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# **acKnowledge: Race and Ethnicity in Sociology repository final report to the British Sociological Association**

31<sup>st</sup> March 2023

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University of Kent**

## **Acknowledgments**

The research team would like to thank Judith Mudd and the BSA Advisory board for their support and advice during this project. We would also like to thank the board members and colleagues at the University of Kent who completed pilot versions of the call for contributions and enabled us to improve our survey. Finally, a big thank you to all colleagues across the United Kingdom who took the time to fill out the survey, to respond to emails and to talk to us about their work.

## **Executive Summary**

Evidence shows that the pedagogical practices in teaching race and ethnicity in Sociology requires a major shift from the margins and more to centre of Sociology (Joseph-Salisbury et al, 2020). In tune with the 2020 report, Cureton & Gravestock (2019) have argued that lacking a sense of belonging is common for BME students within higher education. While there is some clear focus in the commitment to addressing the lack of essential focus of race and ethnicity in Sociology, the pace of change is slow and sporadic across UK universities with much of the work placed on certain staff members with a particular interest in EDI or broadly related work on access, retention and racial social justice. There remains a greater need for senior management support, funding and human resources in these areas of work to in order to improve racial equity in Sociology.

## **Overview of report**

In response to these key concerns, this BSA-funded research project set out to collate, analyse and promote examples of best practice in relation to improving the teaching of race in Sociology, as well as best practice in recruitment and retention of BAME students and scholars. Following the recommendations of the Race and Ethnicity in British Sociology report (Joseph-Salisbury et al, 2020),

this project qualitatively surveyed and collated a range of widening participation initiatives and interventions in Sociology departments and cross-disciplinary departments around the United Kingdom with a particular focus on race. The survey findings were then collated into a number of thematic strands, such as decolonising the curriculum and encouraging a sense of belonging. The themes were informed by current research and pedagogy in critical race theory and evidenced by showcasing the work of Sociology departments that are demonstrating tangible progress in this field. This report focuses upon analysis of the survey submissions, breaking down the demographics of contributors who submitted to particular thematic strands. There were a total of 77 submissions to the repository. The report also refers back to the pedagogy and practice focused recommendations in the 2020 Race in Sociology report, highlighting best practice case studies submissions that help engage BME students, enhance a sense of belonging, and address the 'leaky pipeline' to postgraduate study for these students. The report then discusses the challenges and reflections on working in this area, and the constraints and opportunities of the project. Finally, the report offers key recommendations for the continued use and future potential of the repository, assisting members and other interested parties who use the BSA website to find tried and tested ways of improving racial equity in higher education.

### **Key findings**

- Survey submissions were predominantly concentrated in HEIs located in London and the South-East of England
- 77 % of submissions were identified as women and only 18% were in professorial roles
- 61 % of submissions were initiatives led by staff of colour
- The top two themes were curricular content and decolonising
- Best practice for improving racial equity in teaching and recruitment sits beyond Sociology as a discipline.

### **Conclusion**

The findings from the survey offer a snapshot of the work that is happening in and around the teaching of Sociology and we were pleased to find cross-disciplinary best practice and social aspects of race equity outside of sociology. The acknowledge repository offers a series of useful guides for academics and professional services staff with downloadable materials to allow them to engage with the initiatives in their own practice. The limited but promising submissions raises questions about the need for universities to provide sustainable supportive systems and processes to improve the place of race and ethnicity in sociology. This repository provides a systematic evidence base of what works well when embedding racial equity and justice within the discipline of Sociology, and holds value not only as an indicator of best practice, but also of the level of commitment within institutions to support academic and professional services staff with resources and funding to do this type of work.

## Introduction

The BSA's Race and Ethnicity in British Sociology report (2020, p.24-5) observes that the growing diversity of the student body in many sociology departments means that there is increasing demand for modules that focus on race and ethnicity. Despite this, the report finds that 23 per cent of the undergraduate sociology degree programmes sampled made no explicit reference to the terms race, ethnicity or racism. Furthermore, interviews with staff indicated that race and ethnicity is often taught as an add-on, or specialist module, rather than a fundamentally integrated part of the curriculum such as class and gender. It argues that the place of race and ethnicity in undergraduate Sociology degree needs to be addressed through directly addressing the structural whiteness of HE institutions and the teaching of the curricula.

During this time of the report, the COVID-19 pandemic prompted an accelerated transition to online teaching and learning in higher education. Analysis revealed that Black students and staff experienced COVID-19 against the backdrop of racism as a "pandemic within a pandemic" (Laurencin and Walker, Cell Systems 11: p. 9–10, 2020), including demotivation in learning linked to racial (re)traumatisation, loneliness and separation from their student peers. The pandemic has also had a direct impact on those who may have not had time to submit our survey due to further pressures upon precarious employment and exploitation then exacerbating strained race relations within higher education. The long-standing landscape of inequalities reproduced by the massification of higher education also serve to illuminate some of the structural and societal problems that Black students and academic staff continue to experience. Studies on the inequalities of Covid-19 and the impact it has had on BME students in the UK begin to highlight the enormous effect the pandemic, coupled with the murder of George Floyd and the subsequent Black Lives Matter movement, has had on students' wellbeing, (Arday and Jones, 2022).

Upon receiving ethical approval from the University of Kent to proceed with the repository in January, the team worked on designing the survey proforma and conducting pilot exercises to test its usability. During this time the team also conducted independent research into good practice materials already in the public domain. We presented our work to date at a specially organised online panel at the BSA conference on 20th April where we received useful feedback from audience members.

## Methodology

As the acKnowledge project emerged in response to the survey findings and recommendations of the Race and Ethnicity British Sociology report (Joseph-Salisbury et al. 2020) report, the project team sought to employ an equally academically rigorous and robust methodology to source contributions and to assess their quality and suitability for the repository. Additionally, we undertook web-based research into good practice materials already in the public domain, and reached out to a purposive sample of academics and professional services colleagues who we already knew to be working in relevant fields. The latter were also approached to provide feedback on a pilot of the survey, as well as proofread the content for clarity and inclusivity. To ensure our sample covered all universities in the United Kingdom, we sought a list of heads of schools of Sociology departments at all UK HE institutions, and contacted each individually to ask them to distribute the survey amongst their staff. We also used Twitter (including the official BSA account) to distribute a QR code that took the viewer to the survey.

In May 2022, the survey was distributed via social media and a number of jiscmail mailing lists including the following:

- BSA RACE & ETHNICITY
- BSA SOCIOLOGY
- ACCESSHE
- SEDA MEMBERS
- ACTION ON ACCESS - WIDENING PARTICIPATION
- RADICAL PEDAGOGIES
- CAPABILITY FORUM
- PFHEA

In addition to circulation via mailing lists, several approaches were taken to promote the project proactively. This included attending editorial board meetings, using known networks and personal contacts, researching relevant conference speakers and recent education award winners (amounting to approx. 85 leads that were contacted) to establish a snowball sample of individuals whose practice related to racial equity in Sociology.

As of February 2023, the repository consists of 77 entries. Of these, 41 were received via our open call for contributions, and 36 were the result of our independent research. The team identified 9 responses that did not fully meet the criteria for the repository, and these are also referred to within the findings of this report; whilst they were not suitable for the repository, they still provide an insight into the kinds of race equity work contributors are undertaking. Although the survey has officially closed, there are still a number of 'follow up' documents and impact evidence expected from contributors, that we envision will be managed by the BSA going forwards.

Whilst the resulting repository entries cannot be considered a generalisable audit of *all* race-related activity in Sociology, they provide a useful snapshot into the range and quality of activity taking place across the country, and the demographics of the people undertaking this work.

## **Positionality**

Prior coming together as a research team for this project, it is important to recognize and acknowledge the role that our own experiences and identities play in shaping our research and understanding of constraints with EDI and the issues we are researching. It's also important to have a deep understanding of the context and community we are working with in order to effectively address the challenges. The research team comprises of individuals with the same goal, to embed inclusive practice in sociology curricula through inclusive methods of teaching and creative pedagogical practices as well as fully participating in the decolonising through the initial interventions of diversifying reading lists and modules across all disciplines through to critical literacy workshops for staff and reflective sessions that challenge the whiteness in the sociology curricula for staff.

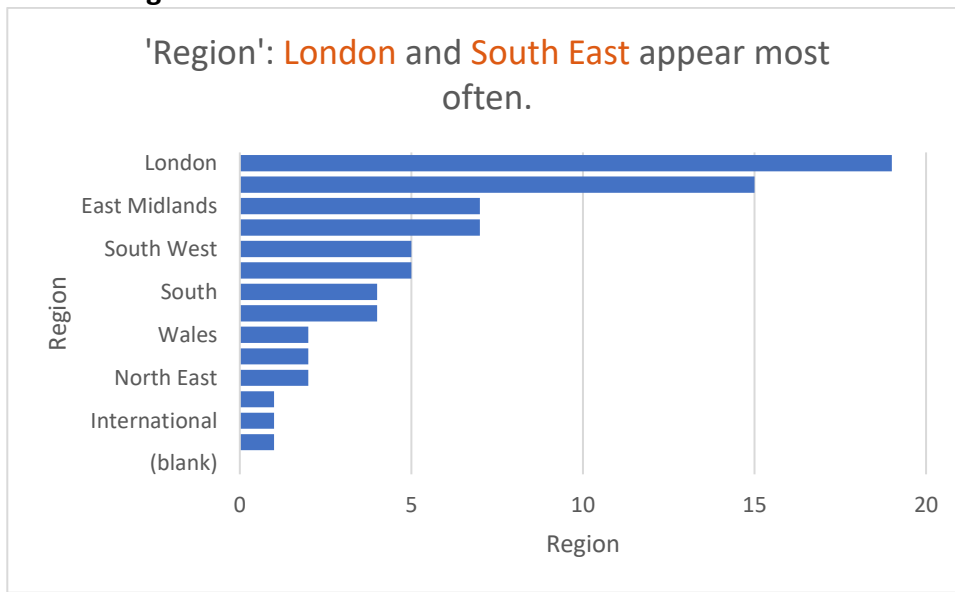
Dr Triona Fitton, Emma Mires-Richards, Dr Alex Hensby and Dr Barbara Adewumi all contribute extensively to Student Success at the University of Kent. Student Success is a widening participation initiative that uses evidence-based, data-led interventions to tackle awarding gaps and retention issues across the university. We have all been active proponents of innovative approaches to teaching that celebrate and acknowledge the contributions of authors from the Global South. We all support, mentor and provide opportunities for BAME students to be co-producers of knowledge. Students who work alongside us are invited to provide an internal critical gaze upon Sociology as a discipline, and comment on the racialised structural processes and systems that impact their learning and sense of belonging at Kent. Our positionality is important to this project, because just as the entries to the repository are formed in response to socio-cultural barriers, so too are our preconceptions as researchers. We have, through our work but also through our personal identities and experiences, a solidarity with those who undertook the survey and contributed to the repository, due to our shared experience of pursuing initiatives that seek to improve racial equity in higher education.

## **Demographics of contributors**

In August we conducted preliminary analysis of the demographic data captured in the acknowledge survey to identify trends relating to staff and institutional submissions. The dataset (N=77) includes survey submissions and best practice activities already known to and added by the team. Consequently, this analysis does not reflect all the entries into the repository, as many of these were

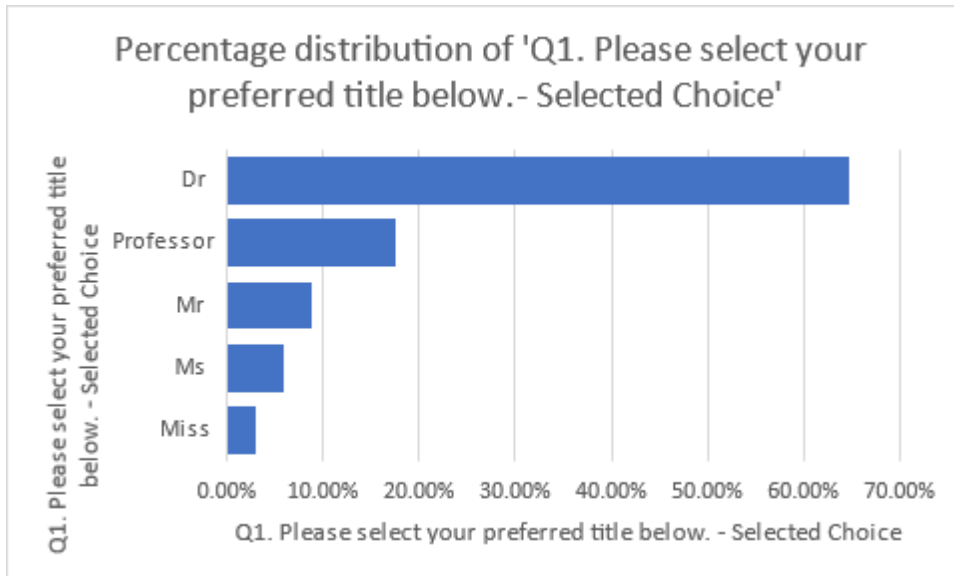
self-sought by the research team and (in the case of scholarship programmes) may not have a specific ‘contributor’ attached. This data is however useful, as it indicates who is engaging in best practice around the country. We looked specifically at where work was concentrated geographically, gender, ethnicity and job title of the contributor, and which disciplines and themes were most associated with the work undertaken.

**Table 1: Regional distribution of contributors**

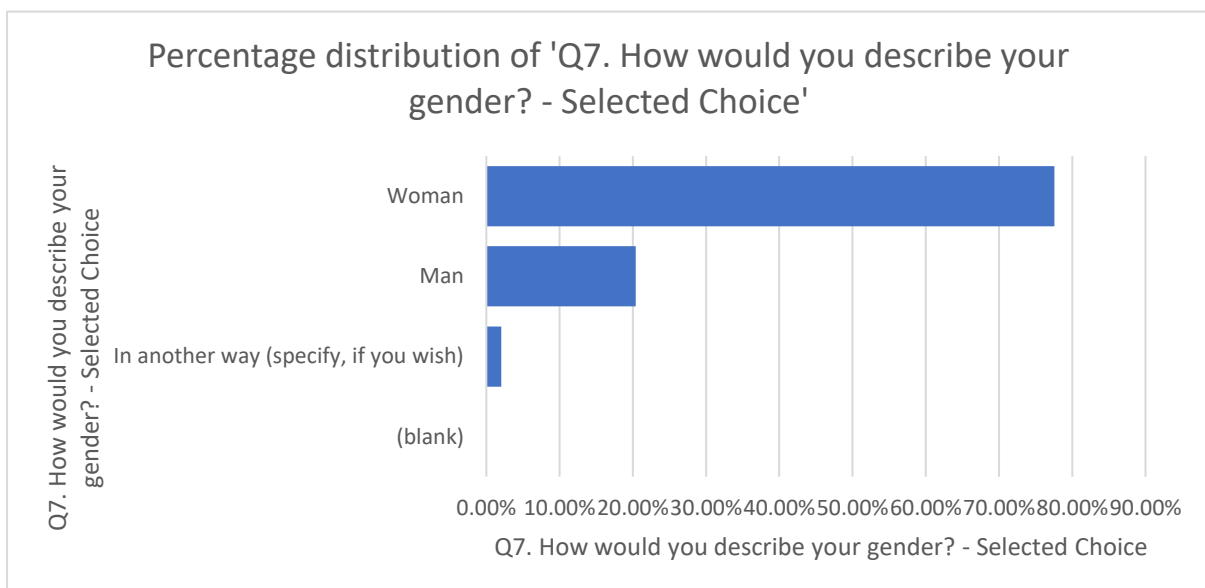


The table above indicates that submissions so far are mostly concentrated in HEIs located in London and the South-East of England. This broadly mirrors the regional composition of ethnic diversity in British universities, with 46 per cent of BAME students studying in London universities (ECU, 2015: 114-5). This indicates that good practice submissions may benefit from an environment where the proportion of BAME undergraduates is higher than average, and possibly also a stronger institutional commitment to EDI work, as well as potential localised cross-institutional collaboration on EDI initiatives.

**Table 2: Title and status of lead contributors**

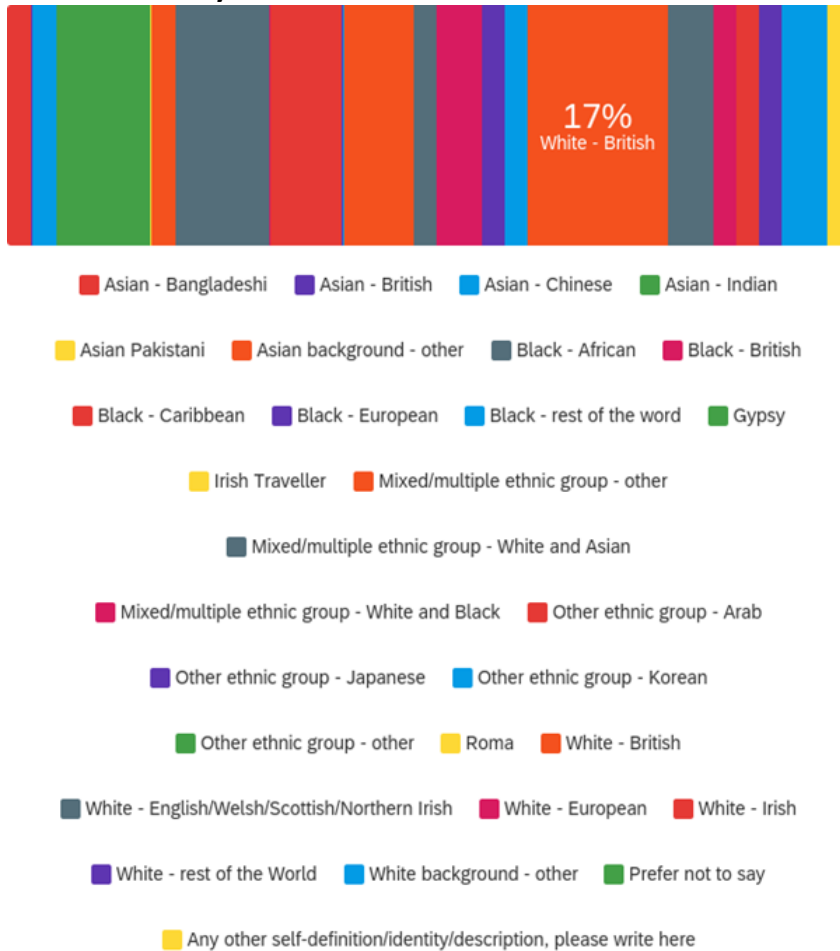


**Table 3: Gender identification of lead contributors**



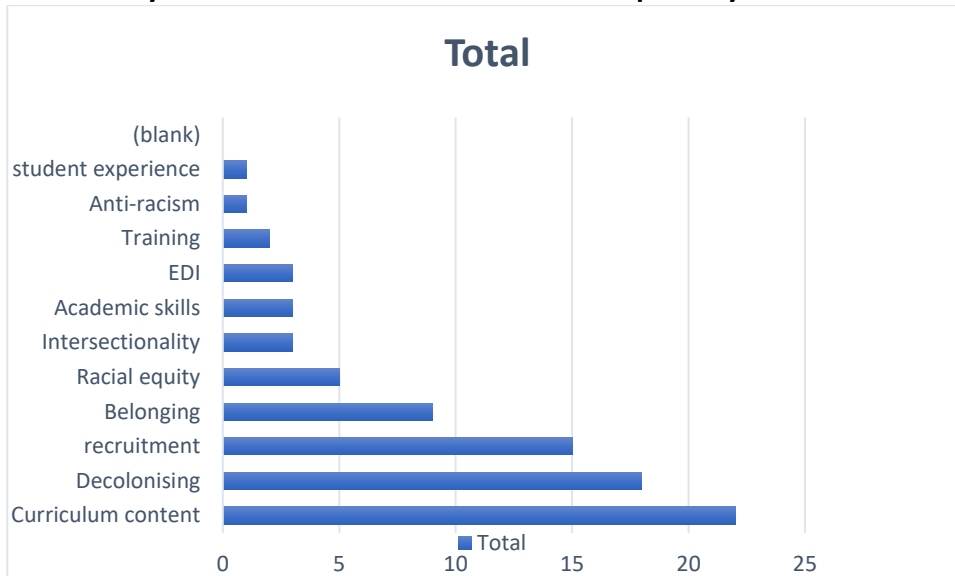


**Table 4: Ethnicity classification of lead contributors**



The three above tables indicate that the majority of submissions were led by BAME female academics who had not yet achieved the status of professor. 61 per cent of submissions were led by people of colour and 77 percent identified as women, with only 18 per cent were professors. This reflects trends identified by authors such as Pilkington (2011) and Ahmed (2012) that EDI-based labour tends to fall on more junior staff (often BAME and female). While this may demonstrate generational changes in the issues and activities valued in academic staff, it also risks restricting opportunities for this work to feed up the chain to senior management, thereby keeping effective race work at ‘convenient margins’ (Hylton, 2012).

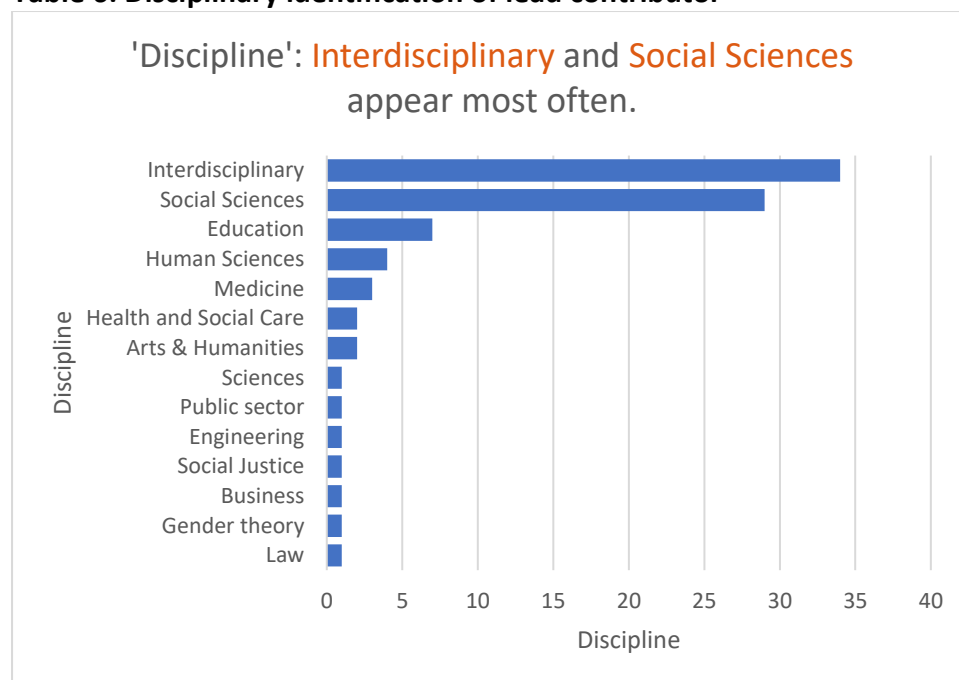
**Table 5: Key words associated with submission ‘primary theme’**



The above table captures the range of content in the acknowledge submissions so far and shows that by some distance the most popular themes relate to curriculum content. Two particular issues come to mind when interpreting this data. On the one hand, inclusive or ‘decolonised’ curricula arguably represents the most prominent campaigning issue for students (and staff) of colour in recent years. The work of campaigns such as ‘Rhodes Must Fall’ and ‘I, too, am Oxford’ helped push universities to think more critically about invisible whiteness, and together with the global Black Lives Matter movement this has helped inspire decolonise movements in numerous UK universities over the past five years. This, in turn, has pushed academic associations (including the BSA) to conduct reviews with the intention of improving the inclusivity of their related degree subjects. In this sense, the dominance of curriculum-based submissions reveals how successfully these campaigns’ aims and critiques are filtering down into the delivery of sociological teaching.

On the other hand, the data may also reveal what sort of work is considered achievable at a subject or departmental level. Interventions relating to recruitment, retention, training, and attainment may be harder to deliver without co-operation and coordination from senior leaders at higher levels of governance, be it human resources, education, or professional services. Of course, this does not preclude such work from being undertaken, but it is arguably less likely to feel ‘owned’ (and thereby submitted to acknowledge) at a subject level. It might be the case that the way our repository has been designed and advertised that inadvertently individualises this work and appeals most to individual academics or collectives engaged in smaller-scale good practice. This would likely produce a bias towards submissions that can be planned and delivered at a subject-level, such as curriculum reform and belongingness activities.

**Table 6: Disciplinary identification of lead contributor**



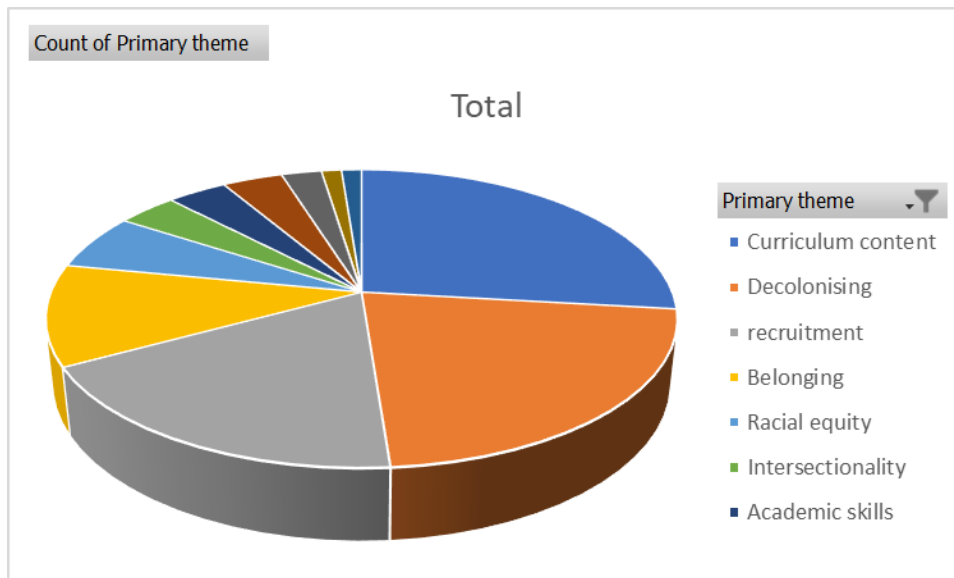
These issues are arguably also evident in table 6, which captures the disciplinary identification of lead contributors. What is clear from the data (along with many informal queries we received from prospective contributors across the country) is that relevant interventions are not necessarily the sole preserve of sociology as a discipline. Many contributors were based in social science faculties and schools featuring a range of social science programmes including criminology, education, and health and social care, and so their submissions were not limited to a sociology-only remit. Conversely, some sociologists, or academics engaged in sociological research, in fact resided in humanities or medical departments. This perhaps highlights that relevant good practice case studies need not necessarily be the work of sociologists. Such is the scope of our discipline that even curriculum-based activities from other subject areas may hold value for improving racial equity in the teaching of, and recruitment to, sociology.

## Repository themes

The repository comprises a range of initiatives, ideas, evidence of impact, and re-useable materials organised thematically for ease of searching. The individual entries also link to other relevant sources that are either illustrative of the work undertaken (e.g. videos or publications based on the initiative), or are able to be used to implement a similar intervention elsewhere (for example, toolkits). The resources provided vary, but include module documentation, guidance for decolonising, podcasts, webinars and web sites. The evidence of impact was left open to contributors – we did not insist upon

hard data or qualitative evidence so as not to exclude ongoing work in this area. We have also included a ‘how to implement’ section that advises those using the repository on the best way to utilise or adapt the ideas shown.

## Key themes



## Number of Entries

|                |   |           |
|----------------|---|-----------|
| <b>Theme 1</b> | <b>Decolonising Sociology</b>               | <b>19</b> |
| <b>Theme 2</b> | <b>Curriculum Content<br/>Pedagogy</b>      | <b>15</b> |
| <b>Theme 3</b> | <b>Belonging and Student<br/>Experience</b> | <b>12</b> |
| <b>Theme 4</b> | <b>Consultancy and Training</b>             | <b>2</b>  |
| <b>Theme 5</b> | <b>Recruitment and Retention</b>            | <b>25</b> |

As part of the survey, we asked participants to suggest the theme or themes their initiative aligned with. For the web-based research, we selected themes amongst the research team. It is notable that a number of initiatives included in the repository do not fall exclusively under one theme, and therefore could be placed into multiple categories. The thematic structure above is therefore organised around the primary theme noted by the research team.

## Responding to the 2020 Race in Sociology Report: Case Studies

The Race and Ethnicity in Sociology report (Joseph-Salisbury et al, 2020) concluded with a number of recommendations designed primarily not only to promote discussion around the theme of race and ethnicity in Sociology, but also to offer practical measures through which colleagues can address the issues raised within the report. This project, and the acknowledge repository, therefore were designed to expressly deal with recommendations 6B, 6D and 6E in the original report (*Addressing under-representation of BME staff/pipeline, Teaching and the curriculum, and Teaching support, training and culture*). This section will deal with each in turn, highlighting entries from the repository that demonstrate best practice in this area:

### **6B. Addressing the under-representation of BME staff/'pipeline'**

Section 3 of the Race and Ethnicity in British Sociology report (Joseph-Salisbury et al. 2020) indicated similar findings to that of the Leading Roots (2019) report into continuation of higher education beyond degree level for BME students; finding that the percentage of BME students studying at postgraduate drops to one fifth (down from one quarter at undergraduate) of all students (2020, p.17). With Sociology being the second most popular social science subject taken by BME students after Economics, work being undertaken to address this recommendation was of key importance to this project. We identified a number of initiatives and scholarships designed to encourage and support BME students to study beyond bachelor level within our project, as shown in the case study below:

#### **CASE STUDY ONE: University of Surrey: Black Scholars Studentship Award (Formerly the Shine Scholarship)**

The University of Surrey offers a fully-funded three and a half year scholarship for Black scholars looking to pursue a PhD in Sociology or another related pathway. The scholarship includes a fee waiver a stipend and a research support grant of £3000, but beyond this it offers a multicomponent package of initiatives that go beyond financial support. The scholarship also includes:

- “A fully-funded ‘Surrey Black Scholars’ package (summer school, mentoring, placement opportunities, teaching qualifications, tailored career advice)
- An internship scheme for Black undergraduates
- A range of mentoring opportunities from Black, Asian and minority ethnic postgraduate students and academics
- Race equity training and inclusive supervisor training for staff
- Inclusive researcher development training
- External speaker series with Black academics and networking events.”

(University of Surrey, 2023)

As reported by the ONS in 2022, the prohibitively high cost of tuition fees are not the only barrier to progression for BME students beyond degree level. This studentship directly seeks to address underrepresentation of black students, a group identified within the Race and Ethnicity in British Sociology (2020) report and elsewhere (Williams et al 2019) as being less likely to get a 2:1 or a First Class degree, and less likely to progress to postgraduate study, than white students or other ethnic groups. This studentship and others like it address recommendation 6B, points d and f directly in terms of offering holistic financial and pastoral support for this student group:

*“d. Departments offering Sociology degrees explore avenues for encouraging and supporting BME students (including financially) into both postgraduate study and doctoral research programmes;”*

*“f. Universities and funding bodies offer ring-fenced funding for under-represented BME groups.”  
(Joseph-Salisbury,, 2020 p.42)*

#### **6D. Teaching & the curriculum**

The majority of the entries in the acKnowledge repository fall into the category of Teaching/Curriculum work. Sections Four and Five of Race and Ethnicity in British Sociology report (Joseph-Salisbury et al. 2020) highlight a number of areas for improvement within British Sociology departments, including ensuring race is embedded within core and optional modules, that the ‘sociological canon’ of classical theory be diversified, related to accounts of race and ethnicity, and “taught with due consideration to their historical context” (p.43). It also recommended that annual module and programme curricula reviews have race and ethnicity embedded within their processes. The repository provided a positive outlook on this front, with several universities having already undertaken this and many already showing demonstrable impact:

#### **CASE STUDY TWO: Brunel University: Remodelling 'Racism, Identity and Difference'**

Rohini Roi at Brunel took over a 3<sup>rd</sup> year undergraduate sociology module on racism, identity and difference and revamped it to incorporate a range of global anti-colonial perspectives on theories of racialization, racism and race at both the individual and structural level. The module was remodelling to become ‘Colonialism, migration and global racisms’, incorporating racism in contexts like India/South Asia, China (e.g. Ughyurs, Tibetans, or African migrants), as well as debates on indigeneity in the Americas and Asia. The module changes were shown to have a positive impact upon enrolment, with over 80 students taking the module last year.

(University of Brunel, 2023)

## **6E. Teaching support, training and culture**

The final set of recommendations from the report centred around ensuring BME students are properly supported by addressing various aspects of the culture of the department in which they are studying. 6E point b of the report recommendations asks that b) Heads of Department ensure that there is a focus on teaching race and ethnicity in the training provided to all Graduate Teaching Assistants; The following repository entry directly addresses 6E point g, which indicated that BME students ought to “fully involved in the culture of the department, and as student reps; that there are ‘safe spaces’ for BME students if required, and that departments create mechanisms through which the needs of BME students can be heard.” (2020, p.44):

### **CASE STUDY THREE: Kings College London: ‘Let’s Talk About Race’ Discussion toolkit**

This set of guidance offers staff members at Kings College London a strategy for engaging in discussions about race with students, particularly those who are new to the university. Developed in response to student focus groups that highlighted a lack of ‘race dialogue’, particularly amongst white staff members, the toolkit forms one aspect of Kings’ 10point action plan towards race equality.

The toolkit explains why talking about race is important, why *not* talking about it indicates a tacit acceptance of inequality, and offers a set of practical guidelines for engaging in discussions about race. It provides a list of networks of allies and BME collectives at Kings, and their contact details, and it also contains a glossary of key terms produced in conjunction with the British Sociological Association. Whilst the document was produced by the university’s Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience, this repository entry demonstrates the multi-disciplinary reach of race-related initiatives in higher education, and their general applicability beyond the subject from which they emerged.

(Kings College London, 2023)

## **Challenges & Reflections**

This project engendered a number of challenges, many of which were anticipated in our 2022 BSA conference presentation on a building of the repository. These are discussed here to highlight how the pursuit of racial equity in any discipline poses a ‘wicked problem’ (Rittel 1972, in Austen *et al.*, 2017) – an issue that is in itself difficult to define, and is made up of many component problems, where solving one of those components risks exacerbating or even creating other problems.

Firstly, the survey and personal communications that formed the majority of our data both placed the onus upon individuals to offer a detailed summary of their work. At the same time, contributors were dealing with the continuation of University & College Union (UCU) industrial action nationally, and ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, alongside the ongoing institutional burden of overwhelming workloads and precarity. This is not to mention the additional toll that undertaking work in racial justice can tend to take in terms of emotional labour (Joseph-Salisbury, 2020, p.32). These latter issues disproportionately affect BME staff members and women (Wright, Thompson and Channer, 2007), the demographic that are most likely to be involved in EDI work, and also the demographic that predominantly contributed to our survey. One respondent to the survey explicitly called out the 'double duty' expectation upon colleagues of colour, where they are expected to do EDI work, and also spend their spare time detailing it for the benefit of institutional bodies such as the BSA:

*"I don't really have time to answer this questionnaire, and I am doing it during my annual leave[...] It is noteworthy that again, I am being asked to quantify and show how this work affected students or how I am implementing it, [thus] making this labour transparent for an institutional body that will not fund it nor recognise it?"*

The frustration exhibited in this critique and others we received provokes a methodological quandary in terms of ethics and practicality: How do we empathetically research a topic whilst not creating extra work for those already overburdened? For academics, EDI work is often deprioritised against the demands of heavy teaching and REF research workloads. Such obstacles increased the difficulty in locating and reaching these dedicated and overworked staff, not to mention the fact that it required extra labour in encouraging them to contribute to the repository.

The project team were mindful of the issue of strike action (and cognisant of the fact that one of the 'Four Fights' in the current UCU campaign relates directly to improving equality in higher education), using strategies such as staggering emails promoting the survey so that these arrived when their universities were not on strike during the March/April 2022 industrial action. Nevertheless, it is pertinent to note that many important contributions to the repository may well have been missed due to the combination of the aforementioned external factors.

Other challenges we encountered required equally careful navigation. For example, concerns about correct and inclusive wording, interpretation, and the desire to properly represent the repository whilst attracting suitable responses led to a delay in publishing the call via email lists. Much time was



spent crafting the survey and video to gain the audience's trust that their EDI work on race and ethnicity will be genuinely valued and shared effectively on the acknowledge repository website. The difficulties that arose from the wording of the survey also compounded a disciplinary issue. Although we endeavoured to keep the wording loose in terms of what we wanted in terms of repository submissions, it was understandable that those who filled it intended to fall into the category of working in 'Sociology', 'teaching', 'EDI, and/or 'recruitment'.

Surprisingly, based on the wording of our call out for submissions, we received several queries about whether their work could still be included in the repository even though it did not fully fall into the category of Sociology. Having assessed their work more closely in the disciplines of medicine, health and social care, engineering and business for example, we found valuable work around EDI and belongingness. Much time was spent carefully reading through these 'outlier' submissions making sure there was indeed a Sociological component to their approach or agreeing as a team that Sociology lecturers would indeed benefit from a cross-disciplinary approach in raising racial equity. We then contacted these participants welcoming their contributions to the repository.

Another challenge proved to be reaching those involved in recruitment, where the aim was to improve the place of race in sociology. With the BAME student voice calling for a more anti-racist classroom and the need of race and ethnicity to be taught beyond the customary one-week lecture, we observed from our survey over 75% of acknowledge submissions have been teaching-related. This indicates a raised awareness of the importance of embedding EDI into pedagogical practice, though recruitment and retention appear to be moving at a much slower pace. Many institutions are only now beginning to scrutinise their policies, gathering granular data in order to start thinking about how to tackle issues such as the leaky pipeline and more effective ways of recruiting and retaining staff of colour. As already mentioned, this work is often not siloed solely within Sociology, and can involve a range of other stakeholders such as independent donors, HR teams, EDI teams and senior university executives, where no one person holds responsibility for the initiative. To ensure recruitment initiatives were showcased in the repository, our web-based research included researching Black and Minority Ethnic scholarships, grants and recruitment initiatives in the United Kingdom that were associated with Social Science courses, and directly contacted the university scholarship teams to ask if they were happy to be included.

The nature of EDI work tends to be work in progress as ideas and initiatives are continually evolving with new collectives and increased allyships within and across UK universities. The growth in BAME

student activism reaches across different disciplines as we see a rise in collaborative staff and student EDI initiatives, evidenced by our repository. A call for change by the student voice and the need for whiteness in sociology to be decentralised remains a key theme running through the submissions of the acKnowledge repository.

## **Recommendations**

Drawing upon the challenges and reflections above, and the repository itself, we have the following recommendations:

### **Recommendation 1: Keeping the repository 'live'**

The acKnowledge repository as it stands is not a static database, but one that continues to evolve as contributors update their submissions. Whilst it provides a helpful snapshot of 'best practice' in teaching and recruitment in relation to race at this point in time in Sociology, it could never cover all of the (often invisible) impactful work going on in Sociology departments and beyond. The repository will serve its purpose best if it is consistently maintained, updated, and added as work progresses and as new initiatives emerge.

This is because a lot of promising EDI work falls foul of limitations in terms of staffing, funding and policy implementation – as noted elsewhere, institutions favour 'stop-start' initiatives with finite amounts of funding (Campion and Clark, 2022), leading to short-termism and meaning that effective work in this area tends to be forgotten as time passes. The project team is keen therefore for the acKnowledge repository to be updated on a biannual/quarterly basis, as awareness of the repository grows. Funding should be made available to employ a BSA staff member to oversee these biannual/quarterly calls for additional EDI best practice. The project team would ideally be involved in some form of additional consultancy to assess and maintain the quality of submissions that constitute EDI best practice.

### **Recommendation 2: Student as Academic Partners**

The project team intends to continue this research by working with BME students within the School of Social Policy, Sociology & Social Research at the University of Kent, and gathering their reflections upon the value of the repository as a tool for best practice in teaching race. This project, as with other research undertaken by acKnowledge team members (Adewumi *et al.*, 2022), seeks to work alongside students as 'academic partners' (Jones-Devitt *et al.*, 2017) in order to eradicate the epistemological

hierarchies that sustain a white academic status quo. Students are co-producers of many of the initiatives showcased in this project, and are the end-users of higher education provision; therefore engaging in a dialogue with them enables their experiential knowledge of race in Sociology and higher education more generally to be centred (Iverson, 2007). If funding were made available, this could be extended nationally to capture further nuances in student expectations and how the repository meets them.

### **Recommendation 3: Beyond Sociology**

As evidenced by the cross-disciplinary nature of many of the submissions to the repository, and the emergence of cross-institutional operations that prioritise racial equity (for example, the Race Equality Charter), we recommend that further work be done to explore best practice activities in relation to race in teaching and recruitment beyond the discipline for Sociology. The acknowledge project team P.I., Dr Barbara Adewumi, has previously explored the potential for decolonising and diversifying the discipline of social policy (Adewumi & Mitton, 2021), and our repository indicates that similar activity is going on across many disciplines in universities around the country, from Psychiatry to Geography to Theatre Studies. The intention therefore to seek out best practice solely within the discipline of Sociology risks excluding good work that can be easily transfigured to suit teaching and recruitment within Sociology departments or indeed, any department concerned with the Social Sciences. We have provided in the repository entries advice for implementation and ‘how to’ guidance, for those who may wish to adapt an initiative to suit their own teaching.

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