Racial Justice, Equity and Power (RJEP): Rethinking Racialisation, Theory and Anti-Racist Practices

9 July 2025, 9.00AM - 5.00PM

Institute for Social Justice & Crime (ISJC) | School of Social Sciences and Humanities

University of Suffolk, Waterfront Building, 19 Neptune Quay, Ipswich, IP4 1QJ

CONFERENCE ABSTRACTS

Keynote Presentation 9.40am - 10.30am

Professor Khadija Mohammed

Associate Dean, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, University of the West of Scotland

Unmuting Marginalised Voices: Decolonising Praxis and Everyday Resistance

In today's urban landscapes, borders extend beyond physical spaces to include social, cultural, and institutional barriers. These often appear as systemic racism, marginalisation, and the silencing of minority voices— especially in education. Drawing on over 30 years in Scottish education and grounded in decolonial thought, this keynote explores how everyday acts of resistance can challenge these invisible borders. By centring the voices of those historically excluded through race and other forms of othering, there is a need to underscore the importance of diverse, experience-based knowledge systems. Grounded in Critical Race Theory and Muted Group Theory the keynote, reveals how dominant structures silence marginalised voices in schools and universities. Understanding these dynamics is essential to disrupting dominant narratives and advancing empathy and inclusion. The keynote synthesises these insights and outlines practical pathways for decolonising institutions, practices, and knowledge. It calls on scholars, educators, and communities to work across boundaries to create spaces where all voices are heard, valued, and empowered. The keynote will focus on the conference's key themes and issue a call to action—urging continued resistance to invisible borders and a collective commitment to justice.

Morning Parallel Panels 10.40am - 12.00pm

PANEL 1: Anti-Racist Practices and Education in Global Contexts

Leila Mouhib (Université Libre de Bruxelles and Université de Mons) and **Zehra Colak** (Utrecht University)

Toward Critical Anti-Racist Praxis in Education: Resistance and Transformative Possibilities

Despite growing discourse on diversity and inclusion, racialised students and academics continue to face systemic barriers across educational institutions. We explore in this communication how we (as educators, scholars and activists) can develop a critical anti-racist praxis as a necessary response to entrenched racial hierarchies in education. Drawing from the existing and extensive research on anti-racism and (individual and collective) resistance in education, we expand an understanding of critical anti-racism praxis as inherently linked to the processes of decolonization and power relations. Building on this, we argue that a critical anti-racist praxis in education requires dismantling the material and symbolic forms of racial hierarchies embedded in educational structures. Ultimately, we call for a shift from neoliberal and depoliticized approaches to anti-racism toward transformative action rooted in lived experiences, radical care, and scholar-activism, as a means of fostering emancipatory possibilities for racialised communities.

Sharon Porter (Leeds Beckett University)

Anti-Racism and Racial Literacy Training in Schools

This paper presents preliminary findings from research conducted with secondary school teachers and leaders on their perceptions of anti-racism and racial literacy training in schools. The research draws on data obtained through semi-structured interviews and an analysis of training resources.

Anti-racism and racial literacy training serve as critical tools for raising awareness and fostering meaningful change across various sectors. Industries such as healthcare and policing have implemented structured training programmes designed to challenge racial bias and promote equity. In education, initiatives like the Anti-Racist School Award (led by the Centre for Race, Education & Decoloniality) and the Race And Conscious Equality (RACE) Charter Mark demonstrate a structured commitment to systemic change at a national level.

A key component of these training programmes is the language and terminology they employ. While some reinforce racial power dynamics through deficit-based narratives, others seek to challenge structural inequities by centring systemic change (Joseph-Salisbury, 2020; Walker et al., 2022).

This paper uses Critical Anti-Racist Discourse Analysis to explore how anti-racism and racial literacy programmes either reinforce or challenge racial power dynamics through their use of language. The analysis is framed by Critical Race Theory, which provides a lens for understanding how race and racism are embedded within institutional practices. The paper examines the implications for teachers and school leaders in developing more effective and transformative approaches to racial equity in education.

To ensure that anti-racism and racial literacy training leads to systemic change rather than perpetuating existing inequities, educators, policymakers, and training providers must critically evaluate the language and frameworks used in these programmes. Schools must move beyond performative gestures and actively embed anti-racist principles into curricula, policies, and institutional practices.

Michael Cole, Nariell Morrison & Mark Anderson (Imperial College London)

Reflections on Launching a university-wide Anti-Racism in STEMMB Special Interest Group

Racialised disparities in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) persist as raced-ethnicity gaps in student access, experience, retention, and awarding and in staff wellbeing, retention, and recognition. Whilst policy and promotional materials signal intent to address these inequalities, there remain barriers to anti-racism within HEIs. These include a lack of racial literacy and cultural humility amongst staff and students, the disproportionate labour, risks and dangers of engagement for faculty, and a low visibility of best practices. In light of current global events, and legislative challenges and uncertainty vis a vis the UK's freedom of speech and equality landscape, threats to anti-racist efforts are on the rise. Anti-racism continues to be in danger of being maligned, misunderstood, or misappropriated.

This oral presentation uses a co-autoethnographic approach to provide an overview of a project designed to help address these issues. The Anti-Racism Special Interest Group (ASIG) aims to foster critical dialogue, knowledge-sharing, and action-oriented collaboration. Using elements of autoethnography, shared meaning-making, and the concept of a 'principled space', this session explores some of the obstacles, facilitators, and experiences of innovating an ASIG at a STEMMB-focused university.

In sharing this example, we invite discussion and critical engagement to co-construct ways in which we can help challenge and overcome racial disparities in HEIs and build towards sustainable, collaborative anti-racism.

PANEL 2: Lived Experience, Intersectionality and Racial Justice

Alison Wiggins (University College London)

Exploring the Experiences of Black and Black-Mixed Women Teachers Working in London Secondary Schools & Colleges

Black & Black-Mixed women are part of a tiny minority of teachers working in schools & colleges in London, but they make a significant difference to the lives of young people and in furthering social and racial justice in schools. However, there is a dearth of research focused on their intersectional experiences and, research which has been done presents a narrative which is centred on the racism they face. This research project explored the holistic experiences of these teachers and presents counter-narrative themes by applying central tenets of CRT (Critical Race Theory), BFT (Black Feminist Theory) and intersectionality.

Narrative inquiry approaches centred the voices of the women, and their stories and revealed counter-narrative themes which were focused on the positive experiences they had at school and working with young people. The collaborators in this project have been affected by racism in their workplace, but this did not define their experiences or overshadow: how much they enjoyed and were fulfilled by their work, the value of their relationships with colleagues and most importantly the power of the relationships they had with young people. These teachers found affiliation with the young people they taught, and this motivated them to build positive

and meaningful relationships with them through which they supported, advocated for and protected them. Their counter-narratives show that these teachers made a significant difference to the lives of the young people in their care and that this in turn enabled them not just to survive in teaching but to thrive.

Jamila Thompson (King's College London)

Interrogating the Experiences of Race, Racism and Misogyny by Black Girls in Education

This Community/Peer Research project in collaboration with Race-on-the-Agenda (ROTA) explored the experiences of race, racism and misogynoir by Black girls in different parts of the UK, primarily London. The methods used were survey and interviews, and the findings were striking. Girls detailed experiences of racism, Colourism, texturism and sexual assault. Just under 50 girls participated overall.

The girls provide recommendations to improve the experiences of Black girls in schools including anti-racism training for teachers, more representation of Black teachers and having a "zero tolerance" approach to racism. I would like to share my research and findings as well as think collaboratively about next steps.

Ania Couchinho (University of Newcastle)

Intersectional Power and Identity Dynamics in Shaping Black Women's Maternity

Black women's maternity care experiences in the UK are shaped by systemic inequities, with institutional racism and mistrust playing key roles. Using intersectionality theory to explore injustice, inequality, and the experiences of culturally appropriate care, this research examined how power and identity dynamics influence women's interactions with healthcare professionals. Recruitment across the UK led to semi-structured interviews with 26 Black women of African, Caribbean, and mixed backgrounds, conducted in England. Data were analysed using deductive thematic analysis approach to explore power and identity dynamics in maternity care. The findings identified eight factors shaping culturally appropriate care, grouped into either power or identity dynamics. Power-related factors included: (1) power-sharing for cultural safety, (2) exclusionary practices reinforcing hierarchies, (3) cultural incongruence centred on Eurocentric norms, and (4) coercion, fear, and surveillance as control mechanisms. Identity-related factors included (1) the impact of personal characteristics such as colourism and migration status, (2) collective identity in interactions, (3) systemic disbelief affecting care, and (4) the influence of whiteness, privilege, and institutional bias on healthcare structures. This research highlights the need for maternity care that prioritises racial and cultural safety. Key recommendations include: (1) integrating Black women's experiences into training curricula for healthcare professionals, (2) strengthening cultural congruence through improved workforce representation and community engagement, (3) integrating spaces for advocacy throughout maternity care, and (4) implementing cultural humility training tailored to the needs of Black women. These steps are essential for building a more equitable and just maternity care system in the UK.

PANEL 3: Dismantling Knowledge and Power

Saffron East (University of Cambridge)

Antiracist education at the margins of the university: the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies and the Free Black University

In this paper I present my findings at the early stages of a new project in which I plan to map out the history of antiracist pedagogies in UK universities. This paper compares two key case studies: the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Birmingham (CCCS) and the Free Black University (FBU). By analysing the pedagogical approach of CCCS, the paper provides historical context for the recent radical approaches of the FBU. Both case studies are examples of equitable, antiracist approaches to teaching and learning developed at the margins of the university. Both used funding from outside of the university to develop praxes that were divergent from the norm. As we approach the end of the 'decolonial moment' in UK HE, this research provides critical insights into the work that scholars have done, and are continuing to do, to make HE a more equitable and safe space for racialised and other minoritised students. I explore the positive, groundbreaking work of these scholars with the aim of signaling towards transformative practices for the future. Intersectionality is crucial, and my focus on antiracist pedagogies is not done with the intent of separating connected modes of oppression. Instead, this focus is chosen to move beyond the recent focus on the 'decolonial' and demonstrate that there has been a longer history of antiracist pedagogies in Britain that will allow us to shape a more radical space in UK HE.

Ibtihal Ramadan (University of Birmingham)

Rethinking Decolonisation: the vicious trap of Interest Convergence and Interest Divergence

Decolonising the curriculum (DC) continues to be one of the most contested endeavours in Western universities conceptually, epistemologically and pedagogically. Despite rigorous scholarship in support of this venture, backed by global socio-political shifts, efforts from scholars and anti-racist educators and activists to decolonise the curriculum have been circumscribed. Grounded in Derrick Bell's thesis of the permanence of racism, and utilising his concepts of 'interest convergence and interest divergence, I discuss in this presentation my ongoing work that aims to frame the existing complex dynamics between aligning and conflicting interests surrounding the practice of DC. Utilising critical conversations with anti-racist colleagues as well as personal reflections on the current practice of DC, I extend the work of Bell to argue that though seemingly contradicting concepts, interest convergence, operates in conjunction with interest diversion at HEIs. To this end, I critically discuss two common examples that characterise the broader current practice of decolonisation: namely 'the minority tax' and the 'historic fixation'. I argue that this institutional strategy is not only a colonial punchline, but primarily an academic (structural and epistemic) recolonialism aimed at pre-empting genuine efforts to DC, an attitude that has precedent within the academy vis-à-vis other persisting issues of inequity. I highlight the need for a collective and sustained effort amongst activist educators to reframe our strategies into distinct configurations that disrupt exploitation and challenge complicity.

Brent Cunningham (The Open University)

Diverse Computing Pioneers

The Open University (UK) School of Computing and Communications has completed a pilot project building an online repository of a diverse range of pioneers in Computing. These focus on non-Eurocentric contributors and innovators, including lesser-known figures. This is part of an Awarding Gaps initiative, to provide inspirational and relatable figures for diverse students that may experience disadvantage in study outcomes. This therefore relates to themes of anti-racist practice and dismantling knowledge and power in education. The repository is freely available in the University's OpenLearn platform (at https://www.open.edu/openlearncreate/diverse-computing-pioneers). This will be directly linked to teaching and learning materials in the STEM department, contributing to diversifying the curriculum. The pilot project has featured five prominent pioneers in computing from various backgrounds and time periods, covering mathematics in computing, networking innovations and work around AI. The aim is to further develop this project, opening the scope for contributions, and to add figures to the repository. The project has already raised interesting points for critical discussion, such as the relative role of individuals and groups in innovation, and dominant cultures in computing. These emerging topics are open to discussion, and very relatable to the conference theme of Rethinking Racialisation, Theory and Anti-racist Practices. This project would be suitable for a short alternative mode of presentation, such as an adapted 'watch party' where participants can engage with the materials, followed by discussion.

PANEL 4: Migration and Mobility

Zakia Essanhaji (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam)

Whiteness as the academy's orientation: discursive drawings of Dutch academia's racialised and gendered boundaries

Despite increasing commitments of universities to diversity, studies demonstrate how universities continue to reproduce race and gender inequality. The reproduction of such inequalities is tied to academia's ongoing (re)drawing of its racialised and gendered boundaries with which the exclusion of racialised and gendered Others is normalised. This paper addresses how whiteness as an affective orientation draws and consolidates Dutch academia's racialised and gendered boundaries by disciplining women of colour to conform to them. Drawing on 13 interviews, we show how whiteness as an orientation operates through (1) epistemic evaluations of non-white female bodies to draw racialised and gendered epistemic boundaries between the knower and the known; (2) white incredulity to affectively restore racialised and gendered boundaries disrupted by 'bodies moving out of 'their' place' and disciplines them through (3) racial surveillance as a form of boundary consolidation by putting non-white female bodies back 'in place' as 'bodies out of place' who struggle with and against internalising those boundaries to inhabit white academic spaces. Some women engaged in acts of refusal and resistance to being disciplined into the academy's white boundaries. Hence, we argue that we, as researchers and diversity practitioners must refuse the academy's white orientation of us by disorienting whiteness in and through our academic work to effectively redraw the academy's boundaries.

Soniya Ganvir (Goldsmiths College, University of London)

Is the migrant still melancholic? Producing the British South Asian

Representations of British South Asians in UK public life have never been more visible nor more varied. Across media and cultural production, stories by and about British South Asians are increasingly prominent, and consciously break from stereotypical narratives about generational conflict, social exclusion and emotional repression. In her 2010 book, *The Promise of Happiness*, Sara Ahmed diagnosed the British South Asian in the cultural imaginary as "melancholic", trapped between colonial injury in the past and racism in the present. Given this new proliferation of content, I conducted a critical discourse analysis of four contemporary cultural texts to explore the question: is the migrant still melancholic?

In addition to Ahmed's work on "affective economies", especially as they relate to Britishness and belonging, this work is informed by feminist affect theory more widely: Lauren Berlant's "cruel optimism", Sianne Ngai's "ugly feelings" and Amy Dobson and Akane Kanai's work on "affective dissonance". Stuart Hall's definition of media representation as creating "shared conceptual maps" also provided a helpful framework to understand not only how British South Asians feel but how they want to be seen to feel.

In Channel 4's We Are Lady Parts, the BBC's Juice, ITV's Count Abdulla and the Women's Prize shortlisted novel I'm A Fan, new tropes emerge: the British South Asian in contemporary culture is upwardly mobile, urban-dwelling and supported by flawed matriarchs. However, fantasy sequences reveal a gap between who the protagonists want to be and who they are – happiness, fulfilment, and most importantly, belonging, continue to elude them. Through this analysis I hope to contribute to understandings of how the media and cultural industries produce racialised subjects in the UK.

Mohammed Dhalech (University of Leicester)

Walking Hadrian's Wall: Race, nature and historic memory

Hadrian's Wall was the northern boundary of Roman Britain. In 2022 with a colleague, I spent a week walking the National Trail's Hadrian Wall Path. It was the 1900th anniversary of the Wall. This presentation explores how race, nature, and historical memory were entangled while walking the Wall. Walking for leisure is racially coded. The walk was play and a memorialisation of racialised people in rural England. Much of that presence is erased in the English rural idyll and spatial imaginary. Our absented presence underlines the fiction that racialised people in rural England are recent immigrants. This disappears the legacies of Caribbean slavery and the Raj's exploitation of India, from the English countryside. Diversity was part of Hadrian's Wall, including the African Roman emperor Septimius Severus. Yet, diversity was absent from the 1900th celebrations. The erasure of racialised people from the events mirrors the erasure of racialised people from rural England. Methodologically, we used walking as both a research practice and a lens for analysis—engaging with landscape, historical narratives, and public commemorations to examine the historical exclusions of racialised people.

Keynote Presentation 12.50pm - 1.40pm

Professor Heidi Safia Mirza

Professor Emeritus Equality Studies in Education, Institute of Education, UCL, University of London

Decolonising Pedagogies: Safe Spaces for Courageous Conversations

In my talk I explore how professional educators can engage in self-reflexive antiracist courageous conversations which enables them to begin the process of 'decolonising' established discourses of Race, identity and difference in the classroom. In the context of globalization and the ensuing 'irresistible rise' of multiracial eduscapes in our schools and universities, I unpack the ways in which the presence of postcolonial Black and Brown bodies still creates unsettling spaces of contestation in our overwhelmingly culturally White institutions. Drawing from my research on the pedagogic practices of teacher educators and their dilemmas of teaching students from different ethnicities, faiths and cultures, I explore the difficult concept of 'spaces of safety' which offers us the radical possibility of transcending the 'stuck' institutional discourses of 'EDI' to make our places of teaching and learning fit for purpose in a brave new era of decolonial possibilities.

Afternoon Parallel Panels 1.50pm - 3.10pm

PANEL 5: Anti-oppressive theories, methodologies & pedagogies

Rupesh Shah (The Open University)

The line and the circle – experiences of working on racial injustice in universities

In this paper, I explore how people working towards racial justice in large modern institutions encounter differences in worldviews around change as part of their search for agency.

Many universities in the UK are currently faced with a situation in which students from different racial groups are achieving significantly different results. This is often framed as representing an 'awarding gap', and many organisations have prioritised the closing of these gaps with a variety of institutionally driven initiatives. Organisations governed by a culture of targets and subject to growing financial pressures tend to generate cultures in which effective action is framed by notions of measurable, linear progress. Such cultures can lead to a view of agency that is focused on the development and delivery of projects.

The paper examines the search for agency in relation to racial justice within such contexts. Those experiencing marginalisation by existing institutional arrangements can often find that agency when framed by the dominant and dominating linear model of project delivery to be alienating. Instead, their search for agency is often experienced as a stance (Cochrane-Smith and Lytle (2009), Wall (2017, 2023)) in which change and stability are imagined as concentric circles, mandalas, loops or even figures of eight.

Working from an action research tradition, the paper draws mostly on my own attempts to intervene (alone and with others) within an institution that is experiencing an awarding gap. These first-person experiences will be analysed by drawing on theories of situated practice, systems thinking and second-order cybernetics. In the session participants will be invited to engage in an embodied exploration of development that draws on holistic images of change (Kaplan, 2002) and indigenous ways of knowing (Kimmerer, 2015; Yunkaporta, (2020).

Alison Wiggins (University College London)

The Black Girls research collective project: using Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) to connect Black & Black Mixed Girls in school with the next generation of teachers

There is a lack of educational research focused on the intersectional experiences of Black and Black-Mixed girls in UK schools. Existing studies are often framed through a deficit lens, highlighting themes of racism, adultification, carcerality, stereotyping, disproportionate exclusion rates, hypervisibility/invisibility, microaggressions, the impact of a Eurocentric curriculum, low expectations and deficit thinking by teachers. However, there is limited research on more positive counter-themes of academic success and progress, racial pride, solidarity and the 'community cultural wealth' they bring,

Through YPAR, I, as a Teacher Educator am working with a group of Black and Black-Mixed girls in school to explore their holistic experiences in ways which disrupt the traditional extractive and exploitive research approaches used in the academy. YPAR empowers young people to lead research on topics which matter to them, addressing social justice issues affecting their lives. The project operates within an emancipatory research framework, focusing on participatory, collaborative and change-oriented inquiry.

Together, we are co-creating knowledge about their experiences which will be shared with the next cohort of Secondary PGCE Student Teachers in September 2025. The goal is to inform Teacher Education programmes, helping future educators to better understand and support Black and Black-Mixed girls in schools, by removing barriers to their well-being, progress and outcomes. This research seeks to advance anti-racism, equity and social justice in education.

Sakina Jafri (University of Cambridge)

Mapping the river of life: Navigating identity construction among South Asian heritage teachers in London primary schools

Research on racially minoritised teacher representation has examined retention and career progression (Tereshchenko et al., 2020) however, little attention has been paid to the lived experiences and professional identities of South Asian heritage teachers. People from South Asian heritage consist of 20% of London's population (Singh, 2022) and are more likely to teach in London compared to white background teachers (Worth et al., 2022). This research centers 17 South Asian heritage teachers, as passionate role models, sharing stories of resilience in their teaching journeys. I used complementary narrative inquiry methods like life history interviews, river of life elicitation, and semi-structured observations to collect these

narratives across London. In this paper, I focus on the river of life elicitation method, that includes a combination of creative and participatory methods like artefact elicitation (Mannay, 2020) and river of life approach (Moussa, 1994). Teachers created a visual timeline of their lives with meaningful artefacts including photographs, poems, and newspapers that highlighted successes, struggles, and changes in the river's course. This paper showcases teachers' voices and begins to shed light on the nuanced journeys of South Asian heritage teachers, drawing lessons from a rich (and yet little explored) tapestry of experience. It builds on Etienne Wenger's (2016) lived experience of identity and Sara Ahmed's (2007) notion of whiteness as a habit which serves as a theoretical framework for this work, illustrating the importance of including minority teacher voices across the norms laid out by school leadership and government policies in education and teaching.

PANEL 6: Art, Media and Representation

Jamila Thompson (King's College London)

Social Media as Site for Black Feminism: Black Women's Digital Diaspora, Collectivity and Resistance

Drawing on the work of Black feminist thinkers, my work considers social media as a site for Black Feminism and explores how Black women's use of social media in contemporary society speaks to a wider history of Black women producing knowledge and sharing their lived experience outside of traditional spaces (where they have been excluded) in response to their intersectional experiences of racialised (anti-Black racism) and gendered (misogynoir) oppression. Black women's historical exclusion from traditional spaces for knowledge production - such as academia, traditional media, government etc. - has resulted in them having to cultivate their own spaces, tell their own stories and make sense of the world on their own terms. Today, Black women continue to write and rewrite our stories, speaking to the intersections of our identities and lived experience. This research explores how social media has enabled a sense of collectivity and resistance to develop amongst Black women of the diaspora through spaces such as Black Twitter and platforms such as Black Ballad, which have allowed Black women to connect on the grounds of lived experience, culture and identity but also, has galvanised the community into taking action in the face of racial and social injustice - i.e. Me Too, Black Lives Matter, Say Her Name.

Victoria Burgher (University of Westminster)

Hosting change: porcelain as a tool for liberatory anti-racist practice

Can an art practice using porcelain encourage constructive dialogue about the ongoing role of ideological whiteness in racial injustice? As a precious white commodity so entangled with the material culture and oppressive whiteness of European empires, porcelain is perhaps an apt tool for facilitating discussions of liberatory anti-racism. In collaboration with mixed groups of participants at workshops and events, I use a methodology that draws on the

'convivial' (Gilroy 2004; Valluvan 2016) to encourage us to 'imagine otherwise' (Sharpe 2016; Olufemi, 2021. Eating and drinking together, using handmade porcelain vessels, if infused with a commitment of care and relationality, can become a praxis of resistance, to envision 'the marvelous' (Miller 2016) of a socially just future. These occasions encourage a witnessing of plural perspectives – listening, hearing, holding and embodying others' voices, experiences and feelings. This illustrated paper focuses on the methods and objects used to lubricate relations of conviviality in such settings, inspired by Fred Moten's concept (after Denise Ferreira da Silva) of the condition in which we live being one of 'difference without separability' (Moten 2014). The aim of this praxis is to centre communion and futurity. The paper discusses the political potential of porcelain used in this way – whether creating such spaces can allow us to begin to digest the unpalatable realities of white supremacy sufficiently to imagine material and structural change.

Marie Casafina-Orwin (University of Warwick)

Photovoice an act of resistance from Black womxn in academia in the UK

The devaluation of Black womxn is prevalent in the fabric of British society (Pennant, 2024). Using photovoice (Wang & Burris, 1997), my research study will explore how Black womxn students navigate and resist systemic forms of oppression within academic spaces and identify the strategies of resilience and resistance they have developed as a result. This methodological paper argues that photovoice, which relies on visual images captured by participants to tell their own stories, is a powerful creative method to re-centre the narratives of Black womxn in Higher Education in the UK. Stereotypical images of Black womxn shaped by White supremacy such as the "Angry Black womxn", the "Strong Black womxn" or the "Jezebel" (Hill Collins, 2022) have been designed to control our identities and have greatly contributed to our oppression. For this reason, photovoice could be seen as an act of resistance, as a way to regain control and spread positive images of what it means to be a Black womxn, in general, but specifically in academia. As an act of empowerment, it allows participants to be actively involved in shaping the research design and in return, it allows them to create their own narratives. As a transformative method, photovoice disrupts the status quo and redistributes power in the research process. With photovoice, participants and researchers can engage meaningfully, and active collaboration takes place between participants and researchers, but also among participants themselves. With photovoice, the voices of Black womxn could be amplified, voices which are too often ignored and silenced and whose existence is still dehumanised. I contend that in a society where structural and institutional barriers are designed to disregard Black womxn's and other marginalised perspectives, photovoice is a powerful conduit for change.

PANEL 7: Lived experience, Intersectionality and Racial Justice

Zana Vathi, Daniel Sage & Alexander Hay (Edge Hill University, UK)

Tiered, placed and gendered? The impact of nationality on academic careers in the UK

This paper takes an intersectional approach to provide a sector-wide analysis on the extent to which and ways how nationality consists of a category of difference in the UK HE. The study of foreign-born academics in the UK HE is limited, despite the substantial proportion and continuous increase of their numbers in the sector. At the same time, diversity work in UK HEIs remains insufficient and has not responded to the fast internationalisation of the sector. A key focus will be the intersection of nationality and race/ethnicity, in order to provide a more continuous analysis of diversity and its pertinence to the UK HE. This intersection will be scrutinised with reference to the type of HEIs, the geographical location in the UK as well as gender, to inform a nuanced understanding of where, when and for whom nationality at birth matters in terms of career outcomes. Drawing primarily on HESA data and a number of key stakeholder interviews, the paper aims to contribute to theoretical developments on diversity and inclusion, as well as inform policy making, at a time that the HE sector and the UK immigration system are undergoing profound changes.

Sherelle Davids (National Institute for Economic and Social Research)

The racialising implications of representative staff models: The enactment of widening access for Black students to elite universities

Although 'Black' students have above national average rates of university attendance, they are the least likely to access elite universities. As a result, programmes exclusive to Black attendees have been developed by Widening Participation (WP) departments within these institutions. Taken from a chapter in my doctoral thesis, I outline my analysis of the policy imperatives and enactment in place to increase the access rates of Black students by WP departments across England. My research found that there was a reliance on a 'black staff model' (Lewis 2000) – i.e., black staffing for black student programme – to enact policy imperatives to target Black students for higher education entry. This was grounded in the belief that staffing programmes in this way would cater to the specific needs of young Black people. In this presentation, I will connect this to the research and theorisation carried out by Gail Lewis at the turn of the 21st century on the racialization of ethnic minority groups within the field of social work. Lewis (2000) argued that the drive to produce staffing models that supposedly mirrored ethnic minority populations being targeted by social policy, reproduced essentialised and fixed notions of race and ethnicity through the racialising assumption that the experiences of Britain's ethnic minority groups are solely defined by their racial and ethnic positioning. In my work on contemporary WP policy, I argue that in efforts to widen participation to Black students there is a need to unpack the tensions between the supposed importance of representation to address HE inequalities, and challenging racialised thinking. In other words, how does race-matching between staff and students on WP programmes aimed at Black students reproduce static notions of race that sociological inquiry has sought to challenge.

Siobhan O'Neill (University of Manchester)

Racially Minoritised Students' Perceptions and Experiences of Racism in UK HE

In 2020, following the murder of George Floyd and the subsequent reinvigoration of the Black Lives Matter movement, many UK universities made public statements of support promising to commit to anti-racism. This was a critical moment when 'race' and 'racism' were on the agenda. This paper explores racially minoritised students' accounts of their experiences around that time (2020-21). It centres a heterogeneous group of racially minoritised students and highlights their experiences of racism in Higher Education at a time when the salience of racial equality seemed to be on the rise. This paper builds upon and contributes to the field of 'race in Higher Education' by centring racially minoritised students and exploring how they understand and experience racism in these spaces at a critical moment of racial consciousness. It also makes an intervention in our understandings of contemporary racism, arguing that the majority of racially minoritised students characterised their universities in ways that align with the concept of 'post-racial racism'. Their accounts show that this newer modality of racism is not different rather it is a continuation of, and co-exists with, traditional, overt racisms. Furthermore, the paper extends an intersectional approach with attentiveness to the complex ways in which race is bound up with class.

PANEL 8: Institutional Policies, Interventions and Evaluations

Tré Ventour-Griffiths (independent researcher)

Subatomic Racism: Anatomies of Microaggressions

Physicists may describe 'subatomic particles' as particles tinier than or within atoms. What I call 'subatomic racism' is particle-level terrorism (Ventour-Griffiths, 2023) thought-up to give 'racial microaggressions' (Pierce, 1970) a picture without feeling reductive. But it was the arts, not physics, that encouraged this. Marvel's Pym Particles enabling Ant-Man to enter the subatomic realm, a place making idea of time and space irrelevant, may imitate how microaggressions distort senses of placemaking (Ahmed, 2007; Menakem, 2017; Mills, 2020). Yet are there other ways to see?

Through popular science fiction and personal experiences, this paper expands Chester Pierce's (1970) theory of microaggression into a 'multiverse of white supremacy' (Ventour-Griffiths, 2024; 2025). These fictions give rise to six cosmic metaphors, infinity stones. Drawing on my life stories, including the spiritual whiteness of rural Northants, this paper unites the stones – extended metaphors for microaggressions as interdimensional. E.g., microaggressions upon the spirit (the soul stone) may show how the psychological looping that follows incidents (the mind stone) allows racism's afterlife to split "into myriads of copies…" (DeWitt, 1973: 178). "This universe is only one of an infinite number […] at the root of existence, mind and matter meet." (Marvel Studios, 2016).

Penny Rabiger (Leeds Beckett University) (ONLINE)

Against Completion Culture: Permanent Anti-Racism in Resistance to Permanent Racism

This paper draws on an empirical study of 25 Anti-Racist School Award leaders following the murder of George Floyd and a resurgence of interest convergence (Bell, 1992) concerning racial justice in schools. Race talk in schools is typically silenced (Esquival et al., 2002) and the English education system views itself as race-neutral, meritocratic and deliberately 'colour-blind'. Therefore, ignorance and discomfort around racism (Mills, 2007) means Award leaders struggle to acknowledge systemic racism, and then progress to consider what they may do about it (Applebaum, 2007).

Findings show that Award leads often perceive racism as finding its way into schools from outside; rather than inherent in and reproduced by the processes, policies and procedures deemed necessary by the system itself for school success, or due to foundational deficit ideologies regarding racially minoritised staff, students and their families. Even when described as 'a journey' and the destination of being an 'anti-racist school' seems clear, the starting point often remains unspoken. Few Award leaders confidently articulate a direct 'permanent racism' stance (Bell, 1992) which understands in its simplest terms, that they need to move their school from the status quo of reproducing racism to *unlearning racism* and developing vigilant anti-racist praxis. Furthermore, *unlearning racism* may reveal itself as never-ending and therefore incongruent with school cultures which try to navigate the permanence of racism through the neoliberal 'what works' agenda and 'completer-finisher' white supremacy culture (Okun, 2022).

A matter-of-fact acceptance of the permanence of racism and the absence of squeamishness (Warmington, 2024) is necessary to see racism in situ, unlearn racism and implement strategies to create a culture of permanent vigilance to the presence of systemic racism. The question therefore is, how to develop a permanent anti-racism praxis in response to the permanence of racism.

Natalie Quinn–Walker (Birmingham City University) (ONLINE)

Justice denied: racial bias and systemic failures in Central Park Five Investigation. What have we learned?

Over the last thirty years, there has been a steep increase in exonerations following miscarriages of justice, with innocent individuals being convicted for crimes they did not commit. The investigation into the Central Park Five case showcased a profound example of systematic failures, culminating in one of the most egregious miscarriages of justice in recent history. This study will critically analyse the wrongful conviction of Antron McCray, Kevin Richardson, Yusef Salaam, Raymond Santana and Korey Wise, in the USA, also known as the Central Park Five, aged 13-16, through a lens of anti-racist theories such as Critical Race theory, which argues that racism is embedded within the legal structure, rather than an individual bias. Racialised Social System theory explains how institutions perpetuate racial disparities. This research will explore the intersection issues of coerced false confessions and narratives that shaped police conduct, legal proceedings, and public perception. Using critical race perspectives, this secondary research study analysed how the criminal justice system has resulted in racial hierarchies and systematic injustices.

The findings demonstrate a recurring theme of racial bias, unethical policing and prejudices within the media, influencing the trial and public opinion. Thus feeding into the narrative and becoming the driving force for further coercive behaviour, leading to wrongful convictions. The findings report that little has changed, with a legal system criminalising young Black men, and that racism is embedded in the institutions which are meant to represent fairness and justice. The study showcases that there is a human cost to systemic racism, with changes needed to ensure justice is upheld.

PLENARY 3:30pm - 4:30pm

Remi Joseph-Salisbury (University of Manchester)

The Limits of Reform: Critical Race Theory, Abolitionist Theory, and the Fight Against Police in Schools

This paper examines the tensions between reform and abolition through a case study of the No Police in Schools campaign in Greater Manchester, which sought to remove police from schools. In 2021, the campaign appeared to secure a major victory when the local council announced the removal of School-Based Police Officers. However, closer scrutiny—guided by the theoretical insights of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and abolitionist theory—reveals this as a false victory, where police presence was rebranded rather than abolished.

To better understand this dynamic, I develop a theoretical synergy (Meghji, 2022) by bringing together CRT's interest convergence (Bell, 1980) and contradiction closure (Gillborn, 2008) with abolitionist theory's non-reformist reforms (Davis, 2003). This framework exposes how reforms that appear to meet activist demands may ultimately reinforce, rather than dismantle, systems of racial control.

By applying this approach to the Manchester case, I highlight the broader challenges facing anti-racist and abolitionist campaigns that navigate reformist concessions and state co-optation. The findings have implications for activism, showing how campaigns must push beyond surface-level victories and toward genuinely transformative change**.**

This paper contributes to ongoing debates about racial justice, policing, and abolition**,** demonstrating the necessity of a critical, abolitionist lens when assessing reform.

Leila Mouhib (Université Libre de Bruxelles / Université de Mons)

Teaching as Resistance: Towards an Abolitionist and Decolonial Praxis in University Education

As institutions embedded in the structures of racial capitalism, universities in the Global North contribute to the colonial and racial systems of oppression. In this presentation, I argue that a decolonial praxis in teaching contributes to develop pockets of resistance within the colonial

structures of university, on our path to a collective emancipation from the structures of capitalism, racism and colonialism. I stand with bell hooks stating that the "classroom remains the most radical space at University" (bell hooks 1994); this radical space is always an ongoing process that can be created by two related and complementary practices.

On the one hand, the development of a critical curriculum, that consciously diverges from the mainstream white canon and ways of knowing, by critically challenging whiteness from the margins of the Empire (Shilliam 2021). On the other, the development of a radical pedagogy, in line with Freire and bell hooks' thought on education as a practice of freedom (Freire1968; bell hooks 1994). This radical pedagogy consists of different practices that question the traditional hierarchies in the classroom, problematise our relation (as a teacher) to power and make us vulnerable while we develop a space of knowledge co-construction and depart ourselves from a banking conception of education.

In this presentation, I highlight different pedagogical practices that contribute to a theoretical shift in the way we think university education, in an anticolonial and abolitionist perspective. Finally, I also defend the idea that this critical classroom can only exist in relation to other pockets of resistance at University, as encampments, social movements, workers' movements, and outside University, as community-based activism for instance. This presentation is related to a book chapter to be published in 2025 (edited volume on Decolonial Pedagogies) and is based on different set of data I collected from 2021 onwards (qualitative analysis of programmes and curricula, interviews with University students, pedagogical experiences in the classroom).