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# Investigating the impact and value of anti-racist pedagogy within the undergraduate sport and leisure curriculum

Dr Spencer Swain; Dr Mark  
Mierzwinski; Matthew Green

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- Project undertaken from March 2023 through to August 2023

# Rationale – Decolonising the HE curriculum (sport/leisure)

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- Anti-racist education and decolonising the curriculum **challenge colonial thinking.**
- The **dominance of Whiteness** in the curriculum **marginalises non-Western knowledge**, reinforcing **racialised knowledge systems.** (Alexander & Arday, 2015; Arday, 2018)
- Campaigns like **Decolonising the Curriculum Movement** advocate for **inclusive education** that reflects **diverse histories and experiences.** (Bhambra et al., 2018)
  - Promoting **epistemic justice** and challenging the **monopoly of White European ideologies.** (Carnicelli & Uvinha, 2023; Mowatt, 2021)
- Sport curricula – dominated by Sports Science - **lacks a constructivist approach** to diverse experiences - maintaining harmful stereotypes of ethnic groups. (Spracklen, 2008; St Louis, 2004)
  - Impacts students' perceptions of race and scientific validity. (Hylton, 2012; 2015)

# Research Aims

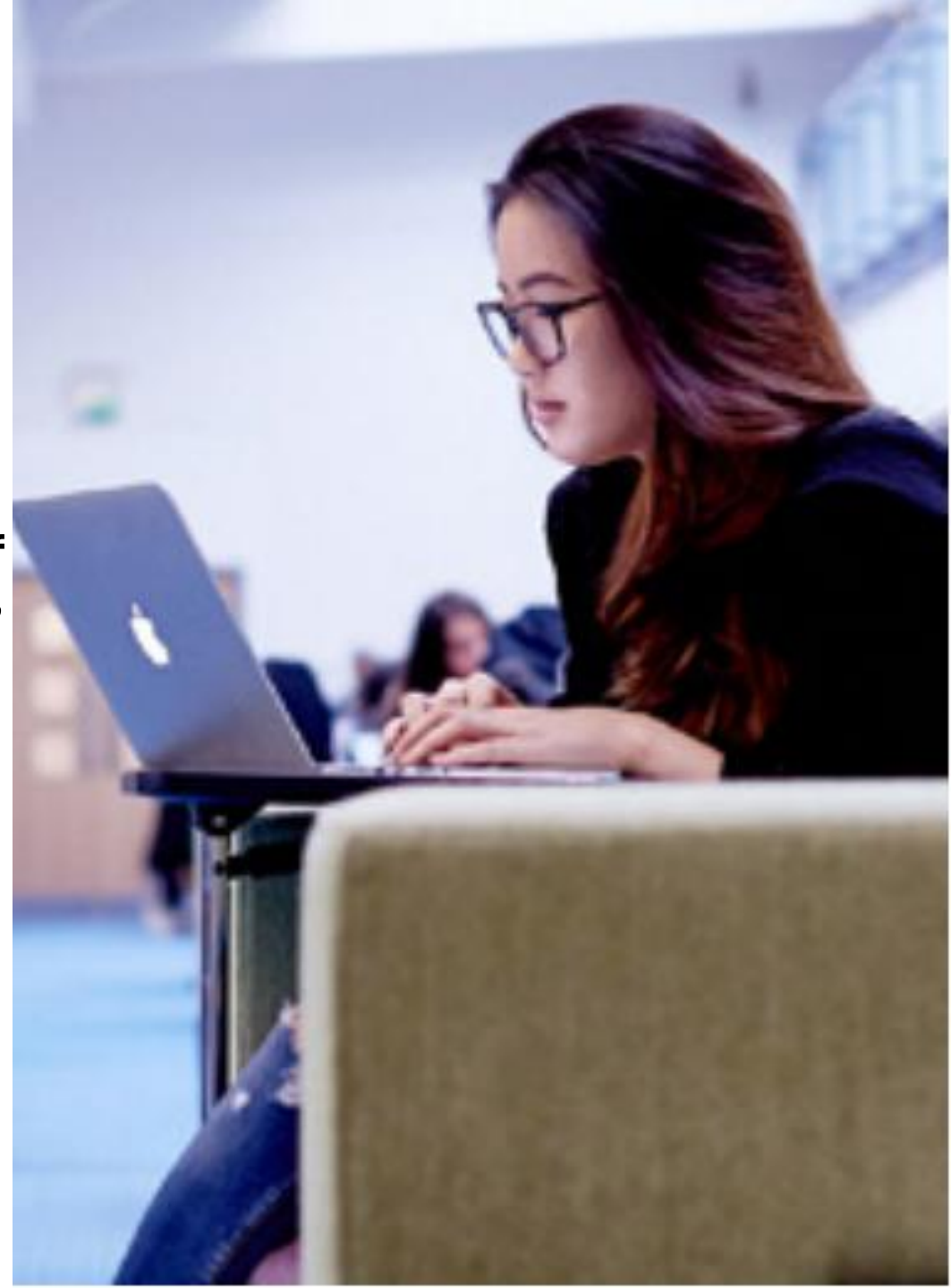
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- How studying **race and ethnicity** impacts students' perceptions of **scientific essentialism, racial discrimination** and **racism** in sports, leisure and society.
- How students' **value antiracist pedagogy** within the undergraduate sport and leisure curriculum



# Literature – Decolonisation and anti-racist pedagogy in HE

- Calls to **decolonise the curriculum** aim to address and **transform knowledge systems** beyond mere **diversity tokenism** (Cleophas, 2021; Green et al., 2023)
- The movement seeks to **challenge the dominance of white European knowledge**, promote the **inclusion of subaltern identities and histories** (Meredith & Quiroz, 2022; Masaka, 2019)
  - Questions **Western hegemonic perspectives** (Mowatt, 2021)
- Teaching **decolonial and antiracist pedagogy** in sports and leisure involves addressing **racial inequalities** and **encouraging critical reflection**.
  - Highlights the need for **safe, respectful, and non-judgmental learning environments** to facilitate **open discussions about race and racism**. (Hylton, 2012; Burdsey, 2019)



# Methodology

- Purposive and criterion-based sampling to recruit participants familiar with sociology-based modules on race, ethnicity, and racism within sports degrees at a UK university
  - Sample **14 current** students and **4 alumni** – various courses
  - University in the North of England – inclusivity? (Riches et al., 2016)
- Data collection involved **semi-structured interviews** conducted both **remotely via Microsoft Teams** and **in-person** (Watson et al., 2018)
  - aimed to create a **comfortable atmosphere to reduce power imbalances**. (Lawrence et al; Swain et al, 2024)
- **Ethical considerations** addressed **potential coercion due to lecturer-student power dynamics**,
  - recruitment and interviews **conducted by a research assistant, emphasising voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidentiality**. (Chapman et al, 2024)
- **Thematic analysis** of interviews resulting in **three overarching themes**:
  - pre-university understanding of race
  - increased racial literacy as a result of study
  - the impact and value of antiracist pedagogy.



# Results and Discussion

# Students' understanding of race and racial inequalities before university

14 of the 18 participants **attributed their limited knowledge of race and racial inequalities** to their **upbringing**.

Many participants acknowledged their **lack of exposure to racial issues** as a result of their **privileged position**.

## Students' understanding of race and racial inequalities before university

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- PESC Student 3: “Personally, I’ve **never been targeted racially**. I’ve been **very privileged in that aspect**...we are very privileged in terms of like race and stuff.”
- PESC Student 6: “I’d say I am **from a town which is very White**. There is **not a lot of diversity**, so it was **never like a massive conversation**. It was kind of mentioned here and there but it was **never like a big thing that we learnt about**...I’ve never been taught to an extent what it is and things like that.”

## Students' understanding of race and racial inequalities before university

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- Students' **lack of knowledge and experience** with racial and ethnic matters **increased their sensitivity toward causing offence**, leading to a **lack of confidence primarily due to uncertainty about using the 'correct' terminology**.
- Universities can play a **crucial role** in providing the **necessary knowledge to increase their confidence in discussing racial and ethnic issues**.

Students increased racial literacy and racial awareness post-modules

Participants could quickly **recall definitions of race and ethnicity** from their sociology of sport and leisure modules.

Participants highlighted the **benefits of considering ethnicity** as a sociological concept **rather than race**.

# Students increased racial literacy and racial awareness post-modules

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SES Student 3: “I think it’s [my understanding] has been influenced a lot by the modules because it’s, it’s something that I was... **I think I used interchangeably [race and ethnicity], not something that you think of been two different things.**”



PESC Student 4: “A pseudo-scientific term coined in the 18th and 19th century... **it’s like false claims of like a scientific method. It is like the idea of fixed like perceived differences between races.**”




PESC Student 5: “There’s like **stereotypes that people have which are not like substantiated**, like those kind of myths that generalise people within different racial categories.”

# Students increased racial literacy and racial awareness post-modules

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Learning about racialisation terms led participants to **self-realise examples of retrospective racialisation**, enlightening them about previously unknown or unquestioned experiences.



This newfound understanding **fostered a degree of criticality**, which contributes to epistemic justice, as noted by Masaka (2019).

## Students' reflections on the value and impact of the sociology-based module

Despite the diverse sport courses and career aspirations of the students, there was a **surprising unanimity in their value of social justice.**

While this data supports the belief that **students are increasingly valuing social justice content.**

# Students' reflections on the value and impact of the sociology based module

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- Alumni 1: I didn't necessarily see the value initially on the course because I kind of when in thinking it's a sport course and I didn't necessarily give thought to the fact that I would be exposed to people of all backgrounds, cultures, races, religions, everything. Having an awareness of certain beliefs and values is really beneficial... again, **it was something that I hadn't given thought to because it hadn't directly impacted me, but I am grateful for the understanding.**
- PESC Student 6: I think I've **been a bit sheltered from it [racism] and maybe I was a bit naïve to what was happening.** Now, I think that it's like a wider world and not just the small bubble that I've been in... it's kind of brought to light a bit more on a bigger scale.
- PESC Student 2: They [modules] have **brought it [racism] more to light and bettered my understanding of it... just even being talked about because where I am from it's not talked about at all.**

# Students' reflections on the value and impact of the sociology based module


**Current students valued learning about social justice issues like racial inequality and racism, which broadened their knowledge.**

**This knowledge gave students confidence in discussing these issues, despite being unsure of their specific career destinations.**

# Conclusion

Findings revealed students' initial ignorance of race and racial inequalities due to lack of personal experience and formal education before university.

Sociology-based modules significantly improved students' **racial literacy, confidence in discussing racism, and awareness of their own White privilege**. Dialogic pedagogical approach as crucial to their **learning and reflexivity**.




Thanks for  
listening

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