

This document contains a selection of anti-racist resources (including examples of sector practice, academic publications, popular media etc.) that may be useful in developing racial literacy and informing educational practice towards narrowing the degree awarding gap.

Towards Narrowing the Degree Awarding Gap in DECI

Support Resources

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Summary

This document contains a collection of resources towards narrowing the degree awarding gap in your respective courses. Divided in two main parts, this document firstly elaborates on the context around the gap, e.g. terms, data and sector practice and secondly, provides a range of resources that may be useful in informing your practice. Whilst requesting that individual engagement with anti-racist pedagogies is essential, these resources may be used to build a starting point in doing so according to how seems fit with your practices and respective courses. Those having attended the "Roadmap to Change"-Event in DECI may be familiar with a few references. However, this document will also include some internal (SHU) and external (non-SHU) information as well as other examples of 'what has worked' towards narrowing the gap.

Context

Definition

Often defined as a complex phenomenon, the degree awarding gap explains the "difference between the proportion of White UK-domiciled [...] and the proportion of UK-domiciled Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) students"¹ who is awarded a 1st or 2:1, i.e. a good honours degree (Miller 2016, p. 7). This gap is sometimes also referred to as the 'BME attainment gap' or the 'ethnicity attainment gap', however is questioned and challenged as a term by experts as it may still depict a deficit perspective on student's *attainment* rather the system of *awarding*. To understand some the challenges in *defining* the gap and terms around it, please also review Miller (2016, p. 27/28).

Data

Further it is extremely important to understand what numbers around the degree awarding may actually mean. Broecke and Nicholls (2007), Singh (2011), Miller (2016) and ECU (2015) are a few selected reports that show the gap's development over time and help putting it into context making terms, challenges and possible solutions very clear². If you would like to know the current data on your respective courses, please review the [dashboard](#) and choose faculty, department, courses, modules etc. If you need assistance in understanding the data thoroughly, you can review the narrowing-the-gaps [website](#), email reg-BMEdegreeattainment-mb@exchange.shu.ac.uk or email s.tahir@shu.ac.uk.

Departmental initiatives

As above literature/data suggests, the gap is caused by multiple factors. In this regard, the Department for Education, Childhood and Inclusion (DECI) at SHU has been developing

¹ This term has continuously been in contested use and is argued to be diminishing unique identities in derogatory ways (Parris 2016); hence this report uses the terms 'minoritised' or 'of colour' to refer to individuals whose experiences may have been impacted by their diverse backgrounds.

² See Miller (2016), Ch. 5 (Initiatives to address differential attainment)

initiatives towards understanding the awarding gap within the department. As acknowledging and understanding that the gap is impacted by various factors, narrowing it will require a multi-faceted approach. A report³ compiled beginning of 18/19, as one of the outcomes of DECI initiatives, obtained the voice of DECI students of colour through the 'Listening Room Projects'. The findings suggested five recommendations (see App.1) of which the first two are prominent in the data collected whilst also corresponding with the [ECU](#).

Hence, "Roadmap to Change - The Legacy of Stephen Lawrence: how far have we come in 26 years?", a session for staff and students, was organised in April 2019 in remembrance of Stephen Lawrence who was murdered in a racist attack, but seeking justice for him was obstructed for decades through *institutional racism*. Understanding (t)his 'legacy', the session focused on lesson the HE sector (specifically an education department) could learn, as it is a major societal institution struggling with institutional racism in a like manner.⁴

This compilation of resources is also a departmental initiative towards supporting DECI staff to comprehend issues around the awarding gap, as well as to improve practice in regards of racial literacy towards a more inclusive department.

Sector practice: What has worked in other universities

Regarding work done at SHU, please also review the Narrowing-the-gaps website that has various resources, both SHU and non-SHU related. Their team has organised a consecutive CPD series '[Disparity in Attainment](#)' across 6 months and various events across SHU including the '[Decolonising the University Symposium](#)' on 31st May 2019. Please also see the '[Transforming Lives](#)' session by Prof Jacqueline Stevenson explaining the gap in a SHU and national context. Further a '[Race Equity through Pedagogy Conference](#)' was organised on 1st July 2019 at the Sheffield Institute of Education with over 100 attendees to elaborate on sector wide initiatives.

As the degree awarding gap is a national issue, universities across Britain have proposed various initiatives to narrow or close it. The *Higher Education Academy* (HEA) have collected information whilst analysing what obstacles and challenges teaching staff face addressing these gaps and what can help to change that. Via this [link](#) you can access review information around 'data, practice, and leadership'. They refer to a case study at Kingston, Hertfordshire and Wolverhampton that may showcase "[What works in approaches to the BME attainment Gap](#)" and other useful resources.

Furthermore, some universities created *Cultural Awareness Videos* such as University of Nottingham on [Microaggressions In The Classroom](#), University of Wolverhampton on [Different Voices](#) and Newcastle University on [Hate Crimes In the UK](#). Please also review the recently held conference regarding the [Decolonising the Curriculum Project](#) at Kent University with scholars in the field unpacking the issue. To find further practical examples and classroom material that have been prepared and applied by various institutions within the sector, please also revisit [Miller \(2016\)](#) Chapter 5 (Initiatives to address differential attainment) and Chapter 6 (Toolkits) to find an extensive list.

³ If you wish to review the report, please e-mail s.tahir@shu.ac.uk and you will receive an electronic copy.

⁴ If you wish to review a compiled version of the session, please email s.tahir@shu.ac.uk and you will receive an electronic copy.

Towards an anti-racist academic practice - An annotated bibliography

In form of an annotated bibliography, this collection of material sorted according to themes should be considered as highly selective within different contexts, e.g. (non-)British, current/dated, (non-)academic etc. In terms of accessibility, the material also varies from written publications to audio/visual media. Therefore, it will be vital to contextualise the literature within your practice and expand it through further personal research around anti-racist material that can inform it accordingly. The starting point would be to challenge our own thinking on race - and therefore be able to challenge our own practices.

Understanding Whiteness

- EDDO-LODGE, R. (2017) [*Why I am no longer talking to white people about race*](#), Bloomsbury: London

This Sunday Times Bestseller is an excellent starting point towards understanding race relations in Britain. This is a link to a Guardian [article](#) about the author's journey towards writing the book, a short [Interview](#) clip and the "About Race" [Podcast](#) - a follow up series to the book.

- DiANGELO, R. (2018). [*White Fragility - Why it's so hard for White people to talk about racism*](#). Penguin Random House, UK/US

This international best seller is a quick read by Prof Dr Robin DiAngelo, a White US academic. [Here](#) she reads from her book at University of Washington. Further, these are useful short clips where she deconstructs [White Privilege](#), expands on "Why 'I'm not racist' is only [half of the story](#)", "Being nice is not going to [end racism](#)" and "Debunking the most [common myths](#)".

- TAYLOR, E. GILLBORN, D. and LADSON-BILLINGS, G. (2016). [*Foundations of Critical Race Theory in Education*](#). New York. Routledge

This academic publication is an essential collection of global work around CRT, Whiteness, race and education by US CRT scholars in the field.

- CABRERA, N. L., FRANKLIN, J. D. & WATSON, J. S. (2016) Whiteness in Higher Education: The Invisible Missing Link in Diversity and Racial Analyses. *ASHE Higher Education Report*, 42 (6), p. 7 - 125. Retrieved from: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com.lcproxy.shu.ac.uk/doi/10.1002/aehe.20116/epdf>

This report is a collection of a range of academic research usefully situating the concept of Whiteness and race within academia.

- OWUSU, M. (2017) [Decolonising the Curriculum](#) [TedxTalk].

In this TedTalk, Melz Owusu who is a researcher and an Education activist elaborates on the process of decolonising the curriculum.

Understanding race and equity in education - Critical reading

- LADSON-BILLINGS (1998). Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a nice field like education?, *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 11:1, 7-24, [DOI: 10.1080/095183998236863](https://doi.org/10.1080/095183998236863)

This peer-reviewed article elaborates on the initial application of Critical Race Theory (CRT) to the field of education and how it poses a useful tool towards 'unpacking' race relations in education.

- KNOWLES, G. and LANDER, V. (2011), [*Diversity, Equality and Achievement in Education*](#), London: Sage

This is a concise collection of main themes around equity issues positioned within education.

- CHAKRABARTY, N., ROBERTS L. & PRESTON, J. (2014). [*Critical Race Theory in England*](#) London and New York. Routledge

This is a collection of a range of academic articles on the American concept of CRT situated in Britain touching on various sub-themes within the field.

- ROLLOCK, N., GIILLBORN, D. VINCENT, C. and BALL, S. J. (2012). [*The Colour of Class: the educational strategies of the black middle classes*](#). London: Routledge.

This is an in-depth analysis of intersections of race and class and how such jointly shape experiences of Black students, who may be impacted by low educational attainment.

- WILD, M., & STREET, A. (2013). [*Themes and debates in early childhood*](#). Los Angeles: Learning Matters

This piece is an essential collection of essays on current debates in the field of Education, Early Years and Childhood Studies. Chapter one 'Equality and difference in the Early Years' is a particularly useful introduction into equity issues within this context.

- hooks, b. (1994). [*Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*](#). New York: Routledge.
- hooks, b. (2003). [*Teaching community: A pedagogy of hope*](#). Florence, USA: Taylor and Francis.

These pieces by CRT scholar and activist bell hooks are an essential read for educationalists who endeavour working towards racial equity in education. Though these pieces tend to be well-known, they have repeatedly been used tokenistically in reading lists to 'diversify curricula'. Hence they ought to be critically contextualised into disciplines that they may inform.

Understanding race and equity in education - Classroom practice

- LYISCOTT, J. (2019) [*Black Appetite. White Food: Issues of Race, Voice, and Justice Within and Beyond the Classroom.*](#) Routledge: London

This book invites educators to explore White Privilege within and beyond classrooms and provides practical "ideas and tools that teachers, school leaders, and professors can use for awareness, inspiration, and action around racial injustice and inequity."

- KAFELE, B. K. (2008). [*Closing the attitude gap: How to Fire Up Your Students to Strive for Success.*](#) ASCD: USA

According to [ASCD](#), "this inspiring and thought-provoking follow-up to his 2009 best-seller *Motivating Black Males to Achieve in School and in Life*, Baruti Kafele makes the case that the "attitude gap" that often affects underperforming students can only be closed if educators first help students develop the will to strive for excellence."

- GILLBORN, D. (2006). Critical Race Theory and Education: Racism and antiracism in educational theory and praxis, *Discourse: studies in the cultural politics of education*, 27:1, 11-32, [DOI: 10.1080/01596300500510229](#)
- PETERS, M. A. (2015) Why is My Curriculum White?, *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 47 (7), p. 641 - 646, DOI: 10.1080/00131857.2015.1037227
- VAUGHT, S. E. and CASTAGNO, A. E. (2008) "I don't think I'm a racist": Critical Race Theory, teacher attitudes, and structural racism, *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 11:2, 95-113, [DOI: 10.1080/13613320802110217](#)

These peer-reviewed articles view (a few) different perspectives on classroom practice in relation to Whiteness, Critical Race Theory and race.

Understanding the lived experience of people of colour

- ADICHIE, C. N. (2009). [*The danger of a single story*](#) [TedTalk]

When finding her 'authentic cultural voice', novelist Chimamanda Adichie warns that a 'single story' about a person or country may risk a critical misunderstanding.

- HIRSCH, A. (2018). [*Brit\(ish\) - on Race identity and Belonging*](#), Penguin Random House: London

[The Guardian](#) describes this Sunday Times Bestseller by writer, broadcaster and journalist Afua Hirsch as a "powerful hybrid of memoir, reportage and commentary [that] considers so-called racial blindness, the draw of Africa and life as a black woman in Britain".

- KHAN, M. (2019). [*It's not about the Burqa.*](#) Picador: London.

This is a [collection of essays](#) on lived experiences of Muslim women in the West elaborating on themes of faith, feminism, sexuality and race.

- SHUKLA, N. (2016). [The Good Immigrant](#). Unbound: London

This [collection](#) of 21 Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic voices emerging in Britain explores "what it means to be 'other' in a country that doesn't seem to want you, doesn't truly accept you – however many generations you've been here – but still needs you for its diversity monitoring forms."

- UNFILTERED WITH JAMES O'BRIEN (2018). [Akala deconstructs race, class, and Britain's modern myths](#) [video file]

This is a discussion/conversation with British rapper, journalist author, activist and public intellectual Akala by James O'Brien on his show 'Unfiltered'.

Further media

Please review the [narrowing-the-gaps website](#) for more information and the online 'wakelet'-lists with various rich resources to review:

- [Closing the attainment gap](#)

This is another collection that identifies sector practice that aims to narrow the gap in degree awarding.

- [Decolonising the University](#)

This collection of words/images seeks to develop racial literacy of our university community in order to foster more transformative conversations about race in the academy. It contains TedTalks, articles, reports and useful brief information around the process of 'decolonising'.

- [Building intercultural skills](#)

This is a brilliant collection of popular media including movies and television shows that challenge stereotypical depictions of people and places of different cultures. They are entertaining and interesting to engage with to improve racial literacy and intercultural skills.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Recommendations

1. Cultural awareness and reflexivity

1.1 Staff training on unconscious bias, institutional racism and acknowledgement of privilege and positionalities towards developing reflexivity

1.2. Shift from the use of a deficit approach towards the facilitation of minoritised students to develop self-efficacy and self-reflexivity

1.3 Open forums for all kinds of students facilitated by trained staff to discuss racialised issues freely in order to improve cross-racial interactions

2. Decolonizing the curriculum

2.1 Review of course structure, classroom material and reading lists

2.2 Critical engagement of academics (and students) with normalised knowledge transfer to introduce diverse texts/material to studying

3. Representation in staff diversity

3.1 Recruitment of positive role models whether being academics, student support services or guest speakers.

3.2 Building trust through critical listening and speaking (also linked to R.1)

4. Promotion of opportunities and support

4.1 Workshops to develop minoritised student's confidence and raise aspirations in a safe space to encourage them to continue studying in HE (e.g. Masters, PhDs)

4.2. Promoting scholarships, bursaries, internships etc.

5. Quality, flexibility and adaptability of course

5.1 Clearer dissemination of information in regards to changes of timetables, course structures and assessments and its flexibility according to personal needs (e.g. caring responsibilities, commuting etc.)

5.2 Stronger staff communication on course content and conduct

5.3 Variety of ethical and quality proven placements (also such as non-school based educational settings)