



Challenging Structurally Enabled Advantage, Navigating Intersectionality

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Part 1 of 2



Working online



We welcome cameras 'on' (where possible), but please mute mic



Stay engaged for this interactive session: expect polls, chat box, breakout rooms and 'gallery view' discussion.



Be patient and kind with challenges of working online.



Respect privacy: no screen-shots or social media please (slides will be provided)

Disclaimer

This is a session that aims **to explore ways in which structurally enabled advantage promotes and sustains inequality**

Materials used throughout and conversations will include topics such as race, racism and other measures of inequality. **We may have some difficult emotional and uncomfortable moments**, but I hope you will have the **courage to engage in the conversations**, and in doing so, **be open and honest**

When we talk about inequality, it touches hot buttons in all of us, including me. **Being honest and authentic takes guts**. But if we do it and stick it out, we can learn from each other

I hope you are willing to take that risk so that we can have that experience together

Confidentiality Statement

We will encourage personal reflection but there is **no requirement** to share any personal information with the group about your own position regarding any aspect of your identity, or any sensitive personal data.

Please **de-personalise any examples that you do choose to share**. Avoid naming names or departments.

It is important to **draw on your own experiences** during this workshop, and to share those experiences where you feel comfortable doing so.



Learning together: Principles for respectful enquiry

- **Active listening** – paying attention as though we are in person
- **Confidentiality** – think about what you share and when
- **Welcome diversity of voices and experiences**
- **Be mindful** of the impact of what we say; give and receive caring feedback
- **Practice and respect self-care**, and be curious about emotional responses
- Anything else?

Who's in attendance today?



In the Chat pane please introduce yourself eg.,

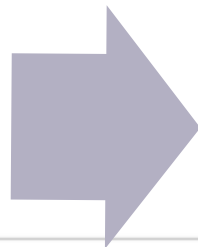
- Name
- Role, discipline/subject area (etc)
- Briefly: why you're here or what you're interested in most today

Learning objectives and structure

- **Demonstrate understanding** of how structurally enabled advantage reinforces structural and transactional inequalities
- **Reflect** upon your relationship with unearned advantage and how it impacts upon your roles as educators, leaders and/or managers
- **Demonstrate practical understandings** of how to adopt an intersectional approach to improving appreciation of staff and student's experiences
- **Evidence** increased personal and collective readiness to engage with the challenges to inclusive culture in order to promote belonging and inclusion for all students and staff

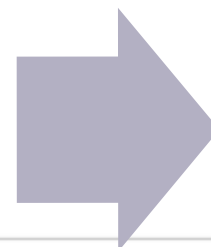
Part 1

- Half-day workshop



Independent learning

- Short task



Part 2

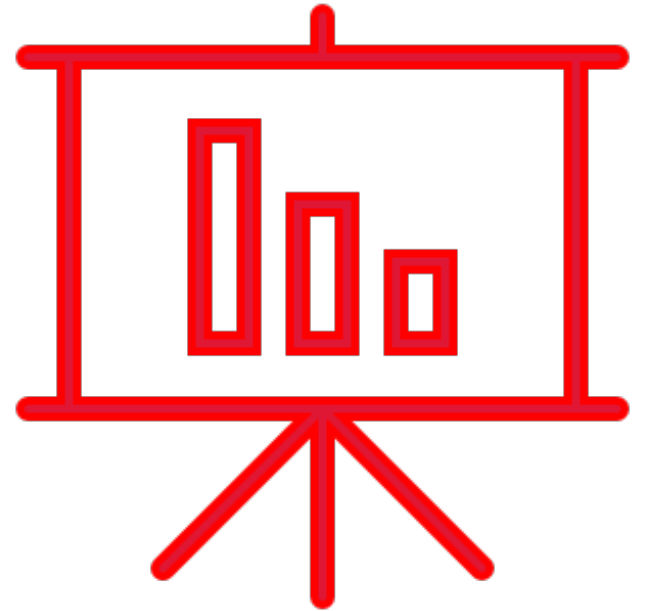
- Half-day workshop



Temperature check

How are you feeling about starting this module?

- a) Excited
- b) Curious
- c) Nervous
- d) Uncertain



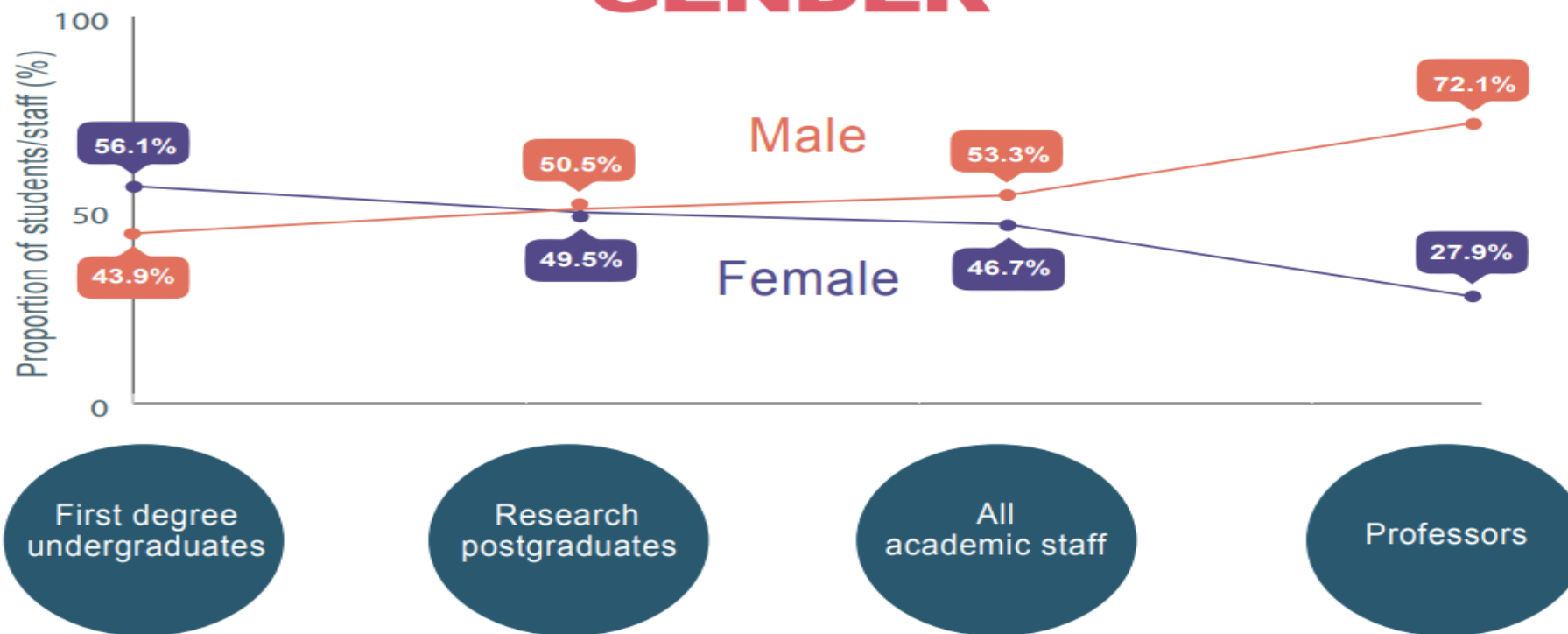


Sector Landscape

Statistics, experiences, conversations

Outcomes in UK higher education

STUDENT/STAFF PIPELINE BY GENDER



Student and staff proportions by gender, 2019-20

Outcomes in UK higher education

What do we know about students nationally ?

Representation



of UK students
are 'BAME'

25.3 %

of UK UGs are
'BAME'

26.7 %

of UK PGTs are
'BAME'

23.6 %

of UK PGRs
are Black

18.6 %

Progression



of White students
leave HE without
qualification

7.1 %

of BAME students
leave HE without
qualification

9.2 %

of Black students
leave HE without
qualification

12.3 %

Success



of White
students are
awarded a
'good degree'

86 %

of BAME
students are
awarded a
'good degree'

75.2 %

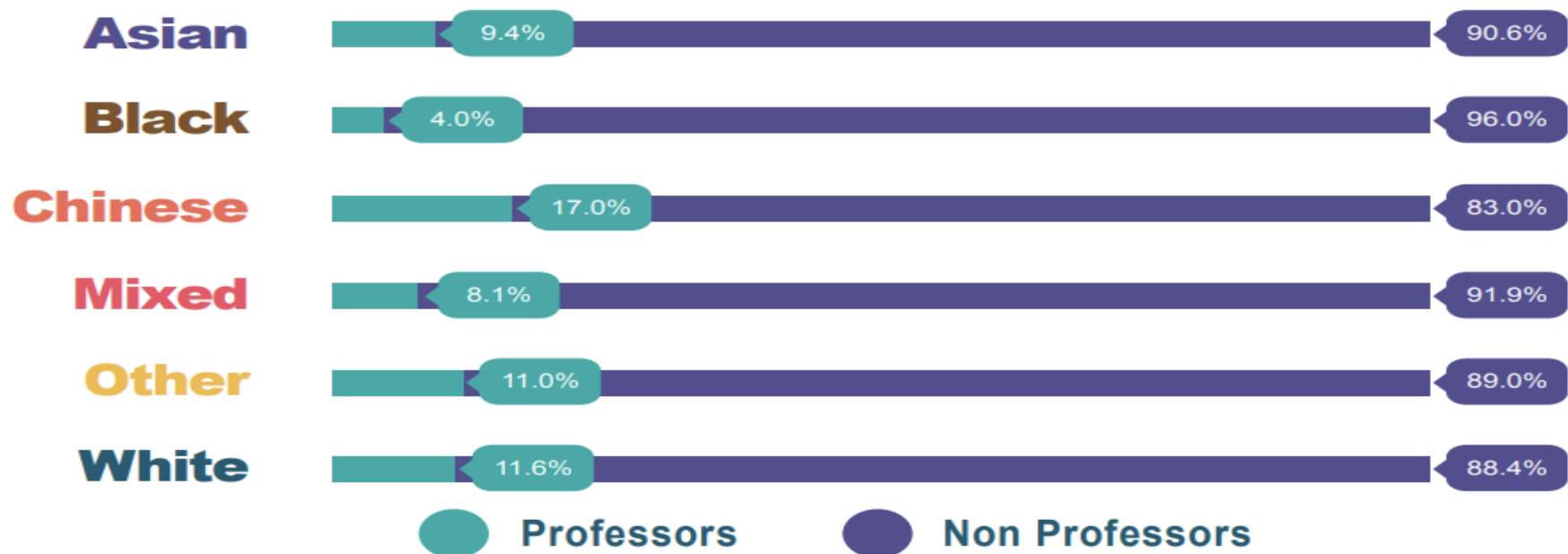
of Black students
are awarded a
'good degree'

66.3 %

Advance HE (2021) Equality in higher education statistical reports – weighted by full person equivalent.

Outcomes in UK higher education

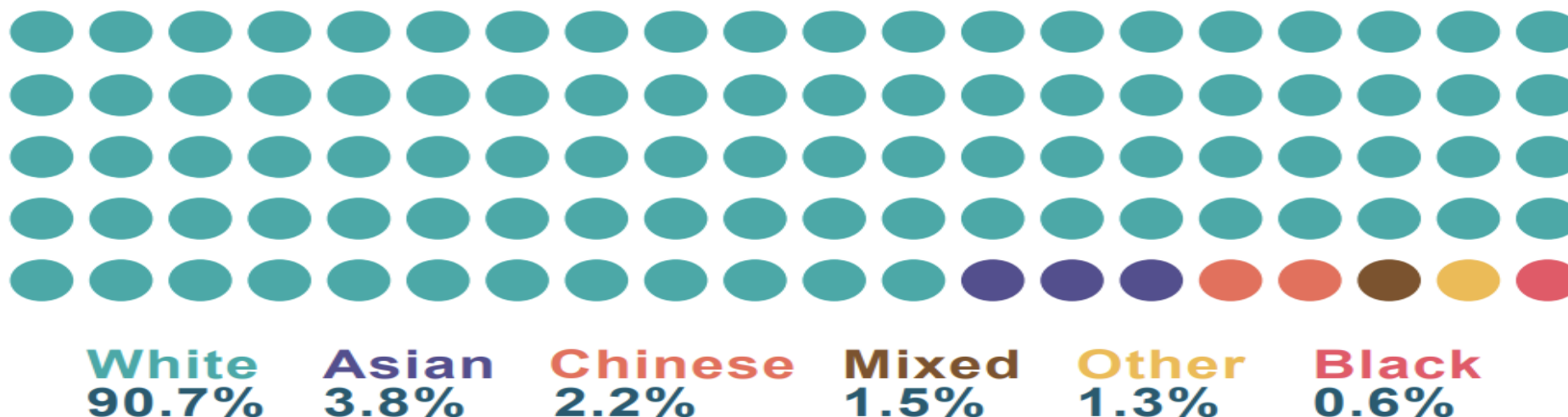
UK ACADEMICS BY ETHNIC GROUP AND PROFESSORIAL STATUS



UK academics by professorial status and ethnic group, 2019-20

Outcomes in UK higher education

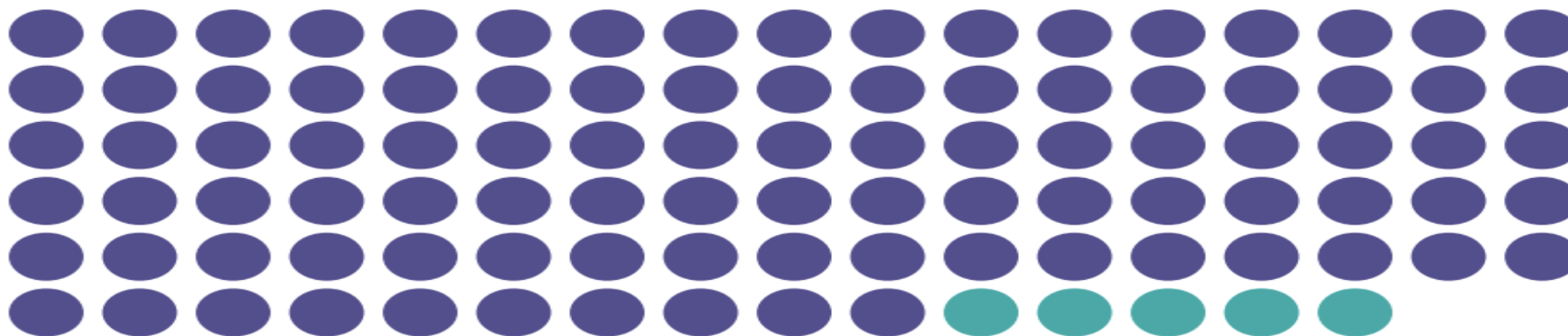
UK PROFESSORS BY ETHNIC GROUP



UK professors by ethnic group, 2019-20

Outcomes in UK higher education

UK HEADS OF INSTITUTIONS BY BLACK, ASIAN AND MINORITY ETHNIC/WHITE IDENTITY



94.8%

White heads of institutions

5.2%

Black, Asian and minority ethnic heads of institutions

UK Heads of Institutions by Black, Asian and minority ethnic/white identity, 2019-20

 **AdvanceHE**

Advance HE (2021) Equality in higher education statistical reports -
weighted by full person equivalent

#AdvanceHEstats



Current sector challenges: Some examples

Gaps in degrees
awarded

Pay and
allowances

Recruitment

Sense of
belonging

Curriculum

Brexit

Violence
(gender/religion/race)

COVID

Scholarships

Policies/ Systems

Admissions

Accommodation



Current conversations

Something's wrong...

- Differential representation, experiences and outcomes ('gaps')
- Safety issues, low sense of belonging, increased incidents of harassment & hate crime

Change is happening

- Changing cohorts, internationalization, pandemic
- Pedagogy & professional development
- Enriching and repairing scholarship and research

We need to do things differently

- Big Questions: who are universities for? Why is my curriculum 'white'? What role for HE in social justice?
- Evolving conceptions (and dissatisfaction) of 'EDI'

We are accountable

- Regulation, benchmarking, frameworks
- Law (Equality Act ; freedom of speech and academic freedom)
- Communities, professional bodies, promises



Conceptualising identity and structurally enabled advantage in higher education



Exercise

Write down your identities

(not prescriptive | as many as you deem relevant)

Identities

- Identity – self concept, sense of self,
- Identity formation – a complex process (interplay of psychology and society - cognitive, scholastic, socio-cultural, parenting influences)
- Identity formation by similarity/ difference
- Rollock, et al. (2014) The colour of class. Routledge: London



What is Privilege?

- **An advantage (or lack of difficulty/ disadvantage) in a particular context given to a particular group of people**, e.g. expectation to be treated fairly when having our assignments marked, expectation to be treated fairly when we call the police, feeling safe when walking outside at night, etc.
- This advantage is **socially embedded** (throughout society, on a systemic level) and **socially conferred** (we didn't ask for it and we can't give it up)
- We all have **a mix of privileges and disadvantages**. Privilege in one area does not directly negate disadvantage in another (it's not a zero-sum game, it's not additive, it's complex and intertwined)
- Can be **invisible** to people who have it due to ease of navigating a particular context.



Another perspective: White privilege

..... “an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day An invisible, weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools and blank cheques”

“I was taught to see racism only in individual acts of meanness, not in invisible systems conferring dominance on my group”

(McIntosh 1990: 92)

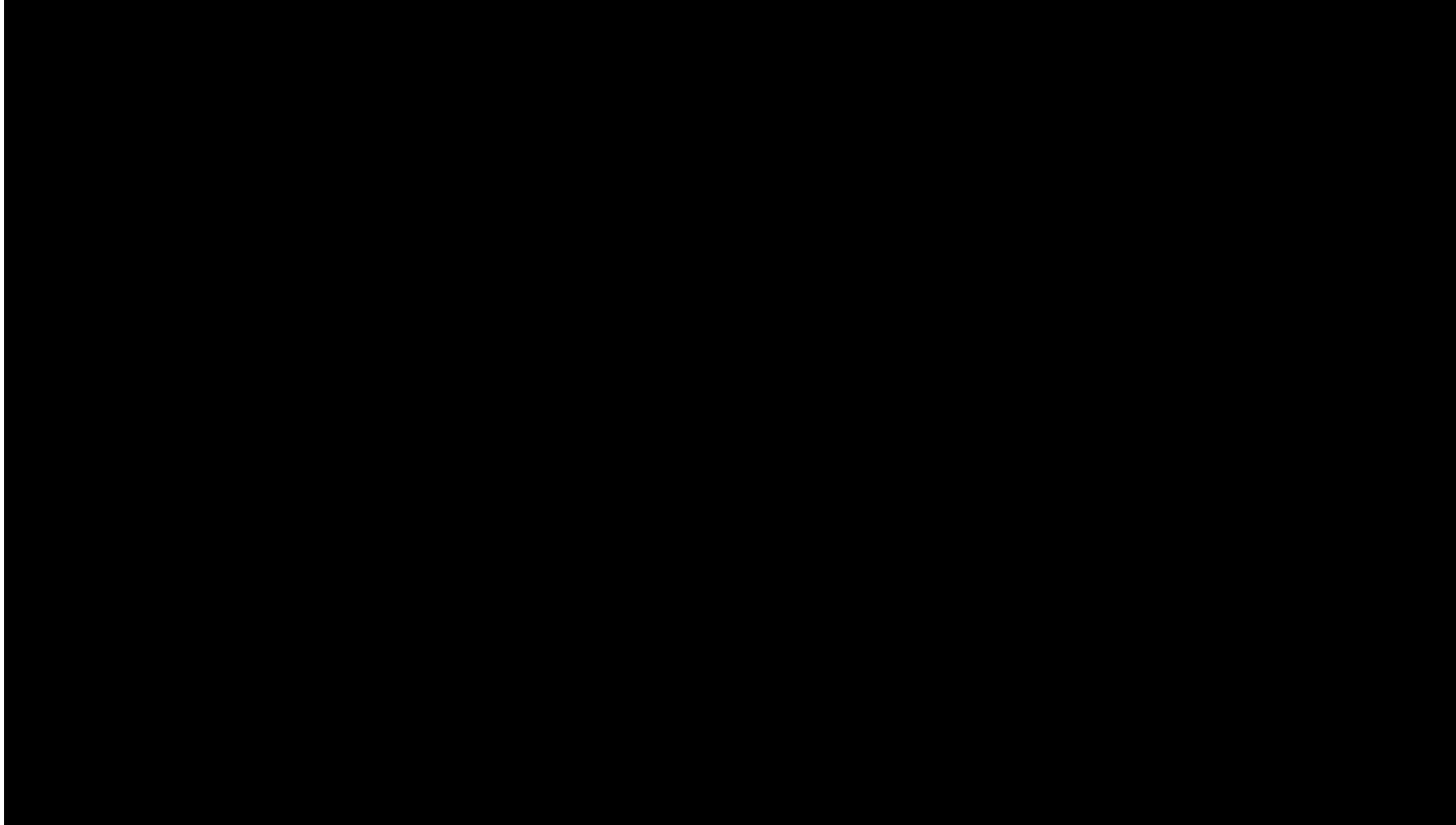
“White privilege is the fact that if you’re white, your race will almost certainly positively impact your life’s trajectory in some way. And you probably won’t even notice it.”

Renni Eddo-Lodge 2017

Race remains a problematic issue for some White academics to confront... particularly when having to acknowledge that their privilege can sometimes contribute towards maintaining cycles of inequality with regards to the paucity of diversification within the Academy



Unpacking structurally enabled advantage





Small group discussion

Based on the pre-work, this video and your own experience. Please discuss:

- How do you feel structurally enabled advantage (privilege) might work in Higher Education?
- What do you think is the relationship between identities and society?

Consider

- Was there anything that particularly resonated with you in the video or prework?
- How might your identities contribute to noticing and challenging structurally enabled advantage?

Outputs

- Nominate one colleague to provide a high level summary of your discussion



Reflective exercise

Consider:

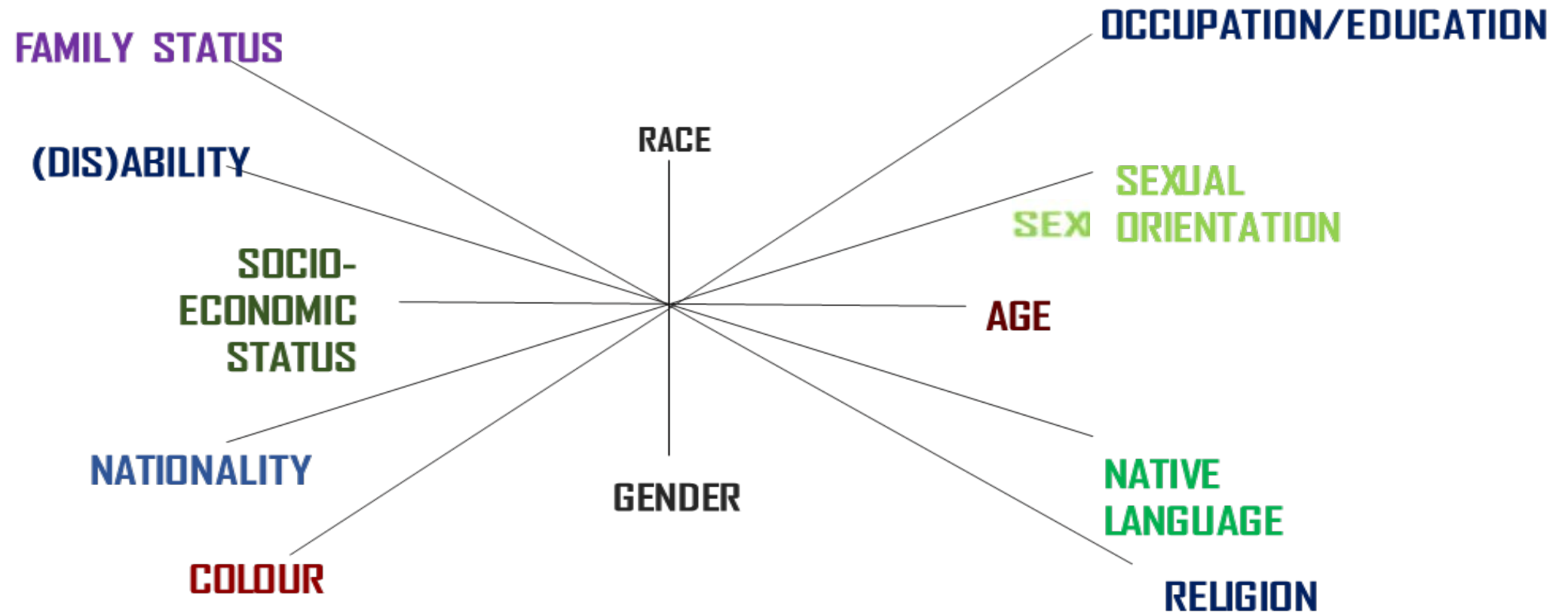
1. Is it useful to conceptualise 'advantage' based on one's identity status?
2. What is one way in which you've had unearned disadvantage in your life?
3. What is one way in which you've had unearned advantage in your life?
4. What is it like for you to sit here and talk about and hear about experiences of unearned advantage and disadvantage?

This is not compulsory



Conceptualising identity, structurally enabled advantage AND POWER in higher education

Advantage and Social Positioning





Power and its relationship to structurally enabled advantage

- Learning to “see” and understand relations of power is vital to organizing for progressive social change.
 - Power **with** (used in the context of building collective strength) and power **within** (which references an individual’s internal strength) are aspects of this
- Inequity (esp racism) cannot be understood without understanding that power is not only an individual relationship but a cultural one, and that power relationships are shifting constantly.
 - Power can be used malignantly and intentionally, but need not be, and individuals within a culture may benefit from power of which they are unaware. (**structural advantage**)
- Both the above signpost ways in which we can use our power, and structurally enabled advantage to become active allies [accomplices] to change



Power and its relationship to structurally enabled advantage

We cannot talk about privilege without talking about systemic/ structural power, e.g.

- Heteronormativity, cis-normativity, cis-het-sexism, patriarchy, classism, ableism, whiteness, etc.
- Hegemony – dominance of a certain social group over others.
- Privilege stems from being part of a hegemonic group (group with higher societal status)



Power and its relationship to structurally enabled advantage

What are the characteristics of hegemonies? (Cabrera et al., 2017; Lechene and Jackson-Cole, 2020)

- Claim to universalism
- Sense of entitlement
- Blank spots

Power and its relationship to structurally enabled advantage

Hegemony	Universalism	Blank spots	Entitlement
Whiteness		Medicine: skin conditions and oxygenation	White Saviour Complex
Hetero-normativity		"This is not a homophobic country"	
Cis-normativity	Gendered sections in shops		
Classism			Negotiating children's grades with teachers
Ableism	Stairs instead of ramps		
Patriarchy			Policing women's bodies



Power and its relationship to structurally enabled advantage

- Privilege understood as systemic advantage is not a straightforward / absolute concept.
- Conversely, structural disadvantage doesn't automatically lead to failure as it is mitigated by personal agency, support networks and coping mechanism.
- Swimming with or against the stream

Consider: How would you critically analyse these situations in the context of power and privilege?

- A white person walking into a poor racialised neighbourhood (e.g. Brazilian favela)
- Person of colour succeeding in the (white) world



Activity: Privilege in HE

Think about the privileges that exist for the group that you have been allocated.

- Make a list of the ways in which privilege operates to benefit them **in general and in Higher Education**.
- What examples of privilege for this group have you seen at **the institution/ department/ team**?
- Has **your institution** taken any action to address this privilege?

Groups are:

Men, Cis Gender, White people, Heterosexual people, People who have never experienced mental illness/ill-health

Plenary

What was discussed in your group?



Summary

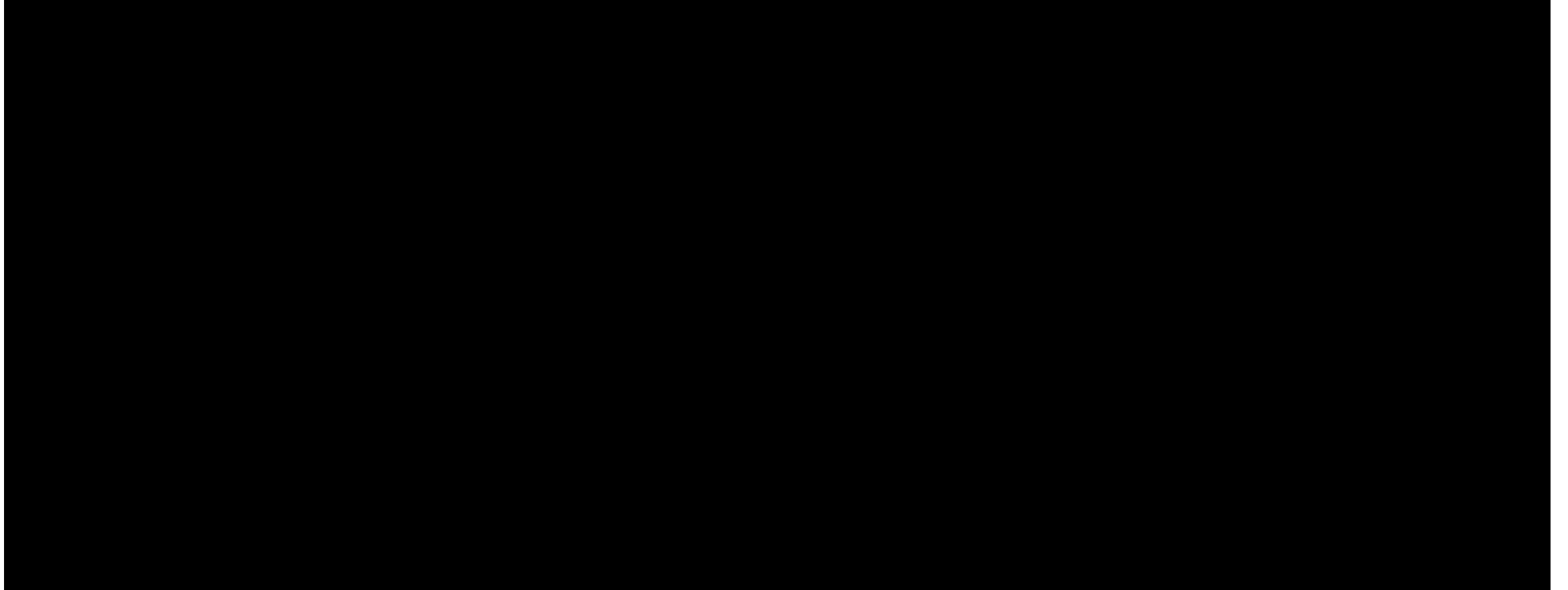
- All **people are both located in systems** and also uniquely individual
- It is **important to see society systemically**, rather than only in terms of individuals making individual choices
- An understanding of the dynamic **interplay between power and structurally enabled advantage** is fundamental to conceptualising and understanding structural inequality
- Unearned advantage, the **“up-side” of oppression and discrimination**
- People who benefit from structurally enabled advantage have trouble seeing systemically. They often believe in the myth of **meritocracy. This myth suppresses knowledge of systemic oppression and especially its “up-side” – systemic advantage**



Dismantling structurally enabled/embedded advantage:

**Seeing injustice and using your power to call it out
in order to promote inclusion**

The danger of a single story





Small group discussion

Based on the pre-work, this video and your own experience. Discuss the following

- The extent to which a single story sustains unequal power and structurally enabled advantage in Higher Education?
- How can we illuminate structural inequalities in order to dismantle structurally enabled advantage in Higher Education?
- What mechanisms are available to help us to dismantle structurally enabled advantage in order to promote equity in Higher Education?

Consider

- Was there anything that particularly resonated with you in the video or prework?

Outputs

- Nominate one colleague to provide a high-level summary of your discussion

Plenary

What was discussed in your group?



Seeing injustice



What is
POSITIONALITY?

Positionality
(Maher and Tetreault, 2001;
Martin and Gunten, 2002)



Standpoint Theory
(Sandra Harding)



Lugar de fala
(Djamila Ribeiro)

Perspective capital
(D Jackson-Cole)



Standpoint Theory: Studying unequal power relations

Standpoint Theory

- The main ideas
 - The realities/ experiences of certain people (particularly from marginalised groups) shows the truth of oppressive structures and forces
 - The view from the “top” (people with structurally enabled advantage) is clouded/ obscured
 - The view from the “bottom” (people without structurally enabled advantage) allows us to see how the system confers unearned advantage that hurt people
 - Black women’s standpoint: the idea that Black women’s experiences and consciousness about those experiences offer a unique/ beneficial view of how oppression works
 - Black women’s standpoint provides a useful site for understanding how gender/race hierarchies are intertwined to create oppressive systems



Epistemic injustice and violence in higher education

Epistemic injustice (Fricker 2007) - harm done to a person in their capacity as an epistemic subject (a knower),

- **Testimonial injustice** – when prejudice causes one to give a deflated level of credibility to a speaker's word. Eg, campus security do not believe you because you are Black
- **Hermeneutical injustice** – when a gap in collective interpretive resources puts someone/ or a group at a disadvantage when it comes to making sense of their social experiences. Eg, you suffer gender-based violence in a culture that still accept those behaviours.

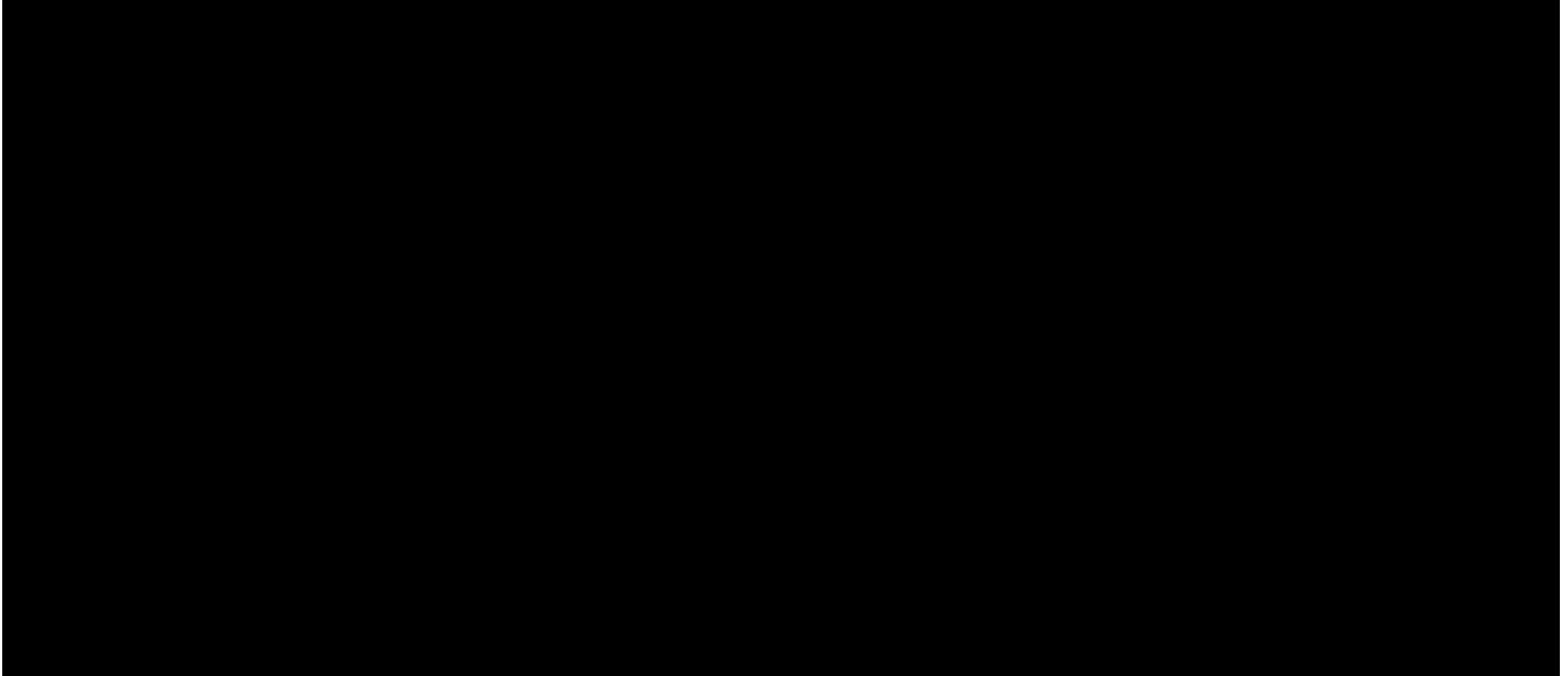
Epistemic violence (Perez 2019) - “violence... in relation to the production, circulation and recognition of knowledge: the denial of epistemic agency for certain subjects, the unacknowledged exploitation of their epistemic resources, their objectification, among many others”



Bases of Social Power

- **Coercive** – ability to punish someone else for noncompliance
- **Reward** – ability to issue rewards, for example, through a bonus or allowing time off in lieu
- **Legitimate** – the formal right to issue directives or commands because of one's position in the organization
- **Expert** – emanating from one's experience or knowledge (or being considered a “knower”)
- **Referent** – power that comes from being trusted or respected
- **Informational** – here power comes from controlling the information that others need in order to achieve something
- **Charismatic** – out of hierarchy power, gained through interpersonal skills

Advantage, power and the upstander effect





Small group discussion

Based on our discussions so far, the pre-work and your experiences, please discuss the following questions:

- To what extent are you able to use your sources of power and advantage to disrupt unearned structural privilege as upstanders/ allies?
- Can you identify examples of good practice in this regard in your institution or across the sector?

Consider

- Was there anything that particularly resonated with you in the video or prework?

Outputs

- Nominate one colleague to provide a high level summary of your discussion

Plenary

What was discussed in your group?





So, what can I do once I recognise my advantage(s)?

- Don't take it personally or use discomfort as an excuse to disengage.
- Learn when to listen, when to amplify and when to speak up.
- Educate yourself.
- Educate others who benefit from advantage (earned and unearned)
- Risk your unearned benefits to benefit others

**Some of these steps were adapted from suggestions in Emily Chiariello's "[Why Talk About Whiteness?](#)"*

Independent learning / reflection task

Roadmap to challenging structurally enabled advantage

Questions to deepen your action planning.

Choose one or two priority areas of equality where structurally enabled advantage or disproportionate power creates and sustains inequality. Then, start to sketch your roadmap.

Inequality identified	Who is impacted by this inequality?	Who needs to be involved in tackling this inequality?	How do you build trust and credibility?	Who are your allies?(Whose support can you enlist?)	Who is responsible for delivering outcomes? (including separate accountability if necessary)	How do you measure and evaluate success? (How will you know you have been successful? Quick wins)

For further reflection: in pairs or groups, challenge each other to explain your answers. In particular, if and how you have considered issues such as: leadership and values; intersectionality; standpoint theory; common barriers and mistakes; stakeholder engagement; avoiding deficit [a](#) approach; reflecting on your advantage and positionality; sustainability and accountability.



Summary reflections

- What can we learn (as a sector, as a discipline, institution, or individuals) about challenging structurally enabled advantage and ways in which it promotes structural advantage from the standpoint of marginalised groups?
- How can we use these understandings to transform practice and redistribute power?





Summing up Part 1

Activity: Group learning summary

Reflect

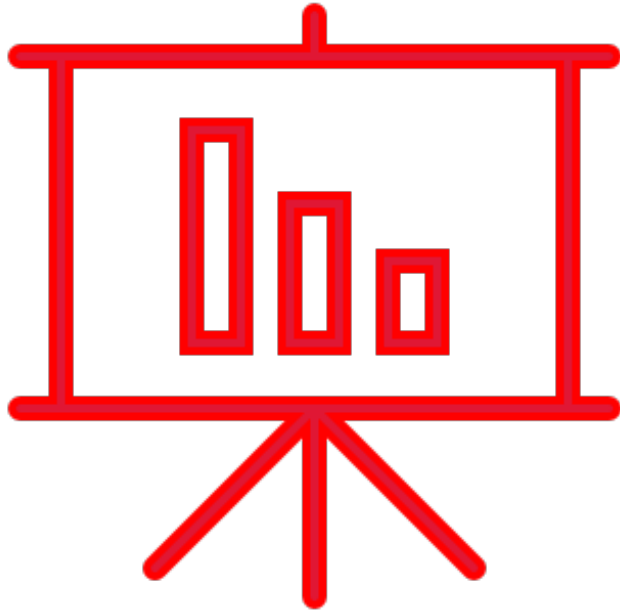
- Think of **one thing you've learned today** (the most enjoyable, or more useful, or most surprising...whatever you like!)

Share

- Write one sentence summarizing that learning, and enter into the Chat pane.



Temperature check



Compared to how you felt before starting this training, how do you rate your confidence in engaging with matters relating to power and unearned privilege?

- a) Much more confident
- b) More confident
- c) About the same
- d) Less confident
- e) Unsure

Please feel free to expand on your answer in the Chat pane.

Reflections & Questions





End of Part 1

Thank you for your time, attention and engagement.
Slidedeck and materials to follow by email.
See you in Part 2!





For more information
www.advance-he.ac.uk
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