it was a 90 cohort, and there was approximately 9 people from 'BAME' community and looking at those numbers it's quite shocking, if I'm thinking of it now as well.*

Through the sharing of experiences of racism in supportive and safe spaces, where participants' personal and professional identities are validated, collaborative agendas for change can be explored and operationalised. It was very evident that isolation permeated many of the participant's journey to becoming qualified social workers. From the very start of their journey, the lack of diversity within the social work programmes they were enrolled on was a stark reality.

> *I mean what I can remember from university and my experience from a 'BAME' community is that we['ve] had 90 students, it was a 90 cohort, and there was approximately 9 people from 'BAME' community and looking at those numbers it's quite shocking, if I'm thinking of it now……*

> *I think I was the only Black person on my course [because] we're talking about 2002…… I can't remember that far back but I know I did feel a bit isolated, that's for sure.*

The geographic locations of social work programmes had an impact on the participant's experiences. One participant shared the following,

> *My experience, I guess, understandably was completely different to up north. You know, London is very diverse, and that was representative of our group in the master's class. We had a range of different 'BAME' communities as students…..*

However, this diversity was not mirrored within the academic staff teams delivering the social work programme.

> *What I did find is, and I think that this is a national issue, is that there was a lack of 'BAME' lecturers or senior lecturers teaching the course, in itself. The majority of them were white, middle class.*

Many of the participants experiences of social work training is encapsulated in the following quote:

> *In terms of lecturers, I didn't come across any from 'BAME' community, it was all white lecturers.*

Having lecturers from 'BAME' backgrounds was felt to provide a level of support which was not provided by lecturer's who were very different to the participants.

> *So yeah, I think that it would have helped, because I think I would be able to share my concerns or any views or opinions more openly to a tutor who was from a 'BAME' community.*

The issue of isolation continues within the workplace where many participants were often the only 'BAME' practitioner within a team, or at a particular level within the workforce.

> *I am the only Black person in my building, and that is a really … it was certainly a very strange thing when I first went to. I don't think about it overly now, although it's sometimes very stark. At times I do, and at times I don't.*

> *We go to meetings where you might be the only face that's in that meeting that's non-white,*

> *I am the only black manager in ……so when we're talking about under-representation that speaks volumes really.*

The research evidenced very clearly that participants, in their experience both as students and as social workers, have the intellectual and emotional resources to counteract their daily experiences of racism. The value of a space where the participants felt safe and secure enabled them to openly share some of their painful

experiences of individual and structural racial oppression. Many of the individual experiences though unique to the individual, were remarkably like other participants in the group.

The tough issues embedded in diversity, equity and inclusion can only be effectively raised when employees are not operating in a state of interpersonal fear of speaking about their lived experiences (Dios and Altman, 2020).

'Talking about the experience of racism is always painful in its recollection – always requiring the individual to relive the experiences. These memories of sorrow, pain, humiliation, and hopelessness come at a cost to the individual; the impacts are both individual and intergenerational, and both contemporary and historical.' (Harrison, 2022:179). Therefore, the opportunity to discuss, experiences of racism, concerns, irritations, and frustrations within an emotionally supportive and psychologically safe space, where individuals are freed from the processes of 'othering', is a necessary part of the process of not only interrogating dominating racialised discourses but replacing these with narratives of resilience and resistance. Mutual sharing of difficult and traumatic racist experiences within a safe space, can be a powerful, energising, and creative process.

All the participants valued the opportunity of being provided with a safe space in which they could share and discuss their experiences of racism during their social work training as well as within the social work profession.

It has been a while since I have met like-minded black female practitioners. It felt like a safe space to talk openly about my longstanding role and the time I have spent in the social work profession. Both challenging and rewarding times.

For me it was nice to get together with people who could appreciate and validate some of my personal experiences. It felt like a safe space to share and process our experiences. Thank you for the opportunity.

> *It was a positive experience taking part in the focus group yesterday. I felt it was a safe space to share our experiences and contribute to any actions to combat racism in social work. As R. Gandhi said, 'be the change you want to be.'*

Supportive relationships from other members of the team is an important feature of social work. One participant related how it had been a challenge having no colleagues from their cultural, racial or religious background to relate to or share their faith or culture with in the workplace. One participant, recognising the importance of peer support and connections with other 'BAME' practitioners, ensured she looked out and supported 'BAME' practitioners in her team. However, it was felt that this type of support could be facilitatied on an organisational level.

Navigating white spaces: issues of belonging and progression

There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they're falling in (Desmond Tutu)

It was very evident that many practitioners experienced a lack of equity and fairness in relation to their progression at work. Some participants reported that after graduating as a qualified social worker they had been employed in a social work assistant level role for several years, having been told that they needed further experience. Others had waited several years before being given a permanent contract, witnessing other less qualified and experienced colleague's progression. Mbarushimana and Robbins (2015) have reported how minority ethnic workers in the UK experienced a 'covert rejection' from managers and colleagues, having to work harder to be recognised.

Many participants spoke about the need for more racially diverse interviewing panels to help address potential unfair recruiting practices, and mentioned the need for cultural awareness training for interview panel members.

> *cultural awareness (training) must be made mandatory in terms … in the social work departments across the board for local authorities. And again, that includes diverse interview panels as well.*

The experience of workplace racism, everyday casual racism and micro aggressions and receiving little support and encouragement from managers has meant that 'BAME' practitioners may be less likely to put themselves forward for leadership roles:

> *there are (around 8%) of us who are black (in the wider team) and, as (another focus group participant) said, there are no managers, no senior practitioners or deputy practitioners in the team. And although I've been there (for many years), I am just … I'm not just, but I am a social worker. I find that there is no source of encouragement to enable you to move to a different level. That's what I've found." (words substituted to retain participant anonymity)*

There was a perception from participants of not fitting in and not belonging due to their racial background. The working environment was experienced as a largely white space with little diversity, exacerbated by some when they were the lone 'BAME' worker, remaining hypervisible:

The under-representation of 'BAME' social workers particularly in leadership and management positions in the UK remains an ongoing issue (Bernard, 2020).

The invisibility of 'BAME' practitioners indicated to many that there was simply no point in applying for a leadership role.

> *And they're all people who, for some reason, seem to look like the team managers. You know, therefore there is no way I'm ever going to climb the ladder because I don't look like them.*

One participant spoke about positive outcomes when organisations recognised the importance of investing in their 'BAME' staff and progression opportunities were targeted at them. They attended an excellent leadership and management course and have progressed into a leadership role as a consequence.

Social workers invest both financially and emotionally in their decision to pursue a career in social work. For 'BAME' social workers, there is often a huge sense of emotional investment in doing a role which is not recognised by their own communities or is recognised negatively:

> *At the time, from my community perspective, you either went into nursing or you kind of did something to do with health and social care. And it's not common knowledge that you can be a social worker. I mean, social workers are perceived as people who just take kids away in my community, and that perspective really hasn't changed after all of these years. I mean, and there's little old me, just kind of having those conversations now, as a qualified social worker, telling people there's more to the role, there's more to us than taking kids away.*

This investment does not always get recognised and rewarded in the workplace. Where there were examples of 'BAME' staff in senior roles, there could be a feeling of isolation and lack of opportunity of peer support from other 'BAME' managers. It was felt that this position was a lonely place to be. There was a recognition that 'BAME' staff in managerial roles had to work much harder to achieve that role:

> *My team leader is Black (female), but from having conversations with her (them), she's they've)said she (they) did really have to fight for position, you know, she (they)was kind of rejected a good few times before she (they) actually got the role.*

Speaking out, taking action

Speaking out is the start of the process of change. Speaking out about harsh personal, familial and group realities experienced by so many within a structurally divided society; contribute to the development of narratives of resistance which compete with the discourses of inequality and social injustice. 'BAME' social workers and students have had to struggle and continue to struggle to get their voices heard. The following quote not only evidences the clear silencing of a 'BAME' voice but highlights very clearly the ideological position of the responder, regarding their understanding of the impact of racism on 'BAME' workers within the workplace, as well as perhaps a reluctance to engage in discussions in relation to social differences.

> *I wanted to set up a Black social worker support group, and I was told no, it's not needed. You know, there are no problems, there are no issues. And I*

> *thought, 'Well, you aren't Black, so you don't know whether there are problems or issues. I'm coming to you....*

The importance of networking, speaking out, strategising to counter negative prevailing ideas and practices were made by many of the participants who, based on their analysis of racially oppressive situations, provided some clear ways forwarded.

> *I want my ... the authority I'm working for to sort of take on board what those issues are, and how can they make things different or better, or what changes need to be put in place. They're not even big things. You know, it's the smallest things that sometimes have the biggest effect on you.*

> *So, I think that is important to recognise that it's important to reflect on where we've been and what we've done, what the expectation has been and where we're at now, and how we're going to embrace moving forward again*

> *We're helping service users who look like me, so why not have people in the role of social workers who look like me.*

Framework for change: Individual, team, organisational and the Partnership

Student voices

The following framework for change is informed by the research with students.

1. Anti-Racism strategy for change

An anti-racism charter involving all HEIs, LAs and wider partners such as placement providers would provide a clear message of 'zero tolerance' to racism. It would also provide an opportunity to remind all individuals and organisations within the partnership of their responsibility and accountability for the safety and welfare of 'BAME' service users, students and staff.

A delivery framework incorporating monitoring and evaluation should be considered from the outset to demonstrate genuine commitment from senior leaders in the partnership. A dedicated resource to coordinate the initiative should also be identified. This may be through an existing job role or team located in one of the partner organisations, or a multi-agency delivery group which would promote shared ownership and responsibility of HEIs and other organisations.

2. Anti-Racism training for HEI staff

The confidence of White tutors was highlighted in relation to engaging and supporting 'BAME' students and facilitating learning around race and racism. Addressing these issues could begin with a 'development day' for social work teaching staff from across the partnership, led by an independent external facilitator. This would provide a safe space to share anxieties, access support and build capacity.

3. Decolonising the social work curriculum to promote clear and effective anti-racist and anti-oppressive approaches

The partnership should commit to a project to 'decolonise' the social work curriculum and ensure that every HEI is promoting anti racist and anti-oppressive approaches. The first stage could incorporate a peer review format with HEIs reviewing each other's teaching and learning strategies, with a specific focus on race and racism.

The second stage could involve consultation and engagement activities with wider stakeholders including 'BAME' students, practitioners, placement providers and service users, such as care leavers.

4. Providing safe spaces and support for 'BAME' students

Additional anxiety, isolation and stress experienced by 'BAME' students were recurring themes within the research. Every HEI should review the health and wellbeing support available to 'BAME' social work students to ensure it is inclusive, accessible and appropriate to their needs.

HEIs should ensure 'safe spaces' are available to 'BAME' social work students, via student led groups or networks. This could be through groups established within individual HEIs or across HEIs within the partnership. Whilst the groups should remain independent of course leaders and tutors, HEIs should provide a named member of staff with responsibility for supporting the groups, connecting the groups with each other and ensuring that issues which are highlighted on an individual or collective basis are resolved effectively. The dedicated staff member could also connect the groups with 'BAME' staff networks within LAs, if appropriate.

HEIs with existing groups for 'BAME' social work students should review this provision to identify any further support they can offer.

5. The role of white stakeholders in anti-racism – engagement and action

The study highlighted the key role that White students, educators and wider stakeholders need to play in combatting racism and embedding anti-racist approaches. Further scoping is required to identify the most effective format to deliver engagement activities to promote reflection, learning and allyship. Good practice from within the partnership could be reviewed as well as exploring initiatives delivered by other organisations and potentially in other parts of the country.

Framework for change: Individual, team, organisational and the CMSWTP

Social work practitioner voices

The following framework for change is informed by the research with social work practitioners.

Experience of Trauma and racism

- Support and fund the development of specific support groups for 'BAME' practitioners and further for students whilst on placement.
- Develop training for managers and other staff to understand and recognise and challenge microaggressions and everyday racisms in the workplace.
- Engage in training to understand and appreciate the impact of the trauma of racism in the workplace and on social work programmes.
- Develop practice curriculums which decolonise the received wisdom in social work practice and education.

Reflection on the lack of diversity

- Training for white managers to improve their support of 'BAME' staff in everyday practice and supervision.
- Develop a system of consulting with 'BAME' staff on all matters which relate to good anti-racist practice.
- Urgently, explore the poor outcomes for 'BAME' social workers in terms of progression in the workplace.

Support, networking and safe spaces

- Development of a CMSWTP wide 'BAME' mentoring scheme available to 'BAME' students and social work practitioners
- Training for managers to support 'BAME' students and social workers in their everyday practice, including supervision. This should include experiences of racism within teams and from service users.

- Recruitment of 'BAME' consultants to provide support related to admissions, recruitment, teaching and learning and the development of anti-racist practice.

- Set up a CMSWTP 'BAME' social work network with access to management structures in the Partnership

Navigating white spaces: Issues of belonging and progression

- Diverse recruitment panels to include panel members from 'BAME' backgrounds and to have completed mandatory equality, diversity and inclusion training
- Application forms to be anonymised at the point of shortlisting to reduce bias in the selection process
- Progression to be discussed at appraisals and during supervision to include an action plan to monitor progress
- Each Local Authority to develop a bespoke 'BAME' in-house funded leadership programme

Reflective questions for individuals and teams

People like to grasp things that are operational that they can get their minds around – they don't like confronting those bigger difficult challenges (Casey, 2023: 330).

Louise Casey in her independent review of the metropolitan Police Service discusses how uncomfortable it is talking about racism, misogyny, homophobia and other forms of discrimination.

The development of anti-racist action on an individual, team, organisational and partnership basis requires everyone to engage in anti-racist ethical reflection and practice. The following Anti-Racist Reflective Questions can be used to assist individual or collective responses which can inform frameworks for change to ensure that 'race matters.'

Individual: Reflecting on your practice

- What do you understand by anti-racist practice? What does it look like in your current practice?

- How does your own position enable you to influence change. Have you been able to use your position for change? How have you done this?

- How has personal, the team and the organisational histories, led to, or has informed the relationship with 'BAME' communities in the receipt of services or the provision of services?

Sometimes it helps to think of concrete actions which can be undertaken so when reflecting on your practice using the above questions or others which you may have thought of, think about how you and the team can demonstrate commitment to anti-racism and anti-racist practice.

Anti-racism audit questions to ask

- How diverse is your team? Your organisation? (Look at employment patterns, numbers of black staff employed, etc.)

- Does your team induction programme(s) include a statement regarding racism and anti-racist practice?

- Is Anti-racist practice a meaningful standing item on the team meeting agenda? Would an anti-racist team development day be useful?

- Do you have access to anti-racist practice materials when working with service users?

- What materials, information, training have been provided to you by your organisation?

- Have you developed materials which could be shared with others?

- Have you considered using 'BAME' consultants, or 'BAME' practitioners from other teams or local authorities for a particular case? Or in relation to developing your knowledge base?

- How does the organisation *really* cope with equality and difference, as compared with what it claims to be doing?
- How far does the organisational culture facilitate or hinder anti-racist practices?
- How has the organisation reacted to existing, concerns, information provided regarding racial inequality?
- Are the organisations current policies and practices fit for purpose when viewed from an anti-racist perspective?, and how have they been reviewed, monitored and evaluated?
- What arenas and structures are currently available for the monitoring and development of anti-racist policy and practice, and how well are they being used?
- Who is best placed to initiate change within the organisation/partnership structure(s)?
- How are anti-racist incidents addressed?
- Are the mechanisms for 'BAME' staff to share their concerns available, sensitive and robust?

Phase 2: From student to Practitioner: Race, Racism and Social Work

One thing is consistently clear to me: writing about race taps into a desperate thirst for discussion from those who are affected by the issues (Eddo-Lodge, 2017)

In 2022 we applied for continuation funding from the NIHR to support the continuation of the research project work. This allowed us to take the original project into the next stage in response to some of our key project findings.

The 2 key findings identified to take forward into action were:

- The importance of 'BAME' students and social work practitioners connecting, networking, and coming together in safe spaces to enhance their personal and professional development.
- Need for anti-racist awareness and practice events for social work practitioners.

It was evident that attending the focus groups had a positive impact on both 'BAME' student and social work practitioner participants. Direct feedback and reflections about taking part in the focus groups indicated the need for safe, supportive spaces to discuss their experiences and perspectives and network. The following participant quotes give an essence of reflections and feedback regarding the impact of their participation:

I found the experience reflective and quite therapeutic.

For me it was nice to get together with people who could appreciate and validate some of my personal experiences. It felt like a safe space to share and process our experiences. Thank you for the opportunity.

It was a positive experience taking part in the focus group yesterday. I felt it was a safe space to share our experiences and contribute to any actions to combat racism in social work.

Thank you for including me in the focus group I really enjoyed being a part of it. I found the experience warming and comforting to be able to have a safe space to talk and listen to the experiences of other 'BAME' individuals and share my own.

I just want to say that I really enjoyed taking part in this focus group, I felt it was safe space to discuss the issues that we have experienced as 'BAME' practitioners in workplace/placements etc.

Further key findings revealed experiences of unfair recruitment, selection and progression processes in the workplace, racism from service users, experiences of micro-aggressions from colleagues, feelings of isolation and exclusion and the need for social workers to be confident in anti-racist and anti-oppressive practice when working with Black and ethnically diverse service users.

Phase 2: Aim and objectives

Aim:

To provide professional development opportunities for 'BAME' students and practitioners.

Objectives:

- To provide three networking facilitated discussion forums where safe conversations can take place.
- To discuss and develop thinking around Anti-Racist practice.
- To evaluate the experiences of participation in the three events.
- To write up and disseminate outcomes from Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the research.

The Three networking facilitated discussion forums took place between December 2022 and January 2023. They provided an intellectual space where safe conversations could take place, as well as continued discussions regarding the development of Anti-Racist Practice and anti-racist initiatives within higher educational and social work arenas. The impact of the events was recorded by collecting participant feedback and evaluations after each event.

Networking Event 1: Starting The Conversation: Race, Racism and Social Work ('BAME' social work practitioners)

The best things in life are on the other side of a difficult conversation

(Kwame Christian)

The first event was delivered by Patience Odonsi, Senior Lecturer at the University of Salford. Attendees included 'BAME' social work practitioner research participants from phase 2 of the research. It provided a space to continue the

conversation from the initial findings of the research and to take forward the recommendations identified in the first stage of the research.

Participant feedback and impact

Patience's session was informative around educating and awareness of the issues that we face in our daily living be it in work or out of work. The presentation highlighted the awareness and understanding of the lived experiences of Black and Asian minority groups.

The session pointed out some ways to action, an awakening to renew our resolve and continue the fight against racism. I felt that to ensure sustainable and lasting change it is important that we all work together and our allies also continue to support change through their actions. The presentation is pivotal to advance the work on equity and inclusion to make the social work and other professions a place where everyone has the opportunity to thrive and achieve, whatever their background.

Our discussion on Friday was really helpful and certainly prompted some important reflection for me.

Thank you for the slides and the informative discussion on Friday. Really enjoyed the presentation.

Networking Event 2: Starting The Conversation: Race, Racism and Social Work ('BAME' social work students)

'One of the most vital ways we sustain ourselves is by building communities of resistance, places where we know we are not alone' (hooks, 1990: 227)

The purpose of the second event was to share the research findings from our original research study with students across the Cheshire and Merseyside Social Work Teaching Partnership who identify as Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic.

The discussion forum was facilitated by Katrina Igbinovia, EDI lead at Cafcass who had conducted the student element of the CMSWTP research project, and Avril McCoy, social worker in the Child Protection, Pre-Proceedings and Court Team.

The discussion forum provided an opportunity for students to:

- Have space to reflect on their own experience of social work education
- Connect and network with other social work students across the Cheshire and Merseyside Social Work Teaching Partnership (CMSWTP)
- Be part of the conversation around race, racism and social work education

Participant feedback and impact

The presentation of the research findings relating to student's experiences was impactful and students discussed further recommendations they would like to be acknowledged in the report to the CMSWTP. These are as follows:

- Duty of Care – Universities and placement providers owe a duty of care to social work students. They should consider the health and safety of students from 'visible' ethnic minority backgrounds and vulnerability when using public transport – particularly in areas where hate crime is known to be an issue. Where possible, visits should be carried out in pairs or efforts should be made to re-allocate cases where student safety may be compromised.
- General Support – Universities and placement providers should identify and raise awareness of support for people from Black Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds, such as internal staff networks or external community groups and organisations

- Peer Support – Specific peer support initiatives should be established for social work students from Black Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds.

- Bursaries and Awards – The challenges and barriers experienced by social work students from Black Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds should be acknowledged more openly. Students should have access to additional support and recognition through targeted bursaries and awards.

Networking Event 3: Anti-Racist Practice: Challenges and Change (social work practitioners across the CMSWTP)

If we can have the conversation in a better way, we can make meaningful change in the world around (Kwame Christian)

The third and final event brought together the two strands of the original research project and was aimed at practitioners, Practice Educators, and newly qualified Social Workers. The purpose of this event was to share with participants concrete ideas and strategies informed by the themes emerging from the research, as well as support those negotiating the landscape of Social Work education, as students and then as practitioners challenging endemic racism in teaching and learning and professional practice. The event was facilitated by Dr Suriya Nayak, Senior Lecturer from the University of Salford, who has considerable experience in working with 'BAME' and Global Majority students, Practice Educators and practitioners around matters related to Anti-racist practice.

For the evaluation participants were asked to write about what (thoughts, ideas, practices) they would take away with them and what they would leave behind after engaging in the event. Visually, this was in the form of a suitcase and a bin on to which they wrote their responses.

From the accounts of the participants the event was experienced as valuable to all of them. They were able to connect with the detail of the content and identify ways in which they would think about and re-imagine what they might change in their everyday practice. In addition to completing evaluation forms, participants verbally expressed their enthusiasm in having engaged in the session. In common for all participants was the connection to theory and practice that they were able to make on the day via the keynote speaker and the dissemination.

The following are some of the themes that emerged from participant responses:

- Using the concept of Intersectionality as a tool in practice. There was a sense that this would enable access to all aspects of the student/practitioner relationship; including interconnections on individual positionality and social difference.
- Participants felt they needed to develop the capacity to 'sit with the discomfort' that the experiences of racism bring for white practitioners in a range of roles including being a Practice Educator.
- The desire and understanding to challenge the organisational 'norms' on policies and practices and thus not waiting for permission to initiate changes and never assuming that things are OK.
- A commitment to promoting the outcomes of this research project within their organisations.
- A commitment to developing anti-racist ways of understanding how the organisation /their agency functions.
- Working to developing a different way of addressing the notion of 'safe spaces' – an anti-racist view of safe spaces.
- They articulated a commitment to 'opening up' conversations in the workplace.

Limitations of the study

This was a small-scale qualitative research project which was undertaken in the northwest at a particular point time where the issue of racism was once again on the social work agenda. All HEI's and local authorities within the CMSWTP were contacted by the research team, however, despite a number of attempts to recruit participants within the CMSWTP, not all HEI's or Local Authorities were represented.

We conducted online focus groups and interviews which had the advantage of participants not having to travel great distances, and participation in the research was accessible. However, a face-to-face experience may have been better due to the content and nature of the research.

Generalisations cannot be made from the findings for all social work students and practitioners, due to the small sample size of this research. However, we do believe that the recommendations made are pertinent for the CMSWTP to seriously consider.

This racialised knowledge about difference has the power to organise everyday conduct as well as the various practices of groups toward one another, and such knowledges enter deeply into, and profoundly disfigure, the culture of the societies in which they are operative over long periods (Hall, 2017: 68)

Concluding comments and reflections.

The issue of racism has achieved a degree of prominence recently due to a number of international and national events taking place where racism has directly impacted on the experiences of 'BAME' communities. This has prompted many organisations to review their policies and practices. Within social work these events have opened up space for conversation on the need to reaffirm our commitment to anti-racist and anti-oppressive practice. To gain a more nuanced and intersectional understanding of the lived experiences of students and practitioners.

The narratives obtained through this research has provided concrete strategies for the way forward. Adopting a long-term holistic approach is important for interventions to be embedded across the Teaching Partnership. Outcomes will need to be monitored and evaluated, and changes made if required. In order for this to take place it is important that partner organisations, take notice, actively listen and work together with 'BAME' students and practitioners within their organisations. Only when the racialised power relationship which exists between 'BAME' communities and HEI's and LA's is accepted can we begin to make changes which are meaningful and long term.

To cite this report:

Newman, A., Burke, B., Harrison, P., and Igbinovia, K. (2023) *From Student to Practitioner: Race, Racism and Social Work,* March 2023

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Useful resources on racism and anti-racism

https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/resources/documents/Support-for-leaders-and-managers/Supporting-a-diverse-workforce/Supporting-a-diverse-workforce-Understanding-racism.pdf#msdynttrid=TasvTOkX2yjdmhYPUAY-RRmBfgs1-9pPtpJ4C9d4Gyc

Black Lives Matter: social work must respond with action – not platitudes

A guide to anti-racism