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

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- LSA Teaching and Learning Grant
- Project undertaken from March 2023 through to August 2023

Rationale – Decolonising the HE curriculum (sport/leisure)

- 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)

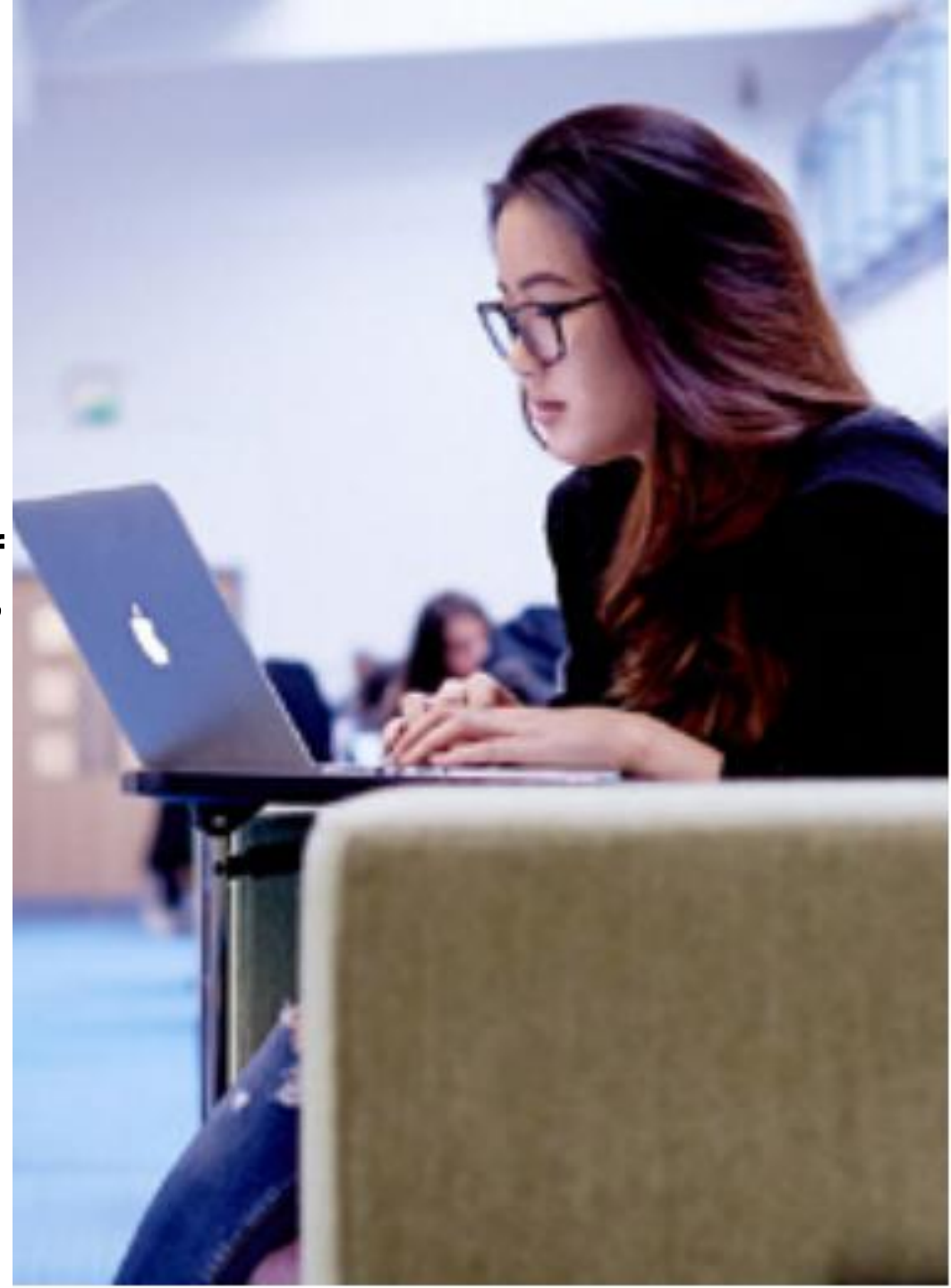
Research Aims

- 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

- 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

- 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



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

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

- 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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