

Disrupting the Default: Race, Inclusion, and Research Cultures

Brookfield Campus, University of Leicester | Friday 24 April 2026

Introduction

Disrupting the Default is a one-day conference organised by the Wellcome-funded I-REACCH project to explore how race and racialisation affect research culture and researchers' experiences of the research environment.

Conference venue

The conference will be taking place at the University of Leicester's Brookfield Campus: 266 London Road, Leicester, LE2 1RQ.

The venue is accessible via the number 31/31A buses from Leicester Railway Station and parking is available if needed.

Please use the accessible entrance on the North side of Brookfield House, opposite the Mary Seacole Building, which will remain unlocked throughout the conference. Other entrances may be card access only. For the duration of the conference, weather permitting, you are welcome to enjoy the gardens.

Luggage

There is not a dedicated cloakroom at Brookfield coats and luggage can be stored in BRK 0.02.

Breakout rooms

BRK 0.02 and BRK 0.03 can be used as informal breakout spaces, including meetings and calls, throughout the conference.

Quiet Room

The dedicated quiet room will be BRK 0.09 (also called the Drawing Room). The room will be available to all conference delegates and we kindly ask that you respect that it is a quiet room.

Prayer Room

The prayer room is located in BRK 0.06 and is available to anyone.

Catering

While we will be providing lunch and refreshments, there is also a café located on the ground floor should you wish to purchase additional food and drinks.

Accessibility

All conference rooms and facilities are located on the ground floor. More information on accessibility is available on the [AccessAble website](#).

Agenda

Time	Session	Location
09:00 - 09:30	Registration (tea and coffee)	Brookfield Atrium
09:30 - 09:45	Welcome remarks <i>Kate Williams and Aaron Andrews</i>	Peter Jackson Lecture Theatre/Online
09:45 - 10:30	<u>Session 1: Keynote</u> <i>Chair: Kate Williams</i> Race in Research Leadership <i>Etlyn Kenny (University of Birmingham)</i>	Peter Jackson Lecture Theatre/Online
10:30 – 11:30	<u>Session 2A: Understanding Racialisation in Higher Education</u> <i>Chair: Ning Baines (University of Leicester)</i> Intersectionality and Research Culture in UK Higher Education: Lived Experiences of Black Muslim Women <i>Sadiya Osman (University of Leicester)</i> Weaving Knowledge Together: Collaborative and Creative Approaches to Understanding Women of Colour’s Academic Journey <i>Sukanya Krishnamurthy, Manasa Gade, Sarah Kline, Siying Wu and Sakshi Chindaliya (University of Edinburgh)</i> The AIR Study <i>Aurella Yussuf, Majidha Jaman, Ameeta Retzer, Iestyn Williams, Parbir Jagpal and Mamidipudi Thirumala Krishna (University of Birmingham)</i>	Peter Jackson Lecture Theatre/Online
	<u>Session 2B: MedRACE workshop</u> <i>Tahmina Sayfi, Ayesha Ahmed, Ayona Dey, Hussein Uraiby, Krishna Savadia, Kike Solanke, Takunda Nhiwatiwa, Kate Williams and Shameq Sayeed (University of Leicester)</i>	Brookfield 0.42AB
11:30 - 11:45	Break (tea and coffee)	Brookfield Atrium
11:45 – 12:45	<u>Session 3: Difficult Conversations</u> <i>Chair: Elizabeth Kawesa</i> Let’s Talk About Race <i>Nora Musyoka (University of Leicester)</i> Research Culture’s Diversity Fails <i>Churnjeet Mahn (University of Strathclyde)</i> Indigenous Language, Knowledge and Technology: Removing colonial mentality in research and development in Nigeria <i>Joy Oluchi Uguru (University of Nigeria)</i>	Peter Jackson Lecture Theatre/Online

12:45 – 14:00	<p>Lunch and poster session</p> <p>Inclusive Research Hub <i>Luke Burguete (University of Bristol)</i></p> <p>‘An Island of Strangers’: Doctoral Experiences within UK Higher Education <i>Fareeha Akhtar (Queen Mary University of London)</i></p> <p>INKLUDE <i>Mitul Mehta, Giouliana Kadra, Jasdeep Singh, Tobias Yu-Kiener (King’s College London)</i></p> <p>Inclusive Placement and Employment Opportunities for Diverse Engineering Graduates <i>Nada Yusuf (Loughborough University)</i></p> <p><i>I-REACCH project (University of Leicester)</i></p>	Brookfield Atrium
14:00 – 15:00	<p>Session 4A: Making Change <i>Chair: Kikelomo Ladipo</i></p> <p>Breaking Barriers <i>Charlene Gallery, Omodunni Adeniyi and Ghada Soliman (University of Manchester)</i></p> <p>Improving Career Support for Mid-Career Minority Ethnic Researchers: University of Birmingham ASPIRE Mentoring Scheme <i>Etlyn Kenny and Nosheen Qamer (University of Birmingham)</i></p> <p>SAATH: South Asian Advancement of Talent and Heritage <i>Salma Baz, Nadia Zakir, Sylvian Jesudoss, Muhammad Rahman and Nora Musyoka (University of Leicester)</i></p>	Peter Jackson Lecture Theatre/Online
	<p>Session 4B: Valuing Voices workshop</p> <p><i>Roisin Blackburn, Lucy Cheseldine, Fleur Hughes and Alison Goodwin (University of York)</i></p>	Brookfield 0.42AB
15:00 – 15:15	Break (tea and coffee)	Brookfield Atrium
15:15 - 16:15	<p>Session 5: Keynote <i>Chair: Aaron Andrews</i></p> <p><i>In Conversation with Neil Chakraborti (University of Leicester)</i></p>	Peter Jackson Lecture Theatre/Online
16:15 - 16:30	<p>Closing remarks <i>Aaron Andrews</i></p>	Peter Jackson Lecture Theatre/Online

Please note: due to technical and format considerations, sessions 2B and 4B will be in person only. All other sessions will be hybrid but will not be recorded.

Abstracts

Session 1: Keynote

Race in Research Leadership

Etlyn Kenny (University of Birmingham)

Etlyn Kenny is Professor of Human Resource Management and Organisational Behaviour at the University of Birmingham. Etlyn's field is Work Psychology, and her research interests centre on employee diversity and organisational careers. Her research and publications focus both on how employees experience organisations as minorities as well as the analysis of organisational practices and structures designed to facilitate equal access to career opportunities and progression. Etlyn is currently Principal Investigator on the Wellcome-funded [ASPIRE project](#) which aims to improve understanding of racial inclusion barriers in the research cultures of higher education institutions.

Session 2A: Understanding Racialisation in Higher Education

Intersectionality and Research Culture in UK Higher Education: Lived Experiences of Black Muslim Women

Sadiya Osman (University of Leicester)

This paper examines how intersectional identities shape experiences within UK higher education research culture, focusing on the lived experiences of Black Muslim women. Drawing on four narratives from a study of sixteen participants, it explores how overlapping racial, gendered, and religious identities influence academic trajectories, highlighting the ways research culture can perpetuate subtle and everyday forms of discrimination, often referred to as microaggressions. Findings reveal that, despite institutional commitments to equality, diversity, and inclusion, microaggressions remain pervasive, impacting psychological wellbeing, career progression, and participation in research communities. The study also foregrounds the agency of participants, showing how they navigate, resist, and strategize around structural and cultural barriers, demonstrating resilience, aspiration, and determination. By centring intersectionality, this research underscores that inequities in higher education cannot be understood through single-axis frameworks alone. It illustrates how research culture through norms, expectations, and everyday behaviours interacts with intersecting systems of oppression to shape the experiences of Global Majority researchers in distinctive ways.

The paper concludes with recommendations for transforming research culture to promote genuine inclusivity: recognizing intersectional disadvantage, implementing inclusive leadership practices, and addressing the subtle forms of discrimination embedded in everyday academic life. By linking intersectionality to research culture, this work contributes to discussions on equity, diversity, and the structural and cultural reforms needed to create supportive, inclusive, and equitable research environments in UK higher education.

Weaving Knowledge Together: Collaborative and Creative Approaches to Understanding Women of Colour's Academic Journey

Sukanya Krishnamurthy, Manasa Gade, Sarah Kline, Siying Wu and Sakshi Chindaliya (University of Edinburgh)

This paper presents methodological approaches for engaging with the complex and lived realities of Women of Colour (WoC) PhD students and early-career researchers (ECRs) through an ongoing collaborative project between the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow. It demonstrates how feminist and participatory methodologies can create spaces for understanding intersectional experiences of structural inequality in Scottish academia.

We employ the term "Women of Colour" strategically, while acknowledging its limitations and the irreducible diversity of experiences shaped by race, gender, class, migration status, nationality, disability, and sexuality. Our methodological framework refuses homogenisation, instead foregrounding the multiplicity and specificity of lived realities.

The project centres relational and creative methods designed to engage complexity without reduction. Through collaborative workshops, we utilise storytelling, mind-mapping, and zine-making as research tools that privilege participant voice, embody care-based ethics, and honour emotional and experiential knowledge alongside analytical insight. These methods create conditions for collective sense-making, enabling participants to articulate challenges across research, teaching, fieldwork, writing, publishing, and institutional navigation in their own terms and through their own expressive forms.

Our participatory approach positions WoC researchers as co-investigators rather than research subjects. Workshop participants collaboratively map the structural, affective, and everyday dimensions of their experiences, identify patterns and divergences, and co-design contextually grounded solutions. This process generates knowledge that is simultaneously analytical and actionable, bridging lived experience and institutional change.

The paper details how these methods translate complex, embodied realities into concrete recommendations for transforming EDI strategies, Widening Participation policies, and supervisory practices. By foregrounding methodology, we demonstrate how research design itself can embody principles of equity, care, and solidarity, offering a replicable framework for engaging with marginalised experiences in ways that honour their complexity while catalysing systemic change.

The AIR Study

Aurella Yussuf, Majidha Jaman, Ameeta Retzer, Iestyn Williams, Parbir Jagpal and Mamidipudi Thirumala Krishna (University of Birmingham)

Racially minoritised academic and professional services staff continue to face structural and cultural barriers that limit visibility, progression opportunities, and inclusion within research environments. Although the University of Birmingham has made institutional commitments to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), there remains limited understanding of how these barriers manifest in everyday workplace cultures and research settings.

As part of a Wellcome funded programme at the University of Birmingham, a research team in the College of Medicine and Health (CMH) conducted a qualitative study to explore the lived experiences of racially minoritised staff working in research related roles. The AIR Study aimed to identify factors shaping racial inclusivity, career development, and organisational culture. Semi structured interviews were carried out with 25 staff members who self identified as racially minoritised. Topic guides and the interview framework were developed in collaboration with qualitative researchers in the College of Social Sciences to ensure rigour and minimise bias. Interviews explored workplace culture and inclusion, career progression and opportunities, support and resources, international staff experiences, and broader reflections on working within CMH.

Preliminary analysis indicates significant variation in workplace culture across departments, largely influenced by local team dynamics and line management. Participants described repeatedly needing to “prove” themselves, uneven recognition of contributions, and dependence on senior advocacy for visibility. While overt racism was rarely reported, subtle and subconscious bias was common, and informal decision making practices, often taking place in social settings, were viewed as exclusionary. Career progression experiences were mixed; although not always explicitly racialised, participant accounts reflect wider institutional patterns of underrepresentation of racially minoritised staff in senior roles. Access to support was strongly shaped by managerial relationships, personal networks, workload pressures, and isolated working environments. Intersectional factors—including gender, disability, caring responsibilities, and international status—further shaped experiences of inclusion. Many participants welcomed the opportunity to share detailed experiences beyond staff surveys.

The study will generate evidence based recommendations to strengthen racial inclusivity in research settings and inform future institutional EDI strategy.

Session 2B: MedRACE workshop

Tahmina Sayfi, Ayesha Ahmed, Ayona Dey, Hussein Uraiby, Krishna Savadia, Kike Solanke, Takunda Nhiwatiwa, Kate Williams and Shameq Sayeed (University of Leicester)

MedRACE has played a significant role in driving culture change within our medical school and clinical learning environments. As a student/staff partnership we work to embed the principles of the BMA charter (linked below) by taking on projects based on the interests and experiences of students in our community. Initiatives demonstrating our impact include Inclusive Theatre Headwear, policy change accommodating the use of the Kara in clinical settings, improvements to the curriculum and looking at how ‘Bare Below The Elbow’ policies can be more inclusive. These efforts can shift institutional norms and foster a culture of belonging.

This session will explore how MedRACE contributes to sustainable cultural change. By the end of the session, participants will be able to analyse how student-led EDI projects can drive culture change, evaluate the impact of inclusive curriculum design on learner experience and clinical practice, and apply practical strategies to promote an inclusive culture through active bystander behaviours.

This session will showcase the cultural impact of our work, highlighting our Student Selected Components (SSCs). These are projects undertaken by students, covering subjects such as ‘Identifying neonatal jaundice in black and brown babies’ as well as how conditions present in brown and black skin. Through facilitated discussion, we will explore the content as well as their impact of

these on domains such as the curriculum, placements and clinical practice. The session will conclude with an 'Active Bystander Training' Taster, which is designed and typically co-delivered by students alongside Clinical Teaching Fellows. This will explore the background behind the Bystander effect and real-life scenarios, leaving individuals better-equipped to escalate unacceptable behaviour.

Complimentary posters will highlight our Active Bystander Training, Year 5 SSC outputs, inclusive curriculum toolkit and an experiential analysis of the ways in which we have seen that MedRACE has impacted culture change in our experiences at medical school, on placement and more widely. Collectively, these elements demonstrate the transformative potential of student-led initiatives in shaping inclusive, accountable and culturally aware medical education.

Session 3: Difficult Conversations

Let's Talk About Race

Nora Musyoka (University of Leicester)

Conversations about race are central to analyses of inequality, identity, power, and belonging, yet they are often constrained by fear, discomfort, defensiveness, or deliberate avoidance. This presentation will examine how academia, as both a reflection of society and a producer of social norms, should engage more critically and responsibly in discussions about race. It emphasises the necessity of honest, informed, and sustained dialogue, rather than reactive, episodic, or purely symbolic approaches. As universities occupy a distinctive position as sites of knowledge production and critical inquiry, the social construction of concepts such as difference, justice, and community should not only be theorised but also enacted in everyday institutional life. Consequently, the manner in which race is articulated and addressed within academic contexts has significant implications for students' experiences and for institutional legitimacy and integrity.

This paper argues that meaningful, ongoing dialogue about race is a necessary precursor to the development of a genuinely inclusive university community, lest it risk reproducing the exclusion and inequities evident in wider society when conversations about race are silenced or reduced to surface-level engagement, rather than being actively challenged. Such engagement therefore requires a critical acknowledgement of historical and structural inequalities, the rigorous examination of how power and privilege manifest and operate within academic systems, and recognition of the lived experiences of marginalised and minority groups as valid and essential forms of knowledge. Ultimately, redefining how race is discussed in academia is not only an institutional obligation; it is also a moral imperative.

Using specific examples, the paper will illustrate how race-conscious dialogue fosters intellectual humility, empathy, human understanding, and critical self-reflection, essential for moving beyond the performative into intentional and integrated community-focused conversations, which will enable universities to translate stated, planned commitments to equity into embedded and impactful practice.

Research Culture's Diversity Fails

Churnjeet Mahn (University of Strathclyde)

This paper considers the shifting roles of EDI agendas within research culture, especially in institutional and sector policy making. It explores which versions and debates about research culture have 'made the cut' and considers the ways in which sector-wide debates on culture in higher education have helped to de-centre and deprioritise some of the most challenging areas of inclusion and representation, namely race.

Indigenous Language, Knowledge and Technology: Removing colonial mentality in research and development in Nigeria

Joy Oluchi Uguru (University of Nigeria)

This paper studies how the colonial mentality phenomenon has hindered research and development in indigenous languages, indigenous knowledge and indigenous technology in Nigeria. Language and culture bear the technology of a people. Nigeria is multilingual, having much indigenous technologies. The paper studies the educational and language policies as well as the general trend of research in Nigerian higher institutions, specifically, the universities. The paper discovers that indigenous language policies have not been well implemented due to colonial mentality of both the leaders and many of the citizenry. Hence, research in indigenous languages as well as the knowledge and technology they express, is hampered. More research is focussed on English, the official language, and Western technology. Most researchers are patterned to meet the western civilization. This has stagnated the growth of our indigenous knowledge and technology. In agriculture for instance, such indigenous practices as shifting cultivation and yam barn storage, which are beneficial for the climate crop durability, has been replaced with yearly cultivation and the use of industrial fertilizer. Most research done in the indigenous knowledge and technology does not make impact towards improving on them as is seen in developed cultures. On the contrary the research is conducted, papers are published from them, and yet the copying of incongruous western civilization continues. This has made some of the beneficial indigenous knowledge (practices) go extinct. The aim of this paper is to make a call for research on African indigenous languages, knowledge and technology to be intensified and also for findings on them to be practised to make for rapid development of sub Saharan Africa.

Session 4A: Making Change

Breaking Barriers

Charlene Gallery, Omodunni Adeniyi and Ghada Soliman (University of Manchester)

Despite sustained institutional commitments to EDIA, Black female academics (BFAs) remain structurally marginalised within UK higher education and continue to be positioned as "rare" (Owusu-Kwarteng, 2021). National indicators of exclusion are consistent across recognition and resourcing: fewer than 0.3% of UK professors identify as Black women (Advance HE, 2023; HESA, 2024), and UKRI monitoring data show Black applicants had the lowest Principal Investigator award rate in 2021–22 (21%) (UKRI, 2023). We argue these patterns are not best explained as individual

“pipeline deficits”, but as effects of default research cultures in which opportunity is mediated through informal networks, uneven visibility, and tacit norms that intensify institutional gatekeeping and accelerate attrition across career stages (Wilson, 1997; Morgan, 2020b).

Breaking Barriers, a 12-month, equity-led intervention at the University of Manchester, tests an infrastructural response designed to convert inclusion commitments into measurable shifts in research leadership participation. The model foregrounds collective, interdisciplinary strength as a mechanism of change: it builds a visible cross-faculty network of BFAs across career stages and role pathways, creating structured routes to collaboration, sponsorship and shared research capacity. This is paired with targeted development focused on research design, interdisciplinarity and bid-readiness, and a tiered microgrant scheme that provides protected time and early-stage resourcing for exploratory, cross-disciplinary projects. Governance is intentionally transparent and EDI-led, aligning decision-making, criteria, and feedback with responsible research principles.

Psychological safety is treated as an enabling condition rather than a by-product, operationalised through an off-campus writing retreat designed to support reflective writing and open discussion, enabling epistemic freedom and strategic leadership (Freire, 1970; hooks, 1994; Smith, 2004). We contribute an evaluation-ready framework for “patching the leaky pipeline” by demonstrating a research leadership leap through embedded mixed-methods and a Research Culture Impact mechanism, alongside transferable legacy outputs to support replication and scale.

Improving Career Support for Mid-Career Minority Ethnic Researchers: University of Birmingham ASPIRE Mentoring Scheme

Etlyn Kenny and Nosheen Qamer (University of Birmingham)

Structural barriers such as limited access to key networks, inadequate support and recognition, and unequal access to effective mentoring have contributed to the disproportionately low progression of racially minoritised researchers, particularly Black academics, to professorial roles, 14% and 1% respectively in 2023/24 (HEPI 2022; HEPI 2024; HESA, 2023). This under-representation across career stages is a well-documented, sector-wide challenge, with ethnic diversity declining with seniority (Gibney, 2022; The Royal Society, 2021).

While efforts to address this have included a range of interventions, targeted mentoring for racially minoritised researchers remains underutilised (Bhopal, 2019). Instead, mentoring in HEIs is often informal and accessed through existing networks, from which racially minoritised academics are frequently excluded, positioning formal mentoring as a particularly important mechanism of support (Bhopal, 2019; Harris & Ogbonna, 2023).

ASPIRE adopted an evidence based approach to designing initiatives aimed at increasing understanding of how to create more race inclusive research cultures at the University of Birmingham. We used UK-focused academic and practitioner literature to create and test the ASPIRE Mentoring Scheme. This scheme provided 21 racially minoritised mid career researchers a nine month mentoring relationship with a Professor, focused on their career development as researchers and future leaders. Mentors were carefully matched to mentees’ stated development needs, ensuring effective, mentee centred partnerships that supported them as researchers and built social capital with a view to increasing representation in senior decision making spaces.

We will share early participant feedback on the scheme's structure and key learning with attendees and practical steps to maximise impact for racially minoritised mentees and support institutional EDI objectives.

References

Bhopal, K. (2019). Success against the odds: the effect of mentoring on the careers of senior black and minority ethnic academics in the UK. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 68(1), 79–95. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00071005.2019.1581127>

Gibney, E. (2022, December 14). How UK science is failing Black researchers — in nine stark charts. *Nature*. Retrieved from: <https://www.nature.com/immersive/d41586-022-04386-w/index.html>

Harris, L. C., & Ogbonna, E. (2023). Equal opportunities but unequal mentoring? The perceptions of mentoring by Black and minority ethnic academics in the UK university sector. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 33(4), 940–956. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1748-8583.12492>

SAATH: South Asian Advancement of Talent and Heritage

Salma Baz, Nadia Zakir, Sylvian Jesudoss, Muhammad Rahman and Nora Musyoka (University of Leicester)

SAATH is a word in South Asian languages meaning “with,” “accompanying,” and “together” is proposed as a dedicated forum to support students and staff from South Asian backgrounds at the University of Leicester. The name symbolises collective belonging, mutual support, and shared progression. The University of Leicester Equality Information Report (2025) shows that 64.2% of students identify as minority ethnic. In 2023/24, the largest student demographic groups were Asian or Asian British (37.4%) and White (33.1%) (University of Leicester Equality Information Report 2025). Despite these figures, there is currently no dedicated forum supporting the aspirations of South Asian students and staff, such as Black Excellence. SAATH takes inspiration from Black Excellence (UBE), a University of Leicester School of Business initiative that brings together students, academics, and professionals to support students of Black Heritage through equity and inclusivity programmes, mentoring, career advice, networking opportunities, and special programmes a University of Leicester School of Business initiative that brings together students, academics, and professionals to support students of Black Heritage through equity and inclusivity programmes, mentoring, career advice, networking opportunities, and special programs to help close the Awarding and Satisfaction gaps.

Building on these models, SAATH aims to offer culturally informed and inclusive support tailored to the diverse experiences of South Asian communities. Research on UK medical graduates vs International Medical Graduates (IMGs) from BAME backgrounds highlights two key findings relevant beyond medical education: a lack of structured support systems in UK medical schools for ethnic minority students which negatively impacts career progression and wellbeing. The second finding indicates that ethnic minority groups are not homogeneous; their needs are diverse and require intersectionality-informed approaches.

SAATH seeks to address this gap at the ULSB by establishing a research-informed, community-driven platform that acknowledges the significant presence and diverse needs of South Asian students and

staff. The forum will aim to provide structured mentoring, peer-to-peer support, opportunities for networking and professional development, culturally sensitive wellbeing initiatives, and a consultative space to inform institutional EDI policy and practice. By fostering connection, representation, and support, SAATH can enhance the inclusivity and equity of the university environment.

The forum embodies its name by advancing together with the South Asian community at the University of Leicester. The establishment of SAATH aligns with the University's strategic commitments to equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Session 4B: Valuing Voices workshop

Roisin Blackburn, Lucy Cheseldine, Fleur Hughes and Alison Goodwin (University of York)

The Valuing Voices team has proactively created equitable collaborations with global partners. These spaces have afforded new opportunities for listening to those too often silenced. We have directly addressed barriers for the global majority in higher education action, through a) working with international partners from the start of the project; b) funding Valuing Voices seed projects to address global inequities; c) engaging in collaborative research activities that inform a shared output through the Valuing Voices online tool. Our proposed workshop will inspire delegates to challenge assumptions of what equitable team dynamics look like by considering cultural differences, team leadership models, and case studies.

Firstly, we will explore difficult conversations that we have engaged in to find equitable working practices with our global south partners, Mahidol University, Thailand. Our experiences will kickstart discussion with delegates about the assumptions that genuinely equitable global collaborations should avoid.

Next, we will consider models for team equity, which we as a team have experimented with, including adopting a distributed leadership model. This dynamic empowers colleagues across all levels, rather than senior leaders controlling the choices of direct reports, and is shared within the Valuing Voices tool.

Our workshop will also focus on case studies from Valuing Voices-funded seed projects. These will provide insight into the specific challenges that researchers from the Global Majority face such as financial burden and administrative bureaucracy. We will share the recommendations our projects have made to tackle these barriers.

Engaging in knowledge exchange about how to build equitable partnerships will encourage delegates to reflect on their own practices and offer a chance to share best practice. Participants will leave with practical ideas in implementing new ways of enhancing equity within their working environment.

Session 5: Keynote

In Conversation with...

Neil Chakraborti (University of Leicester)

Neil Chakraborti is a Professor in Criminology, Director of the Institute for Policy, and Co-Director of the Centre for Hate Studies at the University of Leicester. He has published extensively within the fields of hate crime, hostility and violence towards minoritised communities, and has been commissioned by a diverse range of funding bodies including Amnesty International, the Economic and Social Research Council, the Equality and Human Rights Commission and the Leverhulme Trust to lead research studies which have shaped policy and scholarship.

Neil is a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences and series editor of *Palgrave Hate Studies*. He has received prestigious awards for his work from a variety of sources, including the Royal Television Society, Learning on Screen, the British Society of Criminology, the President's Award from the University of Leicester and a Hero of Leicestershire Award. Neil recently completed a major nationwide research study entitled the [Rural Racism Project: Towards an Inclusive Countryside](#), and is currently leading [A Catalyst for Change: Transforming Responses to Harassment in Higher Education](#) which examines the complex landscape of harassment within higher education institutions.

Poster presentations

Inclusive Research Hub

Luke Burguete (University of Bristol)

This poster introduces the Inclusive Research Hub, an open, interdisciplinary resource designed to support learning, practice development, and collective change in research culture. The resource responds to a persistent gap in the sector: although awareness of race equality and inclusion in research is increasing, many researchers, support staff, and institutional leaders remain unsure where to begin, or encounter fragmented guidance focused on isolated issues. The Inclusive Research Hub offers a structured starting point that acknowledges the breadth of approaches required, bringing together key concepts, frameworks, tools, and case studies in one accessible space.

The Hub takes a holistic approach to research culture, recognising that it is shaped across all stages of the research process—from project design and funding decisions to data practices, authorship, leadership, and dissemination. Rather than treating research culture as an abstract or purely behavioural concern, the Hub addresses culture through research practice, starting from the premise that many of the issues experienced within research environments are intimately connected to how research is organised, valued, and carried out in practice.

This poster outlines the Hub's motivation, aims, and overall structure, highlighting its core thematic areas. A central aim of the Inclusive Research Hub is to act as a platform for sector-wide learning and collaboration. The poster therefore invites engagement with the resource, including use within research teams and institutions, feedback on its content and structure, and contributions of case

studies, tools, or perspectives. In doing so, it seeks to support ongoing dialogue on how inclusive research practices can contribute to more equitable and sustainable research cultures.

'An Island of Strangers': Doctoral Experiences within UK Higher Education

Fareeha Akhtar (Queen Mary University of London)

This poster offers an insight into how global power structures, academic discourse and identity intersect particularly in the case of UK higher education. It aims to understand how Eurocentric hegemony is perpetuated through the everyday, within a system that also demands individualistic thought. It also aims to understand the results of closing borders, tightening visa policies and far-right movements that are actively pushing students from the imperial peripheries away from academia. This poster interrogates the ambivalent space where resistance, complicity, and survival exist. Whether marginalisation is as straight-forward as it seems and if the institutional structures that demand academic agency even allow for it?

International PhD students exist in paradoxical spaces where they are asked to bring global perspectives but are marginalised by the Eurocentric epistemologies and immigration regimes. Applying methods of critical autoethnography and borrowing from the storytelling methods of Black feminist scholars, I use case studies from students across the UK, this chapter aims to expand on doctoral students' from the imperial peripheries, particularly from formerly colonised contexts, and their lived experiences within universities across the UK. It seeks to unpack the various visa, financial, and job precarity that they are faced with in a system that 'Others' them, especially with the recent race riots in the UK as well as the racist rhetoric peddled by the UK government. Through Gayatri Spivak's seminal essay on 'Can the subaltern speak', I theorise whether the higher education system in the UK creates a subaltern and if so, does it allow them to speak?

INKLUDE

Mitul Mehta, Giouliana Kadra, Jasdeep Singh, Tobias Yu-Kiener (King's College London)

Women and individuals from ethnically minoritised groups experience significant barriers to career success at UK Higher Education institutions, and even more at senior levels. The INKLUDE project at King's College London, acknowledging the cultural and systemic biases causing inequities at all levels, is working to address and mitigate some of these factors, with work packages on leadership, policy and practice and developing current staff. The THRIVE initiative is working on developing current staff. It has empowered women and individuals from minoritised ethnic groups and educated leaders to commit to a long-term positive and sustainable culture change.

INKLUDE to THRIVE (ItT) and ALLIANCE to THRIVE (AtT) form two complementary parts. They work in tandem, and respectively target those who are often under-represented at senior levels in research and Professional Services, and existing leaders committed to change.

ItT consists of a co-produced series of structured workshops offering a unique professional and personal development pathway aiming to support participants' careers and foster a more inclusive culture. During the first two sessions participants explore their values, priorities, and identities. Those discoveries form the foundation for more practical sessions on pitching skills, strategic

development, and networking. The programme has received overwhelmingly positive feedback from the THRIVE community.

The lived experiences shared during ItT, directly inform AtT, a workshop targeting senior and executive leaders. In engaging with and reflecting on the ItT testimonials and considering the leverage that their position brings, leaders are equipped with the tools to enhance their allyship. It is this unique combination of empowering and giving a voice to women and individuals from ethnically minoritised groups, on the one hand, and having leaders to listen and consider what they personally can do to enable and enact a culture change, on the other hand, that makes the THRIVE initiative so targeted and impactful.

Inclusive Placement and Employment Opportunities for Diverse Engineering Graduates

Nada Yusuf, Elizabeth Ratcliffe and Laura Justham (Loughborough University)

The research focuses on the problem of inequitable career outcomes of diverse engineering graduates in the UK due to inequitable placement and employment opportunities based on gender, race, socioeconomic status, and disability. Currently, there are no contextual placement and employment-related endeavours within mainstream engineering higher education. Overall, research suggests that policymakers should pay more attention to graduates' extensive career choices and have less confidence in the fundamental notion that 'choosing to study a STEM subject leads to entering STEM employment' (Thompson & Brewster, 2023). As such, the study aims to develop equitable placement and employment strategies for diverse engineering graduates and to understand how universities and employers can work in partnership to co-create them. The research uses methods such as interviews, surveys, and participatory workshops to understand the problem from the perspectives of the diverse engineering graduates at Loughborough University's engineering schools. It also collects the perspectives of the career services staff and the engineering industry. The research aims to deliver interventions and a co-creation model that can be adopted by engineering schools and the engineering industry to create transformational change in the career outcomes of diverse engineering graduates.

Inclusive Research Environment Achieved through Culture Change

Fi Wood, Aaron Andrews, Cleo White, Emma Angell, Nysha Givans (University of Leicester)

Leicester is a superdiverse city, with around 60 per cent of the population being from the Global Majority (i.e. a minority ethnic background). While that diversity is reflected in our undergraduate student population, at each stage in academic progression there is a reduction in the proportion of staff from the Global Majority. I-REACCH is a Wellcome-funded project which aims to create a more positive and inclusive research culture at the University of Leicester to address this 'leaky pipeline'. Our interventions focus on (1) adapting recruitment practices to make them more inclusive; (2) creating a Career Atlas to support researchers applying for jobs; (3) organising and supporting activities to promote a more positive and inclusive research culture; (4) co-creating an Empathic Leadership toolkit; and (5) evaluating everything to find out what works.