A Workbook

HOW TO START DECOLONISING SOCIAL SCIENCES

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'Decolonising education' is often misunderstood or even misinterpreted. This is perhaps due to the media attention, combined with some misuse of the language of 'decolonisation', which has created a lot of debate.

With this workbook, we invite the readers to embark on the journey of understanding what is meant by decolonising education, how to engage with the ongoing efforts on this, and to support the start of this process in Social Sciences at Warwick.

We do not expect this work to be fully exhaustive either in the explanation of the concepts or the changes needed to 'decolonise' Warwick. We will instead signpost some of the very comprehensive literature and ongoing activities on this topic.

We invite you to actively engage with this work, rather than passively read it (hence a WORKBOOK rather than a *guide*). This is not a *'best practice manual'* either as we do not believe there is only one way to embrace decolonising practices. We do however believe that by engaging with this workbook, you will develop your understanding of decolonisation and what it takes to feel empowered to design your own decolonising approach in the context of your discipline and subject of study.

This workbook is a collaborative project coordinated by Stefania Paredes Fuentes, Chair of the *"Decolonising Social Sciences"* Subgroup of the Faculty of Social Sciences Education Committee, supported by Warwick students Alero Etuwewe, Caitlin Hoyland, dipbuk Panchal, Ivanne Gnaoure, and Mahek Bathia. This would not have been possible without the generous financial support of the Institute of Advanced Teaching and Learning (IATL) at Warwick.

WHO IS THIS WORKBOOK FOR?

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Decolonising education is a complex process which requires reframing the traditional Eurocentric curricula and challenging hierarchies of knowledge creation (see Section 1). We want our students and graduates to be critical thinkers capable to understand how past events impact contemporary normative thinking and shape our views on key aspects that affect our societies today, therefore our teaching has to reflect this.

Academics play a key role in designing curricula and influencing how knowledge is created and disseminated. While there is a lot of work to do at the institutional level, this workbook is about how you—as an individual—can contribute. This workbook is written for academics in Social Sciences. We aim for every academic teaching Social Sciences modules at Warwick to engage with this work and think about how our modules contribute to exploring the society we live in from various perspectives. We wish academics to reflect on how their pedagogical practices affect different students and the opportunities created for students to express themselves and their experiences. The various sections in this workbook contain many activities to help you develop a self-reflexive approach to your academic practice.

With this, we are not exonerating the institution from its responsibilities. Decolonising education cannot be disconnected from the university structure. The institution is responsible to create an environment in which academics can develop a decolonising strategy, students can explore how colonialism contributed to shaping the current knowledge, and the whole community can start a self-reflection process on our relationship with colonialism. This has to be embedded in the institutional educational strategy and adequately communicated and resourced.

Departments can use this workbook to develop and organise a decolonising strategy. Most departments are leaving the work to keen individuals interested in the topic and, perhaps, trialling various pedagogical interventions within their own modules. Departments can use this workbook to ensure that all staff understands the meaning and importance of "*decolonising education*" and how this fits within the broader department's Education strategy. For example, how this links to closing awarding gaps, how this contributes to updating the current syllabi, how this fits in the creation of new modules, how the new assessment strategy can reflect on decolonising principles, etc. Departments can use this workbook to support those staff willing to change, but unexperienced on how to start the process.

Finally, while we believe academics designing curriculum, assessments, and learning environments are key for the decolonising project, and it is important that they are completely on board and understand what decolonising is all about, we do not believe academics are the only ones who need to work on this. On the contrary, throughout the workbook, we explain how everybody within university has to

engage. Therefore, if you are not an academic, you can still read and engage with the activities in this workbook. Even if only to truly understand what decolonising education is (going beyond newspapers contentious explanations), read through student experiences, and reflect on how your role contributes to these experiences.

We do realise that reading 80+ pages may feel an overwhelming task. However, we do not expect you to read this all in one go. Take your time. We know it is not always going to be easy, and we invite you find someone else (or a small group) to read the workbook and engage with it. Departments can facilitate these connections and group creation too. What follows describe the structure of the workbook, and how you can engage with it.

HOW IS THIS WORKBOOK STRUCTURED?

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There are seven sections divided into two parts. Part I explains "*Decolonising Education*" (Section 1) and why we need to *decolonise Social Sciences* (Section 2). Decolonising education is not a simple job. It requires engagement with all aspects of our teaching and pedagogic methods and can feel overwhelming. It may not be possible or even feasible to change everything at once. Even choosing where to start may seem like a big decision.

Self-reflecting on our own teaching and pedagogical practice is not easy. Shall we start by changing the curriculum? How to create a better learning environment? How to change assessments? Where to start? The activities in Section 3 are designed to help you reflect on what aspects of your own practice you want to develop further. These activities are linked to the three sections in Part 2: curriculum (Section 4), learning environments (Section 5), and assessments (Section 6). You do not have to read these sequentially; you can start with any of these and move backwards and forwards.

All sections contain '*Activities*'. These are not optional. You should not just read through these sections but reflect on your own practice, so please engage with these activities and do not skip them. There are also various optional '*Boxes*' with extra material, including student experiences while at Warwick, self-reflections, information on what is going on at Warwick, and various other things. While optional, we believe they offer a lot of food for thought.

We also link to extra material (e.g. videos) that we believe can support your engagement with this work.[1] We also link the work to the various initiatives going on at Warwick. There are various departments and groups within the university working

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[1] This workbook is available in various formats. In the printed format, we use QR codes for accessing the interactive resources, in the online format, there are various clickable links.

on Decolonising Education, and it is important to link up, share successful practice and avoid repeating work already done.

As part of this project, we also created the "Decolonising the Academic Year" calendar, which aims to highlight the various cultural celebrations and awareness events during the academic year, and we invite you all to incorporate in your celebrations.

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Working on this workbook was a revitalising experience. We were a group of very different people sharing a common goal: improving the culture at Warwick and making our university a better place for all to thrive. We learn a lot through this process, and committed to continue this work in the future.

We are very grateful to those who have taken time to contribute to this work through reading, commenting, sharing experiences and writing sections. Very special thank you to (in alphabetical order): Sara Abdelmotaleb, Anil Awesti, Tim Burnett, Mark Hinton, Becca Kirk, Naomi Waltham-Smith, participants to the "Global South Initiative Conference" 2022, and all the members of the Decolonising Social Sciences subgroup.

PART I

1. DECOLONISING EDUCATION AT WARWICK
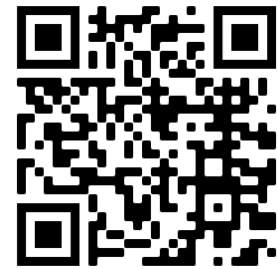
Video: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. The danger of a single story

Scan me to see the link to the video on your device

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Decolonisation is a **process**. A process is a series of actions or steps taken to achieve a particular end.

Decolonisation is not a new idea. There is a long tradition of scholars working on decolonisation, and there is not a single definition that can capture all the aspects of decolonisation. However, we feel safe to argue that most of this literature agrees that decolonisation is the **process of undoing colonialism**, and this reflects in many of the definitions found.

For instance, the Oxford English Dictionary defines decolonisation as:

'the process of eliminating the effects or influence of colonization or colonialism on the attitudes, assumptions, power structures, institutions, etc., of a formerly colonized people or (later also) a former colonial power or culture.'

Colonialism involved a process of dominating space and imposing colonial ideologies, religions and socialisation upon the colonised people. It transformed the political hierarchies between colonisers and colonised and created new power relations with European colonisers at the top. In the new social order, colonised subjects were not valued as human beings, but they were disposable resources to be exploited (Maldonado-Torres 2011). Decolonisation is therefore not limited to specific political fights or conflicts to achieve independence, but to undo the power and social relations and structures created by colonialism, what <u>Anibal Quijano</u> called "*coloniality of power*". For this reason, decolonisation efforts go beyond undoing colonialism: these *'have to undo coloniality'*.

When talking about global phenomena, it is never easy to give a unique definition without the risk of making the concept too basic. Could you explain *Globalisation* in two lines? Could you provide a brief definition of *Sustainability* that provides defined actions to undertake to achieve it? *Decolonisation* is as complex as these phenomena and the use of the word has evolved. It is not restricted to a particular political or social activity or defined time period (see Betts, 2012).

In fact, it is important to keep in mind that the social and historical context matter for discussing 'decolonisation'.[2] Maldonado-Torres (2011) offers a great review of the philosophical development of decolonial thought.[3]

The objective of this workbook is not to be an exhaustive treatment of the work on decolonisation. Instead, we focus on helping the reader to work on their understanding of the process, and then implementing some actions to start working towards it. For this reason, in this workbook, we mostly use *'decolonising'* rather than *'decolonisation'*, focusing on showing *action* and *how* to engage with the project. This because we are aware that, for many of you, this is the initial engagement with this process, and meaningful engagement is the most important step in this process.

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2 See Adefila et al. (2022) and Shahjahan et al. (2021) reviews the literature on decolonisation, and how this develops in different contexts.

3 For an overview of the origins of the study of decolonisation you can read these short introductions: Jansen, Jan and Jürgen Osterhammel (2017) *Decolonization: A Short History*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press; Kennedy, Dane (2016) *Decolonization: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford , UK: Oxford University Press; and Young, Robert (2016) *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, Wiley-Blackwell.

Box 1.1: Colonialism is the past! But... is it?

'Some gram flour, lemon juice, turmeric, and yoghurt. Mix into a thick paste, apply it on your face for 15 minutes and take it off. Trust me, you will become fairer and whiter in days'

My brown skin was always ridiculed. I was told to equate fairness to beauty. My grandmother, who fled Pakistan in the partition of 1947, always produced extensive recipes to scrub my wheatish complexion and turn it into a whiter glow. I remember bowls of different ingredients being lathered on my skin- milk fat, turmeric, aloe vera, wheat flour, you name it. In Mumbai, fairness creams are displayed on massive billboards, promising a whiter glow in days of application. Every beauty parlour has a 'bleaching' treatment, aimed to bring oxygen to your skin to whiten it (with a billion side effects, of course, but they will not talk about that.) Songs I listened to reinforce this obsession with fair skin, glamorising 'chittiyan kalaiyan' (white hands) and 'gore gore gaal' (white cheeks) as the ideal beauty standards.

My experiences with coloniality did not just end with racist comments taking blows at my self-esteem, however. In school, even in the sweltering heat of Mumbai, I would have to wear the classic colonial uniform: a shirt, tie, and a pinafore. My neuro-divergence could never find a place in a system that valued rote learning and reeked of the colonial times. I saw my gay friends being targeted and subject to homophobic comments in a country which embraced homosexuality before the British rule. Caste conflict cripples remote villages of India. Headlines about dalits being lynched, looted, and burned became the norm.

Coloniality was not restricted to India. Racist chants reported at Edgbaston stadium prove that colonialism did not end in the twentieth century and has permeated society.

In school, I discovered decolonisation whilst studying History, where I conducted research to analyse imperialist effects embedded in the schooling system. I delved deeper into decolonisation as a concept at university, whilst studying postcolonial legal theory and analysing the detrimental effects of colonial divides and law on postcolonial societies. I was instantly driven to the cause. It made me stop and think about much colonialism is embedded in my day-to-day life. This deep-rooted evil reflects major socio-political concerns raging the world to this day. In India, for instance, the census produced caste, Christian ideas of marriage produced homophobia, drain of wealth produced widespread poverty, expansionist conquests produced white supremacy.

In a modern university that prides itself on the substantial number of international students that study in it every year, decolonisation is a necessity. Within established systems that further fuel white supremacist fires, it becomes essential to give a voice to the racialised experiences in spaces that promise 'equality' on paper.

1.1 WHAT IS THE LINK BETWEEN DECOLONISATION AND EDUCATION?

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The most recent wave of *decolonising education* started with the ['Rhodes Must Fall Movement'](#) at the University of Cape Town in 2015, leading a series of student protests in other South African universities, and worldwide. In the UK, [students at the University of Oxford](#) called for the statue of Rhodes to be removed. The death of George Floyd in 2020, reanimated the discussion, with many students across the US and soon around the world demanding the acknowledgement of the links among slavery, colonialism and contemporary racism.

> Activity 1.1
> How do YOU define "Education"? Write down your own definition.
> How do you think your current role at Warwick fits this definition?
> In which historical and cultural context, did you acquire your current level of education?

While the recent attention given to *'decolonising education'* may have sparked the interest of many students and scholars who otherwise were not familiar with the term, there is still a lot of misunderstanding on what it means. While usually, a lot of effort goes into explaining the meaning of 'decolonising', it is very important to remind ourselves what is *education*.
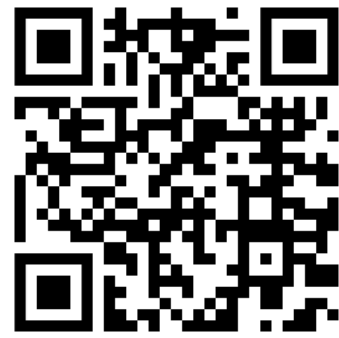
The Oxford English Dictionary defines **Education** as

> "The systematic instruction, teaching, or training in various academic and non-academic subjects given to or received by a child, typically at a school; the course of scholastic instruction a person receives in his or her lifetime."

Formal education is, therefore, a systematic process of teaching and learning. According to the definition, students are the receptors in this process. Through education, students receive formal *knowledge*. How is this knowledge created in first place? Knowledge creation is a complex process. Knowledge is acquired overtime; it develops through new findings and experiences. These experiences are shaped by the historical context and our social connections and, through formal education, we replicate the historical and social narratives through which we—and those before us acquired this knowledge. Knowledge thus should be interpreted and understood within the historical and cultural context this is developed.

'Decolonising education' is indeed a call for greater awareness of the historical and cultural context in which the knowledge created through formal education, is disseminated. Education is a tool and, as many tools, can be used for more than one scope.

Video: Dr Lushaba (University of Cape Town) What is Decolonisation? South African context.

Colonisers understood the power of formal education to exert and maintain their hegemony on colonised populations. Through formal education, Europeans asserted themselves as the sole protagonists of *'modernisation'*, including in the canon of knowledge production. This domination permeates the spheres of knowledge production, behaviour, experience, and identities while non-European knowledge was historically discredited, dismissed and marginalised (Mignolo, 2000; Mills, 2007). *Modernity* became a repository for European colonial rule.

Colonial attitude aimed—through education and pedagogy—to convert *'savages'* from colonised territories and produce *social beings* fitted for modern society (see Simpson, 2007). The colonial project engaged in knowledge production that justified the colonial rule and social sciences contributed to this (Connell, 2018), colonised territories' philosophies were dismissed or transcribed through a colonial discourse (Hountondii, 1974). To this day, European knowledge continues to dominate the academic sphere with no recognition of the dynamics of domination, exploitation, and oppression in which this knowledge was (re)produced (see Mbembe, 2013 and Este, 2017).[4]

Decolonising education aims to undo the *coloniality*, i.e. the colonial processes and logic embedded in the educational system. Many authors have identified how colonisation and coloniality impact education, but from a practical point of view, some of us may find it difficult to put these ideas into practice in our teaching. Fortunately, various scholars have shared how to implement decolonial practices in the classroom, and there is a lot we can learn from these works.

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[4] Este (2017) evaluates the relationship between methodology, power, imperialism, colonialism, and Empire. It includes a brief history of the construction of "methodologies" during the Enlightenment period.

There is a lot of heterogeneity in the various initiatives and practices, and this may intimidate those of us who are just starting this journey. *"How do I choose what practice to adopt?", "What if it does not work with my students?", "How do I overcome institutional challenges?"* are some of the questions you may ask when engaging with this literature.

Shahjahan et al. (2022) review of decolonising curriculum and pedagogy initiatives may help to address some of these questions. The authors characterise these initiatives in themes that can help us to provide some structure to our own work. Various decolonising initiatives aim to position what is considered *mainstream* knowledge and consider how this became dominant within the discipline while at the same time integrating knowledges from different contexts. Interesting examples cited under these themes are Rao (2012) on the Indian psychology curriculum and Raju (2012) on Decolonising math and science education. Shahjahan et al. also highlight the importance of collaborative pedagogical approaches for knowledge creation such as active learning and critical reflexivity, the integration of alternative pedagogical practices from other cultures, and closer collaborations with local communities.[5]

The heterogeneity of decolonial practices in education may also be a response to various constraints and challenges faced by practitioners in different contexts, such as resistance from dominant groups of students, lack of institutional engagement and systematic barriers to implementation, lack of access to resources (including time), (Shahjahan et al., 2022). Decolonising education cannot be disconnected from the rest of the institutional structure as it risks becoming a box-ticking exercise without dismantling the coloniality embedded into the system (Moghli and Kadiwal, 2021).

Keeping this in mind, this workbook looks at various decolonial examples and practices. It is structured around ideas and practices applied to curriculum and pedagogy, learning environments, and assessments. Considering the context in which it developed and tries to influence, we bring scenarios and examples from student experiences, decolonial practices and ongoing initiatives at Warwick.

Decolonise
the Law School

There are in fact many people working on this already at Warwick. See for instance the 2020 report "Decolonise the Law School" by Shay Runsewe, and the "Global South Initiative", a student-led initiative providing a community for PhD and early career scholars across all departments and creating opportunities to disseminate knowledge created in the Global South (see Box 1.2).

Global South Initiative

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[5] For more examples of decolonising initiatives look at Alvares and Faruqi (2012), Bhambra et al. (2018), Moghli and Kadiwal (2021) focus on the UK higher education and the "Third World Thematics" Journal, Volume 5, Issue 1-2 (2020) collects a series of articles that connect decolonial theories into pedagogical practices with various examples.

We have put together a shared document so that we can all add the various initiatives going on at Warwick (need Warwick login).

We have also created a "Decolonising the Academic Calendar" resource in which we look at how to celebrate student diversity by considering the various religious and cultural traditions. Being aware of different customs can help us to rethink many aspects of our institution. Think about learning environments that celebrate not only Christmas, but buildings that remind us of Ramadan traditions, and different New Years' festivities. Raising the multiple flags of inclusion of all identities, while creating making sure these identities truly belong to Warwick.

Share relevant Warwick initiatives here

Decolonising the Academic Calendar

In this sense, we agree with Morreira et al. (2020) that *"there is no one single way of implementing decolonial thought and practice in the classroom, and that this may well be recognised as a strength rather than a limitation,"*. We hope that this work supports your self-reflection journey on your own relationship with colonialism and coloniality and how this influences your pedagogical practice.

Box 1.2: The Global South Initiative by Sara Abdelmotaleb (PAIS, PhD candidate)

The Global South Initiative is the first and only interdisciplinary/ interdepartmental initiative by and to PhD students and early career scholars from the global south in the University of Warwick. We aim to develop the initiative, in the upcoming years, to be a hub not only for PhD students and early scholars across Warwick, but across the UK.

The Global South Initiative is a call for solidarity, collaboration, empathy, and above all resistance. Resistance to the divide of the West and the rest, and all the discrimination that comes with it. We, scholars from all parts of the Global South, are resisting our invisibility in our respective departments, the University, and academia at large. We are here, and we bring our worlds with us, and we aim to claim our place in academia.

We also aim to highlight the rich contribution scholars of the Global South bring to academia. We recognise and claim our social positioning. As Feminist scholar Donna Haraway in "Situated Knowledges" puts it: *"Location is about vulnerability; location resists the politics of closure, finality."*

In claiming our positionality, in resisting the place we have been located, we make radical change. Vietnamese filmmaker and scholar Trinh Minh-ha describes what her writing does:

> "In writing close to the other of the other, I can only choose a self-reflexively critical relationship toward the material, a relationship that defines both the subject written and the writing subject, und asking 'what do I want wanting to know you or me?'"
>
> Trinh T. Minh-ha, "Woman, Native, Other"

reversing the anthropologist classical raison d'être straining *"to read over the shoulders of those to whom they properly belong"* as renowned anthropologist Clifford Greetz puts it.

You can find more about us in our website: https://theglobalsouthinitiative.wordpress.com/

References:

Donna Jeanne Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," in Donna Jeanne Haraway Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature (New York: Routledge, 1991), 196.

Trinh T. Minh-ha, Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 76.

Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays *New York: Basic Books, 1973), 452.

1.2 DECOLONISING EDUCATION IS NOT…

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The recent attention received by decolonising agendas at universities has generated not few public and political debates. *Decolonising* has been blamed for creating '*culture wars*' that create divisions, '*censoring history*', '*threatening academic freedom*', among others. These interpretations are based on misunderstandings of what decolonising entails. Let us clarify some of these points for those of you who may be worried about any of these, and perhaps concerned about engaging with this workbook.

Decolonising Education is not 'censorship' or 'erasing' history

Decolonising is not, as might be presumed, the reversal or removal of something. It does not render invalid European knowledge, nor is it merely seeking to expand the representation of marginalised voices.

To censure something is to evade recognition of something, to hide something, to erase something. Censuring is antonymous with decolonising. Decolonising involves *challenging* censorship, including the historically excluded, to empower the historically silenced, to expand beyond the limiting hermeneutics of the hegemonic Western lens. Decolonising expands, rather than replaces, historical knowledge, by challenging the censorship and exclusion of histories experienced by non-white, non-European peoples. In Section 2 we expand on these points.

Decolonising foremost involves active interrogation of the structures that cause and sustain marginalisation through the critique of the power structures embedded within knowledge (re)production. Only through expanding what is considered to be "knowledge" can representation be diversified. Therefore, the process of decolonising must be understood as an active, continuous process, not a closed, terminus process.

Decolonising Education is not threatening academic freedom

Decolonising education requires not to marginalise and oppress voices, but to embrace diverse knowledges.

As we will amply discuss in this work, decolonising does not dictate '*what (not) to teach*' in any module or subject, threatening your freedom on designing curricula or creating assessments. On the contrary, decolonising urges educators to fully evaluate and disentangle how existing assumptions and theories that underpin the basics of the knowledge in our curricula and disciplines were created in first place. To consider which voices and contributions have been historically ignored and why this is the case.

Decolonising education requires not to marginalise and oppress voices, but to embrace diverse knowledges. The only voices that the decolonising project does not tolerate are those trying to systematically oppress the voices of historically marginalised groups.

Decolonising Education is not about blaming White people (or any other group) and creating divisions

The decolonising process does not seek to set people against one another, it does not seek to sow conflict. Decolonising education is not about prioritising one narrative over another. The purpose of education has not changed.

On the contrary, by decolonising education, the value and participation of education can be increased and broadened. The status quo of education in the social sciences has hardened the marginalisation disenfranchised groups and communities face. Colonised education breeds a culture of superiority. We hope the staff at the University of Warwick can confront this culture. We understand that culture is structurally implemented, this is also carried out by people and individuals independently of their backgrounds.

Decolonising education means this process is acknowledged and addressed. The process of decolonising can be challenging because it requires us to confront our complicity (potential or actual), in the more extensive process of perpetuating a colonised education. Learning to deal with this discomfort and moving forward is part of the process.

Box 1.3: A White Perspective

On account of my being white, I have to actively think about race. In other words, race is not something I notice myself having, until I stop and think about it. That really is the nature of being a white person living in a white supremacist society. Like so many white people living in Britain, my ancestors, who did not by any account live privileged lives, uncritically free rode on the wealth and luxuries appropriated by Britain from the nations and peoples colonised by Britain.

Up until recently, I remained ignorant of, and thus uncritical of, this history, just as I remained ignorant and uncritical of the white supremacist social order. If I am to be candid, the ignorance of Britain's history is to some degree, a hermeneutical ignorance. It is my belief that the dearth of admittance to the brutality of Britain's history is because for those complicit in the brutality, it is far easier to ignore its evils.

Locating the British Empire, for example, as "something in the past" makes it easier to deny its enduring present. I think this guilt is understandable. But it is not useful in activating change. After all, my tears and the tears of other white people won't wash away racism fabricated by our ancestors and refurbished by this denial and guilt. So much history has been concealed and so much injustice has gone unaccountable. As I see it, white people have two choices: to be complicit in the perpetuation of oppression; or be active in challenging this oppression and ally with non-white peoples in the fight against racism.

Decolonising Education is not looking for recognition of guilt from White people for events in the past

We are not looking for white people to feel guilty about the injustices that happened in the past. Guilt does not necessarily deliver change, especially if this translates into white people becoming overly concerned with appearing racist, protecting their own position, and thereby subverting efforts to dismantle structural racism.

We instead ask everybody—including White people—to assume *responsibility*. To engage in becoming anti-colonial and anti-racist, to deconstruct the structures that create inequality and allow discrimination. Become responsible for their own learning and understanding of the current effects of coloniality on different groups of people. Become responsible for understanding how racism works in our days, and challenge behaviours that contribute to perpetuating current forms of discrimination.

We encourage you to become the ancestor who delivers this change for future generations and do the work that those in the past did not do.

Decolonising Education is not just increasing diversity

It is not enough to simply increase diversity to achieve meaningful, sustainable, and long-term change. Decolonising means opposing white colonial systems that benefited some demographics whilst disadvantaging others. Although diversification provides some benefits, it does not confront or disrupt the white colonial structures.

In an effort to decolonise the curriculum, it is possible, for instance, that some academics will use educational materials from non-white people that "*fit*" with the mainstream curriculum. This gives the impression that we value racialised people's viewpoints; nevertheless, we only value their perspectives because they agree with and align with the colonial curriculum that centres *"whiteness"*.

Efforts in increasing diversity that appear to be doing ethnic minorities a favour by 'celebrating' their talents within the same institutions, without disrupting the methods of thinking, and colonial structures will not create long-term equity.

2. WHY TO DECOLONISE *SOCIAL SCIENCES*

> "Decolonising the social sciences and philosophy means to produce, transform, and disseminate knowledge that is not dependent on the epistemology of North Atlantic modernity – the norms of the disciplines and the problems of the North Atlantic – but that, on the contrary, responds to the need of the colonial difference."
>
> Mignolo, 2008 (The geo-politics of knowledge and the colonial difference)

2.1 THE COLONIAL ORIGINS OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

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According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, Social Science is *"any branch of academic study or science that deals with human behaviour in its social and cultural aspects."*

The origins of the Social Sciences, as we know them, are linked to the Enlightenment period in the 17th and 18th centuries. Indeed, from the same source we can read:

> "... the origins [of social science] go all the way back to the ancient Greeks and their rationalist inquiries into human nature, the state, and morality. The heritage of both Greece and Rome is a powerful one in the history of social thought, as it is in other areas of Western society.
> [...] through texts of the great classical philosophers, is the very essence of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment in modern European history."
>
> Nisbet and Greenfeld (2021)

Activity 2.1

Think about your discipline within Social Sciences. When did your discipline start developing? Who were the main subjects of study? How does your research or academic interest relate to Social Sciences?

Box 2.1: Decolonising Social Sciences disciplines

In Social Sciences, we educate future generations of researchers, experts, and professionals. Our curricula, across disciplines, need to reflect the societies they try to study and impact. It has to recognise the historical events that changed the world. The French Revolution, the Industrial Revolution, the Scientific Revolution are not 'endogenous' processes of European history and other important revolutions—such as the Haitian Revolution—cannot be relegated to '*cultural studies*'.

Economics

Economics was the driving force of colonialism (Sartwell, 2017), despite this, colonialism is rarely studied in economic theories, and analysis of economic development neglect the impact of coloniality on human behaviour. Decolonising Economics requires rethinking the economic and social effects of colonialism and how these shape current economic theories. Economics can start rethinking the narratives and who matters when explaining economic events. We can remodel the questions to ask the real problems we face in the economy, and how these effects are different across different populations.

Law

Decolonising Law means recognising the continuities in colonial hierarchies embedded in our legal structures. Part of the strategy used by Britain in its Empire was the idea of "indirect rule". Indirect rule permitted but did not officially recognise, existing "laws" in the colonised territories, providing they did not contradict the laws laid down by Britain. In other words, British law was the Law.
Let's zoom in on the central proponent of modern law: property. Property cannot be separated from coloniality. Whether through *terra nullius* in which Indigenous peoples were dispossessed from the land; the buying of property from wealth accumulated from the Atlantic Slave Trade and the enslavement of people; or through the violent appropriation of land, buildings, knowledge, economy, and people in the processes of colonialism, imperialism, and Empire.

Philosophy

Philosophy holds a unique standing in social science as the study of the root of the university: *reason*. Within philosophy, it was the concept of "*dualism*" that underpinned the modern era of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when European colonialism was consolidated and the Atlantic Slave Trade was established (Sartwell, 2017). Dualism was used to allege differences between White Europeans and non-White peoples living in colonised lands; it was used to allege differences and hierarchy between European societies and non-European societies, European knowledge and non-European knowledge (Sartwell, 2017). Dualism offered a means to establish white supremacy. It determined what was objectively right and what was not. Philosophy, then, held a unique position during the period of the European Enlightenment in defining the modern world of nation-states and Empires (Stengers, 2012). And the "dualisms" or divisions established in the modern era still define our lives today. Today, philosophy offers the potential to imagine a decolonial world, but in order to do so requires introspective decolonisation of the discipline itself (Maldonado-Torres et al. 2018).

... cont... Box 2.1: Decolonising Social Sciences disciplines

Sociology

Sociology exists as a discipline so as to better understand modern society. Linearly, it was developed as a discipline in the nineteenth century, at the same time as anthropology, ethnology, ethnography, and other subsidiaries of studies of social interaction. That is to say, it was developed within a wider project of creating a strict abyssal line dividing humanity into "civilised" and "uncivilised". Sociology assumed the position as a study of the civilised; anthropology, ethnology, ethnography, etc. were studies of the "uncivilised" (Boeventura de Sousa Santos, 2017).

References:

Caselli, M.; Somekh B. 2021, Access to Banking and the Role of Inequality and the Financial Crisis, The B.E. Journal of Economic Analysis & Policy

de Sousa Santos, B. (2017), Decolonising the University: The Challenge of Deep Cognitive Justice, Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Maldonado-Torres, N.; R. Vizcaíno, J. Wallace & J. E., A. We (2018) Decolonising Philosophy. In Gurminder K. Bhambra, Dalia Gebrial & Kerem Nişancıoğlu (eds.), Decolonising the University. London: Pluto Press. pp. 64-90

Sartwell, C. (2017) Entanglements: A System of Philosophy. Suny Press

Stengers, I. (2012) Reclaiming Animism. E-flux Journal, 36 (July). https://www.e-flux.com/journal/36/61245/reclaiming-animism/

The Enlightenment period is associated with *modernity*, which refers to the set of cultural, political, economic, and spatial relationships influencing the nature of social life, the economy, and the use and experience of time and space (Linehan, 2009; Wittrock, 2003).

Modernisation was used during the Enlightenment period to justify colonisation. Modernity commenced at the inception of colonisation, whereby the pre-colonial world was relegated to the inferiorised status of "*traditional*". "*Modernity*" is most acutely characterised by its dedication to rationality, which in turn signifies uniformity. Colonisation was a means of appropriating the knowledges of the colonised and imposing a monistic worldview constructed by the coloniser state. Simultaneously, colonisation was responsible for manufacturing an asymmetrical path of modernisation, whereby coloniser states symbolised the true modernity the colonised states must aspire to. Even today, the idea that there is one singular way to

modernise and develop is a prerequisite of development models constructed by the West. Colonisation was the means to hegemonise Eurocentrism (for a detailed analysis of the relationship between *modernity* and colonialism see Bhambra, 2007 and Ascione, 2016).

It was in this context that Social Sciences—and its separation into disciplines—originated. These, along with other scientific studies, were designed to study/justify the new 'modern' political, economic, cultural and social structures imposed in the colonised territories, based on ideas of *universalism*. It was also in this context in which European experience acquired its current hegemony. In the words of Wittrock (2003, p. 80):

"… the type of critical historical reflection on the European political experience relative to that of other parts of the world, and in particular that of East Asia and China and which was most closely associated with Voltaire, but echoed also in Kant's critique of European imposition and in his appreciating comments on Chinese society, disappeared. In its stead came first a distinctly Europe-centred conception of world history with Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of history as an emblematic expression."

Colonialism thus provided social scientists with objects of study, whilst social science provided a means with which to try and justify the colonial rule over the very people of study (Said, 1978). The bodies of knowledge created during the Enlightenment were imposed upon the colonised nations and, in order for the voices of colonised subjects to be heard, they must be spoken in ways which fit Eurocentrism (Spivak, 2003) (on the relationship between colonialism and social sciences, see Wittrock, 2000; Wittrock, 2003; Maldonado-Torres, 2016).

Universities also contributed to the expansion of Eurocentrism:

"In the late nineteenth century, at a period in time when European global pre-eminence was at its peak, history largely came to be a scholarly exercise that served as a discursive parallel to the formation or reform of European nation states. The new investigations of social conditions and the back side of processes of industrialisation, urbanisation and modernisation were to become institutionally embedded, if in a slow and uneven process, in the research-orientated universities and other new higher education institutions."

Wittrock (2003, p. 80)

In fact, ideas of the *'universalism'* of social theories developed during the Enlightenment period have been used (and still are) to explain societies and human interactions in universities in the Global North and Global South, uncritically with regard to how these studies and theories were initially produced and the influence of

colonialism (Ngugi 1986, Bakare-Yusuf et al., 2004). European *knowledge* became thus hegemonic, placing it in a position of power over other ways of knowing (Mbembe, 2019) making it difficult for other knowledges to be expressed and understood. *Knowledge* and *power* worked in tandem to maintain a worldview and a world order that serves the dominant groups.

The Eurocentrism and universalism of social sciences have not been unchallenged and there are various examples we could cite. In "*Orientalism*" (1978), Edward Said offers insights on how racist narratives of the East (the *Orient*), based on inaccurate cultural representations of the societies of the Middle East that mirrored prejudices and discriminatory perceptions of these societies, contributed to creating and maintaining the hegemony of a "European identity". Samir Amin coins the term "*Eurocentrism*" in his book published in 1988, in which he argues that European domination operates through the cultural formation within non-European cultures. According to Amin, Eurocentrism is a way to understand others' cultures in terms of European cultural principles (see Stauth, 1992). In "*Peau noire, masques blancs*" (Black skin, white masks), Fanon presents a deep analysis of the inequality and dehumanisation inherently to the colonial domination and modernisation project and its effects on economic and cultural development. Fanon's work proposes a way to decolonise not just a project, but as an *attitude* i.e. a fundamental dimension in the task of producing knowledge (Maldonado-Torres, 2016).[6]

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[6] None of these works are without criticisms on various aspects. You may find useful to engage with the literature on these topics as a process to better understand the issues raised by post-colonial and decolonial scholars.

2.2 WHAT TO DO

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Social sciences offer a means to understand the world around us and how to deal with situations we live today. However, the social sciences are dominated by perspectives from scholars on a limited number of countries (concentrated in the *Global North*), resulting in social theories that consider the Global North *normal* and *modern*. We need to break with this. Decolonising the social sciences inspires the expansion of world views beyond the restricted and limiting confines of European knowledge so as to gain a greater understanding of the world around us, and we can help our students to do exactly this.

1. Provide context to knowledge

In simple terms, decolonising the social sciences means providing context to the knowledge disseminated and recognising the propensity to uncritically accept a certain sociality as the status quo (Althusser, 1965; Hountondji, 1996). It inspires the expansion of world views beyond the restricted and limiting confines of European knowledge. Take as an example the Industrial Revolution, a key moment in modernity. Classically, the Industrial Revolution is framed as something primarily located in cotton industries in Britain, but the cotton plant is native to India and the technology of weaving and dying cotton was developed in India. Moreover, the cotton that was so central to the revolution was grown in the US and the Caribbean by people from Africa who had been enslaved. The catalyst of the Industrial Revolution was colonialism, enslavement, and Empire. (Bhambra wrote extensively on this, see 2007, 2010, 2016, 2020). In reality, modernity has always been a globalised phenomenon (Dirlik, 2005).

> Activity 2.2
> Pick one of your lectures (anyone). What is the main piece of 'knowledge' in this lecture?
> Do you know how this knowledge was created?
> Can you think about the historical and social context in which this knowledge was created?

Decolonising social sciences is a crucial and exciting *'refounding'* of thinking, knowing, and producing knowledge (Mbembe, 2019). This is not to discredit or invalidate the existing academic work in social sciences, instead, it is to understand

how coloniality may influence various perspectives (Connell, 2006). For this, it must be accepted that "knowledge" is pluralistic and is curated in ways beyond the value-free notion of facts and material realities posited by European Enlightened thinkers.

2. Be active but recognise limitations

Decolonising also involves recognising our own limitations whilst actively seeking ways to de-centralise Enlightened European knowledge from its position as the dominant domain of knowledge production. In other words, it must simply be appreciated that there exist knowledges outside of your own understanding of the world that we may never truly understand. Our own inability to understand this knowledge does not detract from its validity and quality as knowledge; rather it indicates the inherent limitations of sharing knowledge across cultures, languages, and histories.

To decolonise social sciences, it is not enough to add historically marginalised voices to our reading lists. "Adding" these knowledges to the pre-existing knowledge-base is itself an act of colonial oppression because it reaffirms European Enlightened knowledge as hegemonic and ignores the fact that colonial rule immobilised non-European knowledges from their expansions (Mignolo, 2000).

3. Engage with the literature

The good news is that we are not alone in thinking about how to decolonise Social Sciences and there is extensive literature we can leverage on.

Reiter (2020) collects various lessons from analysing ontologies and epistemologies from non-Western societies in Latin America and Africa. Tonda (2012) explains the difficult relationship between Social Sciences and African societies and academia. Bulbeck (1998) critically examines the current issues of Australian society, including topics on ethnicity and *race* from an interdisciplinary perspective.

Baur (2021) offers alternative methodologies in research to overcome power structures in academia. Bhambra (2016) reflects on the impact of feminism and queer theory on Sociology. For ideas on how to incorporate knowledge from the 'South' and understand how these knowledges are marginalised in current Social Sciences, look at de Sousa Santos (2014). Read Bulbeck (1997) to rethink 'feminism' from a broader perspective.

These are only some examples. Reading through this work, you will encounter plenty of bibliographical references. We hope you engage with them.

This workbook showcases and discusses the injustices and inequities within education and in particular the social sciences. General rules of logic dictate that *correlation* cannot be elevated or equated with *causation*. Such rules of logic would argue that establishing causation is a necessary requirement. In an environment where injustices are contested and contentious, and where power is hegemonically held, structural change is often resisted on the basis that evidence arguing for change does not meet the standard for establishing direct causality. It is precisely within this paradigm that this guide is written. As authors, we invite you to take a moment to dwell upon who holds power, who decides upon the type of evidence that validates a claim for injustice and who arbitrates.

In this context, using the work of Leon Moosavi as inspiration, this workbook is one that asks you the decolonising scholar to turn the decolonial gaze upon yourself. To interrogate your own positionality.

3. WHERE DO WE START?

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Starting may feel daunting. Decolonising education requires rethinking and re-engaging with all aspects of our teaching, learning and doing research, and this may lead some of us to feel a sense of hopelessness.

Where to start? Can we work on decolonising our curricula when many aspects of the learning environment have not changed? Can we work on assessments even if we have specific constraints on what to teach? What is the point to work on this, if many of my colleagues do not want to engage?

These are all valid questions, but we should not allow fear or despair to stop us from changing. Our main goal is to move towards a more equal institution (and society), in which all students—no matter their background or ethnicity—enjoy similar academic experiences, feel they do not have to be embarrassed about their experiences and backgrounds, believe they are capable to participate in the process of creating knowledge because their contributions are valid. They are not systematically discriminated against by achieving lower marks despite their capabilities, reducing thus their graduate opportunities. To achieve this goal, we need to start engaging with decolonising practices within our roles and in the spaces we have access to, no matter how minor or small they seem.

We strongly recommend you start by reflecting on your own practice. In what follows, we offer various self-reflection exercises. Take your time to complete these. Sometimes you may feel uncomfortable answering these questions. This is normal. Thinking about ourselves and our practice may feel uncomfortable. You may feel challenged and become defensive. We invite you to get comfortable with the uncomfortable. Talking about these topics can be difficult, but this is why many of us are still avoiding the conversation. Instead, feel the discomfort, but then do it anyway.

After completing these exercises, you can start working on Part II of this workbook. You do not need to engage with the sections in this part sequentially, feel free to jump to whichever aspect you want to start working on first.

Box 3.1: I don't belong in this university; I can just feel it!

"I don't belong in this university; I can just feel it," this is what I told my flatmate in my first year whilst I cried and concluded that Warwick university was not a place for me. At the time, I recall thinking about dropping out; just a few weeks into my bachelor's studies.

Most people associate racism with one traumatic event, or a negative experience but for others, it consumes their entire life. I would say I fall into the latter category. As a young neurodivergent black woman, I have often felt out of place in my life, and university reinforced this feeling. When I started university, I became increasingly aware of different forms of racism, especially its systemic form. As I learned more about the consequences of colonial white supremacist structures, I realised the system was rigged against me. As a language student, I studied how neo-colonialism affects different cultures. The more I learned about the matter, the more enraged I grew. You reach a point where you realise the world has been deceiving you by convincing you that you have the same possibilities as everyone else and that you are failing because you are lazy or a minority. The world does not tell you that there are deeply embedded racist structures that obstruct your achievement. To this, I thought: *how convenient!*

I observed a difference in treatment from my first year and wondered what I was doing wrong; why weren't my teachers fond of me? Why did I feel so uneasy in their presence? Why was it so difficult for me to ask for help? These are the questions I would ask myself daily whilst at university.

We are conscious of our minority status in society due to our personal encounters with racism or the experiences of those around us. This makes us considerably more aware when things do not feel right. In my case, I did not particularly enjoy how I felt at university, and I noticed how my anxiety rose in class, so I believed I would be better off studying alone and attempting to teach myself. Some may read this and think it is an exaggerated reaction to 'feelings,' but I want to emphasise that this is a daily struggle for many minority students. Noticing the disparity in treatment between you and your white colleagues leaves an impression; it informs you that you do not matter.

Completing this project was significant to me as a recent graduate, but it has meant even more to that 18-year-old girl who felt like her only alternative was to give up. This project is for the 19-year-old girl crying in her economics class because she did not want to be the *"unintelligent black girl."* Decolonising the curriculum creates space for people like me who have always felt on the margin. Decolonising means informing these students that we care about them and that their success is just as important as the success of the other students.

The aim is not to begin recognising minority students' lived experiences with white supremacist structures and racism. The goal is to let those in the majority realise these seemingly inconsequential stories are related to many, hence a reality for many. Once these experiences are linked to data, it is clear that a change is required, and it must start immediately. As a minority student, I have decided to advocate for marginalised communities throughout my degree, and I plan to continue doing so in the future; I hope to disrupt the systems that prevent some people from succeeding and simply existing.

In the words of the American activist Angela Davis: *"I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change; I am changing the things I cannot accept".*

3.1 SELF-REFLECTING ON OUR OWN PRACTICE

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When working on the following questions, focus on yourself and not institutional constraints. We are aware they exist and affect our ability of engaging with new practice, but for now, we want to focus on things we can do.

Write down your answers and remember: there are no correct answers. Each of you will answer differently, depending on your own experience.

Question 1: What are your main fears when teaching?

Your answer

Question 2: How do these fears obstacle your ability to make changes?

Your answer

Question 3: Why do you want to overcome these fears?

Your answer

Keep your answers to these questions handy. From time to time, come back here. Check which fears you have overcome, add new ones, change your motivation, and the reasons why you are doing this work.

3.2 WHO ARE YOUR STUDENTS?

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What do you know about your students? Students are not a homogenous group. Not all students hate waking up early for the 9am lecture, eat junk food, or enjoy clubbing until very late on Thursday's nights. When you think about your students as a homogenous group, you are using student stereotypes to create your image about students, and your attitude and teaching practice will follow these stereotypes.

Activity 3.1: What do you know about your students?

• What proportion of your classroom speaks English as a second (or third) language?
• For any of your students, is this the first time living outside their home country?
• Does any student in your classroom work more than 10 hours a week to financially support themselves or their family?
• Is any student in your classroom neuro-divergent?

• Has any student in your classroom (or their families) fled war?
• Do you know if any of your students have parental responsibilities?
• Do you know if any of your students has been victim of domestic abuse?
• Do you know if any of your students has been victim of sexual violence or harassment?
• Do you know if any of your students has been victim of hate crimes?

• Any student in your classroom was told by a school teacher "*you should not go to university, you are not good enough*"?
• Was any student in your classroom bullied at school?
• Does any of your students have at least one parent who has been unemployed for more than 5 years?
• Has any of your students been homeless at any point in their lives?

You may not know the answers to these questions, and we do not want to make you responsible for supporting students with different problems (the university should do this though), but you should be aware that, statistically, it is highly likely you have students with some of these experiences in your classroom. Depending on your own experience, you may or not be able to relate and understand how these experiences affect student engagement with their studies. In any case, by start considering students as a heterogenous group, with different backgrounds and experiences can help reframe your attitude towards students, and update teaching practices.

3.3 …SO… WHERE DO *I* START?

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In Part II, we cover three aspects: Curriculum, Learning Experience, and Assessments. Each of these aspects is very important for the decolonising project, with no one being more important than the other.

As you will have the opportunity to see, there is a lot to do within each aspect, and making changes to all of them at the same time may not even be the best way to approach this. Then, we go back to the question… so, where do *I* start?

The answer will vary for each of us, and it will depend on the topics covered in the module, your role, previous experiences in adapting to new pedagogical practices, own confidence, etc. Here we provide some exercises to help you think about where *YOU* can start.

Exercise 1: Do you recognise yourself with any of the following statements?

    A. I teach a module, but I do not set curriculum or assessments, these are done by someone else.
    B. I just started teaching, and have no time to change the curriculum this year.
    C. I co-teach a module and it will take some time to coordinate curriculum changes with the other lecturers.
    D. I am really scared of changing my curriculum and not be very familiar with *new* material.

If you recognise yourself with statement A, you may want to start reading Section 5: Learning Environment. Even when you are not making decisions on curriculum or assessments, you can work on your own practice, working on dismantling unequal power dynamics in classrooms and other learning environments.

If you recognise yourself more with statements B and C, you can also start reading Section 5: Learning Environment, so you get some ideas on changes that you can put in practice now, even if you have limited time. We strongly recommend you to follow this with Section 4: Curriculum, so you get ideas for next academic year and can start early.

If instead, you recognise yourself with statement D, we realise how difficult can be to go out of our comfort zone. Perhaps starting with Section 6: Assessments, may be a way to start your own process, moving then into Section 5: Learning Environment. Setting assessments can help us to reflect back on the changes we want to make in

our curriculum and teaching practices. From how students engage and perform in assessments, we can learn a lot and reflect on how to make changes to our curriculum and rethink the physical and online environment. We also invite you go back to <u>Section 3.1</u>, and reflect about your fears regarding curriculum.

You did not recognise yourself with any of the statements in Exercise 1? Or you are coming back to this section after working on Exercise 1? Move to Exercise 2.

Exercise 2: Select all the ones that apply:

My curriculum is not the problem, because…

    A. *"I have added non-White authors to the reading lists, my curriculum is decolonised".*
    B. *"I don't want to remove White-authors from my reading list only because they are White."*
    C. *"I teach a very technical subject, this does not apply to me".*
    D. *"I am a non-White lecturer, students already get a different perspective from me".*
    E. *"I only have white students in my module, this is not a problem for me".*

I am happy working on my curriculum, I know what to do, and…

    F. … I am a very popular lecturer, and have no problems in making everybody feel included.
    G. … I only teach very large classrooms, so there is not much I can do regarding the classroom dynamics.
    H. … we need to maintain rigour and credibility, so we should not change assessment methods.

If you selected any of the statements A-E in Exercise 2, we strongly recommend you to start with <u>Section 4: Curriculum</u>. In this section, we explain how decolonising the curriculum is not about replacing one (White) author with another (non-White author), or even just adding material to your reading list. It is about developing critical literacy and engaging with different—usually marginalised—perspectives. No matter the subject you teach, or where you come from, or even who your students are, Section 4 invites you to consider how the accepted canon of knowledge in your subject area was created, how it varied over time and what is missing.

If you chose statements F or G, we invite you to start with <u>Section 5: Learning Environment.</u> Your popularity as a teacher may not necessarily reflect on how students from various backgrounds feel about the module, or the environment. If you teach an optional module, you may not be aware of the reasons why some students may not be selecting your module, and whether there is a systematic bias on who self-select into your classroom. Moreover, if you measure popularity using module evaluations, you may benefit from better evaluations than other colleagues merely

because some characteristics that have little to do with teaching practices (Boring, 2017; Mitchell, 2018; Mengel et al., 2019; Chávez et al. 2020). Of course, you may still be a great educator, in which case you will find easier to engage with Section 5, and just confirm that you are *engaging with all ways of learning*, considering how *power dynamics work in your classroom* and making *diversity the norm*.

If you instead selected statement H, or in general believe that assessments are *value-neutral* and that you have provided students with all opportunities to engage with this, move to Exercise 3.

Exercise 3: The Hidden Curriculum

After many years in academia, we have internalised many rules and ways to work. In many occasions we expect students to comply to these. This falls under the *"hidden curriculum"*. This is, essentially, everything that we expect students to do, even if we haven't taught it directly. This is reflected in many aspects of students' learning experience, including assessments.

What knowledge are you taking for granted in your assessments?

- Do you think all students know what is an *"essay"*?
- You mark the way students express their ideas (e.g., use of first person, passive form, style of English?)?
- If doing presentations, is there a specific language students should/should not use?
- Do you believe that assessment types do not impact student performance and, that all students are able to demonstrate their engagement with the learning outcomes independently of the type of assessment?

If you answer yes to any of these questions, we strongly invite you to engage with Section 6: Assessments. In this section we talk about how some students are disadvantaged by some type of assessments, how assessments contribute to awarding gaps, and some ways to improve assessment literacy, increase variety, and make feedback more accessible to all.

We understand that whichever way you are engaging with this workbook, this may not be simple. There are groups at Warwick that can help you to overcome your fears and share practice, while engaging with a broader group of Warwick academics, beyond your own department. Check Box 3.2 to learn more about the Anti-Racist Training at Warwick.

Box 3.2: Anti-Racism Training at Warwick (by Anil Awesti, Chair of the Race Equality Taskforce at Warwick)

> 'It is my firm belief that UK universities perpetuate institutional racism. This is uncomfortable to acknowledge but all university leaders should do so as a first step towards meaningful change. Too often Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students and staff have been failed. While they may have heard positive words, they have seen little action. That needs to change now.'
>
> (Professor David Richardson, Vice-Chancellor of the University of East Anglia and Chair of the UUK Advisory Group, November 2020)

A number of people across Warwick have been working for many years to increase understandings of racism (see Warwick's Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations, 1984-2011). More recently, a group of staff and students based within WIHEA's 'Anti-racist Pedagogy and Process in Higher Education' Learning Circle have focused specifically on developing and delivering anti-racism staff training across the institution, through initiatives such as the Anti-racist Pedagogy Teaching Forum and the 'Tackling Racial Inequality at Warwick Staff Development Programme' (TRIW).

In particular, the TRIW programme has been carefully designed to help academic and professional service staff better understand the social construction of 'race', the different operations of racism, and the variety of ways racism manifests itself in the HE sector and specifically at Warwick, both in learning and wider university spaces.

In doing so, the approach taken to anti-racism staff training at Warwick is rooted in the principles of anti-racist pedagogy and its significance to all disciplines. Above all, encouraging and facilitating self-reflection amongst staff vis-à-vis their own practice, context, social position and dynamics of power is at the heart of the approach. As Kishimoto (2018) put it,

> 'Anti-racist pedagogy is not about simply incorporating racial content into courses, curriculum, and discipline. It is also about how one teaches, even in courses where race is not the subject matter. It begins with the faculty's awareness and self-reflection of their social position and leads to the application of this analysis not just in their teaching, but also in their discipline, research, and departmental, university, and community work.'

Furthermore, through engaging with this training, staff have been working to learn how to have thoughtful, open and rigorous conversations about racism with a wider variety of people and learning to continue talking and working well together when we disagree, when mistakes are made, and when we have to face our own complicity or help colleagues face theirs. As a result, stronger relationships to further progress anti-racism work have been built which span the institution, reaching across the academic/professional services divide, our differences in lived experience of race and racism, generational and national differences, faculty differences, and more.

There is much yet to do – new struggles and campaigns will be needed, and those already in progress will need a better hearing – but the work that has been done so far at Warwick increases all of our capacity to respond well and make the many changes required.

Reference:

Kishimoto, K. (2018). Anti-racist pedagogy: from faculty's self-reflection to organizing within and beyond the classroom. Race, Ethnicity and Education, vol.21, issue 4, pp.540-554

PART II

4. CURRICULUM

Video: Why is my curriculum White? UCL

Scan me to see the link to the video on your device

❖

One of the most functionally important roles a university plays is to act as a sight of learning. The material covered in our curricula is the most straightforward and direct way in which students learn, so it is not surprising that students are challenging our curricula. See for example the NUS Black Students Campaign "*Why is my curriculum White?*".

By now, we hope it is clear that decolonising requires an appreciation of different ways of thinking and engaging with knowledge and for this reason how to decolonise the curriculum cannot be prescriptive. In this section, we propose some ways to start thinking about this, with the objective that you get a better grasp of what is going on and can find applications in your own practice but let us start reiterating what we mean by decolonising our curriculum.

4.1 DECOLONISING THE CURRICULUM IS NOT…

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We have already covered what decolonising is not in <u>Section 1</u> but let us reiterate these points in reference to the curriculum:

❖ Decolonising our curriculum does not mean *censorship* of any kind.
❖ Decolonising our curriculum is not a *tedious* and *overly sensitive* agenda.
❖ Decolonising our curriculum is not a mirroring of the historic statue removal movement we've seen gain momentum in recent years (Peacock, 2021).
❖ Decolonising our curriculum is not discarding and devaluing important classical thinkers and *tokenistically* replacing them with a Black academic.
❖ Decolonising our curriculum is not removing any '*slightly problematic*' person from our curriculum and replacing them with a much less qualified theorist.

Decolonising the curriculum is more about teaching the whole truth. Decolonising the curriculum is about deconstructing the myth that colonialism is entirely a (non)-issue of the past that has no contemporary relevancy. Decolonising our curricula means identifying and amending the ways in which the material taught in Social Sciences at Warwick, structurally reproduces colonial hierarchies and inequalities. Decolonising Social Sciences curriculum at Warwick will be an asset and not a hindrance to our academic integrity.

The most important aspect to consider is that we cannot start decolonising the curriculum without understanding what colonialism and coloniality mean and their broad impact on our knowledge. We hope that Section 2 contributed to enhancing this understanding (we also recommend reading Mignolo (2017) "*Coloniality is Far from Over, and So Must Be Decoloniality*").

Activity 4.1: Colonialism in your modules

Think about one of the modules you teach at Warwick (whether you designed the module, or you just teach it).
As an expert of the topics covered in this module, what is your understanding of the effects of colonialism on the society or social phenomenon studied in this module?
How do you reflect on this in the curriculum?

4.2 HOW TO DECOLONISE SOCIAL SCIENCES CURRICULA AT WARWICK

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Decolonising the Social Sciences curricula means engaging with teaching material in a way that acknowledges the inescapable continuation of the impacts of colonisation that are embedded in our current society.

We propose three ways to start the process of decolonising your curriculum:

1. Include resources that highlight how coloniality affects the social dynamics in the context of the topic being taught, including knowledge that has been marginalised or dismissed as a result of colonialism.

2. Embed questions that encourage appropriate discussion of colonial legacy in the context of the topic being taught.

3. Create assessment opportunities that facilitate student engagement with the relationship between colonialism and the topic being taught.

We are aware that the application of these points will be highly dependent on what you are teaching, and it may not be possible to include each of these steps in every teaching week of every module. We however believe that, if these steps are taken up where appropriate, we can make a noticeable difference and it would be a good starting point.

1. Resources on the effects of coloniality on social dynamics

From Economics to Law and everything in between, the Social Sciences teach about the palpable social relations in our contemporary society today. So, decolonising the curricula will ultimately mean continuing to do this but more honestly. To achieve this, we need to go beyond *diversifying reading lists* and embedding decolonisation in all aspects of our curriculum.[7] We can look at what academics around the world are doing to get some inspiration on how to start. Here are some examples.

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[7] We are not arguing that diversifying reading lists is not important, as in fact, reading lists contribute to reflect particular perspectives and knowledge (Bird and Pitman, 2020) and it is relevant to improve the learning experience for students from under-represented groups. However, tokenistic gestures of adding Black/ethnic minority authors to the current lists, without truly understanding the importance of their contributions is not decolonising and does not address racism (Ono-George, 2019). We believe that reflecting on the coloniality of our current curricula will be more effective and will bring more meaningful representation to our classrooms.

Sociology: Alatas (2011) explains how social theory is taught from a Eurocentric perspective. To overcome this, the author promotes non-Western thinkers in their teaching, but also critically deals with Western social thinkers such as Marx, Weber and Durkheim.

Political Sciences: Shilliam (2021) explains how Aristotle '*the father of Political Sciences*' can be studied from a more critical, less Eurocentric perspective. Shilliam's book provides ideas on how to engage with a more decolonial critical analysis of Political Theory and Behaviour, Comparative Politics, and International Relations.

➡ We do not need to stop teaching those '*key*' authors in our discipline, but we do need to be more critical of their contribution and the historical context in which it developed.

Changing our perspective: In the disciplines of Education and Sociology, Eurocentric practices have influenced the literature around childhood lives and the sociology of childhood. Kaneva et al. (2020) reflect on their efforts to decolonise Childhood Studies curricula, by offering various case studies of curricula and classroom practice that reposition the idea away from a 'normal childhood' by looking at experiences of *global* childhoods.

➡ Rethinking at the experience and socialisation of different groups around the world, and how some experiences are considered 'normal' by othering anything that does not fit this normality.

Race and colonialism in our teaching: Choat (2020) shows the changes to a Year 2 Political Theory module with a detailed description of the changes made week-by-week. These changes were based on the analysis of what is usually included in the curriculum for similar modules in UK universities. The findings show that most of the curriculum in UK universities has no reference to race, colonialism, and/or contains readings from non-White thinkers, despite the important role played by racial prejudices in shaping the arguments of many of these 'key' political thinkers.

Langdon (2013) provides various reflective points on how development studies "*needs to become more conscious of how it frames itself in relation to its current historic ties to colonial legacies*" (p. 384), using a theoretical framework the author helps us understand how development studies has been connected to decolonisation efforts since its birth, and therefore to decolonise Development studies is to recognise its relationship with colonial history.

➡ Race and colonialism cannot be considered a concept to add to our curriculum. European colonial expansionism influenced the development of 'modernity', and many of the 'key' ideas in the Social Sciences were developed to justify colonialism and its institutions.

2. Embedding discussion on colonial legacy

Critical thinking is essential for learning and a standard educational goal, and it is very important for student engagement with the curriculum. Questioning how ideas and assumptions are created, trying to understand whether arguments and findings represent the whole picture or are excluding important aspects, reflect on our decision-making process and how our beliefs and background influence it, are all important aspects of the learning process. Lecturers should be able to help students to develop these skills and create spaces to discuss how colonial legacy affects the topics under study. We show you some ideas for various disciplines in Social Sciences.

Business: Thinking about business practices, we can include discussions on different management practices developed in African communities. The *Journal of Management History* dedicated a special issue to [Black Business and Management History](#). In this, Osiri (2021) explains how the Igbo[8] management philosophy, and the related institutions, created an economic system that differs from the one in the Western world. There is indeed an ongoing debate on *universal* management practices and their applications to local realities that cannot be ignored (see Ibeh et al. 2022). Adding questions and creating spaces to discuss the different systems can only enrich the student experience and expand knowledge and critical engagement with business practices.

Economics: In Economics, the role of colonialism in economic development is mostly neglected. The study of Britain as a successful economy rarely acknowledges the impact of the extraction of labour and natural resources from colonies as a success factor. In section 2 we already mentioned the (neglected) role of imperialism and colonisation in the British industrial revolution. Slavery was a form of organising labour rarely addressed in Economics, but Naidu (2020) uses economic reasoning and modelling to help to think about slavery and the colonial legacy in the US.

Political Sciences: The discipline can also reflect on the role of colonialism in British political history. For instance, British military dominance and the victories in World War 1 and 2 relied on financial, human, and natural resources from all parts of the Empire (Costello, 2015; Jackson 2006). The economic drain caused by the war caused serious poverty and economic crises in colonised territories. Policies to stop civilian starvation during the war were however focused on the British Isles, while in India, British officials insisted on allowing rice to be exported following 'free-market' laws, and Churchill blamed Indians for the high death toll for *"breeding like rabbits"* (Immerwahr, 2022).

Applied Social Sciences and Policy: Topics related to immigration, employment and current policymaking can also benefit from a better understanding of the history of

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[8] Igbos are one of the largest single ethnic groups in Africa, with large settlements in south-eastern Nigeria, but large ethnic Igbo populations are also found in Cameroon, Gabon, and Equatorial Guinea.

British Imperialism. The *Windrush scandal* is an outcome of the way in which British economic history is (not) studied in the UK. The Caribbean people who arrived in the UK between 1948 and 1973 were not *illegal immigrants* from other nations, but they were lawful migrants moving within the British Empire (JCWI, n.d). The success of the UK National Health Service (NHS) would not have been possible without the workforce of the Windrush generation and more in general people from various parts of the Empire (see NHS stories by Golding, 2019; Bonner, 2020; Naqvi, 2020, Sidhu, 2022).

3. Creating assessment opportunities to engage with these topics

Students really care about assessments. The assessments we set, tend to determine what they study and how they engage with the curriculum. Therefore, it is important that we set assessments that allow and require students to engage with topics of how colonialism, coloniality and race affect the discipline/topics they are studying. This will not only help to increase interest in these topics but also allow to create opportunities for connections to some students' experiences.

Godsell (2021) for instance illustrates how to use play roles to teach History to a group of Social Sciences students in South Africa. The course covered the French revolution (which may not be a very interesting topic for African students). Students work on creating a play focusing on a historical moment in the French or Haitian revolution. Students worked collaboratively, engaged with primary sources, and discussed details of the revolution. This assessment feels more personal to students, allows for agency as students work on what goes in the play, and shifts the power dynamics of the assessment as they decide how to best present their work. More in general, the use of plays and scenarios in assessments can help to bring students interpretations of topics in many subjects. Soliani (2020) and Morroni and Soliani (2022) use these in Economics.

Activity 4.2: (Adapted from Let's Talk! Discussing Race, Racism and Other Difficult Topics with Students)

Select the statement that best describes how you feel:
• I would rather not talk about race/racism.
• I am very uncomfortable talking about race/racism.
• I am sometimes uncomfortable talking about race/racism.
• I am comfortable talking about race/racism.

Why do you feel that way?

Try completing the following sentences:
• The hard part of talking about race/racism is …
• The beneficial part of talking about race/racism is …

In Section 6, we talk in more detail about pedagogical practices in decolonising assessments.

We may find discussing some of these topics on colonialism and race uncomfortable for various reasons. However, as educators, we need to learn to deal with and manage discomfort and, in many cases, facilitate these conversations among students. The Teaching Tolerance Guide can help you to overcome these scenarios and confidently set assessments that engage students with topics surrounding the decolonial agenda.[9] You may also find it useful to join the "Anti-Racist Pedagogy Teaching Forum" at Warwick, open to all Warwick staff to talk about various topics on Anti-Racist pedagogical practices, including curriculum and difficult conversations.

Let's Talk!
Teaching Tolerance Guide
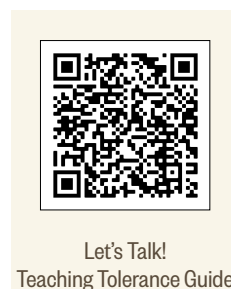
The work here presented is not fully representative of the whole literature and examples available. We also do not aim to tell academics what should be included on their reading lists. We do wish though that subject experts engage with a curriculum review with a new critical perspective that allows for widening the scope of what should be included when teaching the subject.

The good news is that implementing the steps detailed in this section is the *easy* part. The consequences of colonialism are so widespread and greatly embedded throughout the realities of our current society, that there is barely a single feature of our society today that is not intertwined with the remnants of our colonial past. Consequently, beginning to decolonise our social science curriculums by overtly acknowledging colonial relevance and opening the opportunity for bias questioning can be implemented seamlessly alongside the material we already teach. This makes the process of practically committing to the decolonial agenda usefully un-tasking! Box 4.1 shows two examples of applying these principles to two Social Sciences module at Warwick.

The harder part is acknowledging that there are, in fact, ongoing negative consequences of colonialism in our contemporary reality and that the current material taught in our Social Science departments here at Warwick are continuing to reproduce harmful colonial beliefs, hierarchies and inequalities.

Other resources on how to start decolonising the curriculum:

- Arshad, R. (2021) Decolonising the curriculum – how do I get started? Times Higher Education, 14 September, Available at: https://www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/decolonising-curriculum-how-do-i-get-started Accessed on 27 August 2022.

- Shay, S. (2016) Decolonising the curriculum: it's time for a strategy. The Conversation, 13 June, https://theconversation.com/decolonising-the-curriculum-its-time-for-a-strategy-60598 Accessed on 27 August 2022.

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9 Let's Talk! Discussing Race, Racism and Other Difficult Topics with Students. A Teaching Tolerance Guide, A Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center. Available at: https://www.learningforjustice.org/sites/default/files/general/TT%20Difficult%20Conversations%20web.pdf Last Accessed 6 September 2022.

- Charles, E. (2019) Decolonizing the curriculum. Insights 32 (1), p. 24. ISSN 2048-7754. Available at: https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/id/eprint/28953/ Accessed on 27 August 2022.

Box 4.1: Decolonising modules at Warwick

The Faculty of Social Sciences claims to 'shape humanity's next steps with social awareness, legal insight and business ability'- which is a noble yet achievable. However, at present, this claim may seem unfounded: students may complete their course of study at Warwick with minacious deficiencies in their social awareness regarding the contemporary relevance of colonialism. We present here the analysis of two modules for the Social Sciences and how this we can apply the steps described in this Section, to update the curriculum.

We selected the modules based on our student experience (strongly influenced by the degree we are studying). We do not believe these are the "worst" or "best" or the only modules that need changing. In fact—and unfortunately—we found that across the Social Sciences departments at Warwick, the vast majority of modules fail to address the relevance of colonialism in the context of the material being taught.

Political Sociology

Political Sociology is the study of the interaction of politics and society. The module aims students to understand politics, sociologically, by tackling some fundamental political questions from examining the very nature of 'political power', to defining 'nationalism' in the 21st century. However, there is not a single overt reference to colonialism at any point in the teaching material. This does not need to be the case.

For example, the week on "Political Power and other forms of power" focusses on examining the 'primacy of political power' alongside, and in comparison, to other power relations in society. Gianfranco Poggi's book "Forms of Power" (2003) is the main reading for this topic.

Discussing political power and other forms of power in our society could provide an excellent opportunity to begin de-monopolising the colonial biases we have been socialised into, and overtly address how colonialism menacingly continues to act as a force of power across societies today. However, there is no mention of colonialism— one of the world's most significant force and form of power—.

… cont…

... cont ... Box 4.1: Decolonising modules at Warwick

There are readings that can be considered alongside Poggi, for example:

• Myers, G.A., 2003. Verandahs of power: colonialism and space in urban Africa. Syracuse University Press
• Lange, M., 2009. Lineages of despotism and development: British colonialism and state power. University of Chicago Press.
• Olivier, B., 2019. Decolonisation, identity, neo-colonialism and power. Phronimon, 20(1), pp.1-18.

Small groups discussion could discuss Poggi's contribution in the context of one of the most remarkable form of power: colonialism; and this can also be part of summative assessments.

These changes do not alter the material currently being taught, but we argue that they improve it. Addressing colonialism as a form of power in this context adds academic and social integrity to the teaching and learning experience. It allows for the questioning of colonialism and its current impact as a form of power, and opens the opportunity for students to engage with colonial relevance in an academic setting, which will bring the Faculty for Social Sciences at Warwick closer to the aim of 'shaping humanities next steps with social awareness'.

Legal Theory

Several modules at Warwick Law School are aimed at educating students about colonialism and coloniality, along with studying neo-colonialism and decolonisation.

Legal Theory is a core module for Year 1 students studying Law at Warwick. Within the second half of this module, students had the opportunity to engage with post-colonial legal theory as part of the assessment methods. This part of the module was assessed with an essay, where students had to analyse a protest through the lens of postcolonial legal theory.

Since the topic was broad, students had the opportunity to research several aspects of protests linked to postcolonialism. They read literature about anti-colonial movements in the global south and decolonial praxis. Seminars enabled students to introspect and identify their personal relationship with colonialism. Students were also enabled to introduce their own research in discussions. Addressing colonialism helped students identify colonial structures within legal systems. Personally, I understood the impact of colonial law in nations once colonised and read a wide range of scholars that presented several perspectives on postcolonial, anti-colonial and decolonial ideas.

5. LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

"Teaching is a performative act. And it is that aspect of our work that offers the space for change, invention, spontaneous shifts, that can serve as a catalyst drawing out the unique elements in each classroom... Teachers are not performers in the traditional sense... Yet it is meant to serve as a catalyst that calls everyone to become more and more engaged, to become active participants in learning."

bell hooks (1994) "Teaching to Transgress" p. 11

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The learning environment is the space in which students learn. These include physical spaces (classrooms, libraries, university facilities, cultural and sports venues, etc), and virtual spaces (Moodle, and other virtual platforms used to communicate such as Teams, Warwick app, etc). They do not just concern the student/lecturer relationship, but it also includes management and administrative processes, and all the services available to support the student experience while at Warwick.

Classrooms are radical spaces for learning and promote critical thinking (hooks, 1994). Traditional classroom structures are not free of the societal dynamics of power that foster inequality and limit critical thinking. Learning environments are embedded with assumptions, traditions, established practices and canonical knowledge structures that may intensify power dynamics and inequality. In these learning environments, knowledge is presented as something static that students must acquire even when they do not see themselves either represented or identified with the scenarios provided. In this context, societal inequalities are replicated, disadvantaging students from black, ethnic-minority backgrounds, and other under-represented groups.

The process of decolonising the learning environment aims to uncover and address the existing biases within our classrooms and in other university spaces that play a role in how students learn. In this section, we look at why the learning environment needs to be decolonised. We then provide some ideas on how to start decolonising your own practice.

5.1 WHY TO DECOLONISE THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

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The learning environment directly influences students' achievement and experience. Student performance and experience are not homogeneous across different demographic groups, although universities do not necessarily appreciate or understand the extent of the differential outcomes (Mountford-Zimdars et al., 2015; Reay, 2018).

As we explain in more detail in Section 6, differences in attainment by ethnicity are not explained by other variables (e.g., entry qualifications). Richardson (2018) suggests that discriminatory pedagogical practices in teaching (and assessment) and exclusionary attitudes from the teacher and other students can affect performance. Micro-aggressions, lack of safe spaces, and minority status are all factors that affect students and impact their performance. Universities have the legal duty to act on these findings (Pilkington, 2018), although there is still a tendency to try to justify these gaps rather than address these.

We can observe these gaps at Warwick too. For instance, using the Warwick Attainment Summary Dashboard, For Social Sciences, we observe a 'Good Honours' awarding gap of 4.3% between White and non-White students in 2020/21. This gap widens to 9.4% when considering 'First Class Degrees'. Figure 1 compares 'good honours' and 'first' degrees across the various faculties at Warwick. Gaps in the various faculties seem to be converging, although the direction of travel has differed. The Faculty of Science, Engineering and Medicine seem to have done the most progress since 2013/14 for 'good degrees' (less for 'first'), while Social Sciences and Arts have been quite stable.
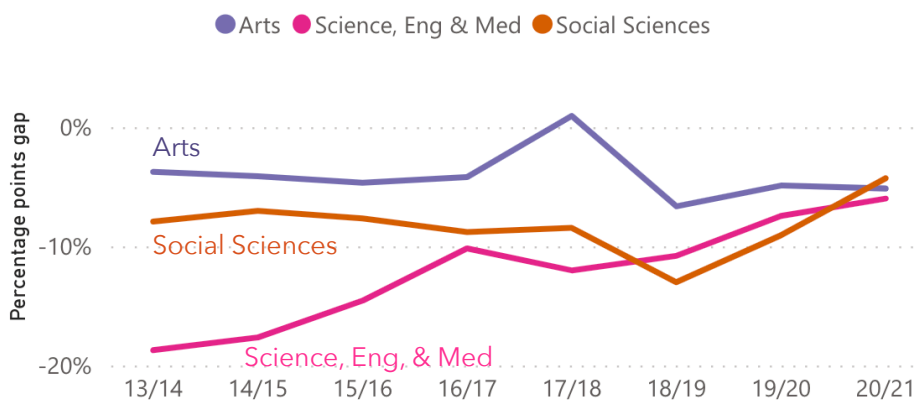
Warwick Attainment Dashboard (needs login)
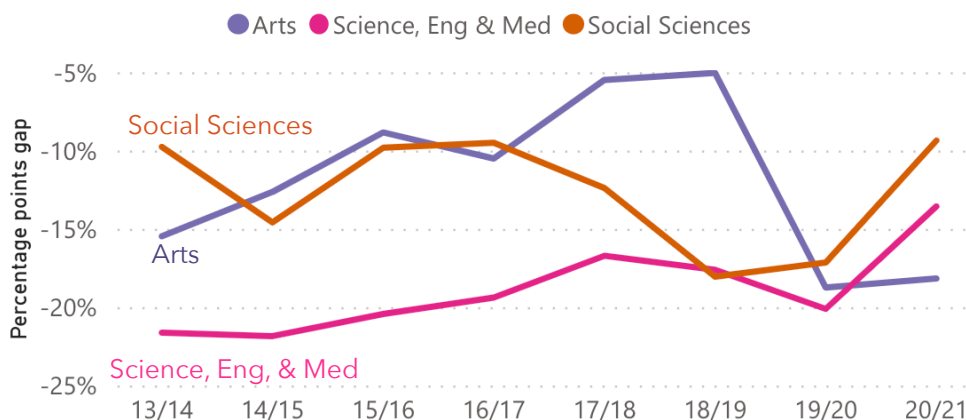
> **Activity 5.1: Awarding Gaps**
>
> Use the Attainment Summary Dashboard and find the significant awarding gaps in your department.
>
> Think of ways how your module contributes towards these gaps.

FIGURE 4.1: AWARDING GAPS AT WARWICK

(a) 'Good Honours' Awarding Gap

(b) 'First-Class' Awarding Gap

Source: Warwick Attainment Dashboard

Percentage points gaps between non-White students receiving at least an Upper Second Class degree (Figure a) or a First Class Honours Degree (Figure b) compared to White students.

A more detailed analysis by demographic groups reveals however important differences, for example, the *'First Class Degree'* gap between Black and White students in Social Sciences is -18.2% in 2020/21.

Many aspects affect student performance (and we look at how assessments may affect awarding gaps at Warwick in Section 6), but there is no doubt that the learning environment plays a key role. From a young age, we can see attainment gaps which are not explained by pupils' knowledge but are directly linked to structural inequalities that foster discrimination (Gillborn, 2006; Crawford et al. 2017).

Within the educational system, students from minority ethnic groups face overtly or hidden racism and discrimination. Moorman et al. (2021) provide a collection of auto-ethnographic studies that show the authors' experiences with racism and discrimination through the US educational system. It is not difficult to find similar experiences in the UK. Coard (1971) in his not uncontroversial book *"How the West Indian Child Is Made Educationally Sub-normal in the British School System: The Scandal of the Black Child in Schools in Britain"* highlights the institutional racism and inequality in the UK educational system in the 1960s and 1970s.[10] In more recent times, Black children in the UK are still disproportionately excluded from school and achieve lower marks (Firth, 2005).

Discrimination and racism episodes are not rare in universities, negatively affecting students who are victims of these acts. In Box 5.1 we explain how racism and discrimination affect students' sense of belonging, and their university experience more in general, including examples from Warwick students. These adverse experiences are also reflected in their attainment (Osterman, 2000; Anh and Davies, 2020, Smith and Bath, 2006; Arday et al., 2021). Decolonising the learning environment can contribute to improving students' university experience which in turn will reflect in better attainment and performance.

Racism and Higher Education

In conversation with
Dr Anil Awesti and Dr Meleisa Ono-George
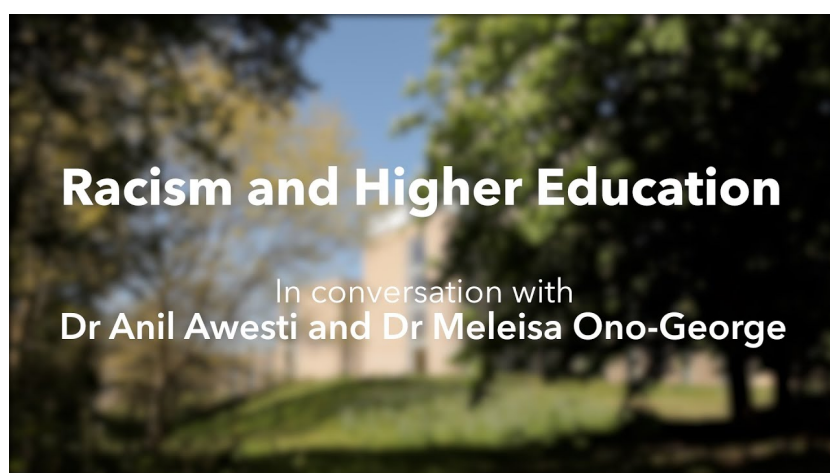
Scan me to see the link to the video on your device

Video: Racism and Higher Education by Dr Anil Awesti and Dr Meleisa Ono-George

As a member of faculty and part of the University of Warwick, we must redesign the learning environment so that it becomes a decolonial space that accepts and cultivates underrepresented students, makes them feel more at home at University, offers them a secure environment to exhibit their full academic potential, ultimately creating space for all forms of '*excellence*'.

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[10] Read the author's article "Why I wrote the 'ESN book'(5 Feb 2005) on the Guardian Available at
https://www.theguardian.com/education/2005/feb/05/schools.uk

Box 5.1: Racism, Discrimination and Sense of Belonging

The educational experience is not homogenous across different groups. Unfortunately, discrimination and racism are not isolated episodes. They have a deep impact on students' engagement with their studies and their experience at university.

Warwick students have raised their voices regarding racism and discrimination. In the "Warwick Speak Out" 2018 Report we can read about these experiences in the classroom, with the lecturers, and classmates, and in various other university settings. Some examples:

> "[A] tutor **read out the n-word** and then proceeded to take up the seminar time explaining why **he felt he was able to use this word.** His reasoning was that during the time the poem was written, people were happier to use/say the n-word and that **today we are too PC and touchy about using such language.** I was disgusted by this and **felt very uncomfortable, especially being the only POC in the room**. ..." (p. 6)

> One student explained that she was once told by a flat mate: "you should be grateful for slavery, it's the reason why you are here" (p. 9)

> "[At] a doctor's appointment at the Health Centre last week I was asked "where are you really from?" I said London. The doctor gave me a deadpanned expression, "I mean, **where are you really from?**" I knew what she was asking but I didn't see how it had anything to do with diagnosing a common cold." (p. 7)

Racism and discrimination have a deep impact on student's *sense of belonging* to the university. Sense of belonging is a human emotional need to be part of a group, and feel connected and accepted by this group. Research finds that students from ethnic and religious minority groups have less sense of belonging to the institution than their White counterparts (Cureton and Gravestock, 2019; Stevenson, 2013). This impacts students' general sense of well-being and mental health as reflected by Warwick students (examples from the same report):

> "I experienced racism in my flat ...it got to the point where I didn't want to go in to the kitchen, I was not eating and I got ill." (p. 9)

> "Since that time that experience stayed with me. Not just in that seminar, but others, **I began talking less and experienced more anxiety** about the way others saw me and the lack of support in the room on that day. At Warwick I found that although the courses were enjoyable, you can't escape the privilege and entitlement that comes from the white students who claim "free speech"." (p. 10)

In recent years, Black and under-represented students have led many campaigns raising awareness on these matters. They have shown how institutional conditions give rise to these racist and discriminatory incidents. The Warwick student newspaper "The Boar" has on various occasions investigated cases of racism and discrimination at Warwick. Some examples:

- Short hand stories: "I am afraid" by Ellie McArthur
- Race bias found among postgraduate students by Praise Ovine
- A history of discrimination at Warwick, 22 Mar 2019

...cont... Box 5.1: Racism, Discrimination and Sense of Belonging

If we want to tackle racism and discrimination in universities in a meaningful way, we must listen to what students have to say, and how to create conditions that foster their sense of belonging at Warwick. The following are examples of student groups and student-led campaigns at Warwick that promote inclusiveness and an anti-racist university environment:

✓ *Warwick Anti-Racist Society*: society that actively challenges racism in society at large and inside the university and its student body. They run several anti-racism campaigns, including 'Warwick Speak Out' and 'Forgotten Black Pioneers'.

✓ The *Black Liberation Project* (BLP) is an association that strives to enhance the educational experience of black students by transmitting information and offering them support throughout their studies.

✓ The student group known as *Globalize Warwick* works to increase cultural diversity on campus.

✓ The *Hidden Histories* project is an endeavour that is working toward the goal of exploring and retrieving intentionally erased accounts of oppression and resistance in the mainstream curriculum.

✓ The *Liberate My Module* campaign aims to provide students at the University of Warwick a substantial voice in the development and presentation of their academic modules.

✓ *Ethnic Minorities at Warwick* is a community that promotes diversity and inclusiveness on campus while providing support for the liberation of cultural traditions.

✓ In a similar vein, the *Warwick Decolonise Project* is an initiative led by students that are working toward the establishment of a decolonized curriculum and anti-racist pedagogy at Warwick.

References:

Cureton, D., & Gravestock, P. (2019). We Belong: differential sense of belonging and its meaning for different ethnicity groups in higher education. *Compass: Journal of Learning and Teaching, 12*(1). doi:https://doi.org/10.21100/compass.v12i1.942;

Stevenson, J. (2013) Discourses of inclusion and exclusion: Religious students in UK higher education. Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning, Volume 14, Number 3, 1 January 2013, pp. 27-43(17). Open University, https://doi.org/10.5456/WPLL.14.3.27

5.2 WHAT TO DO?

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Learning environments are key to helping students develop sense of belonging and foster engagement. What we teach, how we teach, how we engage students, and how with communicate with them, are all aspects that can contribute to creating non-discriminatory spaces and reducing racial inequalities. When our curriculum does not reflect on the shortcomings of knowledge canons that are not reflective of the multiple and diverse history and experiences but considers the narrow experience of the minority of the world population as 'universal', *'what we teach'* contributes to embedding racial and ethnical inequalities (Arday, Bellluigi and Thomas, 2021) as this may deny Black and ethnic minority students their identity and history (Leonardo, 2016). In Section 4, we discuss the problems of a Western curriculum that does not reflect the diverse histories and experiences within our society. In this section, we focus on other aspects of the learning environment.

When rethinking learning environments, we can:

1. Engage in reflexive teaching practice

2. Engage with all ways of learning

3. Think about the power dynamics in our classrooms and use pedagogies to undo these

4. Make diversity the norm

1. Reflexive teaching practice

Engaging in reflection and observation of our teaching practices, contribute to informing what we are doing and thinking about new ways to do it. When designing the learning environment, we need to think about how power manifests. *Who speaks? Who listens? And why?* Should become any educator's focus of attention (hooks, 1994). To achieve this, as educators, we need to engage with a deep *self-reflexive* analysis of our own teaching practices. This requires honestly observing our words, actions and decisions and reflecting on how these may affect us, our work, and those around us, including students. Table 5.1 shows some questions to engage in self-reflexivity in your own practice. These are just some ideas for you to start, we are sure you can add more.

TABLE 5.1: SELF-REFLEXIVE ANALYSIS ON YOUR TEACHING

Macro-questions	Follow-ups
Was my lesson effective?	• Why (not)? • How can it be improved?
What were my expectations?	• What were the expectations about my own delivery? • What expectations I had about students? • Were these expectations realistic? • Did I communicate these expectations to the students?
Which students were more engaged?	• Do you feel students were comfortable asking questions? Which students asked most questions? • Is there any similar pattern among those students? • Are they from similar demographic background?
Did some students struggle with the lecture?	• Were students comfortable letting me know they did not understand something? • Which students were more comfortable in communicating their lack of understanding? • How did I help those students struggling?
If I were to do this lesson again, what would I change?	• Who will benefit from these changes? • How would these changes affect student engagement?

2. Variety of ways to learn

To undo power relations within our classroom and learning environments, we need to consider that humans learn in a variety of ways. Not only we all have different approaches to learning, but our previous experiences affect how we learn. Students come to university with very diverse learning experiences (including experiences of discrimination and racism in previous institutions).

Activity 5.1: Reflecting on how you learn

Think about the last time you learnt something new (not related to your research or academic expertise, e.g. a new language, a new sport, a new hobby).
Why did you decide to learn this new skill? How did your previous experience affect the way you learn this skill? What helped?
Was there any aspect that your coursemates found easier than you did (or vice versa)?
What can you learn from this experience that can be applied on your own teaching?

At Warwick, various groups are working on *inclusive* pedagogies and practices. More in general, there are various repositories of 'good practice', aiming to support lecturers' efforts to create more participative, student-centred learning environments. The following are just some examples:

- [Inclusivity – Resources at Warwick](#)
  The Academic Development Centre offers various resources on how to practice *Inclusivity* at Warwick

- [Economics for All](#) (Paredes Fuentes et al., 2020)
  7 action points for departments of Economics to create more inclusive environment for women. This report focuses on gender and it is written for Economics departments, but there is a lot that can be used more broadly.

- [Global Classrooms in Higher Education](#) (Warwick-Monash Alliance)
  This is a hub where staff and students at Monash and Warwick have shared pedagogies, resources, ideas, and experiences to be used by staff as an internationalisation resource to inspire new pedagogical practice

- [A Guide to Authentic E-Learning](#) (Herrinton et al. 2010)
  This book offers an overview of *authentic* learning supported, enabled and productively partnered with *e-learning*

- [Antiracist Pedagogy](#) (Wheaton College, US)
  Professor Gabriela Torres offers practical steps on how to become and anti-racist educator.

| Inclusivity Resources at Warwick | Economics for All Paredes Fuentes et al. | Global Classrooms in HE Warwick-Monash | A Guide to Authentic E-Learning | Anti-Racist Pedagogy Wheaton College, US |

We hope you spend some time looking through these resources. Whichever tool you use, it is important to first understand how power dynamics work in your classroom.

3. Pedagogies to undo power imbalances

Decolonising efforts should aim to reverse power dynamics in learning environments. Rethinking classroom power dynamics does not mean losing the respect of students. On the contrary, it means creating a learning environment based on respect and where all participants feel appreciated.

You should also be aware of power dynamics among students. Across disciplines, male students tend to raise their hand more often when the lecturer asks open questions but also interrupt more often both the lecturer (especially if female) and other students. When looking at differences across race, White students tend to participate more than Black students (Howard et al., 2006) and under-represented groups more in general (Eboka, 2019). These patterns reflect societal inequalities and learning environments can contribute to replicating them.

Pedagogical interventions aiming to decolonise learning environments should promote critical dialogue, reflexivity and political awareness (Singh, 2016). Various educators are working on designing decolonial pedagogical interventions, and we review a few of these.

Critical dialogue is a *problem-posing* discussion constructed to focus on analysing the problem from different perspectives. Through critical dialogue students learn from each other and learn to value others' experiences. Adriance (1982) uses critical dialogue in teaching *Introductory Sociology*, Odutayo and Yusuf (2020) analyse the effects of using critical dialogue with *Economics* students, Alrø and Johnsen-Høines (2010) explain the benefits critical dialogue in teaching *Mathematics*, Hilton (2013) shows how to implement critical dialogue in *online environments*. All these authors emphasise the benefits for students in terms of student performance and engagement. Critical dialogue provides a strong scaffold for reflexive thinking. It helps students consider events from many angles and perspectives and understand how their understanding is affected by their own experiences and background.

Box 5.2: Who is a *"good"* student?

Think about 'the perfect' student you wish to have in your class. Get some paper and a pen/pencil.

Draw this student (if you are in the mood, use colour too). Please do not skip this step. It is very important. Only you can see your drawing. We need YOU to be able to see your drawing.

Look at your drawing. What do you see?

- ❖ What is the gender of the student?
- ❖ What is the (implicit) ethnicity? If you find your student has '*no ethnicity*' look at the drawing again.
- ❖ Who does the student look like? Is this a current/past student in your class? A friend of yours? Your child? You?

Stereotypes and past experiences not only shape your perception of who is a good student, but this is also likely to influence your behaviour and interaction with different groups of students.

What you can do? Draw a new picture. This time, draw many students. All different and think of them as having different personalities. Some quiet, some talkative, some smiling, and some with many thoughts in their heads. Think of each of them as a good student. You have a classroom full of human beings with different backgrounds and experiences willing to engage in the process of learning with you.

Keep this second drawing handy. Look at it every time you are preparing for teaching. Think about how to engage each of them!

A note to make: when asking students to bring their own perspectives do not to assume any form of '*representation*'. Students from under-represented groups have experiences of being treated as *representative* of the histories, experiences or opinions of a particular group, and tasked with '*educating*' the rest of the classroom on those topics. See for example Blackwell (2010) on how poorly designed anti-racist pedagogies can negatively impact Black students. This however does not happen only when talking about race but in a variety of contexts. For instance, in Economics, Politics or Development Studies, is very common that students from the Global South are asked to explain issues on development from their country's point of view.

Reflexive pedagogical approaches aim to find strategies to question our own thought processes, assumptions, habitual behaviours and potential biases and prejudices, and how this affects other individuals, and the social structures in which these take place. To allow this, we need to provide questions for students to analyse and think about a problem. To think about meaningful convergences between the topic we are studying and students' knowledge and experience. Duarte and Fitzgerald (2006) provide some principles to use a reflexive approach when teaching *Organisation Studies*. Garner and Vanderlinden (2011) show examples in *Economics and Anthropology*.

How we teach is important but there are many other aspects that affect student engagement even before they join your classroom. Maybe not many academics pay attention to **course descriptions** (when was the last time you updated yours?), and for any given module, these tend to look very similar across different universities. Chavez (2021) shows how she changed the course description in her '*Creative Writing*' Workshop from a traditional workshop model to descriptors that empower the participants to believe in their writing skills. More in general, Chavez shows us how to *decolonise the creative classroom*, with important lessons not just for those working on creative writing, but for all aiming to make a change.

Other examples: Kerr (2014) uses self-reflexive practices in *adult teacher education* in Canada. Hlatshwayo et al. (2020) show *changes in the curricula,* as a dialectical and inclusive tool, enable the participation and contribution of a variety of voices in a South African context. Langdon and Agyeyomah (2014) use *experiential learning* in teaching Developing Studies to ask critical, reflective questions about power relations. Attas (2019) reflects on their journey of decolonising a course on Popular Music Analysis and provides a list of *strategies to start decolonising your pedagogy.* There is also a lot to learn from de Carvhalo et al. (2016) on the *music curriculum* and pedagogies used in Brazil.

Finally, we want to emphasise that Education *is* politics. That systematic academic underachievement of certain demographic groups is political. Obtaining education is a political struggle for under-represented groups facing economic poverty (Toscano Villanueva, 2013). Political awareness of these issues is therefore essential to effectively adopt and modify pedagogical practices that engage different group of students.

Bartolome (1994) proposes the use of **humanising pedagogy** that respects students' reality and uses educational methods that respect students' cultural experiences. Garcia (2015) reflects on his experience in teaching immigrant students, and how relating learning to students' experiences allows students to *maintain their identities*.

Creating classrooms that challenge the more traditional spaces—in which students are merely receptacles of knowledge—is challenging itself.[11] After all, students may have already spent years of socialisation in these learning environments. We may even find students' resistance to change (Shay, 2016). Traditional classrooms may have contributed to affirming some students' social status (Ochoa and Pineda, 2008) and through their political influence, they may resist and challenge the change. Learning to recognise and undo inequalities in our society is not important only for under-represented or historically marginalised voices, but it matters to all. It opens up to reflect on our own knowledge and limitations and look for different perspectives. Building a more equitable system will help to create a better university culture, to which *all* students and staff feel they belong.

4. Make Diversity the norm

Close your eyes. Describe a 'good student'. How does it look like? If you engage with Box 5.2, you may know that your answers could describe your own biases about who is a *good* student.

It is important that we understand that there is no such a thing as a *'typical'* student. None of the authors of this workbook feels like a *'typical student'*. Our backgrounds make us different. We met because of a common interest (writing this guide), but our perspectives and experiences are completely different. Perhaps when talking about any other topic, we may be on opposite sides of the tables. But it was this diversity that allow us to put this work together.

If students' backgrounds and experiences are systematically '*othered*', they may not develop a sense of belonging to the university—with all the negative implications this entails, including not becoming a '*good'* student in your eyes.

There are many easy things we can do to make diversity the *norm*.

Look at the student list for your module. How many names can you pronounce correctly? Our names are an incredibly important part of our identity and give us a sense of who we are and the community where we belong. By correctly pronouncing names, you are providing students with the reassurance that their presence in the classroom is valued (see Jane Bryan's AHE post on the 'Say my name' project at Warwick). This impact will not only have a positive effect on their engagement, but it will also have a positive effect on them when they go into the workforce and in the

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[11] This is what Paulo Freire calls "Banking model of education" in *"Pedagogy of the Oppressed"*.

future more in general. There are online resources that can help to practice name pronunciation (see for example www.pronouncenames.com).

Provide different ways to learn something. Ideas that there is one way to learn something, and that deviations from this way are seen as *'atypical'* contribute to stereotypes of those individuals who do not fit with this *normality* and have different learning experiences. People experience and interact with the world in many different ways, and there is no one 'right' way of thinking, learning or behaving (Baumer and Frueh, 2021).

It is estimated that in the UK between 30 and 40% of the population are *neurodiverse* (adhdaware.org.uk). Neurodiversity explains the diversity or variation of cognitive functioning people. Everyone has a unique brain, and therefore different skills, abilities and needs. Neurodiversity describes the idea that there is no one *'correct'* way of thinking, learning, and behaving (Baumer and Freud, 2021). Understanding and embracing neurodiversity can improve inclusivity in our classrooms. Let's make sure that students are not disadvantaged by the social barriers that interact with their individual differences, and favour only one *'normality'*. At Warwick, there is a Neurodiversity Toolkit to help you learn more about it.

Rentenback et al. (2017) offer various ways in which teachers can empower neurodiverse students in the classroom. While they mostly refer to school students, there are various practical implications for university students too. Some examples:

- Smile! Happy people help making mentally external tasks appealing.
- Let students know that human excellence comes in all packages – invite them to be themselves.
- Wait! Allow downtime to plan a response in class rather than requesting immediate answers.
- Create classroom routines – predictable structures are important.

There are various groups at Warwick working on creating better learning environments for all.[12] The University of Warwick must put more effort into disrupting the institutional manifestations of racism and discrimination. Without real institutional commitment and resources, there is no way to change the culture.

> **Where next?**
>
> You can now engage with Curriculum, or jump to Assessments.
> If you need help to decide what to read next, go back to Section 3 - Where do We Start?.
> If you have read all sections in Part 3 (or have enough for now), go to the final section.

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[12] There are various WIHEA Learning Circles looking at different pedagogies: Trans & Queer Pedagogies, Anti-Racist Pedagogy and Process in HE, Authentic Learning, Neurodiversity and the Student Experience, Internationalisation, Co-creation, Inclusive Policy and Practice for Disabled Students.

6. ASSESSMENTS

'Assessment has an urgency attached to it, as each year a cohort of students pass or fail, get admitted to post-graduate degrees or do not. The decolonisation project cannot be completed in universities if the decolonising challenge is not also applied to assessment.'

Godsell (2021)

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Decolonising assessments is less popular than *decolonising curricula*, but not less important. Through assessments, universities can contribute to replicating social inequalities. Assessments in fact play a crucial *"inclusion/exclusion"* function by formalising recognition of knowledge and determining proficiency, student progression and graduate outcomes (Godsell, 2021). For students, assessments are indeed one of the most important aspects of the learning experience and our decolonising efforts have to include assessments.

Assessments can drive student learning. The [Academic Development Centre at Warwick](#) promotes an outcome-based education in which *"learning outcomes, teaching methods and learning activities, and the **assessment strategy** should be mutually supported."* Therefore, decolonising the curriculum and the learning environment must occur alongside decolonising assessments. This requires a policy and praxis shift from an *equality*—individuals are given the same resources and opportunities—to an *equity* lens—recognising that each person has different circumstances and creating resources and means to allow each person to achieve their full potential—.

This Section offers ideas on how to start this process. We explain the problem with *'traditional'* assessments and provide some ideas about rethinking assessment strategies.

6.1 WHAT IS THE PROBLEM WITH 'TRADITIONAĽ ASSESSMENTS?

"Assessment in higher education is neither value-neutral nor culture-free: within its procedures, structures and systems it codifies cultural, disciplinary and individual norms, values and knowledge hierarchies."

Pauline Hanesworth (2019)

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Throughout our lives, we take many assessments. Some of these assessments help us to acquire social and economic privileges (e.g. access to university, graduate positions, access to lobby groups, etc).[13] Summative assessments in higher education are used to award degrees which contribute to determining graduate prospects. Decolonising efforts cannot therefore ignore the role of assessments and how these may impact different groups.

At university, one of the most common types of assessments we use (at least before the pandemic) is closed books/high-stakes exams to be taken during the assessment periods. Plenty of studies show that high-stake assessments do not have a positive effect on teaching and learning, and they may even cause more harm than good (Madaus and Clarke, 2001; Jones, 2007; Berlinder, 2011; Lobascher, 2011; Fitzgerald, 2015). Not only high-stakes assessments may harm general student learning, but under-represented groups may be more affected than others (Linnn, 2000; Townsend, 2002; Harrison-Jones, 2007).

Ethnicity is found to be the most determining factor for differences in degree award outcomes, even when factors such as age, gender, disability, prior attainment, subject, HE institution, deprivation, level of qualifications, modes of study and term-time accommodation are all accounted for (Broecke and Nicholls, 2007; Amos and Doku, 2019). Amos and Doku show that in 2017-18, there were significant differences in the award outcomes obtained by domiciled students of colour compared to White students. When all award outcome scores were aggregated, there was a 13.2% outcome difference between the White student population (80.9%) and students of colour population (67.7%) that year.

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[13] For instance, one of the most famous forms of tests we may encounter in our lives is IQ tests. These are used for educational and occupational purposes (and also in research). IQ tests are used in many schools as indicators of student abilities and 'intelligence'. Few of us know how these tests originated in the first place though. They were created in the 19th and 20th centuries and used to justify the inferiority of non-white populations (Ionue, 2015). Many of the adaptations of these tests, in fact, took into account how different people performed on the test, and questions and quizzes were created based on those answers. The wide use of these tests is not justified by the current scientific debate and there is not even agreement on what IQ tests actually measure! (Richardson, 2002).

There are many factors contributing to these gaps. Amos and Doku mention (p. 16): institutional culture, lack of ethnic diversity among staff, curriculum content, design and delivery, sense of belonging, prior attainment, guidance, financial considerations, etc. In Sections 4 and 5 we address a few of these points with regard to curriculum and learning environments. In this section we want to look closely at assessments, i.e., how students' knowledge is measured.

Looking at the University of Warwick's Attainment Summary Dashboard, we can observe similar gaps between White and non-White students.[14] Table 6.1 shows awarding gaps for the Faculty of Social Sciences of various ethnicities compared to White students. As you can observe, all the ethnicities show awarding gaps in Social Sciences. In most cases, the gaps increased between 2013/14 (the first year for which data is available on the dashboard) and 2018/19. The academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21 were years heavily affected by COVID and the university shifted to online/remote assessments. We observe a decrease in the awarding gaps in 2020/21. It will be interesting to look at these years more closely and try to understand the factors that explain this change.

TABLE 6.1 WARWICK AWARDING GAPS

Awarding	Good Honours			First Class Degrees		
Gap	2013/14	2018/19	2020/21	2013/14	2018/19	2020/21
All Non-White	-7.9%	-13%	-4.3%	-9.8%	-18.1%	-9.4%
Asian (All)	-7.5%	-13.4%	-5.5%	-9.9%	-17.1%	-9.2%
Chinese	-7.6%	-15.1%	-7.4%	-7.2%	-16.3%	-8.1%
Indian	-4.3%	-11.6%	-0.7%	-8.9%	-17.2%	-8.3%
Black (All)	-19.7%	-14.7%	-4.9%	-15.3%	-26.7%	-18.2%
African	-21.4%	-15.0%	-4.2%	-12.7%	-28.4%	-18.0%

Notes: White students as comparison group. Only groups with student numbers >100 are reported

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Activity 6.1: Awarding gaps in your Department

Using the Warwick's Attainment Summary Dashboard, consider what are the awarding gaps for your department. Where you aware of these gaps?
Think about one action you will take this academic year to contribute to close this gap.

Warwick should invest resources in understanding how students perform at the module level and how this contributes to awarding gaps. There are many aspects that need to be considered when analysing why this is the case. While a detailed analysis of how this reflects at Warwick is beyond the scope of this work, we can start thinking about improving our current assessment strategies to help narrow the gap.

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[14] Data from Attainment Summary Dashboard last updated in June 2022 (at the time of writing). Notice that we prefer to use "awarding" rather than "attainment" gap. *Attainment* refers at issues to do mostly with the student performance, while *Awarding* considers a broader issue, including institutional factors that affect this performance.

6.2 HOW TO START?

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For the frustration of many academics, a popular question they receive from students is *"will this be in the exam?"*. Many students are assessment-driven, and it is likely they shape their studying habits around assessments. This is quite natural. For students, graduate outcome is very important. Instead of getting frustrated, academics can use assessments to increase student engagement with the module.

We propose three aspects to consider when setting assessments:

1. Improve assessment literacy
2. Increase assessment variety
3. Open up Marking and Feedback practices

1. Improve assessment literacy

As educators, we should design assessments that increase student engagement with the subject, in which students have the opportunity to demonstrate their learning and progress. Lecturers need to ensure that all information for the assessments is made explicit and that we are not evaluating skills that are not part of the curriculum (i.e., *hidden curriculum*). Some students have been more prepared for a certain type of assessment than others, e.g., in their previous education, through parental training, access to various networks, etc. Therefore, supporting assessment literacy is crucial for *ALL* students to succeed (Price et al, 2012).

As a lecturer, you do not have to explain/write in detail about every single aspect of the assessment. The Warwick Library offers various resources to support student understanding of assessments (e.g., plagiarism, reference lists, etc). Lecturers can however link these resources and explain how students should use them for the specific task.[15]

Warwick Library Resources

The use of **past student work** on improving current student assessment literacy is contending way to improve student assessment literacy. On one hand, students find looking at past student work useful to understand what is considered *'a good answer'*. However, students may use these as *model answers* which may hinder student creativity in answering the questions. Whichever way you choose, ensure that

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[15] Sometimes, lecturers do offer a *'list of resources'* without explanations. Understanding how to engage with these resources may become overwhelming for some students—in particular those already struggling with the volume of information—as this adds another layer of work (*this is part of the hidden curriculum*).

students understand how to work on the assessment, and aim for questions that do not provide one single 'good answer'.

Create **spaces to talk about assessment**. This can be done in the learning environment (e.g., Moodle), online (e.g., Microsoft Teams) during the lectures, and in small group classes. Using various means to explain assessments increases the opportunities for students to engage and familiarise themselves with the information on assessments. Students use these spaces in different ways, so offering different spaces can improve engagement with the relevant information on assessments.

2. Increase assessment variety

In Section 5, we talk about different ways in which students learn. Assessment variety also allows students to demonstrate their learning in different ways and avoids disadvantaging some groups due to the intensive use of particular assessment types.

Assessment variety—when correctly designed—can increase student engagement with the subject. Students may become less focused on learning for the assessment (usually the final high-stake, closed book exam), and more willing to engage with all aspects of the module as this may allow them to be better prepared.

Of course, which assessments are considered to be the '*norm*' depends on each discipline and their culture. We are not advocating for cancelling any specific type of assessment or favouring some assessments over others. The key is in offering variety so that all students have a fair opportunity to show their learning and progress.

Rethinking assessments with a decolonising goal in mind requires considering the role of power in the creation of knowledge. After all, assessments determine whether students have acquired the *'right knowledge'* in order to progress. Godsell (2021) provides a framework— through questioning and reflecting on various aspects of the assessment design—to think about the role of power and knowledge in assessments, including what hidden curriculum is required to complete the assessment. There are also some examples in the pedagogical literature that we can use. Bansal (2021) provides some guidance on how to set open-book examinations in Law schools. Paredes Fuentes (2020) offers a reflection on setting open-book 24/48 hours assessments in Economics. Box 6.1 shows a few examples of different types of assessments and briefly explains how these assessments contribute to student learning and the decolonising project.

Moreover, assessment variety cannot be considered at module-level only. This has to be coordinated at programme level to avoid overloading students with assessments and provide students with the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the various techniques (Bloxham and Boyd, 2007).

Box 6.1: Alternative Assessments

We provide three examples of alternative assessments. The first two are adapted from Godsell (2021). The third one is based on a module taught at Warwick.

Alternative Assessment 1: The Spiderweb

Students are given an essay topic. The assessment is broken down into four stages:

1. Each student finds 10 pieces of evidence to answer the essay question;

2. In small groups (4-5 students), students collectively decide on not more than 15 pieces of evidence to use for the essay;

3. In the same group, students use a spiderweb based on the Bloom's revised taxonomy (as in the figure below) to construct their argument. They have to connect the evidence with thinking levels on the spiderweb.

4. Students then write their essays individually using the spiderwebs.
Students also write a reflection on the process of the assessment, e.g., how this helped them to see different perspectives about the topic.

Source: https://bloomstaxonomy.net
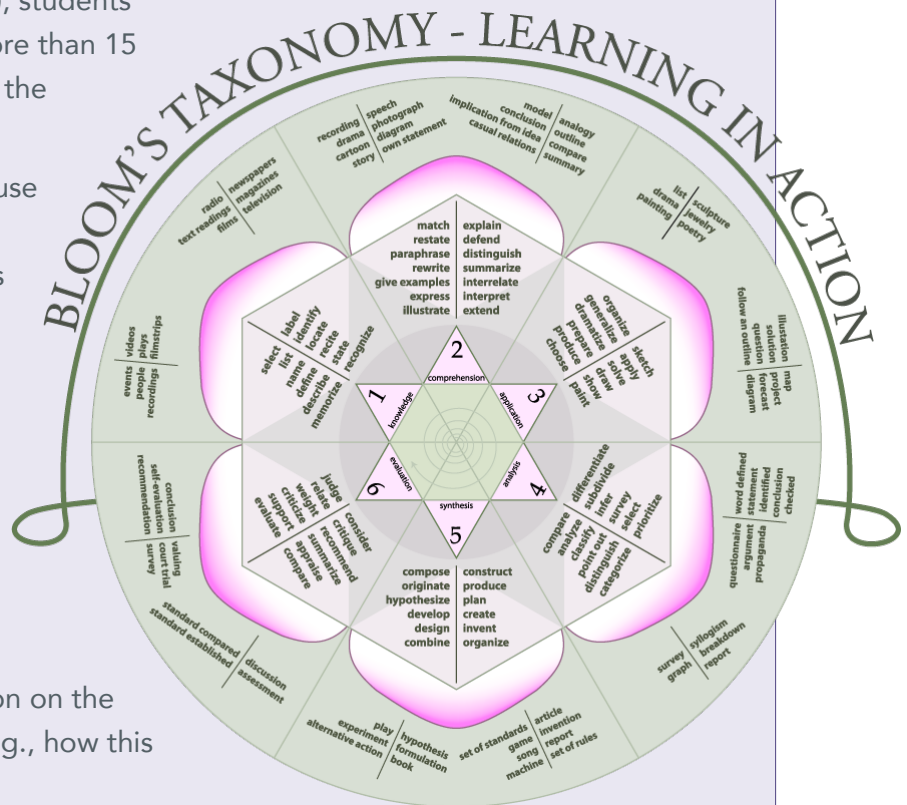
This assessment aims to show students how the thinking process work and disrupt the idea that the essay writing process is a regurgitation of facts, and it is instead an interpretation of the literature and previous work. How we select what is important and what matters for addressing the specific essay question, depends, among other things, on our own experiences, but it may dictate what future professionals consider what is important when analysing the specific topic.

<div align="right">

…cont…

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… cont … Box 6.1: Alternative Assessments

Alternative Assessment 2. Student input on the final assessment

Ask students to write down what they would like to be examined about at the end of the course. Give students clear instructions on the importance to engage with the task (e.g. if the questions provided are too 'easy' and aimed to achieve 100% without considering the course material, these will not be considered).

Read through the suggestions together. You can ask students to vote for (or order) the questions they would like to be asked. Discuss the questions with the students. Discuss the importance on how each question reflects the learning outcomes of the module. If allowing students to vote, do not choose questions based on popularity, but choose the questions that better reflect the content of the course. However, the outcomes of the vote can help you to understand more about students' understanding of the module.

In this way, students are given agency on their assessment. As lecturer, you are also not relinquishing your responsibility to ensure that the assessment is fair and appropriate. You will make the final decision on the assessment.

Alternative Assessment 3. Allowing creativity in assessments

This is based on a low-stake assessment for *EC230: Economics of Money and Banking*. Students work in small groups (4-5 students). Students are given various topics in which they must create resources aimed to explain aspects of monetary policy to a specific audience (e.g., general public, specialised audience, government).

Students can create videos, podcasts, journal articles, and also can design their own activity if they wish to do so. Another group then provides feedback on this activity based on an established feedback criteria (e.g., did the work fulfil the task requested? What are the positive aspects of this work? how can it be improved?).
Upon satisfactory completion of both, the task and providing feedback to another group, the assessment is considered completed and full marks are granted (i.e., 100%).

Students have agency. They can decide the best way to engage with the assessment (including creating their own) and are motivated to focus on the learning process rather than in the mark (they get 100% if they complete the activity). Students learn from each other as they have to provide meaningful feedback to colleagues. In fact, their satisfactory completion of the task depends on the feedback they provide rather than on the feedback they receive.

3. Opening up marking and feedback practices

> "If someone proposed combining measures of height, weight, diet, and exercise into a single number or mark to represent a person's physical condition, we would consider it laughable….Yet every day, teachers combine aspects of students' achievement, attitude, responsibility, effort, and behavior into a single grade"

> (Guskey, 2011)

Marking is a hot topic in assessments. Education is, after all, built around these marks. The difference between a 58 and a 62 determines whether a piece of work is considered 'good' or needs more substantial work and whether the assessment is marked at 10pm or 10am influences the marker's judgment. Marking is arguably one of the least favourite jobs for academics, and one of the most important for students.

The evidence that marks are good for student learning and improve performance is at least contradictory, with many papers arguing that marks actually hinder learning (Schwab, et al., 2018) and negatively affect student well-being (Klapp, 2015; Högberg, et al. 2021)[16]. In fact, many educators have dropped marking completely and adopted *'ungrading'* methods in their classrooms. Ungrading implies the absence of grades, it does not mean lack of assessment. Assessments are used to engage students with their own learning process, and in some cases—and to obviate the institutional constraints to provide marks to students—a final mark is established.

We are not sure whether many academics at the Faculty of Social Sciences are ready to ditch marks yet, or whether they have ever considered education without marking as an alternative, so we are not going to spend too much time on this. You can however read more about it and learn from others' experiences. Rapchak et al, (2022) describe some teacher experiences with this practice. See also [Jesse Stommel's blog entry](#) (2020) in which the author addresses various FAQs on *'ungrading'*.

We invite you instead to think about how the current marking process affects students. ***Marks leave marks***. A mark is a judgement of a student's work, and it can feel personal. Some students are used to receiving 'good' feedback and some students will avoid feedback (even if this is good). This relationship with feedback depends on past experiences.

Decolonising assessments implies decolonising communication. Marking is a complicated language (for staff and students) and becoming fluent in this language system requires time and support. We all give feedback in different ways. Cultural differences affect the way we perceive feedback. Some prefer direct feedback, while other cultures valued more indirect communication. To facilitate communication and understanding, you can explicitly explain to students how ***you*** write feedback, and

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[16] Both these studies find that the negative effects are greater in girls than in boys.

how to read it. Explain students the structure of your feedback. For example, something along the lines: "*I personally start with a positive note to let you know what you did well in the work, then I list the things that are necessary to move up in the marking scale.*" In this way, no student thinks they are the only one receiving negative feedback, but also they do not only focus on the positive aspect and remain to wonder why they did not achieve a higher mark despite the positive in their work.

If giving feedback in person, you may want to be even more aware of these differences. You can directly ask the student how they prefer to receive feedback, or at least reiterate the way you do it. Face-to-face meetings (either online or in person) are a good opportunity to reiterate that feedback is not personal, but it is about the work submitted, and you are looking forward to seeing student progress. Campbell, et al. (2021) provide some ideas on how to improve assessment literacy and create feedback opportunities for students.

Even if assessments have received less attention in the decolonising literature, we believe that changes to assessments can be a great way to start addressing social injustices. Not because we are making assessments '*easier*', on the contrary, we have provided evidence that some of the *traditional* assessments are not fit for purpose, but because we are creating opportunities for students to truly demonstrate their capabilities and engagement with the content in our modules.
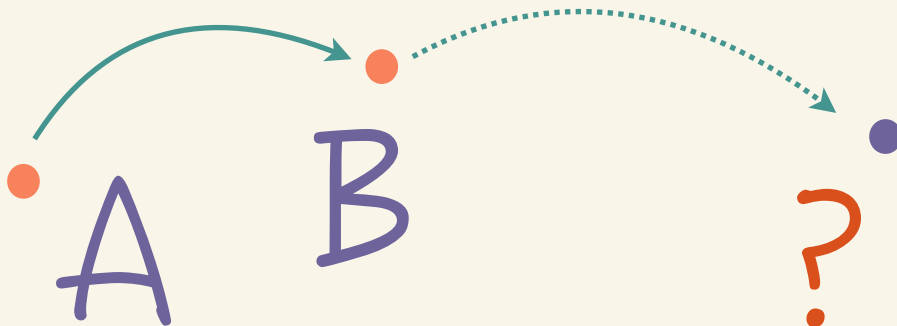
In this workbook we focused on three aspects: curriculum, learning environments, and assessments. These represent a good starting point, but do not consider this a definitive list.

Use this workbook to advance your understanding and start developing your decolonising strategy. By implementing the changes we propose, you can already have a positive impact on your students. You can then continue your research and development.

Decolonising education is an ongoing process. It is dynamic and evolving continuously. It has to respond to the challenges we face in our institutions and society. Coloniality, racism, and discrimination evolve and the ways in which these manifest themselves in our societies change. Our response to this has to evolve too. We need to be ready to (re)act.

The final goal is to create a fairer university for ALL our students. We need to work together to achieve this.

7. THIS IS NOT THE END

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Decolonising Education at Warwick needs to embrace all aspects of our university: curriculum, learning environments, assessments, research, partnerships, etc. Some have questioned to what extent we can decolonise higher education (e.g., Andreotti, et al., 2015; Stein, 2019; Tuck and Yang, 2012). The work may indeed seem an impossible one, with no clear end, but this should not discourage us. Keep in mind the final goal: *create a culture at Warwick in which everybody can thrive and achieve their potential*. We want all students and staff to be able to bring their whole selves into the physical and virtual university spaces, without feeling alienated from the academic experience because of their skin colour, gender, background, or any other aspect of their humanity. We want a university, where students and staff who have experienced racism and discrimination in the past, find a space to heal from these experiences rather than recreate them.

Decolonising starts with us (but it does not end there). Superficial engagement with decolonising without truly understanding its meaning may even be counter-productive, e.g., it may lead to believe that adding a couple of authors to reading lists and emitting statements against racism is all we need.[17] This workbook aims to facilitate the start of a reflexive dialogue between you and the intention to decolonise.

Reading is only a small part of what is required. Making change to happen is the next and most important step. This is perhaps the most difficult challenge to overcome. Change may feel uncomfortable as we critically analyse our own knowledge and beliefs. Accepting to decolonise, means accepting that part of our knowledge is colonised, and it is not necessarily *objective*. It means to be more critical of ourselves and the knowledge we have acquired.

We hope the various sections in this workbook offered some ideas for you to take the next step(s). While this is not the end of the process, we believe this can contribute to improving the academic experience for students (and staff) from historically under-represented and discriminated groups, who Warwick is trying very hard to attract.

Warwick celebrates and advertises its diversity. Warwick is "*home to over 9,500 students from 147 countries*". Warwick aspires to "*remove economic, social and cultural barriers that have prevented talented people from working and studying at Warwick*".

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[17] You may find useful to read The Conversation's article by Alex Broadbent "It will take critical, thorough scrutiny to truly decolonise knowledge" (1 June 2017)

Learning environments that alienate this diversity and contribute to the creation of awarding gaps do a disservice to these students.

This workbook focuses on Social Sciences. We look at how the Social Sciences need to update their curricula in order to truly "*visualise, examine and discuss society's most important questions*". Our curricula cannot neglect important historical events and their impact on today's societies. We need to understand how colonisation and colonial thought contributed to shaping the current knowledge, and how we can challenge the centralisation of the processes of knowledge creation.

To include other ways of knowing, change the hierarchical top-down teaching approach, and create new forms of assessments which allow racialised students to connect their experiences to what they learn, we need a shift in the institutional culture. In an academic world where teaching can be considered a second-class task by many academics, pedagogical interventions cannot be left at the discretion of single educators (although there is a lot you can do as an educator).

This needs to be supported by the institution leadership[18]. Decolonising efforts cannot be disconnected from the university structure and everybody needs to understand and engage with this agenda (Moghli and Kadiwal, 2021). The burden of academic proof for the need for decolonising usually falls predominantly on females and/or academics from under-represented backgrounds, without any form of recognition for this work. In addition, when engaging with new pedagogical practices lecturers from under-represented groups are more often subject to criticism of their own professionalism and knowledge than White colleagues. Professional development, collaborative work, and university acknowledgement and recognition are key for moving the decolonising process forward (Tate and Bagguley, 2017).

Power also needs to be decentralised and representative. Lack of diversity and representation in academia negatively impact the efforts to decolonise education and affect the potential to attract and retain students from under-represented backgrounds (Ball, et al. 2012; Bhopal, 2014; Begum and Saini, 2018; Richardson, 2018). The precarity of early career academic positions disproportionally affects women, people of colour and academics from working-class backgrounds. It is less likely that academics from this group *'stick around'* to gain a full-time secure position. This directly feeds into the lack of representation of these groups at all levels of the academic ladder, especially at the top. University leadership has to address this.

There are many aspects that we could not cover in this workbook. The university is a much larger space than the (physical or virtual) classrooms. The student experience is not just about their learning experience. It starts before students join Warwick through the various bureaucratic practices (e.g. enrolment, immigration offices). It is made of the living spaces (student accommodation, chaplaincy, sports hub, etc) and interchanges with other students and Warwick non-academic staff (security, catering,

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[18] Morreira et al., (2020) identify some of the political and conceptual complexities in decolonising universities that are related to power.

student union, disability services, health centre, etc). Learning goes beyond the curriculum. It is made out of the opportunities within the university (volunteering, work placements, study abroad, etc) and in the community in which Warwick is located. All these aspects are part of student life and need to be included in the decolonising project.

At the core of Warwick's mission and strategic direction is the call for "*Excellence in everything we do.*" Let's truly become excellent by promoting a genuine engagement with decolonising.

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Box 7.1: My experience with coloniality

It is sometime in the 80s. I'm15yrs old, brown, small framed and skinny. My eyebrows are thick, and so is my hair. I'm quiet, rarely speak in class and am frequently criticised for daydreaming. However, I'm also sensitive for so many reasons, but the one that comes to the fore here, as I write this and go back to my memory, is my perceived lack of intelligence. Why this aspect rears its head, I'm not entirely sure. What does this mean, and what does this say?

I'm in a large school of about 1,500 pupils. The school is well funded, modern and transcends newness. There is carpet in all classrooms, proper heating, posh sculpted radiators, varnished natural wood grain window frames, toughened tinted windows that reduce the sun's glare, and double glazing everywhere. Without a doubt, this feels posh. My last school was an inner-city Leicester junior school. I've been here three years already. I've not attended many schools (or comprehensives), but somehow, I keep getting fed this view that this is quite an excellent secondary comprehensive. The computer centre is state of the art, curved Nordic wood architecturally constructed into a fancy shape. The computers are networked. There are 'bells' and 'whistles' everywhere. As teens, we would say things like, "*I think NASA might be something like this!*" I still remember the clean and warm air – an invitation to intellectual thought and learning, perhaps? Why do these sensations appear now? After all these years?

Even the local grammar school students attend here for some of their classes. We're under warm yellowy gold lighting; it's easy on the eyes. There's a large clean green chalkboard at the front. These boards as specially cleaned. I suppose black ones aren't fancy enough. To be honest, I was silently pleased they were green because it meant one less prompt and reason to be called names. As I write this, I'm reminded of Nirmal Puwar's Space Invaders. Nirmal… am I a good Space Invader because I've bought the dynamics of harm into focus? If I am, why doesn't it feel so great? Even after all these years? As I write this, part of me wishes I could peel my skin away.

…cont…

…cont… Box 7.1: My experience with coloniality

I take myself back, again. I'm sat in a class on religious studies at secondary school. My story of decolonisation doesn't start or end here. It started much, much earlier, but this instance sticks with me because, by this time, I was fully aware of my skin's uncontrollable reaction to coloniality.

My skin and body can think faster than my brain. It is even more adept and quicker than my brain at identifying danger, discomfort and inequity. Intuition would cover only half of it. This sensitivity is much more. I think of the traumas experienced by my grandparents, their parents, and my parents. I am the first generation not born on a plantation or indenture.

At this school, even at this youthful stage, my brain will often say, there's something not quite right going on here. But, my body and the roots of my hair follicles know precisely what it is and why. My skin colour is darker than everyone else's here. We're in a market town in Lincolnshire, a town now infamous for its overwhelming support for Brexit in 2016. My so-called friends used to call me names, ridicule my food and make fun of me. I say friends because I would have no one if it were not for them. I've already learned that having so-called friends is essential. By this time, I've already toyed around with being on my own at this school, but it was too much. Oddly, it is safer to be around the very people that express hate towards me.

My memory is stuck on this same school; why is this? It is almost mid-autumn, meaning I have about eight months of this class. The class is religious studies. The teacher is known for being strict and maintaining the highest discipline and order in the class. The heavy board rubber has a reputation. It is known for being used by this teacher as a throwing weapon. Not even the unruliest of students dare challenge him. Could this day be an exception?

The teacher's lips purse slightly, then his mouth slowly opens, and a breath comes out, followed by a *'hih'* sound. I can feel my skin tighten around my little frame. I look down because I know what eye contact in such a situation can do. I stay still, like prey caught in full sight of its predator. My eyes are wide, but I have averted their notice. You see, I'm looking down. I can't even blink. I silently regulate my breathing. Slow… slow and steady, shallow breaths… Dipak (I started calling myself dipbuk many years later—here why), I automatically tell myself. I can feel the blood in my face drain. I already have hairy arms, and they are telling me something. I can feel my bones. The word '*Hindu*' is uttered, and the class erupts into chaos. Chairs pushed back. Books thrown. Pencils and pens slammed. Could this event have been happening slowly for others as it was for me? Why does time feel like it moves slowly during such experiences? There are moans, but the laughter and name-calling I hear most loudly.

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My mouth and lips are one, and they feel frozen together. I would not be able to speak, even if I wanted to. I've tried before, and even to this day, it can still come out all squeaky and uncontrollable. The teacher agrees with the student's protests to do something else, and we are also let out early. Despite many years of such lessons, I feel like I'm still learning the fundamentals. Why does my training towards feeling different types of abuse still feel like it has only just begun?

Fast forward to 2018, and I'm at one of the oldest and most prestigious Universities in the British Isles. We're in the classics department as the view of the gardens is among the best from here. I'm sitting with my friends, all of whom are white and female.

My cohort is comprised of a majority of white females. These friends are from around the world. We are diligently studying. We all share a passion for our subject of study, which is squarely within the realms of decolonising sociology, and was designed by an eminent second-generation scholar. I realise later after speaking with a professor from another such institution that it is highly regarded among academics in this area of work. But it makes no difference here. Unbeknown to us, we've hit closing time for the building. It is a Saturday, early afternoon and so we are all shocked. The only notice was the stern, bellowing voice from the security guard.

"We're closing!" I can still feel the resonance in my ears.

He had come up behind me. The guard is a white man, perhaps in his late 50s. He stands over the back of my chair. I don't need to turn around. I can feel him looking down on me, looming over me and my laptop screen. I remember his black trousers, clean and polished black boots, the toecaps bulled like a military officer's. I glimpse his militaristic blue jumper as I look up while packing my laptop into my backpack. I only caught a glimpse of it, but its sight is still seared into my memory. How does this happen?

"Do you have IDs?" he enquires. Why don't I feel like I'm being asked?

We are all full-time postgraduate students. I show him my card. No response. He continues to stand over me as I zip up my bag. My skin is telling me things. My voice in my head whispers, "dipbuk, none of your friends look like you!" One of my friends suggests we go for ice cream. This friend speaks Spanish fluently. I love the sound of Spanish. I know a few words, but not enough for any fluency. Yet, when I think of Spanish, my brain goes to [Fawlty Towers](#) and [Manuel](#) I don't like it. My mind and body have torn themselves apart many times.

...cont... Box 7.1: My experience with coloniality

I love the books in this department. Old books on empire and antiquity. Even though few have pretty illustrations of people that look like me in positions of any authority. This will not be my only unwelcome encounter in this space and will not be my worst.

My writing process includes the initial process of completing the first draft. I then need to leave it for a night and dream over it. This process includes reliving the pain and the encounters involved. Sometimes writing through such memories can become too painful, and I need to leave them alone. Why do I do this? My mental health suffers. I know this. My stomach aches. I feel this. Each and every time. My skin grates on me. Yet I cannot shed it. This writing process is not cathartic. I keep wishing it would be, but I know from what others tell me that this is not the purpose. So, I'm in and out of therapy, and it feels like it will be a lifelong battle.

Perhaps the reason for elucidating my experience of white space and exclusion goes deeper than the mandated attendance in the classroom. Why do I keep persisting in white spaces at university, and how does coloniality separate me from people like me?

This is my journey. It is my association with coloniality and decoloniality as a process. For this brief moment, I hope I took you someway along with me.

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Stefania is Deputy Chair of the Faculty of Social Sciences Education Committee where she chairs the "Decolonising Social Sciences Sub-group". She works on various projects to improve inclusivity in our learning environments. At Warwick, she co-facilitates the "Anti-Racist Teaching Forum" and the staff development programme on "Tackling Racial Inequality at Warwick".

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Mahek is a Law student with a strong interest in legal and social research. Before joining Warwick, Mahek was active on promoting decolonising practices at her school, such as updating the History curriculum and rethinking at the colonial origins of the school uniform. As someone who struggles with ADHD, Mahek has a strong passion for making assessments more inclusive to neurodiverse students.

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Alero is studying Sociology. She has a strong passion for decolonisation and its potential to contribute racial and social inequality. Alero accepted to work on this project, as she strongly believes that better teaching of Social Sciences can contribute to move from a state of denial of the current racial issues, towards a reality in which racism is truly an issue of the past, and this is the ancestor she wants to become for the future generations.

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Ivanne recently graduated in Modern Languages and Economics, and she is starting a MSc in Humanitarian Engineering at Warwick. She is strongly interested on social issues concerning education, development, and gender. At the School of Modern Languages and Culture, she worked on improving the reporting systems for wellbeing and mitigating circumstances for minority students.

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