Decolonising research: a map of definitions, practices, and obstacles at University of Bristol

Results of a grassroots audit by decoloniseUoB

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Introduction and context

In June 2020, following the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis and the toppling of the Colston statue in Bristol, a group of University of Bristol staff and students united in their commitment to anti-racism in all aspects of campus life came together to form decoloniseUoB. This happened within the context of the Centre for Black Humanities' campaign to remove all references to Colston and other slaveholders from the University buildings and logo, to investigate the University's links with the Society for Merchant Venturers, and to expand bursaries and fee waivers for Black students.

In late 2020, decoloniseUoB launched a audit to map practices around decolonisation of research across the university. Three members launched the audit, by no means as experts in this field, but as academics interested in highlighting the work being done and the experiences of researchers in the University.

Sixty-seven people responded, fifty-four of whom said they were engaged in decolonisation.

It must be noted that some respondents did not realise that this audit was from decoloniseUoB, but rather assumed it was from University management: this may have affected responses. (In response to the above campaigns, the University launched an anti-racism steering group and hosted events about decolonising the University.)

We begin this document with respondents' reflections on what decolonising research means to them. We then move on to the practical ways in which people said they were applying decolonisation to their research and the resources upon which they were drawing. We then explore the reasons that respondents were not applying decolonised approaches, and the obstacles respondents have faced in decolonising research. We end with final reflections from respondents on supporting staff doing this work.

This document is intended to invoke inspiration and ideas around how to adopt decolonised approaches in research and to inspire collaboration and conversation between the respondents. Please share this document with colleagues and friends.

It is a living document that will need updating over time

The contents do not imply an endorsement from decoloniseUoB. For enquiries, contact Ellen O' Gorman e.c.ogorman@bristol.ac.uk or Sandi Dheensa sandi.dheensa@bristol.ac.uk

What does 'decolonising research' mean to you?

Below we present respondents' definitions of 'decolonising research' under the themes of

1. Should we 'define' decolonisation / decolonising practices?
2. (a) Practical and (b) theoretical dimensions of decolonising research
3. Decolonising research involves challenging the premises of research
4. Decolonising research involves seeking out collaborative modes of knowledge production
5. Decolonising research can be very discipline-specific
6. Decolonising overlaps with other terms and practices.

1. Should we define decolonisation / decolonising practices?

Many respondents pointed out that defining decolonisation can be problematic because it identifies decolonisation as an unchanging thing that can be 'acquired'. Instead, they referred to decolonising as a continual process involving self-reflection.

"I believe it is an **open and evolving concept that requires self-reflection** and critical introspection. It isn't an endpoint of 'defined' thing." Madhu Krishnan, English (Director of the Centre for Black Humanities)

"I don't set out a singular definition but I engage with the struggle over its meaning… I prefer to use the term 'decolonising' rather than 'decolonise' to underscore the **ongoing, unfinished process** involved." Arathi Sriprakash, Education

"'Decolonisation of research' is an effort and a challenge… 'Decolonisation of research' is **not being paternalistic** about our possibilities of research." Gustavo Infante, Hispanic, Portuguese, and Latin American Studies

"I define decolonial research practice… as **a set of practices, rather than a fait accompli**. It is an ongoing and necessarily unfinished process." Kirk Sides, English

"I am less interested in arriving at an absolute definition and more interested in **what does decolonisation mean in practice**." Maria Paula Escobar, Vet Science

2. Practical and theoretical dimensions of decolonising research

(a) Decolonising research has very practical/material dimensions for many respondents, such as noticing and overcoming the dominance of White European voices in their field of research, and creating equal collaboration with non-university groups, especially in low-middle income country (LMIC) settings.

"We work with a practical understanding – working to overcome the dominance of white men in who we cite, removing North America/Western Europe focus in case studies and development of theory and working towards **engagement with a diversity of different communities** in impact work. Opening up spaces for previously silenced voices." Jennifer Johns, Management

"**Collaborating equally** with partners, not just universities, particularly those in the Global South." Janet Orchard, Education

"Systematically **embed a non-Western perspective** into research, both in terms of questions asked and team members included." Karla Pollmann, Faculty of Arts

"At least in Arts, it is often very hard to **access materials that have not reached the 'centre'**. So, academics have to be willing to make an effort to find those materials and engage with the challenge that such 'quest' might mean." Gustavo Infante, Hispanic, Portuguese, and Latin American Studies

"Being aware of the fact that I am working with **material culture heritage of other peoples** and nations." Tamar Hodos, Archaeology & Anthropology

"Decolonising research is about interrogating Eurocentric perspectives while also acknowledging the imbalances of power concentrated in academic institutions in high-income countries, particularly in the Anglosphere. It is about using positions of privilege to **empower historians and researchers in the post-colonial world** in ways that enhance their own research projects (including exposure to new methodologies as well as access to archives, labs, and libraries in the Global North), to collaborate and network with scholars outside their own country, and have their work acknowledged as valuable scholarship in the international arena." Su Lin Lewis, History

"Developing genuinely equal research partnerships between all engaged, North and South; and contributing to the international literature on this as a priority to international development; **supporting the publication of research by colleagues working in the Global South**. Scholarship directly on postcolonialism and the

decolonisation of comparative and international research in education. Work and publications on the cross-cultural ethical guidelines for comparative researchers. Supporting the publication and promotion of journals based in the global South. Engaging with and supporting the use and development of indigenous knowledges and epistemologies including in African and Oceanic contexts." Michael Crossley, Education CIRE

"Citation practice – **beyond using solely European authors**. Using Black philosophy and scholarship." Amber Lascelles, Centre for Black Humanities

"Co-produced/co-authored research outputs published **bilingually**." Ruth Bush, French / Centre for Black Humanities

"A big effect of colonialism is that research not in the English language doesn't get published in places that we usually access.   Another related effect is that even the English language journals from non-English speaking, ex-colony nations often don't get indexed in big databases such as PubMed (where one can find many obscure US journals but not many from other countries). So, if you are not searching in regional databases and other languages your background knowledge on a query is already colonized." Sharea Ijaz, Bristol Medical School.

(b) There are also theoretical/epistemic dimensions that often overlap with the practical, such as interrogating how the system of knowledge production is implicated in Eurocentrism and colonialism and challenging the presumed division between subject and object of knowledge.

"Decolonisation of research entails several facets, but can, I think, be narrowed down to two key principles: first, research that examines how modern knowledge production depends upon and reinforces the continuity and primacy of Eurocentrism; and, second, research that actively seeks to displace that privileging with ideas and worlds of experience from outside the centrality of modern Europe. It seeks to understand how modernity colonises and how the constitutive outside modernity can undo and **open horizons for thinking otherwise**." Mark Jackson, School of Geographical Sciences

"People's experiences are usually glossed over or subsumed under theoretical, institutional categories that erase the work done by people in sustaining institutional processes that are usually not of their making. This methodology and theoretical approach (Institutional Ethnography) **brings embodied, located knowledge and experiences forward**, and the research is not (only) concerned with developing theory out of people's lives, but in producing knowledge and practical outcomes that might be useful to them. The research is for people, rather than *about* them."." Adriana Suarez Delucchi, Veterinary Science

"My focus is on intellectual decolonisation which mainly looks at the need to **empower alternative knowledge systems** from the South and the non-West." Charlotte Clarke, undergraduate, SPAIS

"'Decolonisation of research' is **highlighting the agency of the non-hegemonic part of academia** and presenting it to the so-called hegemonic part of academia." Gustavo Infante, Hispanic, Portuguese, and Latin American Studies

"decolonisation of research, in my view, **highlights alternative perspectives, overlooked actors, and global connections**." Helena Lopes, History

"Broadly, I would consider this about intersections of race, nationality, religion, ethnicity, and **how power operates within and across these, both historically and now.**" Emma Williamson, Policy Studies

"**Understanding that imperialism is not something of the past** only but is currently present in our society, in the academy and in the practical actions of powerholders. I don't mean the 'remnants' of imperialism but its real current forms." David Miller, Policy Studies

"**Ways of knowing beyond Eurocentricism**, that incorporate the body and emotions." Amber Lascelles, Centre for Black Humanities

We take an approach based on decoloniality thinkers – such as Mbembe, Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Mignolo – who argue that whilst **decolonisation is about dismantling the systems and processes of colonialism, there remains a historical and cultural legacy that continues to influence knowledge production, social relations and values**… Therefore decoloniality focuses on the ways in which we can confront and undo the privileging of European worldviews, western methodologies and languages of the colonisers in universities and other institutions and in our approaches to research." Sue Timmis, Education

"Attempts to decolonise methodology… encourage **the inclusion of emotional and embodied aspects of research as well as cerebral aspects**." Nazia Hussein, SPAIS

"Developing **participatory methodologies**." Ruth Bush, French / Centre for Black Humanities

"Rethinking not only the flows of institutional power/prestige and finance but **where knowledge production is happening in our research** and who is producing it." Kirk Sides, English

3. Decolonising research involves challenging the premises of research

Because decolonising entails interrogating the system of knowledge production, it often proceeds by scrutinising a discipline's hierarchies of knowledge. This may involve drawing attention to the bias implicit in specific procedures of gathering material or challenging the presumed superiority of mind, thought, cognition over body, emotion, and wisdom. There is often an explicit attention on articulating new methodologies to overcome colonial legacies within a discipline.

"Using the notion of **interdisciplinarity** to decolonise science from the grips of positivism." Maria Paula Escobar, Vet Science

"I would loosely think of decolonising research practice or a specific discipline as an **examination of the links between the creation and maintaining of that research/discipline with imperial and colonial paradigms**, with the centring of a Eurocentric gaze/framework, and with the negation/suppression of non-White, non-Eurocentric forms of knowledge production." Emma Crowley, English/Liberal Arts

"I think that the decolonisation of research agenda fits closely with **challenges to hierarchies of knowledge**, that occur particularly within health research e.g. the dominance of RCTs [randomized controlled trials]." Michelle Farr, NIHR ARC West, Population Health Sciences, Bristol Medical School

"An epistemological transformation which is reflexive about the **imperial origins and location of social research**." Charlotte Clarke, undergraduate SPAIS

"Decolonising research… problematises a sharp dichotomy between colonialism as violent exploitation on the one hand and international development projects as benign humanitarian assistance for progress on the other. It does so by **demonstrating the usually ignored colonial origins of development scholarship and practice**." Eric Herring, SPAIS

4. Decolonising research involves seeking out collaborative modes of knowledge production

Because decolonising entails challenging the presumed division between the subject and object of knowledge, it often involves collaboration or co-production of knowledge. Many respondents drew attention to the practical elements of co-production and also the need to develop methodologies that enable genuine co-production and that do not replicate old Eurocentric habits. In this context, many reflect on the appropriate terminology used to refer to 'co-researchers'.

"**Abolishing despicable research practices** like handing out pens and hats and t-shirts to farmers in low and middle-income countries as an incentive to participate." Maria Paula Escobar, Vet Science

"**Genuine knowledge transfer** and co-production of research with Indigenous rights holders." Kate Hendry, Earth Sciences

"The language of 'partnerships' and 'stakeholders' (and even, increasingly, coproduction) has very much been **appropriated by certain research and funding models that remain rooted in coloniality** and which tacitly disregards or minimises collective labour and collective endeavours through divisions and hierarchies." Madhu Krishnan, English (Director of the Centre for Black Humanities)

5. Decolonising research can be very discipline-specific

At a theoretical level decolonising research is resistant to universal definitions and modes of practice. What decolonising means to different researchers across the University is often very discipline-specific, but it can still be recognisable as a decolonising practice or intention.

"There is also another decolonising component in this method [**Institutional Ethnography**] which is that the binary categories of micro and macro, or local and global are brought into connection and through mapping of work-text-work processes where people are involved in, the gap between micro and macro disappears." Adriana Suarez Delucchi, Veterinary Science

"In **genetics and epidemiology**, most studies have been conducted in European populations. This causes an issue as it made the result difficult to be replicated in other populations. For example, some genetic variants that are targeted for drug development in the European population don't work in the same way in East Asian population. Therefore I would define decolonisation of research as expanding

research to be less Eurocentric and to generate reproducible results regardless of ancestries." Yoonsu Cho, *MRC* Integrative Epidemiology Unit

"In the case of **Economics**, all the theories, approaches and modes of thought that aim to understand economic and social phenomena from a non-Western, non-white and non-male perspective. These mostly do not fall under the neoclassical/mainstream paradigm, which is the dominant in Economics today." Danielle Guizzo, Economics

"I work on, with, and teach **the history of China**, and colonialism more broadly. Bringing China into the mainstream of understandings of what history is has always been an objective. The fact that that remains an objective is itself telling." Robert Bickers, History

"Mitigation for **inherent bias in robotics and AI**, including bias with its origins in colonialism." Hemma Philamore, Engineering Maths

"The approach is to **integrate musicians on an equal level** and pay way more attention to specific details in music, working with musicians and scholars from these places on equal footing." Michael Ellison, Music

6. Decolonising overlaps with other terms and practices

Researchers engaged in feminism will recognise some of the issues here, and some respondents felt that decolonising should go hand-in-hand with the dismantling of patriarchal systems of knowledge. Many respondents felt that critique of racism and white supremacy was central to decolonising. Some see a difference between the necessity for anti-racism work in the University and the task of decolonising research.

"Our Special Interest Group and the wider MART [Bristol Medical School Anti-Racism Taskforce] initiative is still working to differentiate anti-racism work from decolonial work. We know that there will be some overlap in the goals of both. Our group and many others would welcome any advice on how to understand the two in tandem. To me, **prioritising anti-racism, and seeking to better understand the needs and challenges experienced by researchers of colour helps us to decolonise the university**." Myles-Jay Linton, Population Health Science

How researchers are applying decolonisation to their work

Below we present the work being done within each Faculty (with **research topics highlighted in blue**) under the themes of

- Applying decolonising theory and approaches
- Applying theory adjacent to, or with potential for, decolonisation
- Working with others in an explicitly decolonial way
- Co-production and community-based research: steps towards decolonisation
- Work that has explored what decolonisation means
- Rethinking outputs
- Developing and challenging practice through reading and networking groups
- Encouraging students to decolonise their work

We then present reasons shared for why researchers were not engaged in decolonisation practices and obstacles that researchers who were engaged in the practice said they faced.

Applying decolonising theory and approaches

Faculty of Arts

Amber Lascelles
Centre For Black Humanities
At Bristol, the Black Health and the Humanities project for which I'm a research associate also uses decolonial methodology, ways of knowing beyond **Eurocentrism,** that incorporate the body and emotions

Kirk Sides
English
I was CI on two strategic initiative grants which brought researchers together from Bristol and the University of Cape Town (UCT) under the thematic heading of **'Decolonial practice, history, and thinking'**. This is an ongoing project, which was meant to bring UCT academics to Bristol in the Spring but had to move online due to Covid. "

Emma Crowley
English Liberal Arts
My PhD thesis was also an examination of contemporary trends in **global/world literature** that sought to incorporate decolonial theory and what may be termed decolonising practices.

Marianne Ailes
French/Centre for Medieval Studies

Work on **'decolonising the Middle Ages':** initiating discussion among the medievalists in Bristol about what we can bring to this discussion which is different, given we have a perspective that takes many of us back to pre-nation states

Su Lin Lewis
History
I am embarking on a new AHRC-funded project around the **history of socialist internationalism and activism in the Afro-Asian world** which involves bringing researchers from Southeast Asia to archives in the Global North to work on their own research and engage in the practice of collaborative history... I have also co-written a dialogue on 'Decolonising History' for History Workshop
➔ See Behm A, Fryar C, Hunter E, Leake E, Lewis SL, Miller-Davenport S. Decolonizing History: Enquiry and Practice. InHistory Workshop Journal 2020 Apr 1 (Vol. 89, pp. 169-191). Oxford Academic.

Helena Lopes
History
"My current (individual) research project focuses on Chinese interactions with three European colonial territories in South China in the 1940s - anti-imperialism, migration, and refugees are key issues and actors covered in my project. I research **East Asian history** and non-English language sources and historiography are crucial to my research."

Michael Ellison
Music
We're giving a conference in Istanbul in June 2021. The conference, as part of the Transtraditional Istanbul Project (and AHRC project), is called 'The transformation of musical creativity' and is about how to deal with rural to urban, individual to urban conservatoire transitions for **'traditional' musics** and what these kinds of changes mean. This is also on a transcultural, contemporary creative level, but relating to endemic forms of pastoralist and peripatetic music whose musicians are often marginalised/minoritised. And we'll discuss those kinds of processes and how they happen. I'm writing a Bozlak opera about the end of nomadism in Turkey.
➔ See https://www.beyondeastandwest.org/

Faculty of Health Sciences

Narinder Bansal
Centre for Academic Mental Health
Currently, involved in decolonsising research around **mental health.**

Nate Eisenstadt
Centre for Academic Primary Care
My doctoral work sought to **decolonize anarchism through the decentring of the white male canon of so-called 'classical anarchist' theorists** and by bringing this work and ostensibly white post-structuralist thinkers into conversation with late 20thC Black and Chicana Feminism. In my work around majority white anarchist and autonomous social movement responses to **gender-based violence**, I position queer-women of colour-led social movements and theorists that write with them as the key theoretical ground (and often un-acknowledged labour) that underpins ostensibly white activism in this area - rather than attempting to situate it as the 'natural inheritor' of mostly white 'classical' theorists.

Kathreena Kurian
Bristol Medical School
I am CoChair of the Medical School Anti-Racism Taskforce. One of our seven subgroups led by Gibran Hemani is specifically tackling decolonisation of the medical school curriculum and also considering the issue of **decolonisation in genomic medicine**.

Lauren Blake
Bristol Vet School
I am just embarking on some work that aims to be decolonial in its approach, a recently funded GCRF project. This is a collaboration with two UK universities, and a university and an NGO partner in each of the two partner countries of the project (Kashmir and Guatemala). It is looking at **indigenous food systems.** Full consultation and equal contribution to the project proposal from academic and NGO partners, and employing non-formally trained indigenous people who would otherwise be 'participants' to be the researchers themselves. I am also constantly aiming to put into practice decolonial approaches in my research as an iterative and learning process, though this is rarely official/explicit within projects I have worked on.

Faculty of Science

Mark Jackson
Geographical Sciences
I have been doing research and teaching at the UoB around the themes of decolonial and postcolonial geographies for the past 12 years. My work has covered a range of scholarly interests related mostly to decolonising theory as applied to **post-humanisms, new materialism, the politics of affect, urban theory and political ecology.** I see my interests residing at the nexus of post-coloniality, decoloniality, and post-humanisms, with a focus on questions of nature and modernity, predominantly critique. Recent publications (2020 and forthcoming) focus on decolonising the Anthropocene, and decolonising critique, and I have published recently in the area of decolonial approaches to aesthetics, structures of feeling, concepts of nature, and ecologies of thought. I published a book in 2018 on coloniality and the question of the posthuman, and I edit the Routledge research series: Routledge Research on Decoloniality and New Postcolonialisms. I'm co-authoring a paper on **decolonising geographies** with two colleagues, one in Syracuse (Farhana Sultana) and one in Oxford (Amber Murrey-Ndewa).

Faculty of Social Sciences and Law

Rafael Mitchell
Centre for Comparative and International Research in Education
My GCRF network **Transforming Education for Sustainable Futures** (https://tesf.network/) is supporting ~70 Southern led projects based on local research priorities in India, Rwanda, Somalia/Somaliland and South Africa - which seeks to address socially & environmentally unjust education resulting from ongoing colonial legacies. Working on this With Profs Leon Tikly, Sue Parnell & Eric Herring at the UoB…. I co-founded the **African Education Research Database** - https://essa-africa.org/AERD which seeks to redress the historic neglect of African scholarship in education - an open database of research conducted by researchers BASED in SSA, to raise the visibility and impact of this work which is often neglected in policy and practice debates (developed with Prof Pauline Rose and colleagues at Uni of Cambridge)…I have published extensively on global inequalities in knowledge production, focusing on education in Africa - including with Dr Tigist Grieve at the SoE UoB, exploring the current GCRF funding context and its prospects for equitable & meaningful partnerships with Africa-based researchers

Arathi Sriprakash
Education
A number of my research papers address issues of racism and **coloniality in education.**

Jennifer Johns
Management
I work as Chair of a disciplinary research group (**Economic Geography** Research Group, part of the Royal Geographical Society). I have led projects on diversifying the discipline and decolonising is an important part of this. We have been working on decolonising teaching, research and impact activities. We received funding for an event and are continuing the work virtually since COVID-19

Nazia Hussein
School of Sociology, Politics and International Studies
I am currently researching how South Asian women academics perform double **emotional labour in the time of COVID and racism** in the form of managing transnational care responsibilities and managing gendered racism in higher education institutes. I am doing this research with Dr. Saba Hussain at Coventry University but the data is drawn from mutual conversations between Saba and me as well as conversations between some of our peers across the UK. We propose to decolonise research in two ways. 1) Topic: We combine Floya's Anthias's (2020) lens of translocality and, Akwugo Emejulu and Leah Bassel's (2020) 'politics of exhaustion' to study emotional labour which has previously been studied via Eurocentric understanding of women's labour. 2) Methodology: Writing as South Asian ethnic minority women with children and transnational caring responsibilities we use autoethnography combined with dialogues with other South Asian women academics to put forward exhaustion as an ever-present gendered element of translocational academic experience in the UK, magnified by the current crises, COVID and BLM.

Applying theory adjacent to, or with potential for, decolonisation to different subjects

Faculty of Health Sciences

Adriana Suarez-Delucchi,
Bristol Vet School
I used Institutional Ethnography (IE) a feminist sociology focusing on the organising power of texts and language within institutions. I applied this method of inquiry to explore and engage with community-based **water management** with vulnerable rural organisations in rural Chile….This method, although not branded by its author as "decolonising" has true decolonising potential because it highlights different ways of knowing the world, it begins from people's situated and embodied experiences to then scrutinise the institutions that oppressed them and organise their lives. What is under examination are not people and they are not viewed as objects of study. Rather, what we try to explain is how people's lives are caught up in institutional processes which extend far beyond their immediate locale.

Faculty of Science

Jenny Riker

Earth Sciences

TEX [Thriving **Earth Exchange**] emphasises working with community partners who have traditionally had less access to scientific expertise and resources, and much of our work is with BAME and indigenous communities. Broadening access to science, equity, and justice are embedded in our mission and vision. A key tenet of our work is that projects be instigated and defined by community priorities and questions; science partners do not propose projects. Community partners co-lead all projects. TEX staff and fellows pair communities with scientists with relevant expertise and facilitate the definition of project scope and project execution.

Faculty of Social Sciences and Law

Gregory Schwartz

Management

I research the **political economy of the post-Soviet region as a post-colonial region,** with its independent nations integrating into the world political and economic institutions while dealing with the legacies of Soviet and Russian domination. In particular, I have looked at problems of workers identities, class mediations through these, and workplace/organisational practices as beset by colonial legacies.

Working with others in an explicitly decolonial way

Faculty of Arts

Male Lujan Escalante

Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship

My research in the **emergency response** domain - I have a decolonising project working with colleagues in Indonesia and the Philippines - to create frameworks of disaster preparedness **informed by local communities rather than importing them from other countries.**

Ruth Bush

Centre for Black Humanities

Collaborative research with partners in African universities; working with a museum and archive in Dakar (Senegal) to digitise early African women's magazines; working with literary activists (writers, translators, publishers) to develop **literary translation training initiatives** in Cameroon; now working on 5-year ERC project 'Creative Lives of African Universities' about decolonizing university spaces in Dakar, Abidjan, Abomey-Calavi and Yaoundé.

➔ See Tuhiwai Smith L. Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples. Zed Books Ltd.; 2021 Apr 8.

→ Phipps A. Decolonising multilingualism: Struggles to decreate. Multilingual Matters; 2019 Jun 25. [helpful for thinking about the role of language and translation in doing research in multilingual contexts, where language maps onto power hierarchies].

→ H2020 Global Code of Conduct for research in resource-poor settings (European code of ethics): https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/hi/coc_research-resource-poor-settings_en.pdf .

Madhu Krishnan
Department of English
I deliberately work with knowledge producers outside of the academy. My work involves **coproduction, co-labour and thinking** with literary producers, activists and collectives in various parts of the African continent. We emphasise modes of knowledge production that do not conform to the Euro-Enlightenment concept of 'academic writing' or 'science' and which draw on multiple epistemes and positionalities.

Bristol BioDesign Institute

Matt Tarnowski
BrisSynBio
Transdisciplinary and co-created, situated knowledge: working with school students and researchers in other disciplines to understand Bristol's soil assemblages through DNA sequencing. A network to facilitate knowledge co-creation between researchers and agroecological farmers, and value of indigenous knowledges and epistemologies. These ideas are adopted from science and technology studies and Dr Folúkẹ́ Adébísí's blog

→ See resources for the journey of decolonising scientific research:

→ Kimmerer RW. Braiding sweetgrass: Indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge and the teachings of plants. Milkweed Editions; 2013 Sep 16.

→ Langdon Winner - do artefacts have politics https://www.cc.gatech.edu/~beki/cs4001/Winner.pdf

→ Boaventura Sousa Santos - epistemologies of the south - http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/pdf/resource/Epistemologies_of_the_South.pdf

Faculty of Health Sciences

Nate Eisenstadt
Centre for Academic Primacy Care, Bristol Medical School
In terms of research practice and engagement - I always attempt to **bring the lens of anti-oppressive pedagogy to collaborations**, exploring power relations and imbalances and ways to expose and counter them - when doing this work within and as someone raised on white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy, this necessarily entails decolonising work.

Gene Feder

Centre for Academic Primacy Care, Bristol Medical School

Trying to develop a decolonising approach to our collaboration between the UK, Nepal, Sri Lanka, oPT and Brazil on gender-based violence research

Faculty of Social Sciences and Law

Michael Crossley

Centre for Comparative and International Research in Education (CIRE)

We have developed pioneering North-South and South-South research partnerships over decades including with Small Island Developing States (SIDS) including Fiji, St Lucia, Maldives, Belize in Central America (the 1990s), Kenya (2000s+), Tanzania and Rwanda (ongoing)

➔ See www.smallstates.net

Sue Timmis

Education

I was a joint PI with Thea de Wet, the University of Johannesburg on a project working with colleagues in South Africa. This has involved learning a lot about decoloniality (as opposed to decolonisation) as a more generative approach to research. Our research was mainly focused on the lived experiences of students from rural backgrounds and their **transitions to higher education**. Through this we developed a **participatory methodology where students were involved as co-researchers**, which we argue is moving towards a decolonising approach.

Eric Herring

Sociology, Politics and International Studies

My work explores how academics and practitioners can collaborate to decolonise development, with a specific focus on the Somali First initiative to promote Somali-led development…decolonisation of **development** in this case has been advanced through **long term research and practice partnership grounded in a shared purpose and complementary capacities; maximisation of funding for and control of funding by Somali entities; decentring English** and centring Somali linguistic diversity; promoting a locally-led approach; and employing co-production. We argue that scaling up or transfer of the approach set…would involve reinterpretation by local actors to suit the context to be an effective contribution to decolonising development.

➔ See Herring E, Ismail L, Maydhane Y, McNeill S. Decolonising Development: Academics, Practitioners and Collaboration. Journal of Somali Studies: Research on Somalia and the Greater Horn of African Countries. 2020 Dec 1;7(2):65-100. [email Eric for manuscript]

➔ https://transparencysolutions.com/research for co-authored and co-produced works with Transparency Solutions

➔ IRC https://bristol.ac.uk/life-sciences/edi/irc/

➔ The Learning Forum https://www.bristol.ac.uk/life-sciences/edi/learningforum/

Co-production and community-based research: steps towards decolonisation

Faculty of Arts

Nariman Massoumi
Film and TV / Migration Mobilities Bristol
Producing a collaborative film project with refugees and asylum seekers for a Brigstow seed corn funded research project; the nature of this project has provided these marginalised groups with a platform for voicing their experiences and views of the UK asylum system freely.

Robert Bickers
History
Engaging in community-based research with marginal communities: a variety of Connected Communities projects working with UoB colleagues and partner organisations co-creating tools and processes for community research eg Map Your Bristol (via Know Your Bristol On The Move). Partners included Knowle West Media Centre, Action for Southern Africa etc. Collaboration with partners in the Global South: one example is the Historical Photographs of China project, repatriating historical images to China and globally via an open access the online platform at hpcbristol.net

Faculty of Engineering

Hemma Philamore
Engineering Maths
We are **engaging communities** that are often overlooked in engineering in participatory research to co-author **robot behaviours** early on in the development process.

Faculty of Health Sciences

Narinder Bansal
Centre for Academic Mental Health
My work over the past few years has been focused on filling the **ethnicity health data gap**. This includes **coproducing research priorities** and questions with diverse communities and creating inclusive spaces for the involvement of diverse communities and representative stakeholder organisations to shape research questions.

Jeremy Horwood

Centre for Academic Primary Care

We have received Health Foundation funding to work with people of African and Caribbean heritage to increase **HIV testing and awareness** and reduce the stigma of the virus. The study will be **co-produced with community members** sharing power, making key decisions and leading the project.

Faculty of Science

Kate Hendry

School of Earth Sciences

My research is in **ocean biogeochemistry**. I am interested in starting to work in the Canadian Arctic. As part of this, I am aiming to co-produce the research with both Polar Knowledge Canada and with the local Indigenous rights holders. I am early on in this process but have carried out a pilot study in Nunavut in 2019. Not only did I collect some pilot samples for analysis, but I also engaged with the Ekaluktutiak Hunters and Trappers Organization (EHTO) by taking an afternoon to **listen to their concerns** surrounding climate change. There are overlaps in their concerns and my research interests, so my plan for future proposals is to work with them more, giving them **autonomy over a work package** of the research (following ITK guidelines).

Work that has explored what decolonisation means

Faculty of Arts

Dorothy Price

Centre for Black Humanities (Faculty of Arts)

I conducted a survey of 30 different art historians from across the globe (UK, USA, Africa, Malaysia, Japan, Australia, Canada, India) about what 'decolonising art history' means to them.

➔ See Grant C, Price D. Decolonizing Art History. Art History. 2020 Feb;43(1):8-66.

Charlotte Clarke

School of Sociology, Politics and International Studies

conducted a survey with SPAIS students to investigate the gaps between theoretical discourses and knowledge on the ground [around sociology's eurocentrism]

➔ See the work of Syed Hussein Alatas

➔ And SF, Sinha V. Sociological theory beyond the canon. Springer; 2017 May 27 - actualising the decolonisation of theoretical knowledge and putting forward an ideal sociology curriculum that critically analyses 'Western' concepts, and includes thinkers from the 'South'.

Rethinking outputs

Faculty of Arts

Kirk Sides
English
A major part of how I see decolonial practice informing my work is by thinking differently about how the work itself is translated into research outputs. Through different forms of engagement (interviews, as well as thinking differently about the creation of outputs- who creates them, where they are published, etc.) I aim to position my research production differently.

Developing and challenging practice through reading and networking groups

Faculty of Arts

Amber Lascelles
Centre for Black Humanities
As a PhD student at the University of Leeds, I co-directed **Women's Paths research group** which brought local feminist and BAME activists into the university space to explore the relationship between activism and scholarship.

Kirk Sides
English
In my own department, I have begun a **Decolonial Reading Group** for Faculty and PGRs, which attends to various decolonial debates and discourses in the areas of both pedagogy and research.

Helena Lopes
History
Before arriving at Bristol in 2019 I joined the **Colonial Ports and Global History network** at the Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities - this is an interdisciplinary collective of ECRs (who are currently based at different institutions) that puts together academic events free and open to all (e.g. in November 2019 we organised the workshop 'Decolonising colonial ports & global history: rethinking archives of power' at Oxford).
I have been co-organising the **Asian History Seminar** at Bristol (set up by Professor Robert Bickers years before I arrived at Bristol), where Bristol PGRs and ECRs present their work in progress. I invited a series of guest speakers to facilitate connections and knowledge dissemination between Bristol-based researchers of Asian History and colleagues from different institutions/countries.

Su Lin Lewis
History
I have been leading a **Faculty and History Research Cluster** in Decolonisation -
including decolonising the curriculum initiatives as well as around the history of
decolonisation.

Faculty of Life Sciences

Caroline McKinnon, Amber Roguski, Alessia Dalceggio, Luke Burguete, Laura
Mediavilla Santos, Lara Lalemi, Elle Chilton-Knight
Biochemistry
We set up the **Inclusive Research Collectiv**e to promote inclusive and diverse
academic environments and challenge biased and exclusionary methods in the
research process. In January 2021, we ran a 'Decolonising the curriculum' event and
in June 2021 we are running a series of workshops looking at 'Inclusive Research
Practices'. Many of us are members of the Faculty of Life Sciences Decolonising and
Diversifying Working Group. As a subsidiary of the Inclusive Research Collective, we
set up The Learning Forum, a monthly discussion group focusing on wider issues of
racism within society.

Faculty of Science

Mark Jackson
Geographical Science
I run a **decolonial reading group** within the School, but it has attracted participants
from outside the School (in Law, Veterinary Sciences, Anthropology, Politics, etc).
With a colleague at St. Andrews, Jess Hope, who was a VC Fellow here before
moving in August this year, I have organised a **Cabot Institute-sponsored event**
called 'Indigenous Environments' which will examine how **decolonising approaches
to environmental research can speak to contemporary environmental
challenges**.

Faculty of Social Sciences and Law

Michael Crossley
Education
This is at the heart of the research centre that I founded in the 1990s and that is now
led by Prof Leon Tikly

Danielle Guizzo
Economics
I am a co-founder of **an Economics network** seeking to diversify and decolonize
our field, called D-Econ (https://d-econ.org), and I am currently working on projects
(articles, book chapters, workshops) on what decolonisation means for Economics,

and how we can pursue it. I've been doing this work with external collaborators for about 2 years now, but I joined the University of Bristol at the end of August/2020.

→ See Rethinking Economics piece on decolonising (with links to some resources): http://www.rethinkeconomics.org/journal/lets-decolonise-economics-education/
→ LSE Blog: https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/highereducation/2020/06/23/what-decolonising-economics-means-for-someone-who-read-economics-in-india/
→ INET blog: https://www.ineteconomics.org/perspectives/blog/why-do-economists-have-trouble-understanding-racialized-inequalities
→ https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/oureconomy/decolonising-the-economy/
→ An alternative reading list in Economics: https://d-econ.org/an-alternative-economics-summer-reading-list-2019/#more-540

Encouraging students to decolonise their research

Faculty of Arts

Kirk Sides

English

I have been actively involved in efforts around program design and structuring since I have been at Bristol, which seeks to rethink how research happens within a given department. These efforts have taken stock of program design and offered methods for restructuring that would address major systemic concerns about what is being researched and how at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Faculty of Engineering

Hemma Philamore

Engineering Maths

By stimulating students to consider sources of bias in their work, our goal is to nurture the development of the next generation of engineers as individuals capable of developing solutions to current problems of discrimination in robotics and AI.

Faculty of Science

Mark Jackson

School of Geographical Sciences

I have a number of PhD students who are interested in decolonising studies. These include Cara Mazetti-Claassen, who is writing her dissertation on how marginalised communities shape everyday togetherness in Cape Town; Austin Read, who is examining decolonial **ontologies of salmon** in the North Atlantic; Alice Beck on decolonising approaches to **medical interventions** and the micro-biome; and Courtenay Crawford, who is interested in **decoloniality and eco-dharma**.

Reasons for not decolonising research

A handful of respondents—mainly early career researchers (ECRs)—said they were not currently or actively decolonising research but would like to do so: they wanted more training, insight, and guidance. They also indicated that they would need support from senior researchers/managers to do this work. We have chosen to keep these quotes anonymous:

"The concept of decolonising research is newer to me, but on reflection, there is so much scope for thought here. Working decolonisation into my own research as an ECR on a first research post seems difficult to me - the project aims and planning are already in place. … I am keen to hear more about training or events that might trigger conversations and learning for individual (and especially ECR) researchers about decolonisation in research practices for both reflecting on existing projects, and when thinking about new areas of work."

"I would not have self-identified in this space, but as I am engaging with the debates I find that many of the practices around engaging with stakeholders and research partners, which I view as central to my research, are not fundamentally different from what is being suggested as decolonising research. So I am interested in understanding this framing better."

Obstacles to decolonisation

Respondents listed the personal, institutional, and structural barriers they had experienced to doing this work. These were:
- bias, ignorance and resistance from powerful voices
- lack of funding options
- high-income universities tend to be grantholders
- hiring practices disadvantaging low-middle income (LMIC) researchers
- research as time-pressured, and pressure to be first author on publications.

This list is intended to name, raise awareness of, and inspire discussion around these barriers. Again we have chosen to keep these quotations anonymous.

Bias, ignorance & resistance from powerful voices

My own bias being key. Finding ways to challenge myself and be critical.

Not in a high enough position to change practices for a project…I do what I can at my level for example actively finding research [from] non 'first world' countries to inform all my projects. I have had to fight hard against generalising 'globally' when the issue under study is completely different in low-middle income (LMIC) countries… There is often an assumption among senior colleagues that causes and consequences in the rest of the world are the same as in the UK/the West.

To get to the primary issues is going to highlight just how subconsciously conditioned many of us are. And, even if we see the need to change and want to change, that change means admitting that we may not be as decent a human being as we thought we were. That's hard to admit and there are many who don't want to admit it!

The dominant voices in the discipline are white men. Some have been resistant, others less so. There is a general fear around those who are resistant to having the ability to limit our careers (they are the editors of the journals).

Lack of diversity in permanent appointments means that there are often limited voices within academia which allows us to not be self-critical on these issues.

People don't like to be challenged in their comfort zones and refuse to see such practices as fundamentally wrong. People are not good listeners.

...& within this, decolonised research is not seen as 'good research'

Some colleagues are entrenched in traditional ways of thinking and doing research and are hostile to a change in perspective as "unacademic". The risk of taking on unfamiliar tasks is considerable…in particular for junior colleagues.

The subject is entrenched in neo-colonialism and there are barriers to changing research trajectory…I have been told that research must be "useful" practically. As a result, decolonial endeavours are hard to weave in and end up being completed in your own time if at all. These obstacles are endemic in scientific research.

Others do not believe decolonisation should be pursued or find it irrelevant to our discipline and profession.

Lack of funding options

Only financial obstacles: it costs money to recruit diverse samples.

Lack of funding

On occasion, I have found such research practises to be criticised for being 'messy', 'unfocused' or not suitable for specific funding bodies.

...& resource for translations

Another is language barriers, and the dominance of English…require those language skills for colleagues to engage with the ideas also, as well as risking the limits of people's familiarity with the work or ability to engage with it in its core version (esp. when there are no translations).

High-income country universities as grant holders

Research funding structure. GCRF prioritises 'equitable partnerships' and counts the funds as part of UK ODI spending. However, there are substantial limits to the spending actually going to funding of staff time of people outside of UK universities,

and the majority is still expected to fund the time of UK-based academics in UK institutions.

Difficulties in maintaining equal partnerships when external funders control the disbursement of funds and University rewards favour elite partnerships. Time and cultural differences affecting team collaboration.

Structural inequalities (e.g. UK partners are the grant holders)

Funding was set up for this major project in a way that disadvantaged our partners.

I am often the budget holder…need to work according to carefully defined ethical principles with partners.

Hiring practices disadvantage LMIC researchers

I have benefited as the post-doc employed, but I believe a locally-based researcher in [LMIC] should have been employed instead, though it was not even considered.

University bureaucracy

Increasing managerialism and bureaucracy of the university is crushing and stifling.

University did not have a policy for supplying public contributors with IT equipment. We had to negotiate with IT, finance, purchasing and the University lawyer to set up an agreement where the collaborators could own mobile tablets. This took weeks of negotiating and organising to ensure they had the equipment to access meetings.

UoB contractual arrangements on large research grants: there is now a simplified version for use with LMIC countries but is only available in English; the complexity of university finance procedures, especially concerning due diligence (there is now, thankfully, a de minimis payment procedure).

Securing visas for collaborators.

Time & first authorship pressures

Time taken on relationship building has an opportunity cost; ethically the right thing to do but not linked currently with standard indicators of academic success.

Requires collaboration and at least sharing privilege if not deferring to the colleague in the Global South e.g. being second author so as not to perpetuate inequality

Respondents' final comments and reflections

Respondents were given the opportunity to make final comments. Notably, almost all of these centred on a need to support and recognise the staff doing decolonisation work; a need for powerful academics to shift their thinking; and a need for institutional support in the form of time, resources, and funding--both to further the decolonisation process and elevate researchers from marginalised groups.

It is **important that diverse researchers are leading these initiatives**

I hope together we can make things easier for people who want to follow their interests and explore areas that might be difficult for more traditional supervisors. [We need to support] their **self-esteem as academics** and their confidence, which is usually battered when we come across inflexible and unsupportive institutional barriers within academia.

We need **better data within Universities about the pay gap** in terms of Black, Asian, and minoritised groups. Data on who is on fixed and temporary contracts and how that plays out with the student body etc.

We continue to see reports like the recent UKRI data report which highlights that Black individuals constitute less than 1% of research leads (PIs). Less than 0.1% are Black British. Across all the research councils there are less than 5 Black fellows. Where is the response from universities about the recent UKRI report? **What actions will the universities take to address this disparity in research?**

It would be helpful if the **University allocated some funds and resources** to research focused on decolonisation

I find it quite challenging not to just "preach to the converted" when it comes to decolonisation... It feels like a race to the bottom, where there are many people interested in this, but when it comes to actually implementing it in practice (research and teaching), **most academics are not that welcoming to it, and particularly those who sit in positions of power**.

I'd be interested to hear what resourcing the University is planning for this. It needs to be embedded in our everyday practices, but senior management needs to realise that this often takes A LOT of time to develop properly. Disciplines should be organising shared resources (some are, some aren't), but individual institutions also need to play a strong role. **We need leads on this, and TIME and resources**.