JOIN US IN SOLIDARITY: INTERSECTIONALITY AND RACISM

Dr Arun Verma @drarunverma
What does solidarity mean to you?

Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.
“When advocating for constructive disruption, we conceptualise that disruption is simply defined as a break or interruption in a normal course or process. We live in a society where racism is normalised, and any act of calling out race inequalities in different spaces is a form of disruption. To enact disruption requires an understanding of the system in which you are trying to disrupt and what part you are looking to interrupt normalised racist praxis. [we need to] recognise core parts of the higher education system and offers opportunity for transformation and change”

(from Anti-Racism in Higher Education: An Action Guide for Change)
RACISM IN HIGHER EDUCATION
MY INTERSECTIONALITY STORY
EXHAUSTION  

Product of racial harassment

BURNOUT  

As a result of continuous engagement with institutional racism

PARTICIPATION  

Decisions made for underrepresented groups without their voice

COSTS  

Losing amazing talent, perpetuating group think, lacking innovation.
INTERSECTIONALITY

- Metaphor, theory, prism
- Black female scholarship
- Overlapping systems of inequality
- Multiple disadvantages
- Dr Arun Verma (2022)
ISSUES

COMPETITION
What about me?

MYSTICISM
It’s just a theory

SKEPTICISM
Is this really important?

IMPLEMENTATION
How do you bring it into practice?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RACE LITERATURE</th>
<th>BRIDGES</th>
<th>ACTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stems from anti-racism literature to inform action</td>
<td>Embraces connections and the complexity of structure</td>
<td>Translates voice, experience and analysis to action.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“One of the most troubling times I witnessed racist behaviour at a university, was a very worrying pattern of overt racism from a White manager who was working specifically on increasing access to the university for marginalised communities. When I tried to bring this up with the person involved, I was told that the events I was recounting could not have happened. When I tried to seek support from my direct manager, the incidents were brushed off ‘not a big deal’, even though I expressed concern since this manager was working directly with the community, they were being racist towards.

The piece of work they were supposedly leading on, incidentally, had been developed by another junior employee of colour, but due to the contradictions inherent to employing Black, Asian and minority ethnic people to work on anti-racism initiatives in universities whilst having to answer to White managers who might not understand the issues at hand, the work was framed to others outside of the department as having been developed and led on by this White manager.

This really highlighted to me the prevalence of departments working on so-called institutional culture change, as apologists for existing institutional cultures, and the dire need for radical, anti-racist practice, that truly resists and seeks to remake the existing institutional culture.”

(extract from Anti-Racism in Higher Education: An Action Guide for Change)
British society is yet to fully confront its colonial past, and UK universities are no exception. Consequently, not enough light has been shed on the fact that universities and academia played an important role, alongside other instruments of state, in the justification for and maintenance of the British empire. The inequalities faced by black people in the Academy and in society as a whole is a stark reminder of this continued legacy – Doku (2019)
ACKNOWLEDGING LEGACIES…

INFORMS HOW WE ENACT CHANGE
Enables services to shift systems

DESIGN
Better co-design and innovation of services

RESEARCH
Higher quality evidence for decision making and implementation
“patterned series of interrelationships existing between individuals, groups, and institutions and forming a coherent whole” (Merriam-Webster)
SYSTEMS

MULTI-FACETED
Large institutions with lots of departments and functions

AGENTS
Influencers, leaders and pressure.

ASSUMPTIONS
Relationships between domains and agents

COMPLEX
Systems often move, change and react.
Staff experience

Research

Teaching

Pedagogy

Governance

Staff experience

(Verma, 2022)
Staff experience

Research

Student experience

Teaching

Pedagogy

Staff experience

Governance

Global

OfS

REF

NSS

TEF

KEF

OIA

APP

UKRI

(Verma, 2022)
HOW DO WE KNOW WHAT IMPACT WE ARE WORKING TOWARDS?
What does an anti-racist Radboud University look like?
WHAT IS ACTION?
Why iterative design isn't enough to create innovative products (userfocus.co.uk)
Is the evidence underpinning the action intersectional? Does the data reflect different voices, experiences and structures? Are their opportunities to influence those to invest in the intervention?

Is the definition of the action meeting the requirements of the most marginalised and deprived?

Is the development of the service developed with others? Is it participatory?

Is the delivery and implementation of the action/intervention reflective of the previous phases?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intersectionality Considerations</th>
<th>Staff Training</th>
<th>Reverse Mentoring</th>
<th>Reporting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does the training refer to intersectionality?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Are the mentors supported and safeguarded during challenging conversations?</td>
<td>Does the reporting system speak to those experience multiple intersecting inequalities? (i.e. does it consider their characteristics, is there opportunity for the staff to receive feedback on what happened, are support bespoke to the needs of the individual met?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does it refer to multiple intersecting identities and their experiences?</td>
<td>Does it account for the higher education structure where staff could seek help?</td>
<td>How are mentees positioned?</td>
<td>Can reporting take a multi-agency approach?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does it account for the higher education structure where staff could seek help?</td>
<td>Is the training generic or bespoke to the institution?</td>
<td>Is the relationship transactional or transformative?</td>
<td>Who will be held to account on ensuring a complaint is dealt with fairly?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the training generic or bespoke to the institution?</td>
<td>Does the training take into account the histories of how racial aggressions have evolved?</td>
<td>How are the mentees positioned in this relationship?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Discover**
Is evidence reflective of multiple experiences? Do the concepts work towards inclusion? Do the underpinning concepts empower staff and student agency?

**Define**
Does the content speak to those who experience multiple disadvantages? Is the evidence reflective of different communities? Is hidden content inclusive?

**Develop**
Are there spaces and places that nurture belonging through the service experience? Are there equitable opportunity for those to engage? Are you owning the limitation of under-representation?

**Deliver**
Is the delivery participatory? Do the processes enable staff and students to be enabled and empowered? Are staff confident to work with groups facing multiple disadvantages?

**Evaluate**
Will the evaluation involve participants? Are insights and learning constructive and meaningful to students? Is feedback dialogical? How are you defining impact, for whom under what conditions?

**Reflect**
How is intersectional impact understood and addressed? How are communities involved in the evaluation? Are learning and insights aligned with intersectionality?
DISCUSSION

How can intersectionality enhance the impact of your diversity and inclusion activities/interventions?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Implementation outcomes</th>
<th>Intersectionality considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate</td>
<td>Is the action appropriate in addressing the issue? How have you centred the voices of racialised communities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptable</td>
<td>Is it acceptable to the most marginalised and deprived racialised communities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feasible</td>
<td>Can the HE system realistically makes this service come to life?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uptake</td>
<td>Will you be able to ensure uptake of the intervention to those that are also not bought into anti-racist action?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penetrability</td>
<td>How can the work be integrated into the system – think about your systems map.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>What is the cost of not implementing the intervention? Start thinking about your business case.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fidelity</td>
<td>Have you implemented the service in the way it was designed and intended? What rationale is their where there have been changes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>How can the intervention or change be sustained?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EMPOWERMENT
Intersectionality in action

- Intersecting inequalities
- Voice and experience
- Inclusion
- Evidence
- Collaboration
- Participation
What does being anti-racist mean to you?
Reflecting on intersectionality, what does solidarity mean to you?
Being anti-racist (Verma, 2022)

“It’s recognising that when a Black, Asian and minority ethnic colleague is subject to a racial injustice, that they will be supported and empowered to challenge the status quo. To be anti-racist is to truly be intersectional, and to be stronger in solidarity to those that live with multiple intersecting disadvantages, inequalities, and oppressions. To be anti-racist is to be able to practice care and compassion with yourself and others. Being anti-racist offers a wholistic model to driving equity, equality, diversity, and inclusion across one of the most influential sectors in today’s society.”
SUMMARY

- Reflect
- Utilise your positioning
- Systems thinking
- Journeys not pipelines
- Innovate
- Act
THANK YOU

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