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REACH RESOURCE REVIEW: SUMMARY AND RECOMENDATIONS

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EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR ENVIRONMENT AND HUMAN HEALTH, UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

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Introduction

This document contains summaries of topics which I (Dr Bethany Roberts) identified as important themes from the resources I read around decolonising academia, the curriculum, and research. I do not have a background in decolonial or anti-racist theory, my expertise is in pollinator ecology and oceans and human health. I am a white cis-gendered woman from the south east of England (Norfolk) and have been living in Cornwall for ten years as a student and academic at the University of Exeter (one of the UK's least diverse and most prestigious universities). I have been reading these documents not only for this project, but to further my own understanding of whiteness and that of the environmental sciences disciplines. The summaries included in this document are written from my perspective, but I have used quotes as much as possible to privilege the voices of people with knowledge and experience in decolonial and anti-racist theories and practice.

The themes summarised below can be considered as recommendations from the literature to support the European Centre's of Environment and Human Health's collective thinking around decolonisation and anti-racism. Importantly, this document is not intended as an extensive and exhaustive literature review, but aims to provide summaries of each topic I have selected.

Similarly to the REACH ECEHH Publications review, an initial literature search was conducted by Morwenna Rogers from PenARC. Subsequent literature was found by myself, Dr Bethany Roberts, from citations within the initial literature list and through Google scholar searches. The searches were very informal, and not all literature from all searches are included below. Mainly, I tried to choose literature which was accessible to a wide readership. Whilst reading the resources, I selected relevant sections and gave them a theme. These themes have thus informed the topics found within this document.

User Guide

Document overview

This document is split into six summary sections: i) Environment and human health research, ii) Get comfortable with being uncomfortable, iii) Acknowledging and challenging whiteness, iv) Power dynamics and positionalities, v) Challenge racism when it occurs and vi) Fund scholarships and studentships for People of Colour. Within each section there is an overview to provide context on the importance of the section, and then there are summaries providing "evidence" towards each of the relevant sub-topics. At the end of each section there are a list of actions to help guide your process of considering how to embed some of these recommendations into your own personal and professional practice.

At the end of the document, there are three sets of reflexive questions. These have been adapted from existing resources to make them relevant for the European Centre of Environment and Human Health. The purpose of these, similar to the action points, are to help guide the readers process of reflecting on topics of decolonisation within your own

practices. These questions could be used in workshops, to guide collective thinking and discussions.

Resource library

Most of the literature included here can also be found in the REACH Resource Library.

Terminology

When reading papers, it has been interesting to note the difference in terminology used throughout. In particular, the use of the acronyms "BAME" and "BME" to represent Black, Asian and minority ethnic in the UK context. These are widely used terms within academia, but are highly contested. The University of Exeter has a session scheduled this month (June 2022) to discuss moving away from the term BAME, hosted by the Provost Commission, Race Equality Group and Success For All. Personally, I would not choose to use this word because it treats a large and diverse group of people as one, which does not reflect the differences between them. Personally, I have chosen to use the word racialised because it refers to the process by which people become excluded based on their physical characteristics and/or culture. It is important when writing about 'race', ethnicity and cultural backgrounds that we are clear on what those terms mean (see [Advanced HE](#) for definitions we are using), and provide context as to why we have chosen that specific terminology. This makes it clear who the findings are most relevant to.

Care statement

A lot of the topics included in this summary are emotionally difficult and may be triggering. Please exercise self-care whilst reading; take breaks when needed, and if you need further support please access the University's external 24/7 free counselling service. You can also contact the PI of the REACH Team if you would like to make any comments regarding the document.

Environment and human health research

Overview

As the Black Lives Matter movement has highlighted, racism continues to be a major public health issue and determinant of poor mental and physical health. Much of the evidence on the links between race, racism, environment and health came from US studies, but more research has now been done in the UK context. Understanding how race, and racism impacts people's connection to and use of nature is an important research topic. Research within the Centre has shown the positive mental health benefits of visiting green and blue spaces, but is this true for racialised individuals who might feel more threatened in these spaces?

Below are some initial examples of research that has looked at common themes within the ECEHH's research remit in relationship to marginalized and racialized groups. These are offered as potential starting points for further explorations and bouncing off points for conversations and dialogues about research already done within the ECEHH.

Evidence #1 – Nature connectedness

In a study of students from Universities in the US, Taylor, (2018) found that Black students were least likely to say they felt very connected to nature (20.1% of Black respondents, versus 45.7% of white students and 42.6% of other minority students), although 69.8% of Black respondents did say they feel somewhat connected. However, when asked to think about nature during qualitative interviews Black respondents showed they do feel very deeply towards nature, with students describing "the wonderful gifts the earth gives us such as beaches, woods". Another common theme was Black students thinking a lot about human impact on nature, and the connections of their ancestors to nature.

Indigenous people's arguably have some of the strongest human-nature connections, perceiving themselves to exist as part of nature and that nature shapes them and they in turn shape nature and the land where they live (Country et al., 2016). Ogar et al., (2020) states that embracing Indigenous knowledge is crucial in order to help solve the biodiversity crises we currently face. Thus, when exploring nature connectedness, particularly outside of the European and western contexts, understanding Indigenous ways of relating to the environment are vital.

Evidence #2 – Use of greenspace

A study of urban parks in the Netherlands found that Turkish and Moroccan immigrants were more likely to undertake activities such as having a picnic or meeting people than native Dutch citizens (Peters et al., 2010). Ravenscroft and Markwell (2000) explored park use in Reading, UK amongst residents of Asian, Black and white ethnicity. They found 90% of respondents visited parks located within 15 minutes of their house and visited almost daily. Larger parks appeared to facilitate mixing between Asian and white park-users, whereas neighbourhood park use correlated to the ethnicity of the surrounding area. However, Pakistani children who regularly used neighbourhood parks in Sheffield reported feeling uncomfortable in the parks due to bullying (Woolley and Amin 1995). Whereas Pakistani teenagers are significant users of Sheffield parks, and mostly feel comfortable as

they are with their friends, but some felt uncomfortable due to lack of interest in the parks (Woolley and Amin 1999). In contrast, Madge (1997) found that Asian and African-Caribbean park users in Leicester were afraid of being racially attacked in parks and this limited their visits.

Evidence #3 – Access to greenspace

Carter et al., (2009) found that Black and minority ethnic groups were much less likely to visit Forestry Commission managed woodlands, preferring to visit other types of publicly managed woodlands. There was also lower overall visits to woodland made by “Black and ethnic minority” groups (Morris et al., 2011). Qualitative interviews with “Black and minority ethnic” individuals by Edwards and Weldon, (2006) and O’Brien and Morris, (2009) found that lack of experience with visiting woodlands, and lack of awareness of nearby woodlands were some of the reasons for individuals not visiting. Having to use public transport and not having somebody to go with were also listed by one Pakistani woman. Policies around supporting access to natural areas for ethnic minorities have been found to differ between countries (Jay et al., 2012), with authors suggesting greater sharing of scientific evidence as a means of improving policies.

Evidence #4 – Mental health and wellbeing

A systematic review of international studies showed links between racial discrimination and multiple mental health outcomes including anxiety, depression, emotional adjustment, resilience, self-esteem etc. (Priest et al., 2013). Manthorpe et al., (2012) explored mental wellbeing in older people from black and minority ethnic communities in rural UK settings – citing the main barriers being isolation, and lack of sufficient social care knowledge and resources compared to urban areas e.g. translators for care home residents.

Evidence #5 – Physical health

The UK Household Longitudinal Study (2009-2013) found that 20% of respondents had experienced racial discrimination and this was associated with greater psychological distress, poorer mental functioning, poorer physical functioning and lower life satisfaction (Hackett et al., 2020) as well as lower mental component scores using the Short Form Health Survey (SF-12) (Wallace et al., 2016).

Evidence #6 – Combining Indigenous and Western knowledge

Two-eyed seeing was proposed by Mi’kmaq Elder Albert of Eskasoni First Nation in 2004. Elder Albert says that “[t]wo-Eyed Seeing is the gift of multiple perspective treasured by many aboriginal peoples and explains that it refers to learning to see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, and from the other eye with the strengths of Western knowledges and ways of knowing, and to using both these eyes together, for the benefit of all” (Bartlett et al., 2012). This way of seeing and combining knowledge allows us to understand topics with greater depth.

Evidence #7 – Air pollution

Al Ahad et al., (2022) explored the links between air pollution and mental wellbeing in the UK adults and found that individuals from “Pakistani/Bangladeshi, other ethnicities and non-UK individuals” had higher odds of poor mental wellbeing with increasing concentrations of particulate matter. Experiencing racism also was found to increase the effects of air pollution on asthma for all ethnic groups studied (Astell-Burt et al., 2013). Studies in the US have also linked air pollution to race-ethnicity (Clark et al., 2017; Mikati et al., 2018).

Evidence #8 – Access to healthcare

In a study on African Indian woman in the US, perceived racial discrimination within healthcare settings was linked to fewer diabetes services (Gonzales et al., 2014). Another US-based study used an experimental design to look at the likelihood of middle- and working-class black and white people in getting appointments for mental health (Kugelmass, 2016). They found that there was no difference in appointment eliciting in the working class, with white and black participants having equally low appointment rates. However, amongst the middle-class respondents white participants were almost three times as likely to be offered an appointment compared to their black counterparts. Middle-class black woman were also more likely to be offered an appointment compared to middle-class black men.

Evidence #9 – Mistrust in science, research and health programmes

In order to ensure that health and environment research is relevant for diverse user groups, it is important to conduct research with participants with a variety of race, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. However, as the COVID-19 pandemic has shown, there is mistrust between individuals and health research in particular, with fewer people from ethnic minority backgrounds being willing to receive the vaccine (Thorneloe et al., 2020). There are historical and colonial reasons for this mistrust, for example the well-known Tuskegee study in which 400 African-American men were told they were being treated for Syphilis, whereas in fact they were not treated at all, or received very little treatment, even after it was found that penicillin was an effective treatment. This was a US government funded study, and ran from 1932 to 1972 where it was terminated after public outcry once details of the study were made available (Shavers et al., 2000). More recently, in 2011 a fake Hepatitis B vaccination programme led by the CIA was used in Abbottabad, Pakistan in an attempt to gather DNA from Osama bin Laden’s relatives. This had a knock-on effect for Polio vaccinations, which were subsequently banned in the area and healthcare workers were targeted by militants (Kanwal et al., 2016). This massively set back Pakistans Polio eradication campaign, which has been going since 1999. These are just a couple of examples of historical medical negligence imposed upon people of colour throughout history.

Actions we can take

- Co-create studies with understudied and marginalised communities, it could take time to build trust in these communities, but this relational aspect of research is crucial to ensuring meaningful relationships are built and maintained.
- When designing a study in a specific location, think about the ethnic composition of that area and try to ensure each community is represented within the sample.
- Think carefully about the demographics we are using, if we are looking at race/ethnicity, consider how meaningful the comparison groups are e.g. comparing white with all other

ethnicities, as is sometimes done due to small sample sizes. If we do choose to use ethnicity as a covariate, consider having a table which shows the breakdowns of ethnicities, even if we cannot include them as distinct groups for analysis.

- When reporting findings, be specific about the groups being represented by the data.
- If we do have a good sample of a particular ethnic group, consider running a separate analysis on this group to understand the intricacies of intergroup dynamics.
- Be mindful of whether we are only using Western knowledge in our publications, or when designing our research proposals. Include Indigenous knowledge and learn more about Indigenous ways of knowing and doing (especially if working in a context where people have been colonized and Indigenous communities are still existing).
- Particularly when working and collaborating internationally, consider who the publication is for (see Abimbola, (2019)) and write the paper accordingly.
- Ideally, research both internationally and in the UK which is conducted in communities which differ from our own identity, should be conducted by a researcher or at least in partnership with researchers who share the identity of the participants.
- When reading papers, notice who the authors are, we cannot always tell ethnicity or identity from names but it can be a good start, also look to see if there are co-authors from the country where the study was conducted.

Get comfortable with being uncomfortable

Overview

Discussing topics of racism, decolonisation, colonial history and whiteness are uncomfortable. Being told when we have acted in a way that is hurtful to someone is uncomfortable. What is important in these situations is being able to sit with this discomfort, so that we are not centering our feelings over and above the conversation that is happening. Not dealing with our discomfort can lead to lack of progress being made, and can have research and pedagogical implications through not asking for help when needed. Also it is important to remember that the discomfort of feeling ashamed, guilty or embarrassed is not equivalent to the discomfort of being dehumanized, ignored, dismissed or abused.

Below are some key themes.

1 – Race as a taboo subject

Bhopal and Pitkin, (2020) interviewed various individuals in relation to the Race Equality Charter. They found that “all of the respondents from BME [Black and minority ethnic] backgrounds felt that race was a taboo subject, one which was not allowed to be discussed in HEIs [Higher Education Institutes] and that racial inequalities were difficult to acknowledge and therefore address”.

Saini, (2020) highlights how important it is that we are able to talk openly about race: “Frank, open and often uncomfortable conversations about the realities of racial and postcolonial trauma inside and outside the walls of the institution go a long way to destabilising institutional hierarchies beyond the scope of the reading list”.

2 – Decolonising is uncomfortable

Decolonisation is inherently disruptive and should evoke uncomfortable reactions. However, due to the uptake of the phrase, people at all levels of the University are happy to use this term without actually offering the level of commitment and disruption that is needed to truly decolonise (Thomas and Arday, 2021).

3 – White fragility

“Coined by DiAngelo, white fragility gives a name to the ubiquitous practice in which white people react with a range of defensive moves that compensate for even the slightest distress caused by challenges to their racial worldviews and/or to their racial innocence.” (Applebaum, 2017). DiAngelo, (2011, pg. 54) defines white fragility as the “state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves”.

Applebaum, (2017) discusses a scenario where she was invited to give a talk to students entitled “Discourse, Truth and White Strategies of Denial”. After the talk, a conversation started predominantly led by students of colour about white denial of racism, where students gave examples of how this manifests within the classroom. Applebaum noticed that the white students were quiet, and so encouraged them to engage. “A white male student,

clearly agitated, said he didn't understand why the students of color were so "angry" and that they seemed to be over-sensitive and offended by practices that were not ill-intended. Two female students of color reacted to his comments with frustration and infuriation, one announcing that she was contemplating leaving the room, to which the white student protested with both anger and tears insisting that he was not racist." Applebaum saw this as a teachable moment, and so questioned the students discomfort and highlighted the violence experienced by the students of colour in the classroom. In response to this, "the white colleague who invited me to speak to her class interrupted by reproaching me for being too "hard" on her white student. Another student put his hand on the white student's shoulder to comfort him. I immediately noticed that no one expressed the need to comfort the students of color who were experiencing difficult emotions. What just happened? White comfort was recentered, and white denials were protected in a class whose purported aim was exactly the converse".

Applebaum, (2017) goes on to argue that displays of white fragility are performative and rather than showing vulnerability, are moments of invulnerability where the white person uses their whiteness as a tool to shut down conversations, or to take the spotlight away from the situation that made them uncomfortable.

Evidence #3 – Admit when we don't know

This is relevant for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is okay that we do not have all the answers. We do not and should not pretend that we know things if we don't. This is also useful when it comes to pedagogy, because to decolonise the curriculum likely means introducing topics that we have not taught before. This is one reason why starting small is good, perhaps we introduce one text into a module whilst we do the personal learning required to go further. However, if we are not able to admit when we don't know, we may never make a change (Liyanage, 2020).

Morreira et al., (2020) concludes that we must pursue "epistemic humility. There is evidence that since the inception of colonialism, the struggle for decolonisation by colonised communities has been preserved in their writings, art, music and oral traditions. We could appeal to and learn from the knowledge systems and practices of those who have been historically excluded from the official sites of knowledge production. We should also recognise the ways in which this knowledge has been historically dismissed as incoherent, unscientific, and lacking epistemic authority. Simply put, untangling the Gordian knot that is entailed in decolonising our institutions and pedagogy might be enhanced by adopting an attitude of epistemic humility towards the knowledge and knowers located outside the academy".

Actions we can take

- The most important step here, is to start our own learning and unlearning process, this document and the Resource Library contain resources which we can use to start educating ourselves. [Decolonising the mind](#) is the first step towards decolonial practice.
- Instead of instantly responding when we notice feelings of discomfort, we can practice being open to discomfort, and see what happens when we sit with our feelings and

thoughts as they arise. This can help us begin to discover where these feelings are coming from

- When we are ready, and importantly when we can do so largely without centering our own feelings, engage in discussions about race, racism and colonisation
- When we are teaching on difficult topics such as decolonisation and anti-racism, it is important not to center the discomfort of white students. Applebaum, (2017) suggests that the solution to invulnerability, which “entails closure and not wanting to know, [is] epistemic vulnerability [which] begins with being open and an acknowledgment of uncertainty” (square brackets added, also see Gilson, (2011))
- Admitting when we don’t know is important so that we can be open to learning, and open to working with dialogue with others who have expertise on the subject

Acknowledging and challenging whiteness

Overview

We (white people), rarely have to think about our whiteness, and may not even consider white as an ethnicity. White is always present on forms, and we are able to move through the world with relative ease; any discomfort we do experience is not due to the colour of our skin. Whiteness also describes systems, of which we benefit disproportionately. Acknowledging and challenging whiteness is a critical step of decolonisation, as without being able to acknowledge and discuss whiteness, we are unable to fully do the work decolonisation requires.

Evidence #1 – Whiteness

Whiteness is a similar concept to patriarchy, whereas it represents ideologies, practices and system which uphold power that is predominantly controlled by white people, and where white people benefit disproportionately from the system. Ahmed, (2007) notes that “[i]t is important to remember that whiteness is not reducible to white skin, or even to ‘something’ we can have or be, even if we pass through whiteness. When we talk about a ‘sea of whiteness’ or ‘white space’ we are talking about the repetition of the passing by of some bodies and not others, for sure. But non-white bodies do inhabit white spaces; we know this”.

Evidence #2 – Whiteness within Universities (Institutional whiteness)

When thinking about whiteness within the context of Universities, we are not only talking about Universities which are predominantly white institutions, but of the systemic whiteness that affects the ways the Universities function and the knowledge it produces. Joseph-Salisbury, (2019) describes the whiteness of Universities thus: “White supremacist constructions of intellect – through the idea of a white enlightenment (Mills, 1997) – have contributed to the construction of the university as a white space. My argument, therefore, is this: the university, and particularly Oxford university, is constructed as a place of intellect. Intellect has already been codified as white. Ideologically then, the university is not just an intellectual space, but a white space.”

Doharty et al., (2021) also describes the particular context of “Whiteness in British [Higher Education] HE” as being “marred by a unique affliction: cut off from colonial and postcolonial roots, decolonisation is the ‘new’ way in which institutions can demonstrate commitment to racism - both interpersonally and structurally. Institutions advance rather than dismantle racism by adopting the work of a few racially minoritised groups, but exploitatively draining the useful parts of their scholarship to meet institutional metrics and marketise fashionable buzz-words that appeal to social media hashtags. Therefore, whiteness, so invisible and ‘everyday’ (Essed, 1991) can result in [Black minority ethnic] BME scholars becoming complicit in supporting the limited progress institutions herald as significant achievements - working themselves into the ground by sitting on and contributing to, a disproportionate number of Equality and Diversity committees, BME student support initiatives, Race Equality Staff networks, and Race Equality launches”.

These accounts are clearly not only about white people, but about the pervasiveness of whiteness within Universities and the impacts it has on everyone who enters the University space, as highlighted again by Doharty et al., (2021): "Whiteness in English higher education... is taken-for granted, axiomatic of an exclusive sense of belonging that despises people of colour. Whiteness rationalises the stripping of humanity of a person of colour that the latter becomes invisible, not even recognised as human (Dumas, 2016). This longing to be recognised as human in an effort to attain some sense of equal footing with white faculty is a call-to-arms to advance institutional equity work (Rollock, 2019), such as addressing lack of representation of BME staff and pay disparities (Advanced HE, 2018). English higher education has been keen on addressing racial inequalities in the sector (Bhopal and Pitkin, 2018), however whiteness remains steadfast."

Evidence #3 – White privilege

Murdoch and McAloney-Kocaman, (2019) quote Sue, (2003, pg. 138) to define white privilege "as the 'unearned benefits and advantages' that are handed out to white people as a result of a system that is 'normed and standardized on White-European values, with most of the structures, policies and practices of the institutions being situated in such a manner as to pave the road for white individuals while creating obstacles for other groups'"

Educating white people about white privilege has mixed impacts on perceptions and attitudes towards racialised individuals. For example, Todd et al., (2010) reported prejudiced attitudes towards Latino students held by White students, increased during the course of a semester as a result of being confronted with evidence of white privilege. And Murdoch and McAloney-Kocaman, (2019) found similar results where learning about white privilege led white people to report experiencing more personal hardships. Conversely Powell et al., (2005) found that framing narratives around white privilege (versus Black disadvantage) led to feelings of collective guilt and reduced racism.

Evidence #4 – Interest convergence

Linked to white privilege, interest convergence states that white people "will advance the cause of racial justice only when doing so coincides with their own self-interest" (Bell, 1980). One example of this is Athena SWAN, which has benefitted middle class white women disproportionately (Bhopal, 2018). Thus, interest convergence ascertains that white people will only work towards making things more equitable for People of Colour if they themselves are benefitting and their status is not challenged (Bhopal and Pitkin, 2020)

Evidence #5 – Hostile environments

During the Black Lives Matter movements in 2020, a common phrase heard was 'All Lives Matter'. This kind of response to discussions around racism can take many forms, such as changing the subject to social class which feels more comfortable (Liyanage, 2020). This is due to white discomfort with talking about race (see section on '[Get comfortable with being uncomfortable](#)') and the perception that by making things better and more equitable for Black people and people of colour, that we (white people) are somehow losing out (see section on '[Admit when we don't know](#)' which discusses interest convergence). However, this

creates a hostile environment for racialised individuals, and seeks to question their humanity and their lived experience (Dumas, 2016). It also seeks to recenter whiteness, and so reinforces the white perspective.

Hattery et al., (2022) also notes that “equity without inclusion can produce a hostile work environment in which those with privileged identities resent what they perceive to be special treatment, rather than understanding that equitable practices are simply tools for addressing systemic, historically oppressive structures such as white supremacy and heteropatriarchy.” (see section on [‘Diversity, Equity and Inclusion’](#)).

Evidence #6 – Performativity & tokenism

A key pitfall when we want to do decolonial work is that we rush in and do things that are tokenistic, where we do something without really thinking it through properly and where it does not have the desired and intended effects, or performative, where we do something that sounds good but again has no real impacts. These can be done personally, or institutions can do them through policies (Bhopal and Pitkin, 2020).

For example, “[s]ometimes when working in this space, the focus is too much on the process of doing the work (e.g. organising the meetings, having the meetings etc.) and focussing on the end product that the focus shifts to doing the process rather than doing the thing itself” (Bhopal and Pitkin, 2020). For example, being awarded the Bronze Race Equality Charter can be used by institutions to prove they are tackling racism, without them taking the steps needed to implement real change (Bhopal and Pitkin, 2020).

Evidence #7 – White supremacy & status quo

White supremacy is a big word, and may bring to mind images of skinheads, the KKK and other far-right groups. However these are the extreme, very obvious forms of white supremacy. White supremacy has been defined by Ansley, (1989) as: “a political, economic and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily reenacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings”. Throughout history, white supremacy has manifested through colonialism, apartheid and slavery (Gillborn, 2018) but it also remains through institutional whiteness (Joseph-Salisbury, 2019).

Due to institutions upholding white supremacy through institutional whiteness, which is linked to power, Universities want to maintain the status quo. One way of doing this is through what Rollock, (2018) refers to as ‘racial gesture politics’ which “refers to (individual or collective) words, policies or behaviours, which ostensibly address racial disparities but in reality maintain a racially inequitable status quo”. This is not the point of decolonisation, which Saini, (2020) describes as being “inherently disruptive, destabilizing and non-linear. Efforts to streamline and formalise the process more often than not prove reductive”.

Actions we can take

- Learning and unlearning is an important step here, and will help us to recognise whiteness and white supremacy as it occurs in our everyday lives. The next step is then to challenge whiteness through doing things differently in our teams and our research
- “[W]hite members of staff need to use their privilege to intervene and speak up’, Kate [a policy advisor to universities on access and equality, diversity and inclusion] recommended” (Liyana, 2020)
- “Institutions must centre student and staff experience – and people of colour themselves – in their decolonisation efforts in order to avoid inadvertently implementing biased or tokenistic policies” (Liyana, 2020)
- Ideally, projects on decolonisation and anti-racism should be lead by racialised individuals with expertise in the field, who are then being supported by white members of staff (Liyana, 2020)

Power dynamics and positionalities

Overview

This section is to support individuals within a team and/or research project to begin considering their positionalities, and the power dynamics that exist, at the start of each new project (this could be at the start of coming together to write a new grant, and then once the grant has been funded and the project starts with the final team). These dynamics and positionalities should be reflected upon and discussed before the project begins, to address and understand how this will impact the project going forward. Below are a few suggested themes for consideration.

Evidence #1 – Power dynamics and positionality

Power often intersects with race and gender, with those in positions of power more likely to be white males (note that within the Centre there is a more equal gender balance). This can lead to problematic power imbalances, which exacerbates existing gender and racial inequalities. Therefore it is important to consider both our power and identity, and ensure those with less power are supported and centered, thus promoting both equity and inclusion (Hattery et al., 2022).

Evidence #2 – Power dynamics within teams

Within teams, different individuals will hold different amounts of power. This will vary from team to team, depending on the composition. Power may also fluctuate for individuals depending on the situation. Power within a team means that those with more of it get to make more of the decisions around what is done, what ideas are engaged with, what methods are used etc. (Hattery et al., 2022).

People with marginalised identities traditionally have less power, and therefore their voices are less heard (hooks 1984). From a research perspective, “dissecting and interrogating power is essential to assembling research teams that are truly diverse, equitable, and inclusive to produce cutting edge research” (Hattery et al., 2022). Power within teams and institutions can also impact the progression of more junior members of staff. This could be through how decisions are made about leadership roles, career progression, authorship position, training opportunities etc. (Hattery et al., 2022).

Other insightful readings: Therborn, G. (1999). The ideology of power and the power of ideology. Verso.

Evidence #3 – Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion strategies are embedded within almost all organisations. Decolonisation is often put within this remit, which can actually detract from it’s purpose. “Margot Finn, President of the Royal Historical Society (RHS) put it: ‘This is not only about diversity and inclusion, it’s about: must we, should we, can we rethink the structures of knowledge? And that’s where decolonisation is different than diversification’” (Liyange, 2020).

However, equity, diversity and inclusion are important in their own right, but often we do not consider what each word means and how different mechanisms are needed to ensure all three are happening. Hattery et al., (2022) provides useful definitions of each:

"Diversity commonly refers to including people who hold different identities, perspectives, and training. One of the most commonly employed strategies for ensuring diversity in research teams is to assemble a team that is interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary". However, Hattery et al., (2022) suggests a better method would be to create teams which "intentionally disrupt status and power hierarchies in order to conduct the highest quality research while simultaneously advancing opportunities for people who are under-represented at traditional research tables".

"[E]quity refers to the acknowledgement that not all people start from the same place. In the context of research teams, equity requires that we elevate specific people to hold as much space as others by providing more responsive support, or even simply more support, to them. Practically speaking, this means recognizing that because of structural barriers that impede the professional advancement of women, BIPOC, and LGBTQ+ scholars, offering associate professors the opportunity to serve as principle investigators on a team that includes full professors, who as we note are significantly more likely to be white, cisgender, heterosexual men, can be an equity strategy."

"Inclusion is the process that ensures these individuals not only sustain the space provided to them, but are as welcomed, elevated, and centered as often as everyone else. This requires, among other things, debunking the assumption that offering equity in professional opportunities, including additional support, is an 'affirmative action' policy."

Evidence #4 – Mentorship

Reflect on your own career progression; were you were supported by a mentor? Did they look like, or share other identities similar to you? "Mentorship and sponsorship are critical to professional success, and historically many people with marginalized identities find that they are locked out of the social networks where mentorship and sponsorship take place" (Hattery et al., 2022).

Actions we can take

- "Members of the team must engage in a reflexive process that reveals clearly where the power lies among the individuals who comprise the team: who has power, who lacks power, and how power manifests relationally" (Hattery et al., 2022)
- Individuals who identify that they have privilege within the team in terms of their rank or their identity "must commit to equitable practices that ensure inclusion" (Hattery et al., 2022)
- Writing positionality statements, which outline our personal and professional identities and experiences relevant to the team can be a good starting point for understanding and thinking about the power we hold within a team and an institution

- Positionality statements, which can be interpreted a number of ways, can also be useful within presentations and publications to provide context as to the lens with which we see the world and therefore our research (Hattery et al., 2022)
- Provide mentorship and networking opportunities for racialised members of our teams. Particularly supporting them with navigating the University system, career progression, publishing and grant funding processes, feeding back of their work, navigating dynamics within the team and the wider institute etc. Introduce the individual to others within our professional networks (Hattery et al., 2022)
- Consider how we can make meetings less hierarchical, for example during the REACH project we had a rotating chair for meetings. This was suggested by Dr Olivia Barnett-Naghshineh, and meant that everyone's voice was heard during meetings. This encourages interaction and dialogue with all members of the team.

Challenge racism when it occurs

Overview

Racism is prevalent throughout the UK, and is embedded into systems. Racism is often thought of as a physical or verbal attack on an individual because of their race, ethnicity or cultural background. This describes overt racism, whereas most racism is covert. This is where systems and structures within our society, and the way we act, continue to oppress and marginalise racialised individuals. Being able to discuss race and racism, and speak up when we see it happening, means we can start to dismantle the systems that favour the suppressors over the oppressed.

Evidence #1 – Racism exists

Rollock (2018) discusses how people of colour find contact her in various circumstances to tell her of their experiences within UK universities: "Students speak of lecturers whose course content dismisses or subjugates their identity or history, of white supervisors who seek to minimise or altogether alter the content of postgraduate research where race is the focus. Administrative staff describe being forever stuck at the same grade or of their contributions being overlooked by dismissive line managers and, academic staff share endless examples of incidents in which colleagues repeatedly question their competence and expertise."

Ahmed, (2009) states that: "To speak of racism [within universities] is to introduce bad feeling. It is to hurt not just the organisation, re-imagined as a subject with feelings, but also the subjects who identify with the organisation, the 'good white diversity' subjects, to whom we are supposed to be grateful. (p. 46)" (square brackets added by Rollock, 2018). One individual, an Asian British female from a Russell Group University said that discussing racism with colleagues led to them feeling uncomfortable, and that people who bring up this topic are seen as being "hostile" and "alienating" their colleagues (Bhopal and Pitkin, 2020).

Evidence #2 - Microaggressions

Perez Huber and Solorzano, (2015) describe racial microaggressions as: "...racial microaggressions are a form of systemic, everyday racism used to keep those at the racial margins in their place. They are: (1) verbal and non-verbal assaults directed toward People of Color, often carried out in subtle, automatic or unconscious forms; (2) layered assaults, based on race and its intersections with gender, class, sexuality, language, immigration status, phenotype, accent or surname; and (3) cumulative assaults that take a psychological, physiological, and academic toll on People of Color".

To explain microaggressions, and the mental and physical toll they have on people of colour, is to imagine being stung by a stinging nettle. It is painful, but one sting goes away quite quickly. Imagine you are being stung multiple times a day, the pain and itching the stings would take up a lot of your time and energy. You would be less likely to get things done, your work would suffer as well as your mental health.

Microaggressions, and the general difficulties of operating within a white supremacist system which exists within Universities, means many faculty of colour consider leave UK universities

to go elsewhere, for example to the US where it is perceived the situation will be better (Bhopal et al., 2018). Therefore this impacts staff retention and satisfaction.

Evidence #3 – Emotional burden

Having to explain and justify racism to white people, puts an extra emotional burden on racializing individuals, leading to feelings of stress, anxiety, fatigue and discomfort (see Doharty et al., 2021). In relation to microaggressions, Smith et al., (2007) describes the “physiological and psychological strain exacted on racially marginalized groups and the amount of energy lost dedicated to coping with racial microaggressions and racism”, which Doharty et al., (2021) refers to as “racial battle fatigue”.

Evidence #4 – Class vs. Race

Often when systemic racism is discussed as a system which continues to oppress and marginalise racialised individuals, people (usually white people) often bring the discussion back to social class: isn't this the most important factor in the UK context? A key difference between class and race/ethnicity is that we cannot easily tell someone's class, therefore people cannot be actively discriminated against as easily as people of colour who cannot always hide their race or ethnicity. Additionally, race and class intersect and so the two cannot be examined separately (Gillborn et al., 2016).

The preference of white people to discuss class vs. race is due to white discomfort (whether conscious or unconscious; see section on '[Get comfortable with being uncomfortable](#)') (Doharty et al., 2021). Specifically, people discuss the poor educational attainment of white working class boys, however Gillborn et al., (2016) points out that the interpretation of this data, which used Free School Meals as a proxy for social class is problematic, and de-classes people of colour.

Evidence # 6 – Allyship

White people can act as allies for their racialised colleagues. Hattery et al., (2022) says that “allies should ‘read the room’ and notice when marginalized people are ignored or dismissed. An ally can open up space in the conversation by leaving room for team members with marginalized identities to speak. Rather than speak for them, allies show support for their perspectives and amplify their voices. This strategy not only ensures that historically excluded people are included in the conversation, but it also intentionally shifts power away from dominant voices”.

Actions we can take

- Educate ourselves on systemic racism. Consider how it is showing up within our place of work and other aspects of our lives
- Read the section on 'Getting comfortable with being uncomfortable' and start thinking about how we can sit with our discomfort when talking about race and racism so that we do not jump straight to making ourselves feel better, over listening to what is being said

- Do not expect our racialised colleagues to educate us, use the Resource Library as a starting point for educating ourselves
- Do not assume that all of our racialised colleagues want to talk about race and racism, assign work tasks related to people's expertise and expressed interests
- It is not covered in this document, but hiring practices should be evaluated. Bhopal, (2017) suggests: "Simple measures such as the introduction of name-blind job applications to avoid the ample evidence that non-Eurocentric names are disadvantaged in recruitment processes are easy to implement and immediately signal a willingness to tackle issues of diversity"
- Have conversations about race and racism with those in positions of power to make changes
- Learn about what it means to be an ally, consider asking your organisation for allyship training, as part of a longer-term commitment to anti-racism

Fund scholarships and studentships for people of colour

Overview

There are a lack of Black professors in UK universities, which has knock on effects for Black students going onto further education due to lack of representation. It is really important for people to see themselves doing something in order to see that they could do it too. Thus, predominantly white institutes remain so. One way to make research spaces more equitable and diverse are to offer funded scholarships and studentships specifically for people of colour. There is often anxiety around this, due to positive discrimination being illegal within the Equality Act 2010. However, this does not apply to studentships.

An important thing to note, is that international students are priorities by Universities as a way of generating income. However, Bhopal, (2017) makes it clear that universities are "failing to admit a diverse body of home students" and this is something that needs further consideration.

Evidence #1 – Lack of funding for Black PhD students

There is a lack of studentships being awarded particularly to Black students at PhD level (Williams et al., 2019) which then means there are fewer researchers at the postdoctoral and lectureship positions (Advanced HE, 2018). This has obvious knock on effects for who is doing research, what is getting researched and who is getting funding.

Evidence #2 – Mandatory policies

Promoting diversity through mandatory policies which are linked to funding have been used successfully (Bhopal and Pitkin, 2020). For example, in 2011 it was announced that only institutions achieving silver Athena SWAN silver status were eligible to apply for biomedical research funding, leading to a 400% increase in Athena SWAN applications (Ovseiko et al., 2017).

Evidence #3 – Fund scholarships and studentships

Despite the evidence shown above, many institutes are fearful of BAME-specific scholarships and studentships due to a lack of understanding of the legal frameworks in England, Scotland and Wales (Liyanage, 2020). Whilst positive discrimination in employment is illegal, it is legal to fund minority-specific scholarships (Liyanage, 2020).

Bhopal, (2017) highlights that "bursaries and scholarships ... are in no way about lowering standards. They are simple, necessary steps to move towards an inclusive approach for students from black and minority ethnic backgrounds who are not currently finding they have access to the same opportunities afforded their white, more wealthy, privately-schooled peers".

Evidence #4 – Representation matters

The issue of representation is a big deal, and is part of a cyclical problem in which lack of representation means students are not seeing themselves reflected in academia and

therefore there are fewer people of colour undertaking Masters and PhDs, and then even fewer researchers and lecturers of colour (Liyanage, 2020). This has knock on implications in terms of lack of mentorship for students, the importance of which is highlighted by Shahmima's story of an interaction with a student: "Shahmima, who is Brown, was approached by a Brown student of hers: He was like, 'I can't look at you right now because I cannot tell you what you teaching me, made me feel'. And I was shocked, I had no idea ... 'Seeing you teach History made me realise I don't have to do a Science degree. I can go full History now. You look like my sister, and I could be you'. And we just didn't look at each other because he was almost tearing up". (Liyanage, 2020).

Actions we can take

- Read Williams et al., (2019) for information and recommendations regarding the 'broken pipeline' for Black students wanting to undertake PhDs
- Get familiar with what can be done under the Equalities Act 2010 in terms of BAME-specific scholarship
- Look at where funds can be reprioritised to fund BAME scholarships and studentships
- Consider how we can support more home students of colour to go into further education and then on to academic careers. As well as scholarships and studentships, Bhopal, (2017) suggests "[m]easures such as outreach programmes targeting poor areas, underperforming schools and underrepresented schools; offering support packages to pupils to develop their university applications; training for interviews"
- Ensuring that international students, and students of colour, have supportive communities within the University so that they do not feel isolated and lonely. This is particularly important for Truro and Cornwall campuses where racism is most likely to occur within communities, and where transport infrastructure is limited

- **Reflexive questions**

Questions #1 - Decolonise the Mind (adapted from Tuitt and Stewart, 2021)

The first step when thinking about doing decolonisation work, is to decolonise the mind. Most of us will have been raised and educated in a society whose systems are rooted in colonialism and which perpetuate racism. Therefore, whether consciously or unconsciously we will all have thoughts, perceptions and feelings which are based on prejudice, ignorance and racism. These are often referred to as “unconscious bias”, and although they are unconscious they can influence the way we treat people, the way we work, teach, research etc.

That is why the first step is to become aware of our unconscious biases, and of how colonialism persists today and shapes the systems and spaces we are a part of. By increasing our awareness, we begin the process of unlearning and through this can start to question our ways of knowing, doing and being both in terms of our personal lives and our work lives. Here are some starting points:

- Knowledge sources
 - Look for information from outside of academia, including insights from activists and community organisations
 - Actively engage with and cite literature by scholars from minoritised communities
 - Engage with Indigenous voices and knowledge, and consider how this can enhance, support and in some cases challenge Western ways of thinking
- Inclusive language
 - Think about the context of the language we use, why have we chosen certain terms? Make our choices clear in our writing
 - Challenge and reject language and ideas which suggest that minoritised groups are the problem and suggest they are under-developed
 - Get curious about language and terminology, what assumptions are they based on? (Small, 2018)

Questions #2 - Decolonise your teaching (adapted from Tuitt and Stewart, 2021)

Once we have started the journey to decolonise our minds, we will want to start embedding our learnings into other aspects of our personal and professional life. As an educator, the way in which we teach is an obvious area to start decolonising. The traditional lecture style which consists of disseminating knowledge in a very one-dimensional way is a colonial practice. However there are many styles of teaching, some which you may already use, that are more decolonial.

These kinds of decolonial teaching spaces are more inclusive, encourage dialogue and are discursive. They centre and generate knowledge from global majority scholars. When teaching in a decolonial way, “pedagogy is filled with passion, rage, fear, anger and love for the art of teaching” (Tuitt and Stewart 2021).

Here are some things to consider:

- Teach as yourself, rather than being bound by the traditional structures of knowledge dissemination
- Look at your reading lists, who is on the required versus the recommended reading? Why? Aim to provide readings that give a balanced insight into racially diverse scholars
- Engage in the self-work needed to teach from an anti-oppressionist and equity-minded perspective, using decolonial methods to encourage reflection and action from students
- “Be courageous, resilient and embrace the emotional labour required for decolonising pedagogy” (Tuitt et al. 2018)

Questions #3 – Decolonise the European Centre (adapted from Grue, 2021)

Specific areas of inquiry for the ECEHH to consider:

- Are there any scholars of colour within the Centre?
 - If yes, what supports are in place to ensure their success and retention, both within the ECEHH and the wider University?
 - If yes, are they taking on extra burdens, particularly around mentoring students of colour/BAME students or doing diversity work? If yes, are these extra burdens recognised via pay or promotion benefits?
 - If yes, have you asked them (in a way that protects them from retaliation) about their experiences in your course/module? (Things that are going well, things that could improve)
 - If no, what proactive steps are you taking to recruit scholars of colour?
- What theories, research methods and practices are taught and used in the Centre and wider Medical School?
 - Do they include contributions from scholars of colour/BAME scholars?
 - Are traditional theories examined from multiple perspectives?
 - If yes to the above two, do your course descriptions acknowledge this?
 - Do you have any scholars of colour teaching your theory courses?
- What methods/methodologies are taught and used in the Centre and wider Medical School?
 - Are the colonial historic and present-day impacts of these methodologies discussed?
 - Are participant-centric, ethical methodologies taught?
 - Do methods courses include contributions from scholars of colour?
 - If yes to the above three, do your course descriptions acknowledge this?
 - Do you have any scholars of colour teaching your methods courses?
- Does the Centre and wider Medical School offer any courses, or conduct research, explicitly about race or gender?
 - Are these classes optional or mandatory?

- Are any of them taught by scholars of colour?
- If they are taught by scholars of colour, what supports do you have in place to support them from potential complaints from students?
- How frequently are these courses offered?
- Do you offer pedagogical training around teaching race or gender to your scholars?
Key areas for training include:
 - Cultural sensitivity/humility
 - Implicit bias
 - How to create an inclusive classroom space
 - Specific teaching strategies that neither exoticise nor minoritise your students
 - Suggestions for assessment practices

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