



17th January 2025

WELCOME

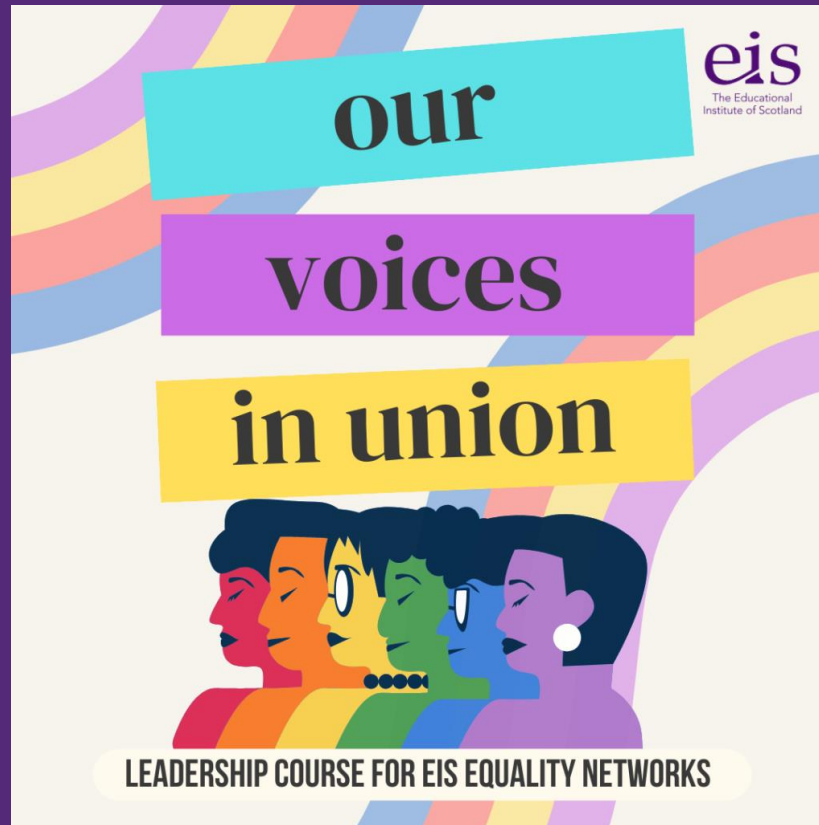
EIS President Allan
Crosbie



Agenda

- Welcome address – EIS President Allan Crosbie
- Our Leadership Journeys – Our Voices in Union Panel, Chaired by Khadija Mohammed
- Workshop 1: Wellbeing and Mental Health from an Equality Perspective
- Workshop 2: Equality Literacy – power, privilege and oppression
- Workshop 3: The Fair Work Framework





'Our Leadership Journeys'

Chaired by Khadija Mohammed



Ellie Muniandy (she/they) is a queer Person of Colour anti-oppressive trainer, therapist, supervisor and facilitator.

They are based in Edinburgh and work with a range of different organisations.



Setting the scene

- It is important that we acknowledge that today we represent a whole range of identities
- We have delegates who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic, disabled and/or neurodivergent and/or under 30 years of age
- While we may not share the same intersectional identities, it is vital that we stay curious about the experiences of others and what we can learn collectively
- We all have something to learn and to teach
- These workshops intend to provide information, a space to share and discuss. We will not be able to discuss individual cases



Content note

- Please ensure you do what you need to look after yourself
- Presentation will make reference to examples of systemic and individual experiences of oppression
- This content may bring up feelings of pain, anger, frustration, hurt or other emotions
- This is an invitation to **pay attention to your emotional experience** and do what you need to support yourself
- Taking care of yourself may mean leaving the session, or taking time to do something supportive after this session
- If you need support, you may want to access mental health helplines such as Samaritans or seek specialist support from a therapist



Mental Health and Wellbeing

Workshop 1



Mental health and EIS

- EIS has been working on supporting the mental health of members in a number of different ways
- There have been mental health and wellbeing sessions focused around different marginalised identities, including a session for Equality Reps to help them in their role
- Further work will be done in relation to this topic including learning resources for all EIS members.



Minoritised versus Marginalised

Minoritised

- A minority group is a group of people that make up less than half of a country's population. This can be based on ethnicity, religion, or language. But can also be used to recognize that people can be 'minoritized' through social processes of power and domination, rather than just being in a statistical minority. For example, BAME people are a global majority, but minoritised within the UK.



Marginalised

- A marginalised group is a group who share an identity or experience, who experience discrimination and exclusion in social, political, and economic ways. This is due to unequal power relationships.



Minority Stress Theory

- Minority stress describes high levels of stress faced by members of stigmatized minority groups. It may be caused by a number of factors, including poor social support and low socioeconomic status.
- Other causes of minority stress may be interpersonal prejudice and discrimination.
- Indeed, numerous scientific studies have shown that when minority individuals experience a high degree of prejudice, this can cause stress responses (e.g., high blood pressure, anxiety) that accrue over time, eventually leading to poor mental and physical health.
- Minority stress theory summarizes scientific studies to explain how difficult social situations lead to chronic stress and poor health among minority individuals.



Minority Stress Theory

Social scientists have found that minoritised individuals suffer from mental and physical health disparities compared to their peers in majority groups

- For example, Black Americans have been found to suffer elevated rates of hypertension compared to white Americans.
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ+) individuals face higher rates of suicide, substance abuse, and cancer relative to people who are not LGBTQ+
- More recent data suggest there is an association with higher rates of migraine headaches, stroke, and functional neurological disorder among LGBTQ+ people
- The minority stress model is potentially useful for conceptualizing the higher rates of suicidality among people with disabilities
- Minority stress does predict significantly worse well-being and higher psychological distress in the autistic community

Newer hypotheses propose that intersections of multiple minority stigmata increase experiences of stress.



Minority Stress Theory

- The challenge for marginalised people are that we live in a system that continually marginalises us, in many different ways.
- As such there is no getting away from the experience of being marginalised, whether that is going into a shop and having an interaction with the cashier or engaging with the police or applying for a job. These experiences have the potential to be shaped by discrimination, stereotyping and prejudice.
- It is precisely this potential that causes the difficulty, and this may look like different things to different people
- It might manifest as anxiety, as a short fuse, as fear of busy spaces.



All the little things

Systems of oppression operate through many different elements of society. It is not only individual belief, it is ingrained in our society.

Discrimination and prejudice is often unconscious and therefore harder to pinpoint, we see this manifest in so many subtle ways which can be called microaggressions. These can be continuous reminders for ourselves and everyone else around about who 'belongs' and who does not belong

It can be hard to trust in our own experience of reality if it is constantly being questioned or undermined



Impact on mental health

For some people who have experienced trauma such as abuse or PTSD, it is normally something that happened in the past. They are no longer in danger despite being deeply impacted, but this also allows them to go through a healing process.

For marginalised people it is every day of their lives. It is not something people can escape from, as due to the institutional nature of oppression it means marginalised people are more likely to be living in poverty, to not get the support they need at school, to not get that promotion at work.



It is invisible

One of the difficulties with this, is being able to know definitely that what you have experienced is because of who you are

- Rarely is it explicitly acknowledged, therefore there is always some doubt left in our minds about why this happened. We don't know how someone else may have been treated differently



Because it can be very hard sometimes to identify, this may lead to marginalised people feeling like they cannot trust themselves.



Marginalised trauma

There are many ways this could manifest

- Hypervigilance
- Difficulty in emotional regulation
- Dissociation
- Denial
- Repression
- Low self-esteem
- Depression
- Self-harming behaviour



Reflection

Take a moment to consider these questions for yourself

- How do you feel?
- What do you need?
- What will you do to support yourself?



Systems of Oppression

A system of oppression is any system designed to hinder a group of individuals (usually a minority) from accessing the resources and privileges available to individuals who are not part of that minority

Internalised: beliefs people have about themselves and their marginalisation

Interpersonal: comprises the thoughts, behaviours, and actions that constitute a negative judgment or treatment of an oppressed group.

Institutional: manifested in systems and structures (such as governments, religions, education systems, health care, law, and the media) as well as policies and procedures

Ideological: includes shared societal values and norms that may not be consciously known



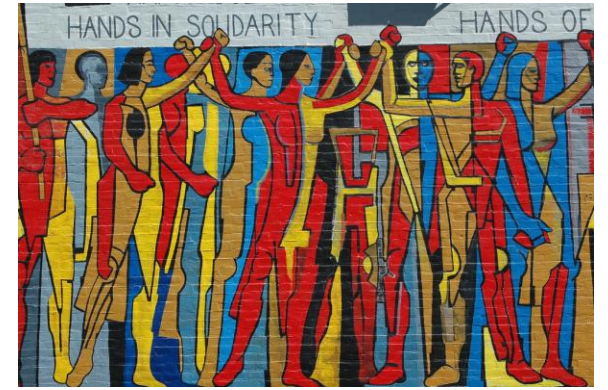
Considerations when supporting

- Everyone responds to trauma in a different way, therefore there is no one way to cope with it
- For some people being able to talk to their family, friends and loved ones is needed. For others talking to a professional
- Being involved in activism can be a healing process too, fighting for a cause and meeting like-minded people
- What is important is that if you are getting support for particular symptoms e.g. anxiety or depression that there is an understanding of the trauma as the underlying cause for these, as otherwise you may end up in situations which are re-traumatising



Standing in solidarity

- It is key to believe people's experiences
- Emotions are true to the individual. It is important that people are given space to feel their feelings
- Ensuring that people feel heard and understood
- This does not mean you need to agree with them
- It is absolutely key to be in a process of learning and understanding the ways oppression manifests for people at all levels
- It is important not to assume that you know why someone is feeling the way they are, but you can offer a tentative interpretation as this can be helpful for people to understand what they might be going through



Group Discussions

- How can EIS equality networks join together and learn from each other to mitigate against the mental health impact of inequality?
- What can be done collectively to support mental health of members?



Equality Literacy: Power, Privilege and Oppression

Workshop 2



Oppression



- Where does oppression come from?
- Hate, Fear, Holding onto power, Ignorance, Media Propaganda
- “If we are oppressive to others we are bad people”



Internalised Oppression

- We take on the values of the oppressive group.
- We internalise the discomfort and conflict that we experience in order to make it easier for other people.
- We must learn to allow the discomfort and conflict to sit externally from ourselves.
- How does impact the choices we make and the ambition we have for our lives?



Power

What is your relationship to power?

Do you like it? Hate it? Feel scared by it?

How does it work?



How Power works

We all have power in some aspects of our lives. Oppression is often the result of powerful people or social forces exerting power over the 'weak'

“It cannot be suggested that we do not need power. Anti-oppression requires power to enforce positive anti-oppressive policies. Power is the engine that drives both oppression and anti-oppression (Adams, 2003; Thompson, 2006)”

“Empowerment involves addressing the imbalance of power between groups in society. In order to achieve a true balance, it is necessary not only for a relatively powerless group to be given more influence, but for those in a position of power to give up some of that power”



Different types of power

Power over

- Traditional way to think about power – the ability to get someone to do something against their will;
- Using rewards, punishments, manipulation to force someone to do something they do not choose.

Power with

- The ability to influence and take action based on uniting with others;
- The power that comes from community, solidarity, cooperation.

Power from within

- The ability to influence and take action based on intention, clarity of vision, or charisma.
- Sense of self-worth and self-knowledge. Exercising your capacity to contribute.





“There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle, because we do not live single-issue lives.”


—Audre Lorde



INTERSECTIONALITY

a fun guide

miriamdobson.wordpress.com

 @MiriamDobson





Bob is a stripey
blue triangle!

AND SHOULD BE PROUD.



SADLY SOME PEOPLE DO NOT LIKE BOB. BOB
FACES OPPRESSION FOR BEING A TRIANGLE, &
FOR HAVING STRIPES.



LUCKILY, THERE ARE LIBERATION GROUPS!
BUT THEY AREN'T INTERSECTIONAL.

SO THEY
LOOK LIKE
THIS



THEY DON'T TALK TO EACH OTHER.
IN FACT, THEY COMPETE.



BOB CAN'T WORK
OUT WHERE TO
GO.



AM I MORE
STRIPE OR
TRIANGLE?

BOB WISHES THAT THE
TRIANGLES AND STRIPES
COULD WORK TOGETHER

OPPRESSION
OF ONE AFFECTS
US ALL!



NO LIBERATION
WITHOUT EQUAL
REPRESENTATION!



INTERSECTIONALITY IS
THE BELIEF THAT
OPPRESSIONS ARE
INTERLINKED AND
CANNOT BE SOLVED
ALONE.



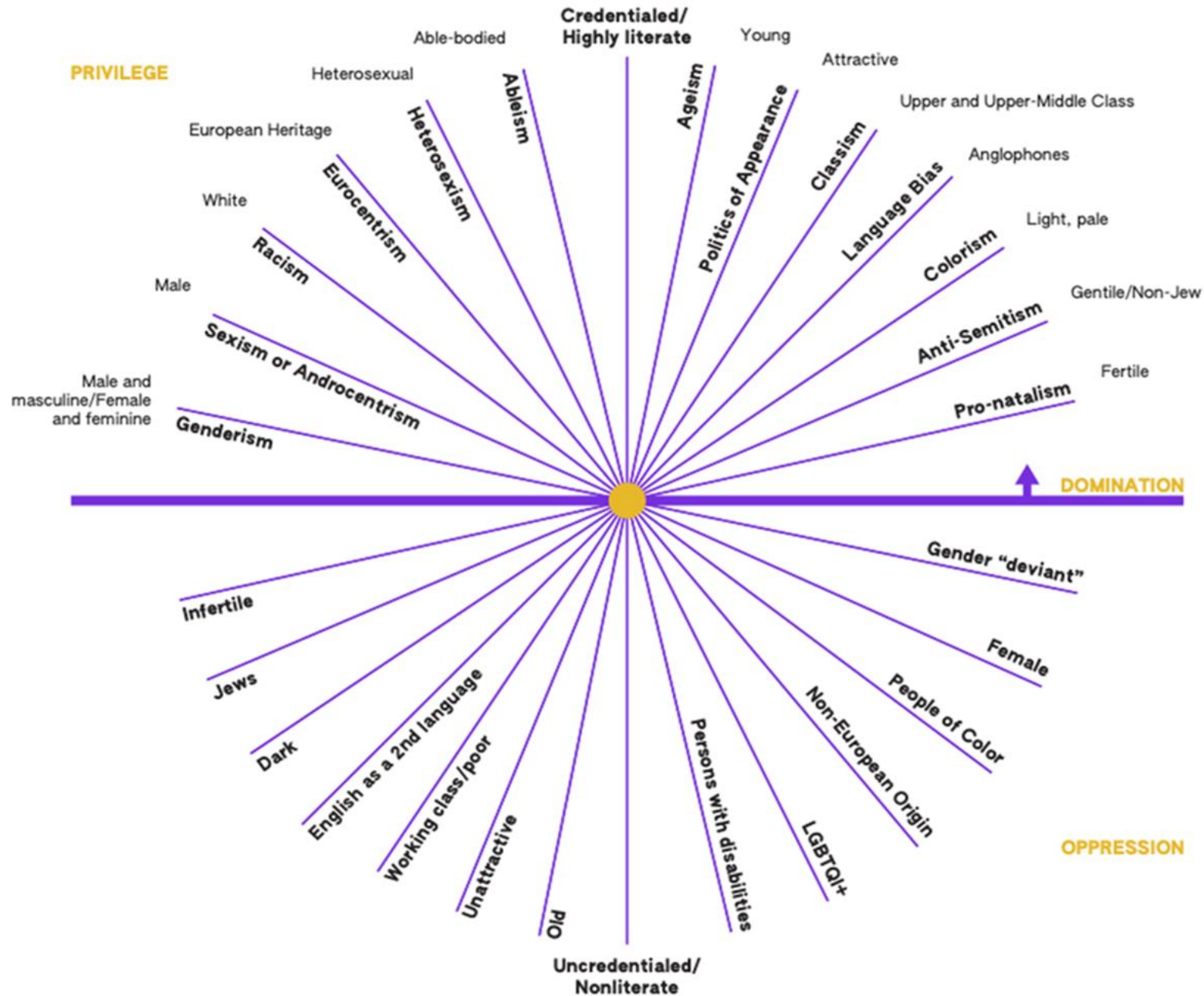
OPPRESSIONS ARE NOT ISOLATED.
INTERSECTIONALITY NOW!



Intersectionality mapping

- Gender
- Race
- Sexuality
- Class
- Disability
- Immigration Status
- Faith
- Nationality
- Age
- Language (is English a 2nd)
- Body Size
- Family Structure (nuclear?)
- Others?





Victimhood

When we talk about marginalisation it can be easy to slip into victimhood.

This is a defence mechanism, it may be a way of coping with being marginalised, but it is not the only way.

- **Acknowledging harm-** we are all capable of hurting each other individually and collectively through our actions, our choices, our behaviours
- **Acknowledge mistakes-** we all make mistakes, we all will make mistakes, what is important to learn is how to both give and receive apologies



Intersectional Solidarity

Intersectionality starts to feel like a competition where people argue about which identities are more oppressed and therefore superior. This is a misunderstanding of intersectionality.

The theory is centred on discrimination and oppression by the state. It's not making any claims about an individual's or even a group's worth, credibility, or morality. The person is not inherently better or more important; their identities simply affect their access to opportunities.



Examples of intersectional solidarity

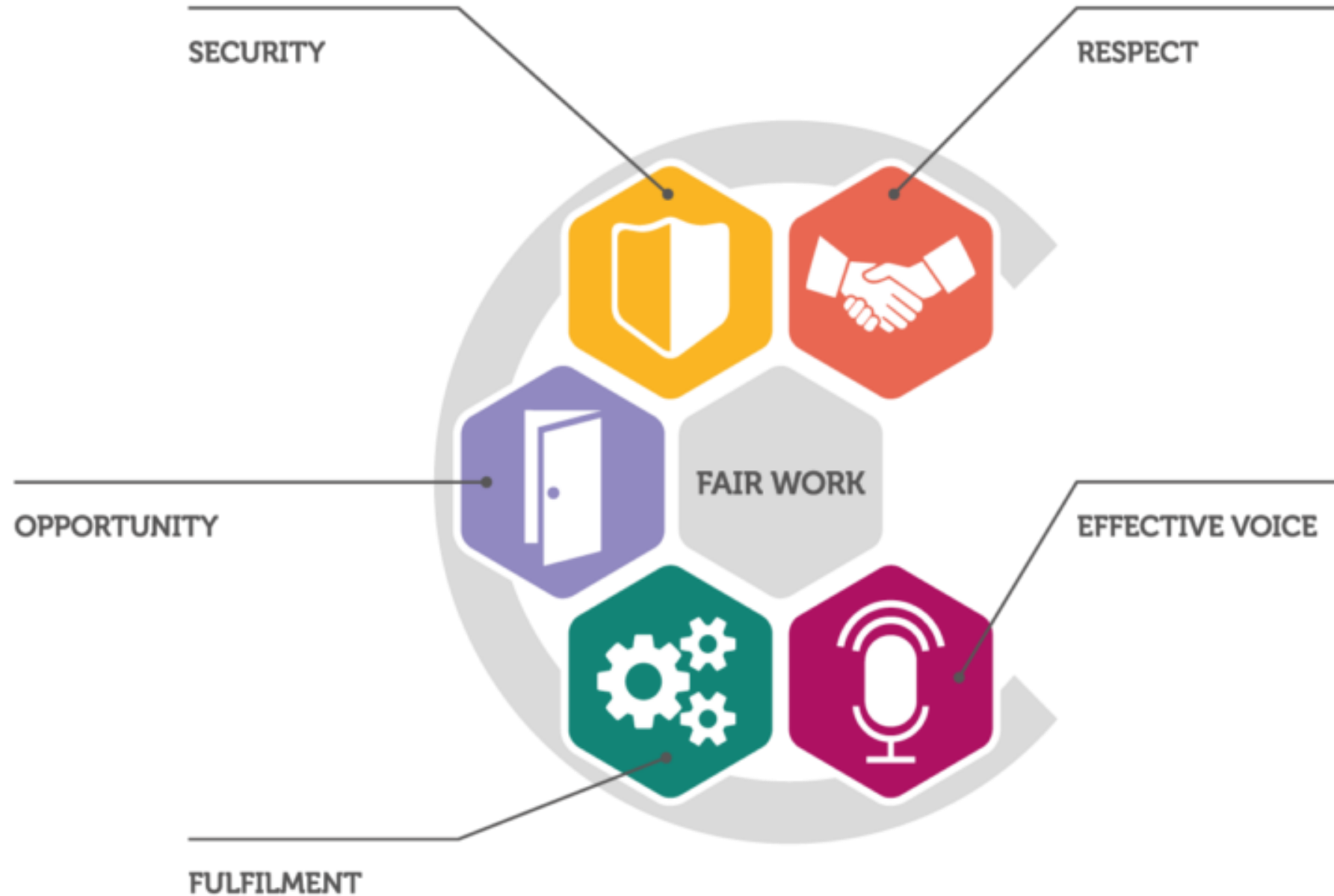
- LGBT community supporting the miners strikes
- Black panthers supporting women's liberation
- Cotton workers in the UK supporting Gandhi's boycott
- Lesbians caring for gay men during the AIDS crisis



The Fair Work Framework

Workshop 3





Questions about the case studies

- What is your reaction/thoughts about the themes/experiences in this case study?
- What is the area of fair work that the case study relates to?
- What support could be offered to individuals in this situation?



Thank you!

