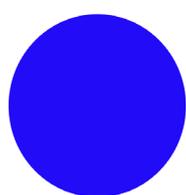


SUPPORTING BAME YOUNG PEOPLE

Intersectional Practice

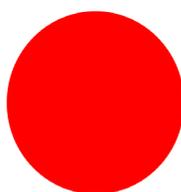
Understanding that people's identities intersect all the time and do not exist on their own is vital. It's important to understand the significance of intersecting identities; for example a young person's race and sexuality will always be interconnected and therefore must be seen as whole and not compartmentalised. What is it like to be a black, gay young man (...and other significant identities the young person may have)?



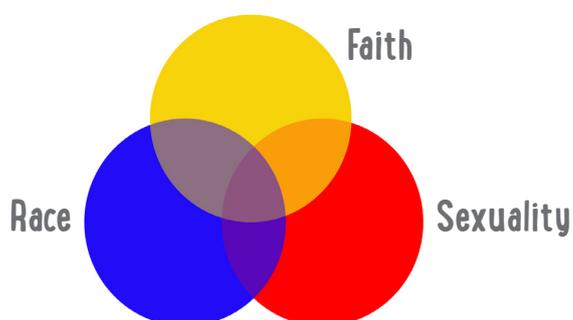
Race



Faith



Sexuality



Intersectional thinking is not only important in understanding and valuing individual experience but also in understanding how a person might experience multiple and overlapping oppressions. For example understanding what it's like to navigate transphobia, racism and misogyny. Often people /organisations approach understanding LGBT experiences and providing support from a white, cis perspective. Not all identities will be seen and respected in all communities. What is it like, for example to experience both racism within LGBT communities and LGBTphobia within your cultural and/or faith community? Support needs to be tailored to individual experiences and actively work to challenge non-inclusive practice.

Community & Family

There is often an emphasis on being 'out' as something that validates LGBT peoples identities and can allow people to live their lives more openly. Whilst this is true for some people, the notion of being 'out' is not accessible for everyone. It is not necessarily an option for someone who's family, local community and/or faith community condemns being LGBT and for whom these spaces are integral parts of theirs and their family's lives. If someone is positioned with losing their place within these communities when coming out, then the notion of coming out is complicated. Not wanting to bring negative attention or 'shame' to a person's family can be a big factor in deciding whether to come out or not and can mean the person has to think about repercussions for others around them as well as themselves. This can leave young people feeling a sense of guilt or being a burden on their families.



Cultural communities are often central to BAME people's lives and can be tight knit, meaning information is assumed to/ can get passed on very quickly. Equally, when a community is silent on an issue or something is thought of as taboo, it can feel overwhelming to exist in a space where you don't know who you can go to for help or support – and for this to remain confidential. Fear of losing or being ostracised from a community can be prevalent and so often LGBT people and their families face difficult decisions about telling which people, what information or who to seek help and advice from. Parents and families can feel as though they must choose between being a part of their community and supporting their child/ren. This can lead to overwhelming feelings of guilt and burden experienced by LGBT young people as well as families.



Marriage and having children in a heterosexual relationship, for some BAME communities is especially important – seen as tradition and intrinsically linked to upholding, celebrating and respecting culture. Being LGBT does not necessarily fit within this expectation and this expectation can add additional pressure to BAME LGBT young people – encouraging feelings of disappointing or letting families down and a pressure to live a life that is not what they want.

Representation & Role Models



Often the LGBT celebrities or well-known people that get the most attention are white, cis people. All young people need to see diverse LGBT representation, especially those who are minoritised/ marginalised e.g. BAME LGBT people, disabled LGBT people, older LGBT people.

Racism within society/ the media coupled with complexities around being 'out' as BAME people in the public eye, it can be harder to find representation of BAME LGBT people – young people may not know of any/many examples of people with similar backgrounds to them. It's important to reassure young people that LGBT people exist in all cultures, countries and of all faiths and explore why it is more difficult to find examples of this – critique limited, and white bias (racist) media representation and depictions of history. For example it has been proclaimed by some African leaders that 'homosexuality is un-African' or is a 'Western' or 'White' phenomenon, whilst actively not acknowledging or knowing that White Europeans who colonised many African countries were responsible for enforcing anti-LGBT 'buggery laws' into their societies.



BAME non-LGBT role models are also very important. There is a mis/understanding that BAME and faith communities are more LGBTphobic than white and non-faith communities and so young people's perceptions of BAME and religious staff may be that they are LGBTphobic. All staff, but especially BAME and religious staff need to actively fight against this idea and be visible in their support for LGBT people and equality. This might be in championing LGBT rights at school, LGBT ally stickers or posters in classrooms, openly challenging all LGBTphobic comments etc.

Faith

There are dominant narratives about the incompatibility of having a faith and being LGBT. Sometimes these are explicit from faith communities themselves, and sometimes these are assumptions made by people with no experience of the faith they are talking about. Both can make accepting and finding space for both at that there are people of all faiths in the world who are LGBT and that there are many people of faith who are accepting and supportive of LGBT people within and outside of their faith communities.



If you do not share the faith of the young person you are supporting or have a good understanding of the faith and being LGBT, seeking support from someone who does for the young person can be affirming – knowing your local and national LGBT inclusive or LGBT faith based organisations and places of worship is important for referrals and seeking advice and support. There are many LGBT faith organisations in the UK, including Imaan (Muslim LGBT), Keshet (LGBT Jewish), Sarbat (LGBT Sikh), House of Rainbow Fellowship (LGBT Christian).



Explore with the young person what they feel like their personal relationship is with their faith/God(s) – often people are told how they should believe in their faith and less emphasis is placed on the individual's relationship with their faith/God(s) – it can be empowering for young people to discuss and re/discover and define what their faith is for them and how it fits with being LGBT.



People of faith with anti-LGBT views are seen by many to be contradicting the core principles of many faiths e.g. love, compassion. Highlighting and exploring these contradictions with young people can be helpful to critique LGBTphobia within faith communities and reassure young people that you can have a faith and be LGBT.

Support

Get to know your local LGBT provision and what specific services they offer. E.g. do they have a BAME worker? Do they provide 121 support in schools? Not all young people will be able to get to LGBT youth groups or will feel comfortable or ready to go to a LGBT organisation or space.



Get to know your LGBT allies – are there any BAME organisations/ community or youth workers who you know are LGBT supportive. Can these organisations also provide support for families as well as the young people?

How are you addressing barriers to accessing support at school? Do young people know it's confidential to access support that their parents don't need to know? Do you have diverse staff who can offer support? – see allies.

