

# Exploring identity in a group context

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# Outline of presentation

## Introduction

- Social GRACES theory and framework
- Research on identity and autism

## Delivering the group

- When, who, what, how, why
- Menti meter results

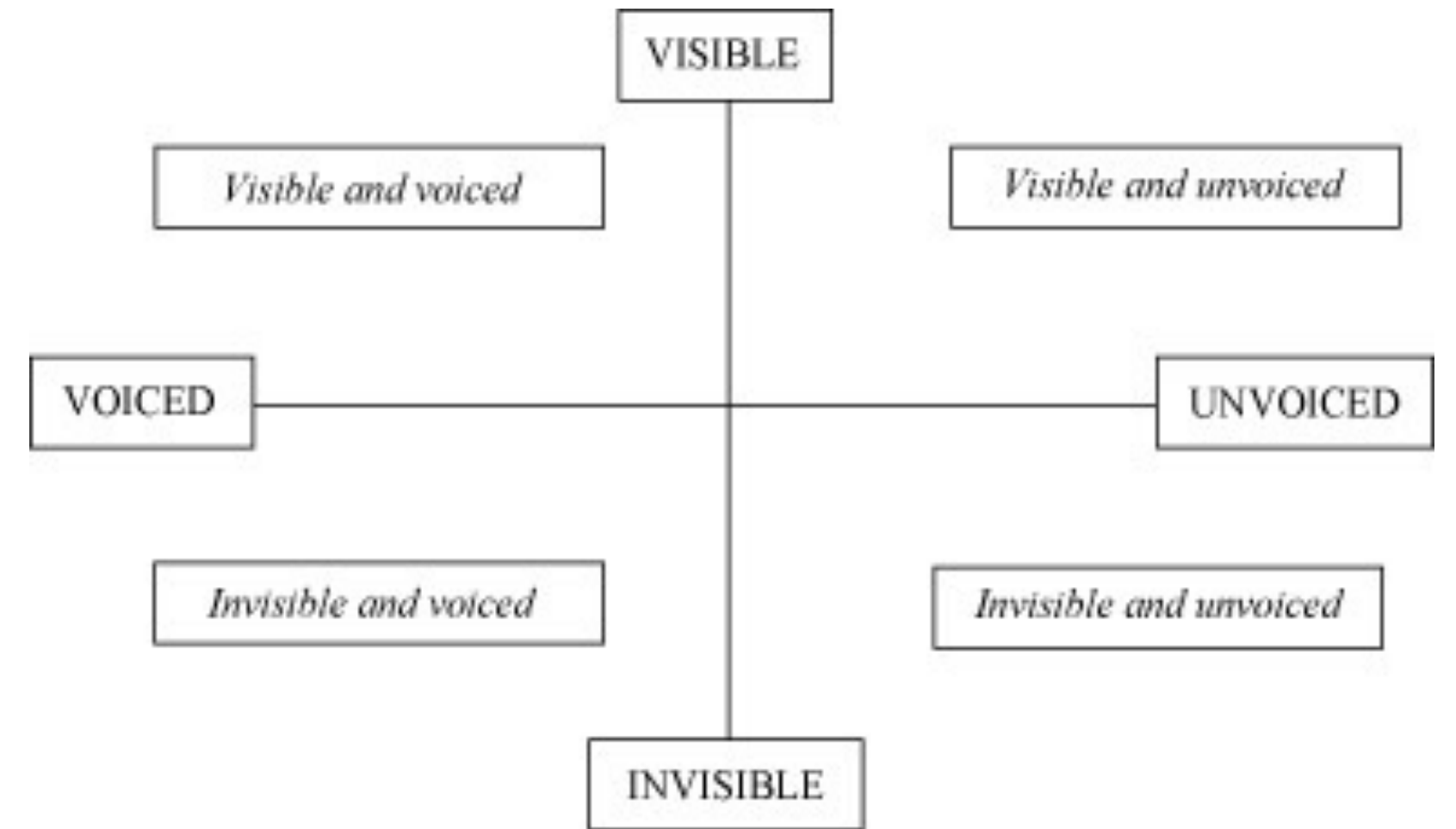
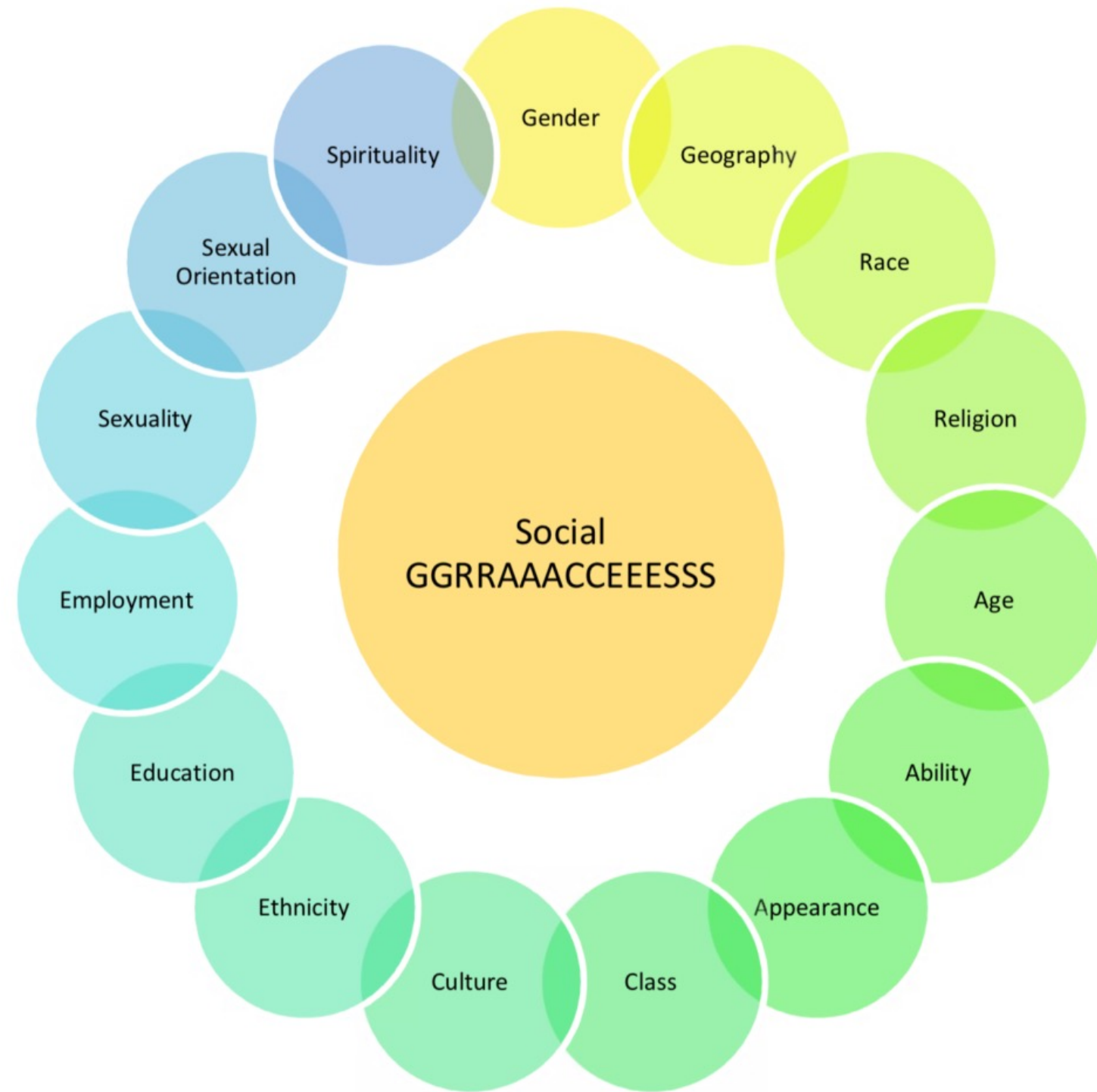
## Patient staff and feedback

- PEACE patient
- Staff reflections

## Adaptions and implications

- Adaptations to day services
- Implications for PEACE pathway

# What is Social GRACES?



# Research on identity and autism

## Challenges in Autism

Diverse social, educational and occupational challenges

Co-occurring mental health or psychiatric conditions = poorer quality of life (Lai et al 2019; Robertson, 2009)

## Social Identity Theory

Self concept = personal characteristics + characteristics shared with other group members (Tajfel & Turner, 1979)

Negative perceptions of differences vs accepting differences

## Autism Social Identification

Autism social identification positively associated with personal self-esteem, and negatively associated with depression (Cooper, Smith & Russell, 2017)

Ability to identify with autism can have a positive impact

## Importance of Social GRACES group

Research on autism and sexuality, sexual orientation, culture and ethnicity

Opportunity to explore these parts of their identity in a safe space

Staff can learn more about the patients = inform care

# Delivery of the group

## When

- November 2020 (10 sessions)
- August 2021

## Who

- Patient demographics
- 1 male and 1 female facilitator from diverse background
- Both involved in the discussion and activity

## What

- Provides a safe space for patients to speak about their identity
- Acknowledge how all intersect with each other
- Explore and discover who they are

## How

- Followed a consistent structure each week
- Review of last session
- Introduction to new GRACE
- Menti meter
- Discussion
- Takeaways

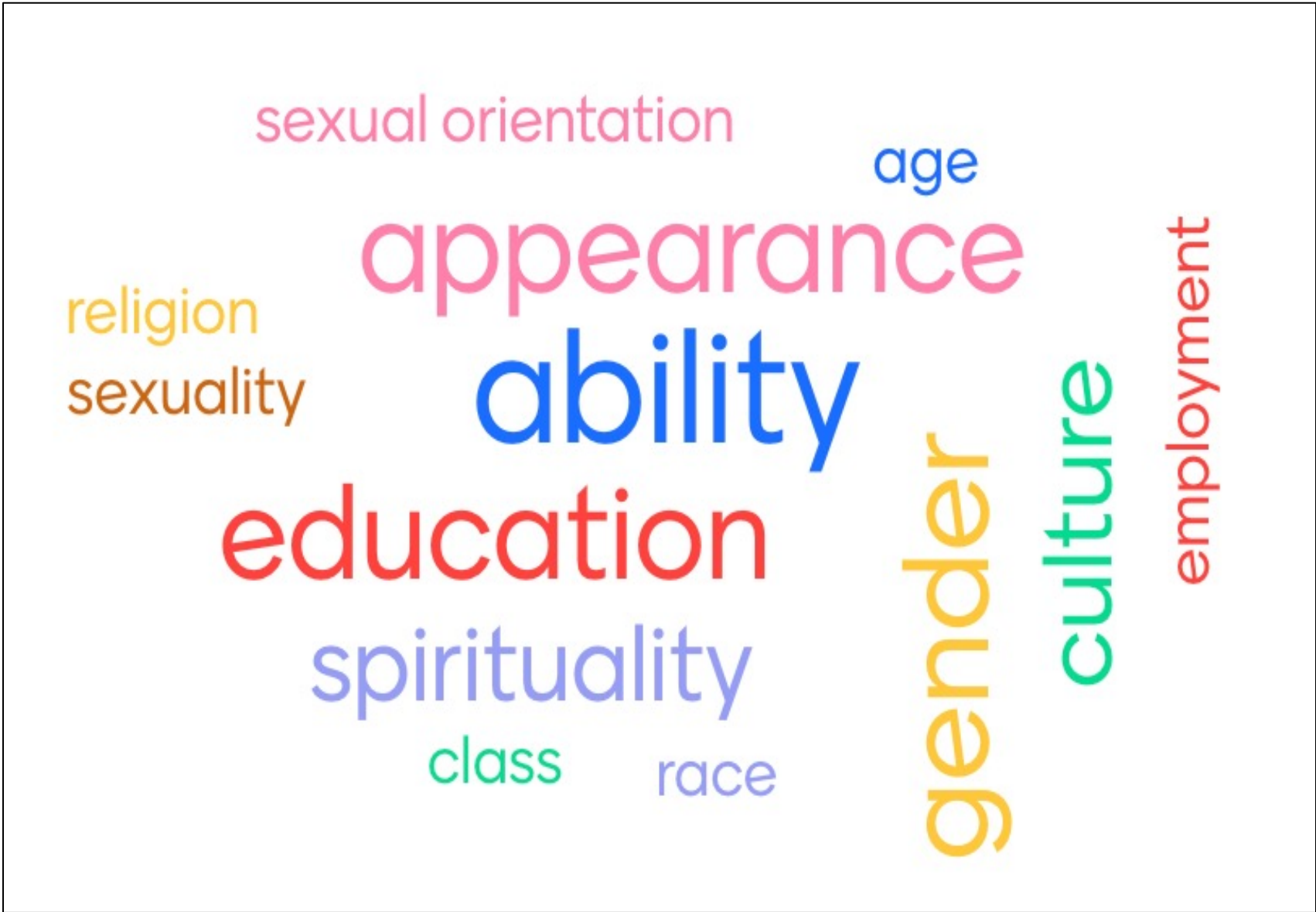
## Why

- In response to the BLM and Me too movements
- Patients bringing it up topics in group spaces
- Positive feedback
- Identity formation

# What GRACES stood out for our patients?



November 2020- 6 participants



August 2021- 8 participants

# PEACE Patient feedback

I really enjoyed using the Mentimeter! It allowed thoughts and opinions to be shared in a more anonymous way, which I appreciated because I can sometimes find it challenging to share things in groups due to a fear of judgement or embarrassment. I also quite liked the visual depiction of everybody's contributions put together and I thought it was quite a unique and fun addition to the group.

Social GRACES impacted my perception of the identity of others in a very positive way. I felt as though everyone was incredibly honest, open and vulnerable and that they shared aspects of their identity they would not disclose or speak about in groups otherwise, which definitely contributed to a stronger sense of connection within the group.

I liked the structure of Social GRACES and it was definitely one of my favourite daycare groups! I particularly liked the way every group was dedicated to a different GRACE as it allowed a very focused discussion on the particular topic and there was something different to look forward to each week.



# Staff feedback and reflections

- Hopes and fears
- How safety was created
- Breaking down power imbalances between clinician and patient
  
- Everyone's ability to be open and vulnerable
- Acknowledging their own bias
- Building confidence in themselves to explore their own identity



**Other considerations**

Is there any aspect of your identity that you feel is important for us to know about you, that will help to best meet your needs? E.g. gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, culture, class, disability, education, employment...

Having diagnosis of autism important to identity.

Can help to explain how I react to things and explain how I do things. Don't always share this

# Adaptions made to our day service

- Information gathering- including other considerations in the assessment, completing a "this is me" form with them, facilitating social GRACES group.
- Information sharing- clinical supervision and formulation, staff more aware of patient's identity.
- Applying the information- can be used in 1:1 OT and therapy, care planning, goal setting, employability, relapse prevention.

**This is me – who I am and what matters to me**

Please tell us about yourself so we can get a better idea of you as a person, you might like to write about your family or other important relationships (i.e. partners, friends, community), your cultural background, your spirituality or faith, your education or employment, your priorities, your hobbies, and other values that would be helpful for us to know as a team.

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Family- close with parents and extended family (cousins, aunt and uncle)

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Education- really like studying when it's interesting, would like to go back to university in 2020, would like to become a secondary English teacher (really enjoy reading, good connection with English teacher in sixth form and this inspired me to become like them), do enjoy classics but miss studying English. Wouldn't want to go back to Oxford (associate with illness).

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Days out with mum- cinema, theatre, museums and exhibitions

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Hobbies/likes- arts, reading, crafts (when in hospital and found this [really helpful](#))

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Faith- brought up as Christian but not sure what to believe in personally (change mind a lot)

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Values- animal welfare, do care about the environment but can be stressful thinking about it in depth, compassion (important to put self in other people's position), passion, experiencing new things

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# Future implications for the PEACE pathway

Idea for delivering similar group in different service

Reflective portfolio based on social GRACES

Empowering individuals to explore their identity

Future research and training

Outreach work in the community

Confidence building for life after discharge

# References

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Thank you for listening!

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