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Stockdale, Kelly, J., Sweeney, Rowan ORCID logoORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4697-3302 and Peacey, Ryan (2023) Staff Experiences of Decolonising the Curriculum: Understanding Opportunities and Barriers to Reform. In: European Society of Criminology 23rd Annual Conference, 6th - 9th September 2023, Florence, Italy. (Unpublished)

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Staff Experiences of Decolonising the Curriculum: Understanding Opportunities and Barriers to Reform

Dr Kelly J. Stockdale, Northumbria University, Newcastle

@KellyJStockdale kelly.stockdale@northumbria.ac.uk

Dr Rowan Sweeney, University of Gloucestershire

Ryan Peacey, University of Manchester
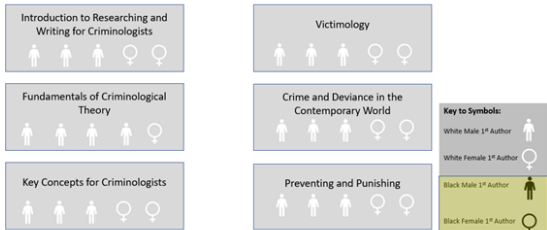
Building on previous projects

- Researched reading lists – whose voices were prioritised
- Explored student experiences of reading lists
- Differences between criminology students and CIS
- Student curators

I didn't realise that I have been reading like mostly the same type of people's opinions and viewpoints until I saw this. And I think a lot of other people won't realise either (Criminology Student FG8P1)

This Project

- Aims:
  - To examine understandings of and practices relating to 'decolonising' the criminology curriculum from a staff perspective.
  - To explore the barriers and opportunities that staff experience when attempting to decolonise and diversify the content that they teach.
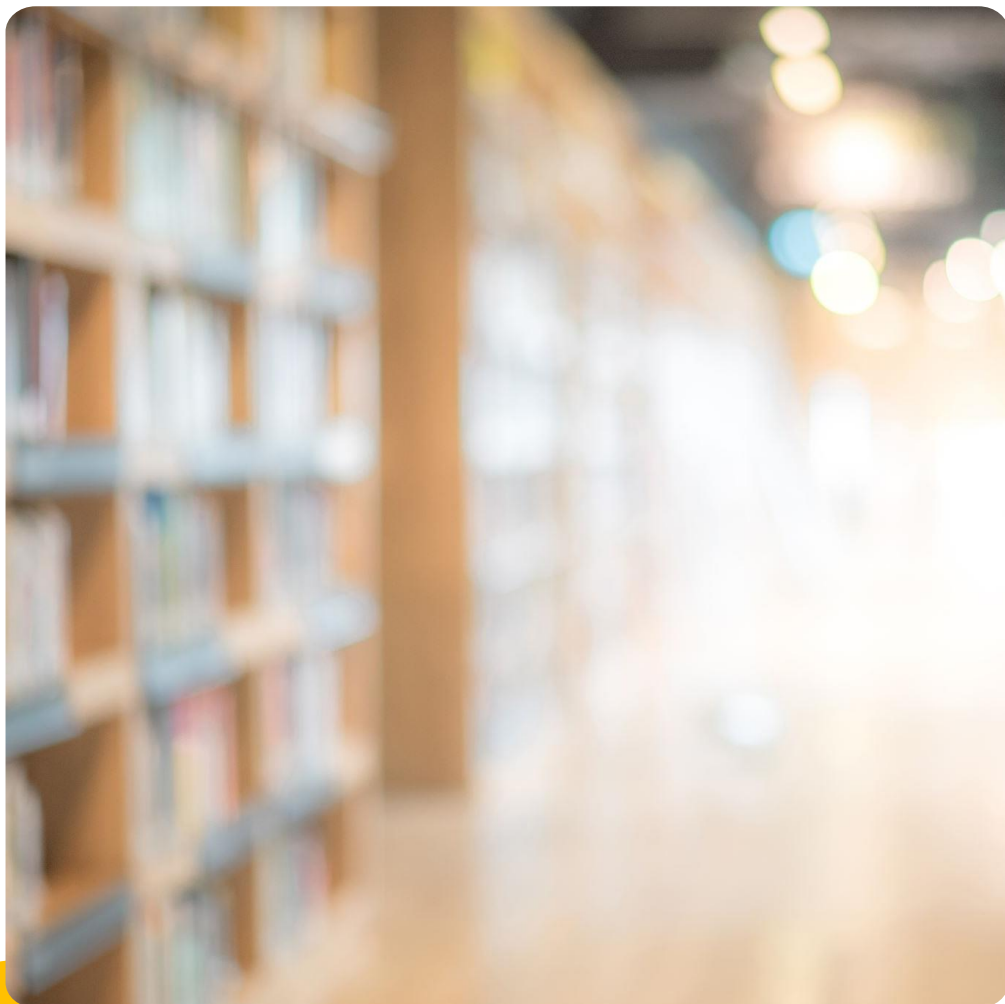
Funding

- Initial funding (£1500) to explore how staff within the University Of Northumbria, Newcastle understand decolonising work and their experiences of implementing it in their teaching. UNN – research intensive modern university in the North East of England. One of the largest universities in the UK, approximately 37,000 students - 3,300 overseas students from over 130 countries. Predominately from the local area and POLAR 1 or 2 - measure of disadvantage, participation of local areas in Higher Education. Northumbria University is a member of the Race Equality Charter (REC) and is committed to submit for a Bronze Award in the Summer of 2024

- Further funding from VC Diversity and Inclusion Fund Application (£5000) to widen the research to explore criminology staff experiences from institutions across the UK and internationally.

Methods

- N22 = Semi-structured interviews with criminology staff

- Permanent positions or hourly paid

- Range of different academic positions and experience (teaching assistant to Professor)

- Teaching in a range of institutions across the UK (Post-92 and Russell Group), Australia, Nigeria, Italy, Ireland

- Reflections on researching peers (we will discuss at the end of the presentation)

Initial Findings

Staff working conditions impact the decolonising agenda

QUOTE(S) 2 or 3 – can come up when click and spend a minute reading through/pause

Staff working conditions impact on decolonising and diversifying curriculum work

- Workload – time allocated to prepare for lectures, seminars and update reading lists.

- Hiring practices – use of casual workers employed to cover teaching on modules. Little autonomy or power (perceived power?) to change.

- Fundamentally transforming course content is not within the scope of 'preparation time'. Staff who do this use their own time, carry a higher 'mental load', impacts on their career (long term in a negative way – good student evaluations but publications are needed for permanent contracts)

Initial Findings

There are issues specific to decolonising *criminology*
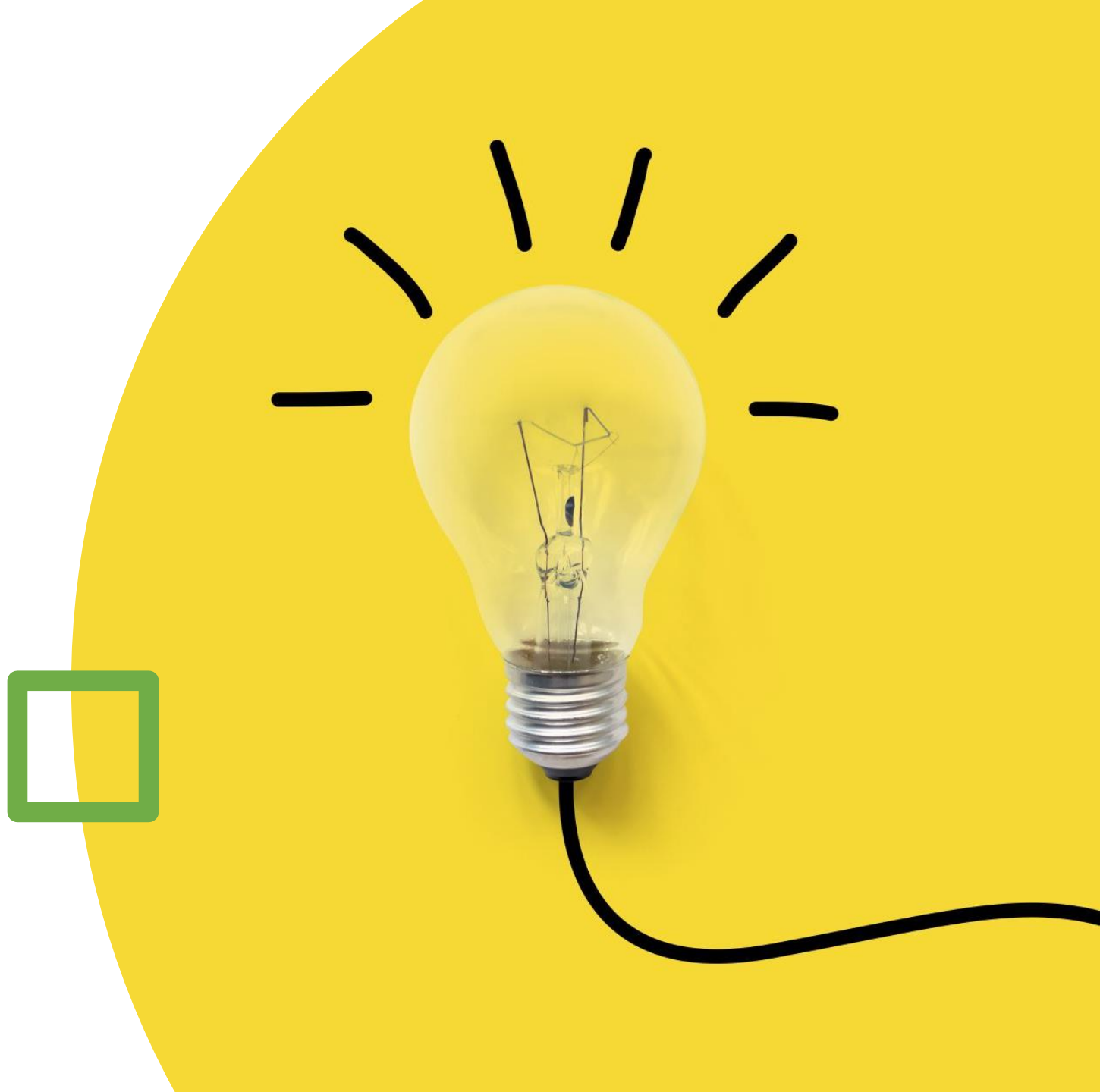
"Would it be really ignorant here when you say decolonising, what do you mean?" (Professor)

"But I think this topic is still very new and when we talk about decolonization, we don't actually understand what we mean here [...] What do you mean by decolonization? I don't think I've come across training or a sat in a conversation where someone told me, OK, this is what we mean by decolonization." (Lecturer)

"And so yeah, because of the discrimination in the criminal justice system, systematic racism, it is important. Given what the criminal justice system can do to people, the harms that can cause, decolonization of the discipline is really important." (Senior Lecturer)

"Would it be really ignorant here when you say decolonising, what do you mean?" (Professor)

"But I think decolonising is still very new and when we talk about it, we don't actually understand what we mean here [...] What do you mean by decolonization? I don't think I've come across training or a sat in a conversation where someone told me, OK, this is what we mean by decolonization." (Lecturer)

"And so yeah, because of the discrimination in the criminal justice system, systematic racism, it is important. Given what the criminal justice system can do to people, the harms that can cause, decolonization of the discipline is really important." (Senior Lecturer)

Discipline specific issues relating to decolonising and diversifying criminology

- What is considered 'decolonising'?

- Recognising the Western centeredness of criminology

- Can we even teach criminology??
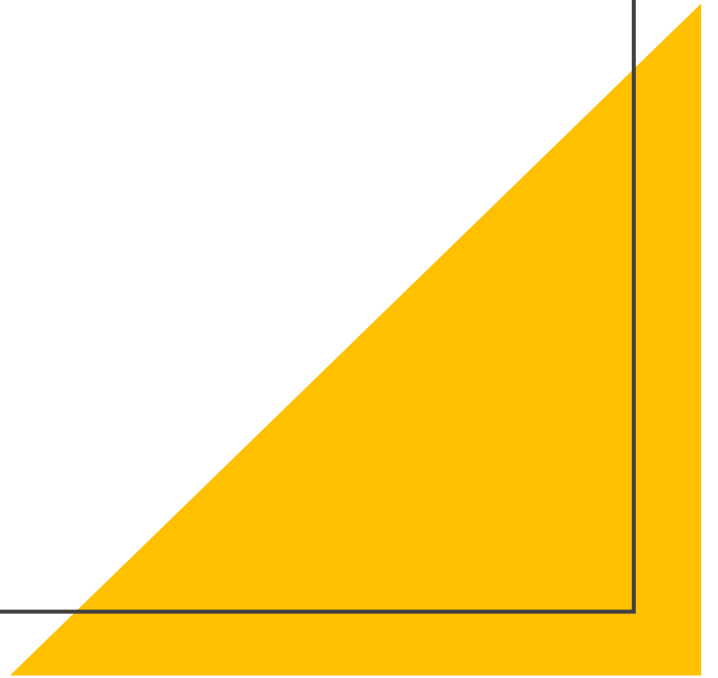
Reproducing Inequalities – why we need to decolonise our curriculum

- Criminology as a discipline is **rooted in colonial mechanisms of oppression and justice** but this history is often ignored and/or forgotten (Moore 2021).

- **Even within "criminology's broadening gaze" issues of "race, racism, and colonial history" are often forgotten** (Earle 2023: 517).

- Criminology presents an **imperialist version of crime and justice** (Agozino, 2003; Blagg and Anthony, 2019) and **masculinity bias** within criminology has limited women's representation (Belknap, 2015; Eigenberg & Whalley, 2015).

- **Citations are socially produced** (Cullen, 2015:12) and have the same **structural inequalities embedded within the processes** as those which exist within society. Inequalities in **publishing are reproduced in teaching**.

- **Criminological ideas by people of colour, women (and intersections of these**) are less likely to be published and cited and meaningfully included in curriculum material.

Conclusion

- Presenting preliminary findings
- Findings are being analysed and written up around the following areas/outputs:
  - How staff working conditions impact the decolonising agenda
  - Decolonising and the neo-liberal university
  - Organisational cultures and decolonialisation
  - University staff experiences of decolonising work – barriers and opportunities for decolonising and diversify criminology
  - Methods – we would like to reflect further on the experience of researching our peers for this project.

Next Steps

This research is a call for action.

- Reflect on and consider your own teaching
  - Created a toolkit (available to download online) for lecturers and university staff to examine and explore their reading lists and lecture content

- Reflect on your role and your workloaded hours – if you are in a manager/have leadership role workload time for examining, updating, and rewriting course materials.

- If you have allocated workloaded hours (i.e. module leader) how can you embed elements of decolonising and diversifying work within your teaching preparation?

- Consider how inequalities are perpetuated within academia – don't rely on the work of hourly paid/adjunct staff.

Publications

- Dr Kelly J. Stockdale
- @KellyJStockdale
- Kelly.Stockdale@northumbria.ac.uk

- Rowan Sweeney
- @RowanSweeney_

- Edited Book: Stockdale, K.J. & Addison, M. '*Marginalised Voices in Criminology'* Routledge. Publication date Spring 2024

- Stockdale, K. J. & Sweeney, R. (2022). Whose voices are prioritised in criminology, and why does it matter? Special issue of *Race and Justice*: Anti-racism & Intersectionality in Feminist Criminology & Academia: Where do we go from here? Vol 12: 3: 481-504

- Book Chapter: Stockdale, K. J., Sweeney, R. & McCluskey-Dean, C., Brown, J. Azam, I. (in press). Exploring the criminology curriculum – reflections on developing and embedding critical information literacy in Young, S. and Strudwick, K. publication date June 2022 'Challenges of Teaching Criminology and Criminal Justice'. Palgrave Macmillan

- Stockdale, K.J., Sweeney, R. (2021) Marginalised voices in criminological teaching: the role of reading lists and how student learners engage with them. British Society of Criminology Newsletter 'Decolonising Criminology'. No. 88, Winter 2021,

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- Stockdale, K.J.,Casselden, B., Sweeney, R. 'Using student focus groups and student curators to diversify reading lists at Northumbria University'. *SEDA Educational Developments*. 22.2 Accepted September 2021, awaiting publication

- Stockdale, K.J., & Sweeney, R. (2019, April). Exploring the criminology curriculum. In *Papers from the British Criminology Conference an Online Journal by the British Society of Criminology* (p. 84).