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Getting to Know Decoloniality Through Dialogue: A Critical Reflection from Students and Educators

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What this chapter is all about:

> The University of Glasgow acknowledges that during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it received some gifts and bequests from persons who may have benefitted from the proceeds of slavery. (Virdee et al., 2021)

As part of one of the largest universities in the UK, and as an Ancient, research-intensive institution, the University of Glasgow Decolonising the Curriculum (DtC) Community of Practice (CoP) covers an incredible breadth of practitioners, and the challenges of bringing together the ideas, issues, challenges and needs of this body of students and staff around decoloniality can feel vast. But this breadth of practice also allows for a rich exchange of ideas through dialogue while engaging students and staff with the issues surrounding what decolonising education means.

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The CoP creates a multidisciplinary partnership, with the assumption that decolonising beliefs, concepts and perspectives differ between disciplines (Fernandes, 2021). As a consequence, the CoP aims to produce multi-sided, multiversal knowledge, by engaging through dialogue with students, academics and practitioners outside of academia through a variety of activities and media which include the collective creation of reading lists, online workshops and The Pluriversity Podcast while influencing not only the University's educational practices but also Scottish government education policy.

This chapter critically reflects on practice from the perspectives of CoP volunteers and co-leads. Coming from different backgrounds and disciplines, we are all united in our journey to deepen our understanding of decoloniality, decolonising higher education, and what this means from the perspective of practitioners working in a Global North institution with historic links to colonialism and slavery while also engaging in dialogue with people across disciplines and the Global North/South divide.

Who we are / Our positionalities

We, the authors of this chapter, bring experiences and perspectives that range widely: we are students, academics, and professional service staff, with a range of disciplinary backgrounds including but not limited to the humanities, social, natural and mathematical sciences.

As of 2024, collectively, we are two students and six members of staff working in Higher Education. Dustin is an educator whose work sits at the intersections of academic, critical, and digital literacies, learning design and digital education. He is a neurodiverse dual-national migrant originally from Dallas, Texas, USA, the ancestral home of many dispossessed Indigenous Peoples including the Jumanos, Wichita, Kiikappoi (Kickapoo) and Takakoni among others.[1] He works full-time and studies a doctorate part-time; he is racialized as white or other because his Persian-American heritage portrays him in a way that doesn't neatly fit into a specific racialized 'box'. Aniela is a Polish woman in her 20s. Born in the US, she grew up in Poland and Thailand. She graduated from the University of Glasgow in 2023 with a degree in Politics with Quantitative Methods, also benefiting from the pre-Brexit free undergraduate studies for European students. With a keen interest in social inequalities, she will be pursuing an MSc in evidence-based policy evaluation at the University of Oxford. Colette is a native Scot racialized as white, raised in a typical Scottish working-class family, who benefitted from Scotland's free

[1] See https://native-land.ca/ for further details.

higher education system for home students. She completed her undergraduate degree and PhD at the University of Glasgow and is currently a full-time Lecturer in Statistics at the University. Nighet, an EDI Policy Adviser at the University, is a woman in her 50s, mother and grandmother, a British citizen, of Pakistani heritage, who has chosen to work part-time at the University to have a better work-life balance. Her doctoral thesis focused on young people, ethnicity, identity, belonging, and transitions through the Scottish education system. Sam is a British national, racialized also as white, whose class identity is complex. They moved to Scotland a decade and a half ago, and currently work as a Research Fellow in Physics in the University. Laura is a writer and tutor, currently working with students on employability and transferable skills on a condensed, full-time, fixed-term contract. She is white and is originally from the West Midlands (UK), raised in a middle-class family. Michèle is a French national born in the French island of La Réunion (Indian Ocean), and her ethnic origins include a mixture of White, Asian (Indian) and African. She completed a PhD in Linguistics at the University of Essex (UK) and has been a full-time Lecturer in Languages and Education at the University of Glasgow since 2019.

Central concepts

- Concept 1—decolonising education in the context of UK higher education
- Concept 2—communities of practice
- Concept 3—creating spaces for dialogue
- Concept 4—podcasting as a site for dialogue transcending disciplinary boundaries
- Concept 5—the impact of non-hierarchical co-working and collaborations

Chapter structure

1 Introduction

In this chapter, we attempt to demonstrate the significance of dialogue as central to deepening our understanding of decolonising higher education. We reflect upon our involvement within a Decolonising the Curriculum Community of Practice whose focus is on developing and deepening understandings of decolonising higher education within our local setting at a large and ancient university in the Global North. We also reflect on what decolonising higher education means from our perspectives both as individuals and as a growing collective. We argue that the dialogues created by interdisciplinary and multifaceted communities of practice are key to developing and deepening understandings of decolonising higher education while supporting others to 'turn a new leaf' in research (Bagga-Gupta, 2023; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020).

As Dr Munyaradzi Mushonga[2] (2023), a senior lecturer from the University of the Free State (South Africa), highlighted in our own 'The Pluriversity Podcast', history and context shape what decolonising the curriculum entails for a specific country or institution. With this in mind, we first establish the historical context of the University of Glasgow, addressing how spaces for dialogue have been created, and how this context contributes to the ongoing dialogue between members of the community of practice around decoloniality. We also reflect on how the creation of dialogues within a community of practice, alongside it and externally, before concluding with imaginings for the future.

Inspired by the work of Sheehy and Nayak (2020), we engage with our creativity and discomfort by approaching the writing of this chapter in a way that is more reflective and dialogic and that challenges normative productions of texts that we regularly engage with across our disciplines. We find inspiration in their approach, underpinned by Black feminist activism, by attempting to create dialogue with one another in a way that 'constructs an imaginary conversation' between critical pedagogy and decolonial thinkers… across a temporal and spatial spectrum that juxtaposes a range of visions, standpoints and theoretical approaches' (Sheehy & Nayak, 2020: 235). This approach, which mixes conversations with each other and our reflections, provides a framework for telling our story of getting to know decoloniality through a community of practice.

We use the following short forms and words for phrases we commonly refer to:

[2] Please refer to Episode 3 of The Pluriversity Podcast: https://bit.ly/pluripod.

- DtC CoP: The University of Glasgow Decolonising the Curriculum University of Practice
- CoP: we use this to refer to communities of practice generally
- we/the authors: we use these words when speaking as a collective

1.1 Community of Practice

The concept of a Community of Practice was first developed by Lave and Wenger (1991) and is defined as a group of people sharing goals, activities, and knowledge in the context of a given practice. CoPs are a key concept for a social theory of learning where the latter is seen as a collective endeavour that takes place through shared experiences and practice (Wenger, 2000). Two key aims of CoPs are thus knowledge sharing and knowledge production (Paavola et al., 2004), which are achieved through members' participation, where the latter may take place face-to-face and/or through technology (Nistor et al., 2015; Yang et al., 2010). Given the size of the University, which has nearly 10,000 employees across its four colleges and professional services, the use of technology (specifically Microsoft Teams and Zoom) currently enables the 190+ members of the DtC CoP to connect online. Members are interested in, among other issues, identifying colonial injustice in institutional structures and the impact of the history of subject disciplines on current practices.

The DtC CoP recognises the tensions and complexities of undertaking such work, namely:

- Increased collaboration and support among educators;
- Sharing of resources, ideas, and good practices;
- Developing a shared understanding of what decolonisation means and how it can be implemented in the curriculum;
- Fostering inclusive and respectful participation;
- Increased collaboration between students and staff.

The focus of the DtC CoP is on sharing and building practice around decolonisation and anti-racism in teaching and learning through collective activity. At the time of this writing in 2024, the DtC CoP is co-led by authors Dustin, Colette, Sam, Laura, and Michèle along with students and colleagues from the University. The horizontal leadership structure is particularly important as it supports an equitable working practice that is not based on hierarchy and allows everyone who would like to contribute to do so on an equal footing. This also reflects the ethos of how the CoP works:

traditional status or rank does not preclude involvement, nor does it prejudice participation. As such, the DtC CoP differs from traditional academic CoPs. Indeed, participants of academic CoPs have been argued to fall into three categories—experts, intermediates, and novices—who may have a central or peripheral level of participation based on these categories (Boylan, 2010; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Nistor et al., 2015).

Academic CoPs are often built around experts, namely senior scholars, who benefit from a certain authority and who typically have a central level of participation by being involved in most activities and those with a higher level of complexity (Gourlay, 2011; Nistor et al., 2015). By contrast, intermediate or novice participants typically learn from experts and/or peers and tend to have a peripheral level of participation by being involved in fewer activities with a lesser level of complexity (Nistor et al., 2015). Unlike typical academic CoPs, in the DtC CoP, there are no authoritative figures, and novices have had central levels of participation in various knowledge sharing and production activities. We collaborate as equals, and from our experience, through dialogue, active listening, and empathy, this has worked well for us. Lastly, we wish to extend our thanks to co-lead Julia Bohlmann whose participation helped propel us further. We also wish to dedicate this chapter to the late Professor Srabani Maitra (University of Glasgow School of Education) whose work in the decolonial space should inspire us all.

1.2 Our Journey

Decolonising the curriculum is not a new phenomenon at the University of Glasgow, a public research university. Still, the ongoing institutional-wide approach started officially with the Reparative Justice and Abolition of Slavery report (Mullen & Newman, 2018) that emerged from the findings following the initial investigation into this topic by Glasgow City Council's museums and the University of Glasgow archives. The recommendations from the report led to the naming of a new learning and teaching building, ten James McCune Smith funded doctoral scholarships,[3] and a lecture series to honour our famous alumnus, the first African American graduate in medicine, James McCune Smith (Greene, 2021). Equally important is the Beniba Centre for Slavery Studies,[4] which continues the research on slavery and reparation. The interrogation of the University's history by the University of Glasgow's archivists and researchers has revealed the privilege we hold as an institution,

[3] https://www.gla.ac.uk/scholarships/mccune-smith/.

[4] https://www.gla.ac.uk/research/az/slavery/.

and how this is embedded into our culture and our practices, and the steps we must take to acknowledge and address the imbalance.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) 'Universities Challenged' (2019) and Universities UK (UUK, 2023) report findings showed racism, and racial harassment were a part of the lived experiences of ethnic minority staff and students. A progress report (Universities UK, 2023) was published by the UUK to identify institutions' commitment to tackling racism with their staff and student communities.

The EHRC report led to the Scottish Funding Council commissioning a Scottish tertiary education sector-wide programme of work 'Tackling Racism on Campus' (AdvanceHE, 2020) to create a suite of resources to raise awareness and provide guidance across Scottish Colleges and the Higher Education sector. A steering group of ethnic minority academics, professional practitioners, and postgraduate students with lived experience of racism, led the work through the creation of webinars, training packs, videos, and diagnostic tools which were downloadable, accessible, and adaptable to individual institutions. The pressing need to address these issues became more pertinent following the unlawful death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota, United States of America, and the third iteration of Black Lives Matter (#BLM) in May 2020.

The #BLM movement's focus was once again on state systems and on education systems as key mechanisms reinforcing racism and oppression across the globe, echoing the calls of the Rhodes Must Fall movement originating in South Africa in March of 2015. This call for racial justice and equity provided further need to ensure that the work we, as employees and students of a university, were part of was aligned with the University values of embedding integrity and truth; doing the right thing; and taking responsibility to play our part as an inclusive community; actively advocating for diversity through a commitment to anti-racism by the university's senior leadership team.

Against this backdrop and following the publication of the EHRC report, the University of Glasgow commissioned an internal investigation where 500 ethnic minority students were surveyed, and 20 members of staff interviewed. The 'Understanding Racism and Transforming University Cultures' (URTUC, Virdee et al., 2021) report led to the creation of an action plan, senior leadership support through a set of objectives, and the hiring of a full-time member of staff to put the action plan into motion. Equally important was to reiterate the importance of innovation and problem-solving, leading by example, and learning from our mistakes.

The report raised questions such as how we wish to be remembered, and what we wish to be remembered for. The creation of a CoP was a recommendation which came out of the URTUC report and was part of the action plan, where it was stated that 'our curriculum and learning community will thrive when it is reflective of global perspectives and race equality is embedded' (Virdee et al., 2021). One route was to build a strand of decolonising the curriculum into the next Learning and Teaching strategy, and through this to shift and build understanding and appreciation. Conversations started with interested academics and postgraduate students in December 2021, and the Community of Practice was launched in September 2021. Our journey has been one that has at times been a bit *shoogly*, a Scottish word that means shaky or unsteady. With different perspectives around what decolonising higher education/the curriculum means and different levels of awareness, acknowledgement and cognizance, the experience has not always been a smooth one.

2 Knowledge Production, Sharing, and Dialogue

Through the DtC CoP, we are embarking upon the beginnings of a journey that involves 're-thinking, un-learning, and re-learning' (Bagga-Gupta, 2023), encompassing all experience and epistemologies in order to create a more equitable world that recognises the multiversal, messy, complexity of being human.

Research-intensive institutions' traditional publishing norms and pedagogical practices can be exclusionary and white-centred (Woods & Wood, 2023). Specifically, there is a tendency to focus on written outputs and written forms of assessments. Many of these are often focused on the individual's performance and are single-authored, taking on a so-called 'God-eye' view that is allegedly objective and representative of hegemonic Eurocentric ways of knowing and being (Grosfoguel, 2013; Wynter, 2003). In addition, genres of writing are underpinned by hegemonic, canonical norms, or in other words, what is considered accepted in specific genres is underpinned by dominant and taken-for-granted ways of thinking which require critical consideration (Bagga-Gupta, 2024: 18). In a world that faces a mixture of ecological, economic, and environmental catastrophes, we challenge these ideas by asking, why should learning, teaching, and research be defined and practiced as a primarily individual endeavour?

Educators who wish to create concrete practices from decolonial thinking rhetoric will likely encounter challenges (Castro Romero & Capella Palacios, 2020). However, dialogue informed by decolonial thinking is key in helping to understand, imagine, and create ways towards a decolonised education and society. The Rhodes Must Fall and subsequent Black Lives Matter movements reinvigorated dialogue around injustices faced by racialized peoples, especially those injustices that higher education and education generally (re)produce. These events have, among others, generated dialogue that has steadily made Global North academics aware of 'border thinking' (Mignolo, 2010) and fissures in education and society caused by coloniality and the colonial matrix of power (Grosfoguel, 2011). This has, in turn, prompted some students and scholars to listen and take note and seek out opportunities to better understand decolonial thinking. Barriers may include lack of interest, discomfort, difficulty in engaging with the vast and growing literature or the perception that these initiatives are not relevant in some disciplines.

Part of this process of developing an understanding of decolonial higher education has included the important steps of both engaging in dialogue and reflection (Zavala, 2016). In some respects, this is illustrative of what Paulo Freire (1972/2000) terms 'conscientisation', which entails 'critically examining our realities to guide our acting in the world, individually and collectively' (Castro Romero & Capella Palacios, 2020).

We recognise that language matters when creating spaces for dialogue, as this ties into meaning-making and sense-making. Specifically, we seek to consider the taken-for-granted assumptions around modality, spatiality, relationality, and embodiment (Bagga-Gupta, 2023) of the knowledge which we are actively engaged in creating. In particular, we recognise that knowledge production and distribution can be problematic when it supports a (re)production of Eurocentric epistemologies and ontologies without critical consideration. In addition, we recognise that building multiversal/pluriversal perspectives requires collaboration that queries traditional, top-down hierarchical structures in order to understand and elevate voices, while breaking down disciplinary silos and re-examining so-called natural boundaries (Bagga-Gupta, 2023).

Dialogue is a method with the potential to achieve this in the way that it supports a multiplicity of voices, ideas, and perspectives, all brought together through a mutual interest in exploration. Through this multiplicity, there is also a lack of fixity, as understandings can continue to change and develop as long as the conversation is ongoing. In this way, as Chris Sheehy and Suryia Nayak (2020: 236) suggest, a "transgression of fixed, ideological borders" can

take place and a kind of experiential knowledge can be created, a kind that is predicated by sharing and bridging, and so simultaneously supportive of the dissemination of this knowledge.

2.1 Creating Spaces for dialogue and conversation

Within a hegemonic Eurocentric time–space, cultures with written systems of knowledge are seen as advanced and developed; however, this, in turn, presupposes primarily oral traditions as regressive and less developed (Milojevič, 2005).[5] We recognise the need to recenter oral communication which exercises the critical faculties of communities by promoting and creating spaces for dialogue and conversation around an issue, problem, or dilemma. For our community, this means organising events where dialogue and conversation are centred as much as possible.

For clarity, we, the authors, understand *conversation* and *dialogue* as sometimes different, but very often overlapping modes of oral communication. For our purposes here, conversation has more informal connotations, whereas dialogue might infer discussion around a specific issue or problem. Both conversation and dialogue occur throughout this chapter.

In a very small space of time, the DtC CoP has created several collaboratively produced resources alongside some central support from the university. In particular, we have:

- Co-created a reading and resource list[6] in November 2022 for students and scholars at the University, and beyond, as a starting point for their academic professional practices as scholars, and to generate further discussions and follow-on activities for the community. We recognise this can expand to encompass considerations around wider life practices.
- Collaborated and facilitated two cross-institutional online workshops, with resulting recordings as resources moving forward.[7]

[5] We recognise that suggesting recentring oral communication is a bias towards oral communication at the expense of deaf-hearing humans who use signed languages; equally, this privileges written language as transcribing is one method of rendering oral communication into another format. This format, however, rarely considers signed language implications. Further reading on this topic can be found in Bagga-Gupta, S. (2019). Languaging across time and space in educational contexts. Language Studies and Deaf Studies. *Deafness & Education International*, *21*(2–3), 65–73. https://doi.org/10.1080/14643154.2019.1594081.

[6] The reading and resource list can be accessed here: https://bit.ly/UofGDtCReadingList.

[7] The recordings can be accessed at: https://bit.ly/UofGDtCChannel.

- Co-created The Pluriversity Podcast series[8] that offers voices and views from different Global South and Global North perspectives on the topic of decolonising education, which launched in September 2023. The DtC CoP received a small pot of funding from the University of Glasgow which has allowed them to recruit two student interns to support the creation of the podcast.

The creation of these resources began within a dialogic space, and enabled colleagues to engage with and contribute to ongoing conversations on and around decoloniality, as well as to signpost colleagues to what is taking place across the wider sector. These are also spaces for reflection where we consider what is included in our learning, and what is erased.

> If we were all taught about colonial history in school, we'd learn at a young age that many of the people who came here from colonies and former colonies did so as citizens. (Goodfellow, 2019)

The quote from Maya Goodfellow (writer and academic, specialising in relationships between race, bordering and capitalism) highlights how the missing pieces of history at the outset of our educational journey impacts on how we see the world, its people, languages and knowledge, and how it is prioritised, and where Bagga-Gupta (2024, pp. 85–86) takes this into the current context and how this impacts our day to day through 'ahistorical gazing' and 're-membering'.

Bringing together a plurality of voices in both the production of and the resources themselves, has helped us explore and query the languages of institutions and the tertiary education sector more broadly, both in terms of the vocabulary of decoloniality to support the ongoingness of this work, but also to identify the ways in which the language of our home institutions, and the academic sector, can prove problematic. In the following subsections, we expand on the experiences of creating the reading list and other resources through reflective dialogues, which explore the ways we have created spaces for dialogue, the initial impact of these choices, and our motivations for doing so.

[8] The Pluriversity Podcast can be accessed via Spotify at: https://bit.ly/pluripod.

2.2 A Dialogue with a Reading and Resource List

Paulo Freire:
"Banking education inhibits creativity and domesticates (although it cannot completely destroy) the intentionality of consciousness by isolating consciousness from the world, thereby denying people their ontological and historical vocation of becoming more fully human." (Freire et al., 2000: 83)

Dustin:
If banking education stunts the humanity of people through a prescribed education, whether this might include set and 'authoritative' readings of only the so-called greats, then one way to address this is to create a collaborative, living resource. This living collection is shared across the borders and boundaries of subjects and disciplines that can be modified over time dynamically so as not to fall into the trap of (re)producing coloniality by becoming another set of 'authoritative' texts. Developing a reading and resource list for decolonising education is just a beginning *that needs revisiting and revising*.

Aniela:
A good start for me [exploring decoloniality] was reading a paper by Moosavi (2023); it pushed me to look at how much attention was given to the knowledge acquired and analysed by western academics, compared to the academics from non-Western regions. Unfortunately, apart from the courses that were clearly focused on inequalities, or specifically on the non-western regions of the world, overall I would need to admit that the curriculum was very much focused around the history of not general political thought but of western political thought.

Hind Elhinnawy:
Although the focus on decolonisation seems recent, demands for the decolonisation of education have a long and broad history connected to post- and anti-colonialism and making visible subaltern identities, particularly in the global South (Winter et al., 2022). These movements argue for a new conception of the University, grounded in challenging dominant ideological positions that privilege particular voices, questioning the economic dependence, exploitation erasure and knowledge/power relations in formerly colonised countries (Shahjahan et al, 2022). (Elhinnawy, 2023: 666)

Aniela:
When reading more on the topic [of decoloniality], I started realising that a decolonial academic future is not just about involving more voices from diverse geographical and ethnic backgrounds but primarily it is about asking completely new questions, going away from what we know and looking at

it from a completely new perspective. These readings and analysis started to make me realise the power of asking questions and of the people who we ask these questions to.

Katherine Hubbard:
"We typically provide students with reading lists, but may fail to consider whether they have the skills to engage with the materials listed. This is particularly true within STEM disciplines; scientific text is characterised by being written in the abstract sense, being very concept dense and using high levels of technical terminology (Fang, 2005)." (Hubbard, 2021: 42)

Colette:
Reading lists are not something that I am accustomed to. Within mathematical sciences, we often think in terms of concepts rather than people. I believe this is part of the difficulty in subjects typically considered as 'abstract' in engaging with decoloniality.

Sam:
I also think it is to our detriment, in the physical sciences, that we do eschew reading lists to such an extent: critical evaluation of a field only comes from exposure to, and engagement with, long-form viewpoints of others, not abstracted concepts.

Laura:
Perhaps when we consider people, with embodied voices, as opposed to concepts, we are more able to converse; a dialogue can take place, as opposed to a soliloquy. It reminds me of Alice Walker's hunt for writer and anthropologist Zore Neale Hurston in 'Looking for Zora' (2005), to find her grave and mark it, to establish Hurston as 'A Genius of the South', and creating a moment "when greater disciplines are born."

2.3 Cross-institutional dialogues

This section is intentionally written as a dialogue with explicit use of "quotes" out of the flow of a posited semi-fictional narrative to avoid creating a fictive position that is unfair to those we disagree with. In contrast to the majority of the text, this section includes viewpoints in *contention* with the authors' positionalities.

Colette:
The primary question I have is: Should a decolonisation framework be appropriate to the mathematical sciences? This specific question led to two workshops hosted by the DtC CoP that aimed to open dialogue within

and between disciplines. Both workshops were online with 13 presentations each with 225 people registering for the first and 172 people registering for the second from across the world. Both covered a broad range of topics such as discussion around student-staff partnership, decolonisation in student support services and supervision, including speakers from computing science, religious studies, geography, mathematics, finance, and engineering.

Within the mathematical sciences, motivations came from comparing theoretical statistics to its application. If the interpretation of data is a component of statistical analysis, then we cannot separate theory from personal interpretation. As a student, I was often faced with the ideology that statisticians should "let the data speak for themselves" dismissing that interpretation involves an explanation of the analysis of data, dependent on the interpreter.

> "there are no innocent data scientists" (Rickert, 2013)

The knowledge that is being created depends on the person asking the question. The person asking the question is in a privileged position to be able to ask these questions. My access to higher education was the result of the Scottish government in 1999 abolishing tuition fees for home students. This is a form of privilege that is geographical rather than derived from social class, gender, or race.

Sam:
I did take out student loans for my undergraduate degree (I was in the first cohort of fee-paying students in Britain in 1999). In Scotland, however, students from *International* backgrounds still pay very expensive fees for access to our Universities—a relationship that is itself Colonial or Neocolonial with respect to the marketing of the Western university as an especially privileged place of academic kudos.

In any case, even within the scope of Scottish citizens attending Scottish Universities, free education *doesn't* lead to equalisation of intake by gender, social class, or ethnicity: first you have to believe you *can* have the privilege before you go for it (and there are other barriers to higher education—most obviously grade requirements—which are themselves influenced by many societal inequalities).

> "scientific knowledge is objective, but scientists are not" (Blackie & Adendorff, 2020)

Colette:
One aspect to studying statistics, which I believe differs from maths and science disciplines, is the understanding that all conclusions are effectively wrong. One of the more commonly quoted sentiments in my experiences is by British statistician George Box.

> "all models are wrong, but some are useful"

Such a stance creates acceptance of uncertainty, not only in terms of what constitutes data but in the application of the statistical framework. One of the many benefits to statistics is understanding methodological limitations and reflecting on alternative perspectives.

Sam:
Meanwhile, in Physics, we tend to declare—at least to early undergraduates—our models, *also* due to statistical interpretation of empirical data, as "Laws of Nature": inviolate and inherently true. So, the idea of a non-universal perspective on reality is challenging. Whilst postgraduates tend to get exposed to a more flexible viewpoint, I've met examples who do implicitly believe in a Platonist-style interpretation of their models—that the "mathematics really exists" at a level underpinning the gross reality we see.

Colette:
Shahjahan et al. (2022) interpret decolonising the curriculum in various ways, for instance "undoing colonialism and disrupting colonial knowledge creation", or "acknowledging and understanding the impact of historical knowledge construction".

Identifying knowledge, to either disrupt or understand it, necessarily involves delving into historic colonial knowledge creation. In the context of mathematical sciences, the relevance is maybe not so clear.

> "mathematics is the language of the universe. It does not change depending on your standpoint. … a typical maths degree doesn't need to dwell too much on the history of mathematics or the lives of mathematicians" (Sturdy, 2022)

While it's true that an undergraduate or postgraduate degree programme in the mathematical sciences will not provide students with historical expertise, I believe that the relevance of history impacts students in such a way that cannot be ignored. In the context of statistical methodology, in particular the development of modern statistics in the late 19th to early twentieth century. While it seems unreasonable to attribute the foundations of a discipline to

one group of people, modern statistics is commonly attributed to Europe, more precisely.

> "Modern statistical theory originated in England, and is today advancing faster there than in any other count" (Hotelling, 1930)

Modern statistics refers to the branch of applied mathematics that extracts meaningful information from data. While it seems plausible to "let the data speak from themselves", the development and advancements of some methodologies such as correlation and regression (two of the most widely used applications of applied statistics today) would not have been possible if scientific knowledge was truly objective.

> "In comparing the worth of different races, I shall make frequent use of the law of deviation from an average" (Galton, 1869)

Similarly, Gödel's theorems on the incompleteness of mathematics.

> "some statements in mathematics are inherently 'undecidable'" (Smullyan, 1992)

Sam:
The tendency of 'pure' mathematics to respond to its own impurity by retreating from the world is a hobbyhorse of mine. What Gödel showed is that mathematics (and any logical system) can never be a self-supporting Universal Language—it's always contingent on an *axiomatic context* decided *outside* of itself. (Or, in other words, Bacon and al-Haytham were right, and Descartes and Plato wrong: you can't simply logic your way to knowledge, you need to start from the observations.)

Surely this applies as critically to social and cultural contexts as it does to mere choices of axioms—there can't be a universal "language" without interaction with the world, and *all* of that world…

…and an acceptance that in some cases, the social contexts that encouraged (and were encouraged by) a branch of research were regressive from our perspectives, such as C19 Statistics (and, arguably, much of astronomy as well, benefiting from the ability to build telescopes on remote colonised land).

Colette:
The specific purpose of historic exploration should be defined.

> "But if there is any maths lecturer hostile to the idea of spending at least a little precious lecture time on humanising their subject, or is unappreciative of the fuzzy and complicated origins of most mathematics, we haven't met them." (Marty, 2023)

While I don't believe that the origins and development of the subject needs a more accurate picture, academic mathematicians should know the origins of their subject and how it was developed. The question is what should be included in "precious lecture time" to ensure that the next generation of mathematicians and statisticians are included and to fix a broken 'pipeline'. The 'pipeline' refers to the journey through education to graduation and then into the job market. The notion of a 'leaky pipeline' in STEM subjects somewhat over-simplifies a complex picture of why some students leave STEM career trajectories and the underlying reasons are yet not well understood (Jacob, 2005; Lykkegaard & Ulriksen, 2019).

Sam:
One way in which we can, perhaps, begin to address these issues of "core material" crowding out virtuous inclusion is to broaden the ways we engage with students—beyond the one-way model of the lecturer on the pulpit, to a broader dialogical mode of interaction with the student body.

2.4 Dialoguing and The Pluriversity Podcast

bell hooks:
"To engage in dialogue is one of the simplest ways we can begin as teachers, scholars, and critical thinkers to cross boundaries, the barriers that may or may not be erected by race, gender, class, professional standing, and a host of other differences" (hooks, 1994).

Dustin:
Dialogue is one key part of decolonial thinking and practices that can lead to a deeper understanding and appreciation of pluriversal knowledges. The initial idea for the podcast came from positive experiences of both listening to and creating podcasts. We believed that a podcast could create a space for dialogue transcending boundaries and borders to broaden and deepen the understanding of what decolonising higher education is for members of our university and beyond (Swiatek, 2018). The potential richness of engaging in dialogue can allow for a deeper and more holistic consideration of an issue, problem, or dilemma. Bringing together a plurality of voices in this way would also help to explore and query the languages of institutions and the HE sector more broadly, both in terms of the vocabulary of decoloniality to

support the ongoingness of this work, but also to identify the ways in which the language of our home institutions, and the sector, can prove problematic (Bagga Gupta & Weckström, 2020).

bell hooks:
"In the classroom, I share as much as possible the need for critical thinkers to engage multiple locations, to address diverse standpoints, to allow us to gather knowledge fully and inclusively" (hooks, 1994).

Dustin:
In reference to hooks's (1994: 91) remark, podcasts can represent a form of contemporary oral tradition, a way of storytelling. One of their key features is allowing for a dialogue to be established between various parties. From the DtC CoP's perspective, these dialogues occur between students, academics, and practitioners within and outwith[9] academia, from different parts of the globe. By amplifying the range of perspectives and voices, podcasts can be more inclusive. They also emphasise subjective experiences and adopt intersectional perspectives (Muzart, 2022). As such, they reflect our decolonising initiative which recognises that knowledge is always subjective (Mushonga, 2023).

Michèle:
The multifaceted makeup of the co-leads reflects what one of our guests on The Pluriversity Podcast, Prof Rowena Arshad[10] from the University of Edinburgh (Scotland), believes to be a pre-requisite for decolonisation, namely the inclusion of colleagues from across the institution, including professional services and teaching staff, students, those from minoritised communities, in order to allow for a wider range of ideas and perspectives. Importantly, bringing these voices together has been possible thanks to the collaboration of the co-leads who, through their various roles and disciplines, have a rich network of colleagues across different institutions and sectors.

Laura:
As a collective, then, the people we reached out to as potential guests were those whose voices and perspectives were exciting and challenging to us, working at various intersections of education and decoloniality, the combination of which when brought together in this way meant that they began to converse with each other across the series as well as within their individual

[9] Scotland has been an aspiring imperial nation, a colonised nation and an influential actor in the British Empire, and so its linguistic landscape is colored by Scots Gaelic, Scots and English. The word *outwith* is a Scottish word meaning 'outside' or 'beyond'; it does *not* mean 'without'. You can read more here: https://www.dsl.ac.uk/entry/snd/outwith.

[10] You can listen to Rowena in Episode 1: https://bit.ly/pluripod.

episodes. The experience of this was joyous, and as Sapna Agarwal notes in episode seven of The Pluriversity Podcast, joy can be a fundamental part of the experience of decoloniality (2023).

Тлостанова М.В.

"Колониальность бытия касается возде͡иствия колонизации на конкретны͡и живо͡и жизненны͡и опыт индивида и на язык" (Тлостанова, 2009) (keep reading for the translation…).

Dustin:
If, as Tlostanova (2009: 9) notes in the quote above, *the coloniality of being concerns the impact of colonization on an individual's concrete lived experience and language*, then we must address our language around lived experiences through dialogue and conversations. Podcasting can help in 'reimagining what it means to make academic conversations inclusive, accessible and more reflective' (Woods & Wood, 2023) while breaking down barriers that written academic journals may pose to educators wishing to relate research to practice (King, 2022). In addition, this Handbook and some special issues aim to challenge mainstream ways of knowing and being.

Michèle:
Podcasts challenge traditional, monolithic modes of knowledge construction and dissemination which is primarily done through the written word. While academic publications, such as peer-reviewed journals, are one way to distribute knowledge, we feel these, despite increases in open-access initiatives, are still limiting for non-academic audiences. Podcasts are more inclusive in so far as they have the potential to reach audiences beyond academia thereby bridging the gap between the academic and public spheres (Moeslund, 2023; Woods & Wood, 2023), which is a sine qua non condition for our endeavour to become a 'planetary project' (Mushonga, 2023).

Linda Tuhiwai Smith
"Jo-ann Archibald describes story as work that educates the heart, the mind, the body and the spirit. She suggests that stories engage listeners and the storyteller in a respectful relationship of reciprocity that creates and sustains oral cultures" (Smith, 2021: 166).

Dustin:
We the authors recognize the place that storytelling and oral traditions have, for such traditions have existed 'for time immemorial' and can represent 'substantitive bodies of knowledge' (Baldy, 2015). As noted elsewhere, we are also keenly aware of the hegemonic modes of learning/teaching (e.g. the written word) and that oral literacies present challenges to the norm.

Nighet:
The Pluriversity Podcast, as well as being a vessel for storytelling, gives a space for the guests to reflect on their journeys and share with their audience how their experiences have informed their understanding on decolonising.

Michèle:
The personal and emotional dimension of The Pluriversity Podcast also allows the audience to connect with the stories, particularly through the guests' emotionally engaging narratives. A key feature of podcasts generally is their authenticity, and both hosts and guests' voices are 'filled with emotion [and] laughter' (Moeslund, 2023), and we try to emulate this. Importantly, emotional narratives have been shown to inspire post-narrative actions (Zak, 2015) and we therefore hope that our podcast series can act as a catalyst for change.

"When I do not know myself, I cannot know who my students are…and when I can't see them clearly, I cannot teach them well" (Palmer, 2007).

Nighet:
It is important for those of us who work in educational settings to better understand cultural backgrounds and the backgrounds of the students we teach, in order to teach them well. It is important for educators to understand some of the challenges international students face, from the difficulties of obtaining a visa or finding affordable accommodation to facing prejudices, as our guests Olumuyiwa Opaleye and Omar Saleh explain in our podcast on students' perspectives.[11] It is important to understand that identities are not one dimensional and static; they are constantly being constructed, changing and adapting (Gewirtz & Cribb, 2008) and involving students in the production of knowledge was an important aspect of the podcast.

Michèle:
Two students were recruited as audio production and marketing interns, and were involved in decision-making at every level of our podcast series. They fully participated in the podcast project and any other outputs they felt comfortable contributing to, including this Handbook chapter. In this respect, we were inspired by the work of colleagues from other institutions. For instance, we talked to Master's student Kyra Araneta and Dr Fatima Maatwk[12] from the University of Westminster (England) who have collaborated to produce the Pedagogies for Social Justice project[13] (also in the form of a podcast) and learned about various ways that students and staff

[11] Please refer to Episode 5 of The Pluriversity Podcast at: https://bit.ly/pluripod.
[12] You can listen to Kyra and Fatima in Episode 4: https://bit.ly/pluripod.
[13] Read about Pedagogies for Social Justice project at: https://blog.westminster.ac.uk/psj/.

can collaborate on decolonising projects. We also spoke with Dr Barbara Adewumi and PhD student Rachel Gefferie[14] about the Diversity Mark programme at the University of Kent (England),[15] as part of which students and staff collaborate to diversify reading lists and body resources.

Throughout our podcast series, the argument for students to be involved in the production of knowledge has been made across other sectors of the education system. In Episode 2, our guest Dr Geetha Marcus[16] from the University of Edinburgh (Scotland), denounced the authoritarian nature of our schooling system which leaves many children excluded. She advocates for a system where teachers would take a step back in order to allow children to take a lead in what they learn and how they can produce knowledge by 'giving more room for creativity, for pupil voice, for pupil choice', as well as for a system which rethinks the space where children learn and take them more outdoors.

Nighet:
The podcast conversation with Geetha exploring student voice are strongly reminiscent of those of another of our guests, a Glasgow-based educator and community organiser Sapna Argawal, who goes even further by introducing us to the concept of 'deschooling'[17] and talking us through how to create a decolonised environment for children to grow up through home education. Although brought in separately through different episodes, the podcast demonstrates that the voices of the podcast contributors must now be brought together in a dialogue which is invaluable to better inform all sectors of education from Early Years to Higher Education, which too often live in parallel, and we hope to achieve this as we continue to work on the podcast series project.

3 Future plans and concluding thoughts

Collectively, we reflect regularly while looking to the future to imagine what else we can do to deepen one another's knowledge of decolonial thinking and education. Getting things off the ground has not been without its challenges. While decolonising the curriculum may form part of our University's strategy, this does not mean that all areas within our University understand what this

[14] Barbara and Rachel discuss the Diversity Mark Program in Episode 6: https://bit.ly/pluripod.
[15] The Diversity Mark Project: https://www.kent.ac.uk/student-success/diversity-mark.
[16] Please refer to Episode 2 of The Pluriversity Podcast: https://bit.ly/pluripod.
[17] Please refer to Episode 7 of The Pluriversity Podcast: https://bit.ly/pluripod.

means or see its relevance. In this respect, the awareness around its importance, despite its presence in the strategy, has been a bit *shoogly*, unsteady and fuzzy. Sometimes this is due to a simple lack of awareness and understanding.

At the same time, the cause could represent what Dotson (2011) terms 'pernicious ignorance' through a testimonial quieting of those who advocate for decolonising education and higher education. On balance, the dozens of educators who advocate and support the need for decolonising have provided a hopeful counter-narrative to our DtC CoP: that understanding and undertaking decolonising education is the responsibility of *all university workers no matter their role*.

We also recognise that, on reflection, we could have reached out to the other higher education institutions (and further education institutions) local to the Glasgow area in order to make this more a community-conscious collaboration. We encourage others to do this where possible.

Dustin:
The most important lesson that we have learned so far is that engaging in and seeking out dialogue is key to enacting a conscientization of decolonial thinking and pedagogies. This is a process that will take time and one that a community of practice can help to support along the way. 'Education is thus constantly remade in the praxis. In order to be, it must become' (Freire et al., 2000).

Sam:
It's equally important to seek dialogue outwith colleagues in the DtC CoP as it is within them. A positive aspect of participating in the DtC CoP has also been the development of such dialogues in an ongoing way with colleagues in Mathematics and Physics departments across the UK and wider, sharing practice and perspectives on how to best apply decolonial thinking to these fields; and within our University, being able to start to engage with student-level concerns in these matters.

Colette:
The benefit of creating such spaces for dialogue within, *outwith,* and across institutions is to understand why it's important for everyone to take responsibility and work collaboratively.

In our future plans, we aim to create a living glossary to demonstrate that more broadly, language is living rather than static. We are creating an online community hub to bring together what we have created; this space will also allow students and the wider community to contribute blog posts on decolonising education and what this means. Part of our work has been voiced to the Scottish government's education policy advisers and while we do not know whether this work will affect education policies, we will continue

to share our work in the hopes that it will. Finally, we are in the early stages of creating a collaborative, massively open online course (MOOC) on decolonising education and engaging in dialogue around decoloniality with colleagues at the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow who are setting up their own community of practice. We believe that each of these efforts together can help develop an understanding of the importance and need for decolonising education.

Reflective Statement

While our focus has been on the growth of a decolonising the curriculum community of practice, there is a disconnect between decolonising the curriculum and decolonising the institution. Precariousness persists for many of those working in HE, which simultaneously highlights the need for this work at an institutional level, while making the experience for individuals invested in this process difficult, and at times unsustainable.

Alongside this, as shown by The Pluriversity Podcast, student engagement with decolonisation is situated as much in addressing issues of colonialisation in the present as it is with the lingering effects of the past.

The DtC CoP is a space where we can have such conversations about how colonisation did not only happen in our past, but persists through coloniality that takes place in our everyday lives, from the structures within which we operate on a local level in our institutions to the wider geo-political landscape and conflicts taking place across the world. For example, coloniality is reflected in the language ideologies which perpetuate language hierarchies within British society, and the British education system. In Scotland, White European languages like French, Spanish and German are overwhelmingly taught in Scottish primary schools, while Urdu and Polish are barely represented despite being two of the main non-English home languages in Scottish schools.

We see through mainstream news media that who is perceived as valuable, and who is not, depends on the lens of the storywriter and the version of a story they wish the rest of the world to know. Creating space for open questioning and dialogue may not seem impactful but it's an important step. Is it morally justifiable to discuss conceptual knowledge with no thought given to the impact and disruption to society?

Finally, we recognise that steps along the way for decolonising the curriculum and higher education will be a long journey with barriers and challenges. These obstacles are surmountable through persistent, collective

effort combined with reflection, engagement in scholarship and literature, and being open to unlearn and relearn.

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