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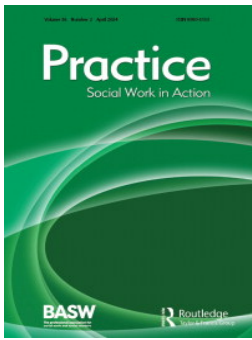
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'Race', Ethnicity, and Experiences of Practice: Perspectives of Child and Family Social Workers Working in England

Sarah Pollock ⓘ, *Susan McCaughan and Helen Scholar*

This article reports a portion of the findings from a 5-year longitudinal study on child and family social work, commissioned by the Department for Education. The study explored issues relating to child and family practice over the five years, utilising a mixed-methods design, including large-scale surveys, quantitative telephone interviews and semi-structured interviews and culminating in an annual report, published by the Department for Education at the end of each wave. This article focusses on wave four, and on the semi-structured interview phase, which explored how practitioners felt their racial or ethnic identity impacted on their experiences of practice. Five themes were developed across the different topics explored in the interviews; structures and organisations; workforce and colleagues; lack of diversity; working with families and intersectionality. This article presents these themes as part of the challenging context of inclusivity and anti-racism in contemporary social work, and makes recommendations regarding workforce diversity, training needs and reducing the additional burden carried by social workers from minoritized ethnicities, by amending the regulatory requirements of practitioners, education providers and continuing professional development recording.

Keywords: anti-racist social work; ethnic diversity; workforce; inequality

Introduction

In this paper, the phrases 'global majority' and 'minoritised ethnicity' are used interchangeably to identify those who are not white. The phrase Black and Minority Ethnic and the acronym BAME are only used in direct quotations of text or where this term is used in the original interview transcript or publication. This is in line with the longstanding contention that this term creates a false essentialism in relation to non-white people (Modood 1994).

The authors have adopted the Equality Act 2010 understanding of race as meaning colour, nationality, citizenship, ethnic or national origins, and recognise racism as 'when a person is treated worse, excluded, disadvantaged, harassed, bullied, humiliated, or degraded because of any of these characteristics' (British Association of Social Workers 2022). We recognise the four types of racism identified within the Equality Act; Direct and indirect racism, harassment and victimisation, and the understanding of intersectionality as defined within section 14 of this Act as discrimination based on a combination of protected characteristics. The authors also draw on the important, wider understanding of intersectionality as a 'multidimensionality' of disadvantage experienced by those based on their membership of multiple disadvantaged 'groups', as described by Crenshaw (1989 pp140)

Throughout the article we refer to structural racism, which, combined with institutional racism, we understand as working through organisational, political, and social action and inaction to sustain and perpetuate racial disadvantage and discrimination. This was identified prominently during the MacPherson Report into the murder of Stephen Lawrence (1999). Although not included within UK legislation, Section 149 of the Equality Act (2010) does outline the Public Sector Equality Duty, which requires public authorities to eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation, and to both advance equality of opportunity and foster good relationships between those with protected characteristics and those without. The present research, combined with existing evidence, suggests that there is still significant progress to be made in relation to achieving equity.

Anti-racist social work practice is not new; community practices in the 1970s and 80s lent themselves to challenging structures and organisations and this pressure from practice led to the requirement for qualifying programmes in the UK and overseas at the time to include anti-racist competencies (Ladhani and Sitter 2020; Penketh 1998). Political and media reframing of anti-racism as political correctness throughout the 1990s however, paired with the growth in neo-liberal individualisation of practice responses to need, saw a decline in both anti-racist and community social work practice (see Lavalette and Penketh 2013 and in Dominelli 2018).

The early 2000s saw a substantial growth in Islamophobia, (Ritchie,2001 Moore and Ramsey 2017), media coverage of the involvement of Asian men in child sexual exploitation cases (Cockbain and Tufail 2020) and the centring of anti-immigration rhetoric as a political tool during pro-Brexit campaigning (Moore and Ramsey 2017) contributed to the difficult context within which anti-racist social work practice has struggled to find a voice.

The murder of George Floyd in May 2020 triggered an immediate international media response (Brown and Mourão 2021). In the days and weeks that followed, the Black Lives Matter movement, initially started in July 2010 (BlackLivesMatter.com online – no date), saw a resurgence in the public domain, and exponential growth in attention across the globe. In the wake of

Floyd's murder, the Covid-19 pandemic further highlighted the impact of structural and institutional racism, through making explicit racial and ethnic inequalities internationally, across all aspects of public life, including in health (Williams et al. 2020), employment (McGregor-Smith, 2017), and housing (De Noronha 2021).

The publication of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities (CRED) Report in the UK (Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities 2021) was contentious in its failure to acknowledge structural racism, referring to racism as historical, and highlighting the successes of some minoritized ethnic groups. It simultaneously blamed these populations for allowing negative perceptions to prevent them from seeing the 'open and fairer' UK context (Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities,2021 6) and for not being pro-active in their own emancipation.

Reading both the Equality Act 2010 and CRED Report creates the image of a very different contemporary context than the reality in which social workers in the UK practice. Following the publication of the CRED Report, many professional regulators and public bodies published statements on behalf of their members, asserting their disagreement with the findings and giving clear examples of structural racism in their respective fields (British Medical Association,2021 Royal College of Psychiatrists 2021). There was no statement from the English social work regulator, Social Work England (SWE) although the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) was vocal in its rejection of the report (BASW, 2021), launching their own anti-racism resources. BASW also launched a report on anti-racist activity in 2021 to commemorate a year since Floyd's death. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation joined these organisations, presenting evidence of structural racism and calling for ethnicity pay gap reporting akin to measures introduced for gender in the UK in 2017 (Barry 2021).

In 2022, SWE, the Principle Social Workers Network and What Works for Children's Social Care published their own report into anti-racism in social work practice (Gurau and Bachoo 2022), which in contrast to the government commissioned report, revealed stark findings. The report headlines identified that twenty-eight percent of practitioners surveyed reported experiencing racism from colleagues or managers. In addition, a further nine percent of respondents had witnessed families experiencing racism from colleagues or managers. The impact of these racist interactions left respondents feeling increasingly anxious, with ten percent stating they had left a position and nine percent reporting they had left the profession entirely as a result. Respondents from minoritized ethnic groups reported experiencing a higher level of scrutiny of their work, unfair workload allocation and lack of progression opportunities. Recommendations from this report included the need for organisations to take responsibility, including social work education providers, for the social work regulator to include anti-racism in the Professional Standards (Gurau and Bachoo 2022, 23), and for white social workers to

provide allyship to their global majority colleagues. These findings are more aligned to the McGregor Smith Review of Race in the Workplace (2017) and the NHS Workforce Race Equality Standard Report (2018), than the 2020 CRED Report.

Alongside professional associations, social work academics and practitioners began to publish their accounts of racism, drawing attention to the experiences of global majority practitioners who have previously been overlooked, through engaging narratives and stories of personal and professional development (Moore and Simango 2021; Reid and Maclean 2021). Research indicates that social work education is fundamental to challenging racism, with findings identifying a lack of anti-racist practice taught on qualifying programmes in favour of a broader 'anti-oppressive practice' approach (Tedam and Cane 2022; Pentaris et al. 2022). Further, Morton et al. (2022) and Soper et al. (2016, in Bellinger & Ford eds, 2016) indicate that social work education not only fails to prepare student social workers to practice anti-racism but can also reinforce discrimination through the structural racism inherent in higher education and social care systems (Universities UK 2019).

It is in this complex context of the UK government's failure to recognise structural racism and the social work profession's growing body of evidence to the contrary, that the research reported here took place.

Methodology

This article reports a section of the findings from a 5-year longitudinal study on child and family social work recruitment and retention, commissioned by the Department for Education (Department for Education, 2019; 2020; 2021; 2022; 2023). The mixed-methods study explored numerous issues relating to social work in child and family practice over the five years, utilising large-scale online surveys, follow up quantitative telephone surveys and semi-structured interviews, culminating in an annual report, published by the Department for Education at the end of each wave. The project received ethical approval from **** University. The methodology for the whole project has been reported previously (McLaughlin et al. 2022).

The topic guide for the semi-structured interviews was adapted at each wave of the study to accommodate for specific areas of interest that developed from the findings of previous waves and/or contextual factors. The interviews for wave four took place between December 2021 and January 2022 and the guide was developed during the summer of 2021, in the months following the death of George Floyd and during the final months of the Covid-19 lockdowns in the UK. The authors felt it was important to use the qualitative interviews to explore the renewed focus on race, ethnicity, and cultural identity in social work (Department for Education, 2022), and the impact this was having on practitioners, alongside other themes.

The sampling strategy for recruiting forty participants for interview was adapted, dependent on the focus of the research each year. At wave four, it was necessary to ensure that a spread of practitioners from different ethnic backgrounds were interviewed. Setting hard targets in relation to ethnic identity is inherently problematic (Gunaratnam 2003) and, after negotiation with the funder, it was decided that we would use the 2021 Census categories as 'soft targets'. This agreement included the caveat that the interview guide asked participants whether they felt that this categorisation of their ethnicity was sufficient and offered them the opportunity to self-define their ethnic identity. It was also explicitly agreed that the aim of the analysis would not be to compare findings across ethnic groups, in line with the recognition that the authors sought to avoid reinforcing notions of a hierarchy of disadvantage (Crenshaw 1989). The UK census ethnicity categories are Asian or Asian British; Black or Black British, Caribbean, or African; Mixed or multiple ethnic groups; White; and Other (Government online, 2021). From the 1605 respondents who completed the quantitative phase of the fourth wave of the study, the aim was to recruit about six people from each category to take part in the interviews, totalling forty participants.

As a five-year project with a wide remit, the budget was agreed long before the fourth wave, on which this article is based. The original funding application had not accounted for a pilot phase at each year of the study, in part because the specific focus of the qualitative interviews was not identified so far in advance. The advisory board for the five-year study, and academics responsible for conducting the interviews consisted mostly of white women, although there were other genders and global majority members of the wider advisory group and DfE project team. This meant that piloting the wave four qualitative interview guide was essential. Disappointingly therefore, although piloting did take place, this was unpaid, and conducted on an informal level, with global majority colleagues of the research team. This feedback led to the amendment and improvement of the guide. It is an important learning point for future projects, to consider representation on funding panels, advisory boards and research teams (UK Research and Innovation 2023). It is fundamental to furthering equality, to appropriately renumerate people from disadvantaged groups, including those from the global majority, for the potentially triggering emotional labour required to contribute to the development of policy and practice, and participate in research of the same nature. Some funding organisations have now developed specific policies to facilitate payments of this type for both research collaborators and participants using their emotional labour (National Institute for Health and Care Research 2022).

Separate to the piloting, and for transparency, each interview participant was offered a £20 voucher for their participation. This again was agreed at the beginning of the five years, before the specific topics had been decided, and on reflection is a point for consideration in future projects.

The final topic guide included participants' own perception of how their ethnicity impacted on their experiences of practice, working through the pandemic,

career plans, agency social work, and career development -including leadership and supervision. The participants were interviewed as individuals and their perspectives were not taken as reflective of the views of their employing organisations or of other practitioners with similar ethnicities. Identity theorists such as Jenkins (2014) offer the scope to debate the limits of participant's ability to speak as individuals, given their employment within government structures and organisations. The participants were, however, all social workers, registered and committed to adhering to the SWE Professional Standards (2021). The researchers suggest that this registration, and the anonymity offered to participants, enabled them to speak freely about their experiences.

The interviews also established participants' perceptions of ethnic diversity within their employing local authority workforce, and that of the people living within the authority and receiving services, to explore how this felt for practitioners. The interviews took place *via* MS Teams or telephone, lasting approximately an hour, at a time convenient to the participants. They were undertaken by a combination of academics and researchers from a partner research organisation and were digitally recorded and transcribed by an externally commissioned transcription company. The academic researchers (three white female social work academics) then divided the transcripts between them and coded the data to develop themes. Once all transcripts had been coded, the researchers met to discuss and agree themes and subthemes across the dataset, developing a framework for analysis. This was then transferred to an online excel spreadsheet and populated by the researchers with quotations to evidence each theme. The framework included columns to identify the ethnic group, role, and employment status of each participant, which allowed the researchers to look for patterns of responses, although the aim was explicitly not to compare responses by ethnicity. The researchers continued to meet regularly throughout this process to refine the themes using a variation of the constant comparative method, which remained consistent across the five waves of the study, as agreed with the funders (Department for Education, 2019; 2020; 2021; 2022; 2023; McLaughlin et al. 2022).

Results

Five interconnected themes were developed across the different topics explored in the interviews, where respondents felt their ethnic identity impacted on their experiences of practice; structures and organisations; workforce and colleagues; lack of diversity; working with families and intersectionality. In presenting these themes, the authors recognise that participants may have different understandings of 'racism' and 'anti-racism'. The interviews did not seek to clarify this with participants, rather to illicit their individual experiences and develop broad themes on which to base practice recommendations.

Table 1. Do the categories provided adequately define your ethnic, racial, or cultural identity?

Ethnicity	Category accurate	Category insufficient or incorrect	total number of respondents
White	5	1	6
Black	4	9	13
Asian	1	5	6
Mixed	2	6	8
Other	0	6	6
Totals	12	27	39

All participants were asked whether they felt that the ethnicity categories used in the study were sufficient to describe their ethnic identity, the majority felt that they were not (see Table 1). The main reason for this was that participants wanted to provide a more specific explanation of their ethnicity, for example those in the ‘mixed’ category wanted the ethnicity of their two parents recording, and Black respondents wanted their country of origin, or that of their parents, included. Other participants wanted to use different language than the categories allowed, for example ‘dual heritage’ was seen as preferable to ‘mixed’.

It was hoped that the quotations presented in this section could use participant’s self-definitions of their ethnicity, however it was felt by the researchers that this was not possible whilst maintaining participant confidentiality. Participants are therefore referred to using their ethnicity from the census categories, and their role within their employing organisation.

Structures and Organisations

Respondents from a range of authorities across England reported that within their employing organisations, ethnic diversity within leadership was not representative of the overall workforce – with one quarter of respondents describing their senior leadership as predominantly White British, even when the local workforce and community they served was not.

> Especially now in our locality, we have an awful lot of black workers, which we definitely should have, you know, but in terms of the seniority, I mean, we’ve only got one non-White senior manager. (Head of Service, Mixed ethnicity)

In relation to organisational responses to racism, the respondents had mixed experiences, with some feeling supported by their employer’s commitment to anti-racism following racist incidents. Others however, felt that the overwhelming lack of ethnic diversity of those in senior positions negatively impacted their morale and expectations of their own careers.

> We definitely need more ethnically diverse senior managers, because it does show. When we sit in these meetings it does show, it's obvious who's at the bottom of the pile and it's us. (Frontline practitioner, Asian)

For some, this exacerbated feelings of being undervalued, and having to work harder to mitigate unconscious bias from predominantly White leaders when trying to achieve promotions.

> I think I have to work three times harder than any of my White British colleagues because when I have worked, I have seen that even people, those who are like in a seven-year, eight year, junior than me, they have been promoted up in the position. (Assistant Team Manager, Asian)

The lack of ethnic representation in senior management was also identified by some respondents in relation to organisational responses to the Covid-19 pandemic. Across authorities, practitioners reported a mixed response from their employers in relation to the increased risk for staff from some ethnic groups, varying from receiving no clear guidance, to specific strategic responses. Others identified inconsistent support nationally, for issues such as extended leave to travel abroad following the death of loved ones, and the associated quarantine requirements at the time disproportionately impacting some ethnic groups (House of Commons, 2020).

Many respondents did recognise that work was being undertaken within their local authorities to raise awareness of racism, with forums, groups and safe spaces being set up for practitioners to share experiences of racism and discrimination, and make their collective voice heard within their employing organisation.

> So, we have a diversity group within the organisation that I manage, they do a monthly newsletter, we do specialist training as a management group. (Service Manager 'other' ethnicity)

Some respondents from minoritized ethnicities, however, did not feel comfortable having conversations about their ethnicity, 'race' or culture in the workplace and were concerned that their individual perspective would be taken as representative of a whole ethnic group.

Overall, practitioners felt more positive about their experiences, when they were supported by their organisations following incidents of racism, and where they saw ethnic diversity and representation within the leadership of their employing authority.

Workforce and Colleagues

Ethnic diversity within the workforce was seen as positive by all interviewees who experienced this, with many describing their own cultural knowledge improving through learning from colleagues. Practitioners perceived benefits

for global majority families, if their social workers had similar experiences in relation to their own ethnic, 'racial' or cultural heritage. This shared connection also contributed to a growth in confidence for ethnically minoritized practitioners, who saw a strength in being able to use their experiences to develop good relationships with families.

> Those types of things have been really beneficial for me in terms of being able to relate to people and people feeling that I understand where they're coming from as well. So for me, it's been overwhelmingly positive (Team Leader, Asian)

Where the workforce was less diverse, respondents felt tensions in the workplace could arise due to lack of knowledge of the backgrounds of ethnically minoritized practitioners. Here practitioners gave examples of experiencing discrimination from colleagues in relation to their written capability, and many different combinations of micro-aggressions, including comments about the volume of people's voices, hair, demeanour, and the pronunciation of names.

> I can speak very fluently in English, but I really don't have as many English words as a lot of people have. And I think usually people might approach me and expect that I will come up with an answer very quickly, and I think that leads to a perception that I don't know what I'm talking about, or my responses are not as quick as somebody might have expected. And to me that's making me start to doubt myself (Frontline Practitioner, Black)

An ethnically diverse workforce offers clear strengths for practitioners and families from all backgrounds, however there is additional emotional labour involved for practitioners who experience racism and micro-aggressions, in addition to their existing workload, which needs to be acknowledged.

Lack of Diversity

Ethnic diversity across the different regions of England is varied, with inner London as home to a highly diverse population, and areas in the North-East of the country being overwhelmingly white-British (Office of National Statistics 2021). This variable picture is reflected in the experiences of both practitioners and families across the country.

Some practitioners described employers as lacking the confidence to challenge discrimination, poor cultural awareness, for example failure to accommodate for non-Christian religious celebrations, and failures to recognise family's cultural needs.

> I've realised that they're less confident in terms of working with families from black and ethnic minorities and they're like, 'Oh, you're from London. You've got more experience of that… (Team Manager, Mixed ethnicity)

Some participants from non-White ethnic groups spent time researching the ethnic diversity of potential employing local authorities when considering relocation, to help them decide whether to accept a role. These practitioners wanted to know whether they would be accepted in the area, and the level of support and understanding about racism was perceived to increase in correlation with increased ethnic diversity of the organisation. This was an important consideration and an additional task that White British workers did not need to carry out.

> When I first came to work here, I did a lot of research around [employing authority] itself because that was the worry that I had around how I would be received. (Practice Supervisor, Mixed ethnicity)

Working with Families

Respondents felt that the recent renewed interest in anti-racism was positive for families, particularly in relation to how their ethnic, 'racial' or cultural heritage was recognised. Practitioners did, however, raise issues of racism both in relation to supporting families who were experiencing racism and experiencing racism from families. Practitioners with lived experience of racism were able to empathise here, and where local authorities had developed inclusive services, this was perceived positively by respondents.

> Our parenting courses, we provide them in different languages, we make sure that we use an interpreter if English is not the first language, we make sure that if we do assessments, we can send them out so that families fully understand them. (Team Manager, Black)

Racism from families came in the form of both explicit racist comments and micro-aggressions. Some practitioners tried to use these interactions as a point of learning for families, and to challenge discriminatory attitudes, where others utilised the support mechanisms in their authorities, and spoke with colleagues and managers. These incidents were reported by respondents most frequently as connected to their accents, combining racism with language discrimination, and here supportive leadership was seen as essential to practitioners.

Intersectionality

It is important to recognise that whilst ethnicity is an important facet of identity, that practitioners, like all individuals, experience their ethnicity as it interacts with other aspects of their identity, for example gender, social class, and sexuality. This intersectional dynamic was identified by participants as shaping their experience of their workplace and the families they worked with. Class was seen as interacting with ethnicity to create different,

multifaceted experiences that were not always recognised by their employers or colleagues.

> There's still an awful lot of white middle class people that do not have a real life understanding of what it is to be poor, what it is to be black, what it is to be both and what it is to truly struggle. (Frontline Practitioner, Mixed ethnicity)

Discussion & Messages for Practice

The findings of this research echo those of Ashe and Nazroo (2015) in relation to the broader UK workforce, NHS (2018) in relation to NHS employees, and Gurau and Bacchoo (2022) relating more specifically to social work. These reports provide an evidence base that demonstrates the urgency with which SWE and practice leaders need to address racism and discrimination within the workplace. The 2022 report concluded with recommendations for allyship, a clear anti-racist focus in social work education and the expansion of the Social Work England standards to explicitly include anti-racism. Similar messages for practice were offered by participants in this study.

The data provided here demonstrates that the profession can learn not only from negative experiences of racism in the workplace, but from positive examples of how representation in leadership can inspire those new to the profession. Disappointingly, the current social work leadership is overwhelmingly White (Bernard 2020), but where this is not the case, practitioners from all ethnicities reported benefits. Participants in this study wanted to see representation on interview panels at all levels, to mitigate unconscious bias throughout the different stages of professional development. Here allyship is important, as white colleagues are urged to recognise when they are in a room with no global majority peers. Forums specifically to raise awareness of anti-racism were seen as an important part of how these representation issues could be raised, with practitioners suggesting that white colleagues should be included in some of these meetings, as allies, to use their voices to facilitate change. Howard (in Moore and Simango 2021) offers an example of this in practice.

For local authorities that had limited ethnic diversity, both in the community and in the workforce, education was seen as important, as practitioners had less opportunity for informal learning from global majority peers. Although respondents in this study reported that the knowledge they had gained from global majority colleagues was a strength, it is not the responsibility of these colleagues to educate white practitioners. It is suggested that any formalisation of this process should be treated sensitively, for example Simango and Moore (2021) describe how reverse mentoring can be a positive way to support global majority colleagues to share their experiences.

Participants both in this study and Gurau and Bacchoo (2022) identified education as key to building practitioner confidence to address and challenge

racism. Currently research suggests that social work education programmes are not including enough anti-racist teaching in their programmes (Tedam and Cane 2022; Pentaris et al. 2022), nor is there strong evidence of this in continuing professional development (CPD) offers from local authorities (Pollock 2023). The result is that social work academics are not consistently or appropriately supporting global majority heritage students (Morton et al. 2022) and practitioners are entering the workforce unprepared for how to challenge racism in practice.

There is opportunity to address this shortfall in the SWE Education and Training Standards (2021), particularly in relation to standard two, which outlines the responsibility to support students on placement, and standard four which describes expectations of programme design. This standard does include the requirement to comply with responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 however this is a separate issue to mandating the inclusion of anti-racist social work in the course content.

SWE requirements expect qualified practitioners to evidence at least two pieces of CPD each year to remain registered (Social Work England, 2023). There is opportunity here, to build in a requirement for some of this learning to encompass anti-racism. Utilising CPD recording to capture this learning would mean that all practitioners have an up-to-date understanding of the impact of discrimination, and how to be an anti-racist social worker. This would also address the notable gap in workforce knowledge due to the absence of anti-racism in social work education, described above.

The Social Work England professional standards are the threshold standards for all registered social workers in England. Gurau and Bacchoo (2022) identified that only 44% of their participants felt their organisation was doing enough to challenge racism, and that participants advocated for reports of racism being taken more seriously. This is in line with wider reports of workplace indifference, as described by Ashe and Nazroo (2015), with NHS (2018) referring to this as 'race evasion', indicating that NHS leadership deny or ignore reports of racism, meaning employees feel isolated, ignored, and undermined. Obasi (2021) extends this definition and refers to a 'race taboo' in her work with Black female social workers, identifying that these practitioners were both invisible in comparison with white experiences, and hypervisible in negative situations.

Integrating the requirement for specific anti-racist practice as a feature of professional standards would be a way of the profession holding itself to account, acknowledging and addressing these experiences of race evasion and taboo, and potentially reducing some of the additional burden carried by global majority practitioners.

Participants from many minoritized ethnicities in this study reported the additional hardship of experiencing multiple types of racism and microaggressions, feeling overlooked for promotion opportunities and having to work harder for recognition than white colleagues, a finding echoed nationally by

NHS (2018) and internationally by Moreblessing (2015). They felt the impact of researching ethnic diversity in authorities before relocating, for fear of being a target of racism, and not being consistently able to rely on the support they needed from colleagues or managers following incidents of racism from either their employer or families. (See Hackett et al. 2020 for an exploration of the link between experiencing racism and mental health difficulties)

The IFSW global definition of social work guides us, as a profession, to have 'collective responsibility' for social justice, an element of which is anti-racist practice. In the current political climate, the inclusion of anti-racism in our regulatory requirements for practitioners, education providers and CPD would be a clear indication of the profession's commitment to social justice.

There are a growing number of students joining social work education programmes from overseas, many from global majority populations (Social Work England, 2023). It is important to ensure that these practitioners feel welcome and supported, both to uphold our professional ethics but also to ensure that they feel able to provide a long-term contribution to the workforce. If we are to continue to provide support for families, the profession must also provide appropriate support for global majority practitioners.

Conclusion

This article has shared the findings from one element of a longitudinal study of child and family social workers, with a focus on the impact ethnicity has on social worker's experiences of practice. Social work has a long history of anti-racist practice, but recent evidence indicates that this anti-racist position is not often reflected in practice realities for global majority practitioners.

As a profession, there is now a substantial body of evidence indicating that structural racism is inherent within the profession (Bernard, 2021; Cane and Tedam 2022; Gurau and Bacchoo 2022; Morton et al. 2022; Reid and Maclean 2021). Action is required to change this. This article makes the following recommendations: 1. SWE and social work leadership to develop clear strategies for improving the ethnic diversity of the workforce, particularly in senior positions, enhancing opportunities for those who are unrepresented in leadership. 2. Ensuring consistent support is provided across the country, for those experiencing racism in the workplace. 3. Use of the Social Work England Standards, to mandate the inclusion of anti-racist learning in qualifying programmes and in the CPD framework, to ensure practitioners document anti-racist learning regularly. This would also align social work regulation in England with the IFSW Global Social Work Statement of Ethnical Principles; Principle 3, which specifically identifies social work's role in building solidarity, addressing unjust practices, respecting diversity and challenging discrimination. (IFSW,2018 online)

This learning can support all practitioners to understand the additional burden that global majority colleagues currently carry when experiencing micro-

aggressions, conducting additional research before accepting offers of employment, and feeling that they work harder than white colleagues, yet are overlooked when promotion opportunities are available.

Authors' Contributions

Disclosure Statement

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