

From 'Whiteness' to the Privilege Continuum: Contemplating EDI, its language and how it supports researcher careers

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Abstract

This paper makes a case for a significantly different approach to EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) interventions in the Higher Education research space, focusing on institutional, systemic unconscious biases and supporting an affirmative approach to reaching various diversity targets and aspirations. The challenge here lies in mainstream EDI interventions being generally built around a deficit model, e.g., with a focus on groups or individuals who 'need to be supported' instead of focusing on adapting institutional processes and 'ways of working' to support more equitable and inclusive cultures built into institutional processes.

Keywords: EDI; coloniality; privilege continuum; interdisciplinarity; whiteness; researcher careers; unconscious biases; systemic exclusion; structural disadvantages

Introduction

This paper makes a case for a significantly different approach to EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) interventions in the Higher Education research space, focusing on institutional, systemic unconscious biases and supporting an affirmative approach to reaching various diversity targets and aspirations. The challenge here lies in mainstream EDI interventions being generally built around a deficit model, e.g., with a focus on groups or individuals who 'need to be supported' instead of focusing on adapting institutional processes and 'ways of working' to support more equitable and inclusive cultures built into institutional processes.

Current UK HE Contexts

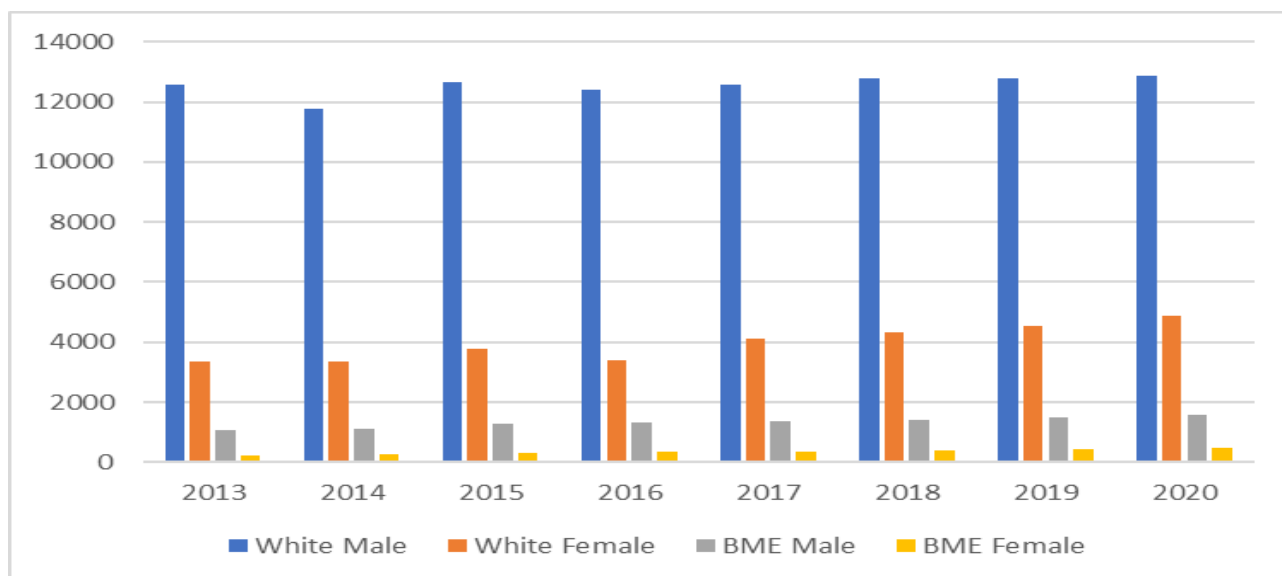
Over the past few decades, EDI has been the instrument of choice to further the diversity agenda in the Higher Education Sectors. There has been incremental progress, but arguably, as the stats suggest, it has not worked to make a significant needed step change, especially in areas where intersectionality is at play.

For instance, in terms of gender and race, here are some UK stats:

- Women have a lower success rate for grant applications and request smaller grants (**Guyan et al., 2019: 20**).
- Non-white principal investigators receive, on average, 10% less funding (**HESA, 2023**).
- Women's research tends to be less likely to be submitted for research assessment exercises (**HEFCE, 2023: 44**)ⁱ.
- Female HE researchers experience more 'research thematic adjustments' than men, as their careers are more fragmented. (**Minello et al., 2021; Bhopal & Henderson, 2021; Aiston & Fo, 2021**).
- There are less than 1% non-white PIs across all subjects (**HESA, 2023**).

Thus, in 2022, from a total of 23,525 professors in the UK, there were only 6,980 female professors (39.6% of all professors), 165 black professors (0.7% of all professors), and 38 black female professors (0.16% of all UK professors). (**Arday, 2022; HESA, 2023**). We make progress (**see Figure 1**), but slowly and only incrementally. As of August 2023, there were 61 Black female professors in UK Universities from 23,000 UK professors (**WHEN, 2023**).

Figure 1: Staffing Data of Professors by Race (adapted from *When, 2023*)



Although some progress has been made since the publications of the UKRI commissioned 2019 report on ‘Equality, diversity and inclusion in research and innovation: UK review’, it largely is still the case that this area still lacks a critical mass of data and research, particularly in areas of intersectionality, research vs innovation careers, protected characteristics other than gender, such as socio-economic backgrounds (**Guyan et al., 2019: 24**).

Additionally, and of particular interest to the co-authors of this article, systemic structural biases related to research methodologies and their perceptions of research excellence are under-researched but can be assumed to be a key driver for the differentials in gender and race-related researcher career progression.

Current traditional types of EDI-related interventions include training (diversity and unconscious bias), protected group-focused policies (career breaks), career development programmes (mentoring and coaching), recognition schemes (charters and awards), and employer engagement and outreach schemes (supportive networks). A 2019 UKRI-commissioned study has found that many of these schemes do not produce statistically significant results about their efficacy and mostly lack demonstrable evidence of success or demonstrate only ‘some positive results’ (**Guyan et al., 2019: 20ff**).

However, there is increasingly available data and evidence from UK HE sectors and the case studies that represent common narratives from research careers (**Welikala & Boehm, 2023**), suggesting that the trajectories of various researcher careers have been affected by inbuilt systemic and institutional biases. These still largely invisible biases within institutional systems, policies and ways of working provide a challenge to

meeting diversity, equality and inclusion aspirations and targetsⁱⁱ. Substantial progress is thus less likely to be achieved by the currently more common mainstream interventions that focus on a target group or individuals.

Thus, we would suggest what is needed is rather an approach that focuses on the institutions' inbuilt biases that have the potential to exclude or create barriers to success. If, for instance, *'invisible and uncontested whiteness moulds the social-cultural and intellectual imaginaries within higher education (...), suppressing alternative ways of perceiving the world'* (Welikala, 2023) ... then it will - and demonstrably already has affected our progression into more diverse and socially just, academic research cultures, including how we do knowledge production.

The challenge here lies in mainstream EDI interventions being generally built around a deficit model, e.g., with a focus on groups or individuals who 'need to be supported' instead of focusing on adapting institutional processes and 'ways of working' to support more equitable and inclusive cultures built into institutional processes.

This article outlines and reflects on some needed interventions that focus on institutional, systemic unconscious biases and support an affirmative approach to reaching various diversity targets and aspirations.

Underpinning Insights and Principles

In January 2024, a special issue of the international journal *Philosophy and Theory in Higher Education* (published by Peter Lang) was published (Welikala & Boehm, 2023; Boehm, 2023b) and this was a milestone in a much longer international story that started with a collaboration between two co-editors and international group of participants in a series of online roundtables, exploring topics around 'whiteness', 'coloniality', and EDI within the academy.

What makes this area of study also so challenging is that the language we use lacks neutrality itself. Language 'can be a help or a hindrance in forming, perpetuating, or challenging stereotypic views' as part of a natural, human process of 'social perception, judgment, and interaction' (Beukeboom & Burgers, 2017). Thus, it has been noted even in anti-racism work that 'the language we use names our differences in ways that separate us, rather than enabling us to seek spaces for mutual and authentic engagement across difference.' (Abdi, 2023, n.p.) Muna Abdi, in her work, thus took the decision to replace the word 'privilege', which centres on individuals, and thus often creates a defensive reaction but also hides the fact of more structural disadvantages. Privilege is not the cause but rather the outcome of this structural bias. Her chosen term is

‘structurally enabled/embedded advantage’, signifying a similar needed shift to the systemic as what we are proposing in this article.

We do feel that the term EDI in itself is highly problematic, as similarly, it has a tendency in its used conceptualisations to focus on the individual rather than the systemic. But even in this article, we make use of these terms. So, although we recognise the limits of these terms, we would like to raise awareness that these terms, although not perfect, are shorthand for a multidimensional number of concepts and phenomena. Language fails our need for nuance here, and language is a blunt tool with its own evolved and inherent biases. This is a key thing to remember when dealing with structural biases; it is a social construction expressed through socially acquired language systems.

Despite the shortfalls of language systems, our discourses started to underpin our insights, reaffirming that:

- Language is not neutral, and the term EDI is problematic in itself.
- Our standards, processes and practices are likely to be not neutral.
- Our main research systems in UK universities were built, developed, and authored still mostly by white men (and only a few white women, and almost no black women).
- The awareness is only emerging of how a colonial past has influenced our institutions of today.
- Our research cultures were largely established as institutional systems at a time when interdisciplinarity was not valued as highly as we do now.
- The phenomenon of ‘Privilege’ works on a continuum.
- Mainstream EDI processes support incremental progress but not step changes.
- Intersectionality data is essential to understanding some of the complexities of equitable interventions for career progression.
- And finally, but possibly most importantly, we need to move away from a focus on individuals to a focus on the systemic if we want to develop a just and fair process to support research careers.

It follows that there are practical implications for institutional policy or rather, principles that policies should ideally adhere to, including:

- Equity, not Equality: ‘We have a fixation for equality, but this is not always the right solution (...) Build institutions that give people what they need to succeed.’ (WHEN, 2023)

- Consistency, not conformity: We do not need to apply the same rules to everyone (equality) but should be able to provide everyone with consistent use of tools for success (equity).
- Avoid deficit models: It's not about the person; it's about fixing the system they're in.
- We need to be more confident about positive/affirmative action. Training staff to be confident in using positive/affirmative actions is important (**WHEN, 2023**)
- We need to provide spaces for a deeper discourse to minimise baked-in exclusionary practices.
- We need to avoid what has been called the 'death of a thousand cuts' problem, as identified by the Interdisciplinary Peer Review College (**UKRI IPRC, 2023**).
- We need to question what we believe not only in terms of what 'good research' looks like but also what a 'solid' researcher career should look like.
- We need to make an extra effort to change any possible existing perceptions that it is not acceptable to speak out about biases. Encourage all voices. (**WHEN, 2023**)
- We should be alert to phrases that can have gatekeeping functions.
- We need to provide sufficient data for intersectionalities.

What follows in this article are three different explorations, think pieces or critical reflections, if you like, led each by one of us three authors. These thin pieces apply our above insights to three different phenomena. This adds layers and discursive case studies to this picture.

The first one is derived from Boehm's work on interdisciplinarity, interrogating how this affects equity in the researcher's career space. The second one is derived from Adefila's work on identity, exploring her concept of a 'privilege continuum', and the third builds upon Welikala's work, critically reflecting on what this all means in a context of colonial underpinnings and how these contribute to the exclusion and marginalisation of particular types of research and research careers.

Exploration - Interdisciplinarity and Equity

An example of the hidden but influential institutional biases at play is the example of interdisciplinary research, as explored by Boehm, and how it affects gender equity in the research career space. This example points towards commonly used terms becoming disadvantaging structures for

specific groups of researchers as part of professorial conferment processes.

In earlier publications, Boehm established a tension between perceptions of research excellence when comparing research with a focus on disciplinary depth vs one with an interdisciplinary breadth (**Boehm, 2016**). In short, this is due to a dominance of linear research production modes applied, named 'Mode 1' by Gibbons in his seminal book titled, 'The New Production of Knowledge: The Dynamics of Science and Research in Contemporary Societies' (**Gibbons, 1994**).

As a short explainer (**see also Figure 3**), Gibbons' Mode 1 here suggests linear innovation, discoveries predominantly within a discipline, with quality being assured through peer review and success measured through concepts such as 'research excellence'. Mode 2 has characteristics of social accountability, problem solving with knowledge production becoming more diffused throughout society and tacit knowledge becoming valid. Quality is ensured through a community of practitioners and success is measured by its 'usefulness'. Carayannis expanded this model in 2012 to Mode 3, being characterised by an adaptive model that shifts between the two former models, with partnership co-production and co-owning of knowledge becoming central, and a balance of cooperation and competition. Quality is assured through impact on policy and success is measured as impact on society.

Boehm, quoting Watson (**2011**), wrote in 2016 that in contrast to the Southern Hemisphere, in the Northern Hemisphere, academia generally comes from a Mode 1 trajectory, which is generally considered to be the highest form of research. (**Boehm, 2016**) Thus, deep, mono-disciplinary research, the common outcome from linear research production models, is linked to the perception of what excellent research should look like.

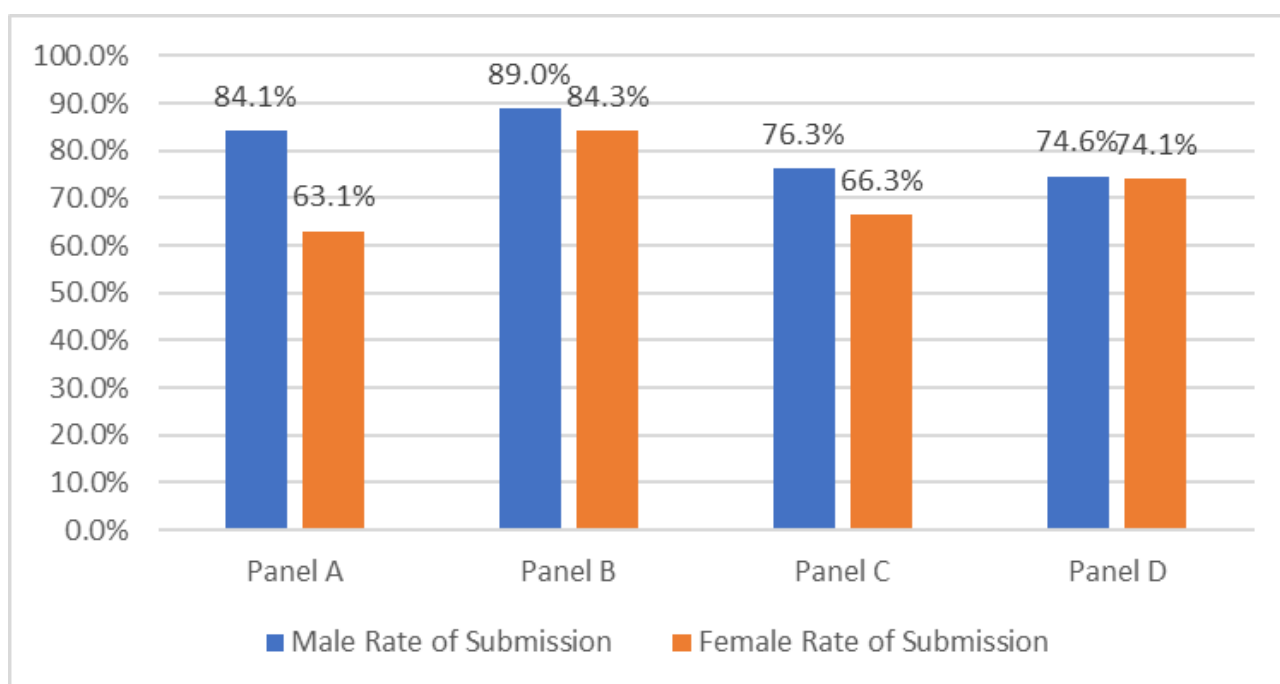
This has implications for systemic unconscious biases when evaluating researcher careers comparatively for gender or race, with more women engaging in interdisciplinary research and more men engaging in mono-disciplinary research, because female HE researchers tend to experience more 'research thematic adjustments' than men, as their careers are evidenced to be more fragmented. (**Minello et al., 2021; Bhopal & Henderson, 2021; Aiston & Fo, 2021**) Thus, as women move more often between employers due to various reasons evidenced by numerous research data, women tend to be afforded to adapt and align their research trajectories with employer priorities, institutional research environmental structures (such as research centres or research themes) often in the long-term increasingly providing more broader, more interdisciplinary or more multidisciplinary opportunities for research rather than delving deeper into one single discipline.

This influences the likelihood for submission to REF (Research Excellence Framework, see **Figure 2**). The REF 2021 analysis evidenced significant negative effects in regards to the ‘likelihood of submission for black, female and disabled staff’ and scoring of female vs male researchers (**HEFCE, 2023: 4**), demonstrably evidencing that the panels with disciplines that traditionally use a larger mix of research production modes (Panel A, with Medicine, Public Health, Applied Health, Psychology, Biological Sciences and Agriculture) have a wider gap between rates of female vs male rates of submission, compared to disciplines with more empirically and more Mode 1 focussed knowledge production models (Panel B, with all the Sciences including Chemistry, Physics, Mathematical and Computer Science, Engineering). This gap is significant, with Panel A’s Rate of submissions being 84.1% for males and 63.0% for females and Panel B’s rate of submissions being 89.0% for males and 84.3% for females. Thus, there is a correlation between the use of different methodological approaches and the perception of research excellence and, thus, likelihood of submission to REF.

As the HEFCE report itself suggests:

*There are statistically significant effects observed for three of the four main panels, and where the proportionate likelihood of submission for female staff can be seen to be lower than for male staff. In Main Panel A the odds ratio shows a 1/3 likelihood while for both Main Panel B and Main Panel C the odds ratio is close to ½. (**HEFCE, 2023: 45**)*

Figure 2: Impact of being female on likelihood of submission (adapted from **HEFCE, 2023: 45**)



As current quality assessment processes (e.g., RAEⁱⁱⁱ and REF) could be seen as having an inbuilt ontological struggle between different knowledge production modes, with outputs in REF predominantly supporting Gibbons Mode 1 knowledge production and impact case studies more often supporting Gibbons Mode 2 or 3 knowledge production (see **Figure 3**) (**Boehm, 2015: 3**), the dominance of outputs as a measure of research value follows, and is particularly evidenced in the northern hemisphere of academia. In the southern hemisphere, civic engagement has been a driver and an imperative for a long time (**Watson, 2011: 241-249**).

The dominance of a particular conceptualisation of research excellence and rigour is at play here, also reaffirmed and validated by peer review. The lack of recognition of mode 2 and mode 3 knowledge production methods is a consequence when it comes to assessing research value, and modes 2 and 3 are only valued when it comes to more recently introduced impact agendas (existent only since the last two REFs) or civic university contexts (which often take lesser priority than undergraduate teaching or producing scholarly research outputs).

Figure 3: Gibbons and Carayannis Modes 1, 2 and 3, collated in (Boehm 2022)

Mode 1 (Gibbons 1994)	Mode 2 (Gibbons 1994)	Mode 3 (Carayannis 2012:48)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • linear innovation • discoveries within a discipline • interested in delivering comprehensive explanations • linear innovation model, non-linear of no major concern 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem-solving • social accountability and reflexivity • knowledge production becomes diffused throughout society • Tacit knowledge is valid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • simultaneously and adaptive Mode 1 & 2 co-evolution • partnership co-production and co-owning of knowledge • balance of both cooperation and competition
<p><u>Quality:</u> peer review <u>Success:</u> research excellence</p>	<p><u>Quality:</u> community of practitioners <u>Success:</u> usefulness</p>	<p><u>Quality:</u> impact on policy <u>Success:</u> impact on society</p>

All of these issues result in the use of a concept, such as ‘excellence’, potentially being unconsciously used as an ‘excellent gatekeeper’, with unconscious biases pervading. These issues include:

- A bias for equating rigour and research excellence with disciplinary depth.
- The risk of associating interdisciplinary breadth potentially with a lack of focus or rigour.
- The risk of penalising researchers that have ‘jumped around different disciplines’ and thus more likely having more interdisciplinary approaches to research methods.
- The risk for minority candidates lacking consciousness of embedded, cultural (western, white, male) norms or the social capital to understand the need for explicitly briefing or finding informed and knowledgeable external reviewers.
- The burden of justifying or educating others about equity tends to repeatedly fall on already disadvantaged communities and individuals (also called ‘ontic burnout’ or ‘epistemic exploitation’; see also **Dunne, 2023**).
- The risk of disadvantaging researcher careers that demonstrate necessary agility in career changes due to childcare, caring roles, HE caretaker roles and job insecurities.
- The risk of accepting incremental progress as good enough and consequently failing to raise awareness of the scale of change needed towards equitable research career progression.
- The risk of having insufficient dimensions of intersectional data; thus, systemic exclusion or barriers can still be hidden from view. (e.g., black women professors).

There is a risk of not having sufficient time to rigorously interrogate systems and processes for hidden exclusionary processes. Biases are often built in ways of working or ways of valuing, and we tend to believe these to be inherently and demonstrably rigorous. These need to be challenged, interrogated and explored to uncover institutional, systemic biases.

Exploration - Identity, the Privilege Continuum and Equity

Another exploration is what Adefila has called the ‘privilege continuum’, which allows our identities to be seen in different layers with different levels or qualities of privilege.

The term identity is used loosely to mean personalised categorisation, which can be distinct to individuals or collective affiliations; it is a multidimensional concept associated with complex human sociocultural assemblages and multimodal emotional and psychological attachments (**Sen, 2014**). Identity is bimodal on several dimensions; it is about uniqueness and aggregation, compatibility, and disparateness. Identity is so integral to human relationships with deep political, economic, and social implications; as such, it shapes and frames the privileges we can access. Furthermore, because individuals have so many different identities because of choices we could make, religious or political, for example, we are inevitably coupled to certain privileges associated with communities or ideologies. Identities can be constructed by virtue of ethnicity, race, or physiology. The social systems that formulate these identities are not politically benign.

Individual identities shift with geographical contexts, political and social and economic affordances, each attached to their different, nuanced qualities of privilege. As a simple example, a paper published in Italian is often referenced less often than one in English, whereas an Italian scholar publishing in English, their privilege changes to that context. An academic moving from a more income-distributed Germany to a less income-distributed USA finds their own professional career trajectories more affected by the choice of institutions, which affected qualities of privilege. Thus, identity can be viewed on a privilege continuum.

The potential for academics to be super collaborators as a result of intrinsic connections we have learners, communities, stakeholders and institutions, the academic community could be celebrating and rewarding the power of human partnership to advance the mode 2 and mode 3 knowledge production methods discussed previously (**Boehm 2022**) with transdisciplinary, transgenerational, and transnational applications. However, the architectures of Higher Education, whether that institutional culture or regulatory policy frameworks, often still afford Universities to fend for themselves, often still causing the town-gown divide, making partnerships between what is within a university and what lies outside of its boundaries more difficult. Although education ecosystems are well positioned to harness the collaborative power of learning, knowledge production and innovation, the identities of academics in these spaces do not seem to reflect the professional or epistemic diversity for which it is valorised.

Over time, the professionalisation of roles in Higher Education has changed significantly with democratic deficits encroaching on how we identify leaders, deans, heads of department, and their functions. With that shift comes with a evolution of associated privileges, but also the

stratification of staff in the higher education space; just as in our UK society, the divide between the poorest and the richest has grown to unsustainable proportions, the divide between the lowest paid to the highest paid staff in our universities correlates with the underrepresentation of groups and the historically excluded, which reveals how persistent inequalities continue to be.

Performance in this context is individualised, although performance of an institution is always based on forms of collective effort. There is a tension here between collective and individual identities, with performance metrics in our 21st-century institutions being driven by a long history of high individualism that obfuscates the contributions of collaborative or collective efforts over rewarding and platforming individuals as the sole or lead contributors to achievement (**Boehm, 2023a**). The emphasis is thus placed on the individually conceptualised and visible parts of the system that are measured and scrutinised for recognition, whilst tasks performed by many in a team, a collective or a collaboration are not adequately captured or rewarded. Who is thus visible or rewarded as the key contributor of achievements correlates with various privilege continuums, with underrepresented groups often being structurally disadvantaged from being named leads of collective achievements.

The focus on the individual, in terms of academic identity, and its link to individual achievement, hides the much more phenomenological reality of collective achievement. Thus, our individually conceptualised identities and their achievement, as an inherently perceived element of working life, get in the way of more collective ways of working being rewarded, and with that, individually conceptualised metrics represent another easy-to-apply disadvantaging structure. Although, individuals themselves display multiple achievements in different contexts in which they can be seen, evaluated and perceived, thus establishing an individually based privilege continuum that can change with context.

The privilege continuum is a gradual gradient on a continuous spectrum with no significant divisions or breaks. Privilege continuums have a gradual transition between two opposing or extreme points, not for classification or categorisation but to highlight relationships and multimodality. Invariably, we turn to concepts such as merit and objectivity to enable us to frame equality. However, these have multidimensional meanings in Higher Education, denoting geographical, disciplinary, professional functions and cultural significances based on value judgements that are far from universal. Thus, the privilege continuum demonstrates the challenges of using singular, episodic categories to pigeonhole individuals.

Exploration - Delinking coloniality in knowledge-making processes

This section examines how the colonial underpinnings of research in higher education can contribute to the exclusion and marginalisation of particular types of research and research careers.

While coloniality embedded in teaching and learning increasingly draws attention (**Welikala, 2023**), there is little discussion on research and coloniality. Perhaps this situation may have resulted from an assumption that research processes have always been democratic, power-neutral, and immune from colonial power structures. However, a critical engagement with research within the higher education context convinces us of the otherwise. What is meant by higher education research, its purposes, the research processes, the presentation of research insights/findings as well as research assessment exercises, are inflicted by coloniality in subtle ways (**Smith, 2021**).

The concept of coloniality has initially been framed to delineate the strategic maintenance of the bureaucratic, racialised power structures and social imaginaries used to subjugate the colonised by the colonisers within the 'post-colonial' context (**Quijano, 2000; Maldonado, 2012**). This interpretation of coloniality can be identified as '*coloniality version 1*'. The genocide in Rwanda, Cambodia and current situation in Ukraine and Palestine evidence that coloniality keeps evolving in new shapes. Powered by the global political Centres, coloniality operates in an increasingly inhumane manner, reinterpreting injustice as justice. This is '*coloniality version 2*'. These versions co-exist, shaping the life worlds of the macro society as well as the inhabitants of the university.

Research practices are affected by both versions of coloniality, in different degrees. There is a need for interrogating research at every step of the way since what research questions are prioritised, which methodologies are accepted, who authors the research insights/findings, and who benefits from the research are shaped by colonial values and 'standards' in subtle ways (**Costello & Zumla, 2000; Pailey, 2020**).

Decolonial approaches are especially needed in interrogating the power issues hidden within international research collaborations. Within most disciplines, research partnerships are formed between countries in the Global North (GN) and the Global South (GS). While research collaborations are expected to be mutually beneficial, increasingly, the power and politics embedded within such partnerships are being critiqued. For example, international health collaborations between GN and GS contexts have been accused of exploiting the GS researchers and research respondents for the benefit of knowledge creation in the GN.

Collaborations are seen as paternalistic, creating ‘the little brother effect’ (Okeke, cited in Faure et al., 2021: 2) or extractivist. Further, there is little evidence of how the knowledge created will benefit the communities that provided data for the research (Faure et al., 2021). Despite the colonial underpinnings, the REFability of international health research outputs and the possibility of being judged as world-leading (4*) or internationally excellent (3*) can be high.

What counts as valued research within Western higher education is based on the methodological biases and the ‘quality’ of the research outputs. Research is generally expected to follow ‘standard’, linear processes, aiming to discover the absolute truth. This colonial rationality regiments how and what kind of knowledge should be developed through research. The norms associated with ‘rigour’, ‘validity’ and ‘reliability’ restrict the possibilities of seeing the world through relational connections. Rather, they promote individualistic, capitalistic and dualistic, ‘either’/‘or’ world views.

As Boehm (2023) observes, research in the most general contexts should be for the benefit of society, but the institutionalisation of research in Western higher education has made knowledge-making a bureaucratic, commodified process that is mostly not accountable to the researched but to the funders. The relationship between research and the community could be seen to be crudely severed in some disciplines while within some other disciplines participatory approach to research, creative inquiry and autoethnographic research are being promoted.

However, such methodologies are often given secondary status in the REF and so-called ‘high impact factor’ journals due to lack of ‘rigour’. This silences particular ways of knowledge creation, leading to epistemic omissions while presenting a universality which is actually an ‘over-asserted particularity’ (de Sousa Santos and Meneses, 2020: 82).

On the contrary, the idea of research in indigenous societies is intimately connected with their life worlds. For example, the collaborative methodology, ‘whakapapa’ (Kawharua et al., 2023), and social theories/principles such as à̀sùwà̀dà (the belief that individual goals are only achievable through the collective goals) encourage research-researched connection, which makes research worthwhile, sustainable and useful.

We can delink research from coloniality by making the invisible visible through debate, discourses and critical reflections like this special journal, all of which will help transform communities, enhancing justice while disrupting forms of hegemonies that disrupt particular ways of knowing the world.

Conclusion

The institutional policies and processes around research and research career development are heavily informed by our historically evolved conceptual frames of understanding the world, including the northern hemisphere's long attraction to high individualism distorted to grotesquely inequitable levels in our neoliberal age, and our meritocratically perceived processes for advancing society by supporting individuals that meet the criteria developed by predominantly a particular subsection of society. It should be obvious that our research systems, due to the social constructions around achievement and merit, are and never have been without biases.

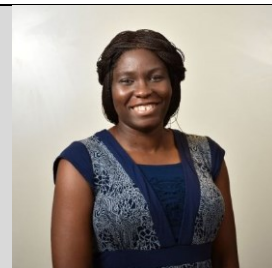
But to understand this and make space for debate of these issues in our research career-relevant committees, and then to explicitly embed this within our research career-related policies, would already be a giant step towards a fairer and just research system. We believe, and there is some evidence that it would result in a step change more significant than most of the incremental achievements that our individually targeting EDI processes have accomplished.

Avoiding individually conceptualised deficit models, we can finally move our focus away from the individual to fixing the systems they are in.

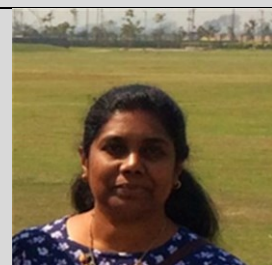
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Caveat: All images are included for the purposes of research and review.

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Endnotes

ⁱ In REF 2021, there were only 68.7% female staff of all eligible female staff submitted, compared to 81.4% male staff of all eligible male staff. 'This indicates female staff meeting the definition of 'Category A eligible' for REF 2021 were less likely to be identified as having significant responsibility for research than male staff meeting this definition' (HEFCE, 2023: 44)

ⁱⁱ It should be noted that targets themselves are problematic in relation to equity-focussed interventions, as they in themselves do not confront cultures, mindsets, or practices needed to understand the complexities of the phenomena around equity and diversity. Targets thus make it easy to not tackle inequality and in equities.

ⁱⁱⁱ The Research Assessment Exercise, the precursor to the REF.