Socially just practice: Race and Culture

Overview description

We each bring various aspects of our identities to our educational community. Alongside other aspects of identity, this includes our ethnicity, race, and the culture we feel, and others perceive, we belong to. In this chapter we will explore how race and culture are defined, current inequities in the school system, and ways to promote equality in our practice.

As part of our service's ongoing commitment to anti-racism and socially just practice, our hope is that the toolkit and this chapter will continue to evolve and develop as our understanding develops. It is our intention that this will be through ongoing collaboration and feedback from stakeholders in the communities we serve.

Definitions

We use the term 'race' in this toolkit as a social and political construct[1]. The idea that there was a biological and genetic nature of racial categories has been comprehensively discredited; for instance, there is greater genetic variation within racial groups than between them.

Culture is an ambiguous term; however, it is suggested to refer to the values, beliefs, behaviours and norms of a group of people[2], such as families, religious groups and racialised groups. It changes slowly over time and is different for each individual. Culture can influence our interests, ambitions, and perceptions, but also how others identify and perceive us.
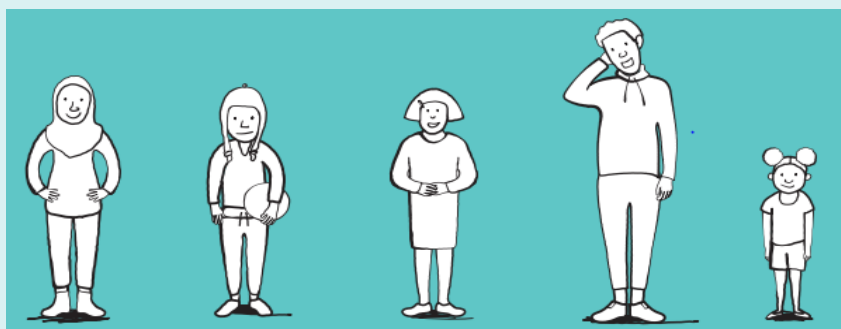
Current picture in the UK and locally

Our systems and settings are often tailored to the needs of the majority group, which in the case of the UK is 'white British' individuals. There is extensive evidence that outlines the inequities in school experiences, educational outcomes, SEN identification, and exclusions for different minoritised[3] groups, particularly when comparing to white British students. For example:

- The #BeeWell survey 2021[4] indicates many students in Manchester report experiencing racial discrimination in school.
- Teachers from across England report that students in their schools experience racism and discrimination[5]

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[1] Ladson-Billings & Tate, 4 1995; Kendi, 2019

[2] Spencer-Oatey, 2012

[3] As in the thesis by Abijah-Liburd (2018), we use the terms 'minority' or 'minoritised' to recognise the process that results in a group occupying a smaller proportion of the UK population, rather than a "state of inherent 'lesser-ness'" (p.14. Abijah-Liburd, 2018). It is a relative term, as an individual who is classified in a minority group in the UK may be in the majority group in another country.

[4] https://gmbeewell.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/BeeWell-overview-briefing.pdf

[5] Joseph-Salisbury (2020), Dyer (2022)

- In 2021/2022, students from Gypsy/Roma, Traveller of Irish heritage, black Caribbean and white and black Caribbean ethnicity categories continue to be overrepresented in the school exclusions data[6]
- Most minoritised groups in England are underrepresented in SEN identification figures when compared with white British pupils[7], impacting the level of support they receive in schools. Black Caribbean pupils are overrepresented, however, in the identification of moderate learning difficulties (as well as Pakistani pupils) and social, emotional and mental health needs (as well as mixed white and black Caribbean pupils).

In Manchester, there are groups that we are aware of being most impacted and vulnerable to these inequities which include: black, black British, Caribbean, or black African, mixed white and black Caribbean/African, Irish Traveller, and specific South Asian groups, such as Bangladeshi and Pakistani. We note, however, that many students from these minoritised groups in Manchester continue to succeed in spite of these persisting barriers.

Promoting equality in our practice

We all have a duty to safeguard each other from discrimination and abuse. Whether this is morally, legally, or part of our own principles and beliefs. As such:

❖ The United Nations Rights of the Child Convention (Article 2) states that all children have a right to protection from discrimination.
❖ Under the Equality Act 2010, it is the duty of all professionals working in education to protect individuals from discrimination, based on their race, and ensure access to equal opportunities.

To promote equality and protect from race-based discrimination we must take an actively anti-racist[8] approach. As Ibram X. Kendi says "there is no in-between safe space of 'not racist'" when promoting equality.

Key considerations

We have included some resources and key considerations below, which we have also embedded across the chapters in this toolkit. We recommend:

- Consider the communities you and your setting serve (e.g., who makes up your student and staff populations? What aspects of individual's identities are important to them or influence their experience? Who is represented currently?)
- Seek and listen to the voices of those communities and individuals. It is only by listening to each other that we can begin to understand and tailor the support required, and uncover any barriers or blind-spots (e.g., barriers to access, power imbalances, relationships, linguistic barriers). The onus of this work should not be placed on minoritised staff members.
- What beliefs, values, experiences, knowledge, and influences might you bring to this topic? How might these differ or be similar to the communities you are serving? How might you use these to help to have a positive impact?
- How can we promote the sense of self-worth and confidence of all young people we work with? How can we help young people to understand and have a positive view of their identities?

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[6] Gov.uk, 2023 - We have used the ethnicity categories used by the government and documentation where these are used; however, we understand that the way an individual defines their identity is often more complex than these labels may allow (White, 2012).

[7] Strand & Lindorff, 2021

[8] Ibram X. Kendi, How to Be an Antiracist (2019)

Children notice differences from a young age and the environment young children occupy can mould their thinking, beliefs and values. Children by the age of six, and some by two/three, are aware of race and are able to identify perceived racial groups. Research indicates that children as young as three, attach positive or negative characteristics to different racial groups (Hamiltion and Showunmi, 2023; MacNaughton, 2006). It is, therefore, important that we feel equipped to have conversations about race and racism with children from an early age.

Resources and ideas for practice:

- https://www.communityplaythings.co.uk/learning-library/articles/cultural-diversity-in-the-early-years
- https://www.annafreud.org/resources/under-fives-wellbeing/helping-young-children-to-think-about-race-in-the-early-years/
- Kristina Konstantoni (Senior Lecturer in Childhood Studies at the University of Edinburgh) provides a list of anti-racist resources in her blog 'It is never Too Early to Talk Anti-Racism with Young People'. Please find this here: https://www.ceres.education.ed.ac.uk/2020/08/31/ceres-blogs-it-is-never-too-early-to-talk-anti-racism-with-young-people/

Anti-racism in the Early Years Advocates
- ❖ Dr Valerie Daniel
  Follow on twitter: https://twitter.com/Valerie_JKD
  https://www.routledge.com/Anti-Racist-Practice-in-the-Early-Years-A-Holistic-Framework-for-the-Wellbeing/Daniel/p/book/9781032162652
- ❖ Liz Pemberton – Anti-racist training and consultancy i
  Follow @theblacknurserymanager
  https://www.theblacknurserymanager.com/

Age-appropriate texts:
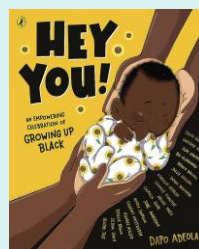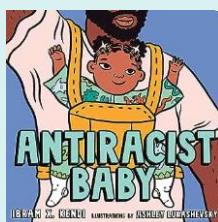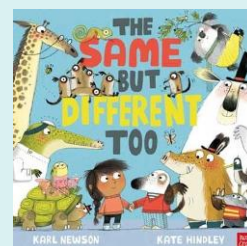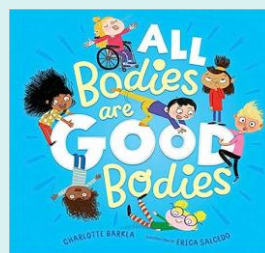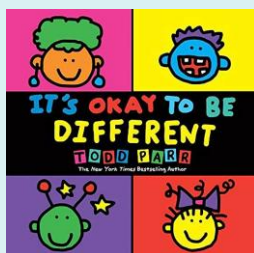
Useful links and resources

For personal development:

We have included some recommendations for..

- ❖ **Books:**
    - o The Good Ally, by Nova Reid. Nova also offers an Anti-Racism course (https://www.novareid.com/)
    - o Representation Matters: Becoming an Anti-racist educator, by Aisha Thomas.
    - o Why I'm No Longer Talking to white people About Race, by Reni Eddo-Lodge
    - o How To Be An Antiracist by Ibram X Kendi
    - o Natives: Race & Class in the Ruins of Empire, by Akala
- ❖ **Webinars and podcasts:**
    - o Race & Identity in the 21st century webinar with Layla F. Saad, author of 'Me and White Supremacy'.
    - o [Podcast] 'About Race' with Reni-Eddo Lodge
    - o Talking racism and mental health in schools by the Anna Freud centre
- ❖ **Documentaries and TV programmes:**
    - o The school that tried to end racism. Channel 4 Catch-Up TV
    - o Black and British: a forgotten history A 4-part series by David Olusoga
- ❖ **Videos:**
    - o The doll test: You Tube
    - o Ted Talk by Nova Reid 'Not all superheroes wear capes'
    - o Ted Talk by Aisha Thomas 'Why representation really matters'.

For your settings and young people you work with:

- ❖ https://neu.org.uk/latest/library/anti-racism-charter-framework-developing-anti-racist-approach
  NEU anti-racism charter: a framework for developing an anti-racist approach. The website gives further information on the importance of an explicit anti-racist approach, particularly within education.
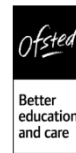- ❖ https://em-edsupport.org.uk/Page/21130
  Equality- Everyone's Business. A tool to support the development of anti-racist practice in education settings developed by Nottinghamshire County Council

- ❖ https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/5546/1/Race%20equality%20in%20education%20good%20practice%20in%20schools%20and%20local%20education%20authorities%20(PDF%20format).pdf
Race equality in education. Ofsted (2005). Good practice in schools and local education authorities

- ❖ https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/jun/23/three-ways-for-uk-schools-to-improve-their-race-relations-now
Three ways for UK schools to improve their race relations now. The Guardian, 2020
- ❖ https://www.redcross.org.uk/get-involved/teaching-resources/talking-with-children-and-young-people-about-race-and-racism
- ❖ https://www.bameednetwork.com/resources/
- ❖ https://www.learningforjustice.org/topics/race-ethnicity

Sources of support:

- ❖ General support
  - o the BAMEed Network – a movement that aims to connect, enable and showcase diverse educators https://www.bameednetwork.com
- ❖ Organisations that can providing advice on equality and discrimination
  - o Citizens Advice
  - o Equality Advisory and Support Service
  - o Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS)
  - o Civil Legal Advice (CLA)
  - o Trade Union –National Education Union for members and general advice for non-members
  - o Equality and Human Rights Commission – https://equalityhumanrights.com/en
  - o Equality Advisory Support Service – https://www.equalityadvisoryservice.com/
  - o Stop Hate – a national organisation where you can find support to challenge all forms of discrimination https://www.stophateuk.org/
- ❖ Support for emotional and mental wellbeing:
  - o Samaritans – a national mental health charity offering a free helpine service, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week
  - o Mind – a National mental health charity providing information, advice, and support. Students can also receive support from Mind https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/student-life/
  - o Rethink – a national charity offering advice and information relative to mental health and wellbeing
  - o National Bullying Helpline – a national charity with a helpline that is available 9am-5pm, Monday to Friday

- Black Thrive – A Lambeth based partnership dedicated to reducing inequality and injustices experienced by Black people in mental health services
- Black Minds Matter UK – a charity supporting black people to access mental health services https://www.blackmindsmatteruk.com/resources
- The black, African and Asian Therapy Network – a network offering resources and information on mental health and wellbeing
- A campaign that aims to provide information and advice on mental health to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller individuals https://www.travellerstimes.org.uk/sites/default/files/Information_Pack.pdf

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