Talking Careers: Using interviews with learner stakeholders to understand the graduate outcome gap.

Stakeholder internal report. Autumn 2024.

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Summary of project findings and evidence

Table 1. Project themes and evidence

Themes	Sub-themes	Illustrative extracts
Theme 1: Surrounding real world context of systemic racism and white privilege.	Unfairness, racism and prejudice in career seeking or workplaces	*With my surname (Singh) people automatically assume things about me… in an interview once they were like "ohh, do you speak Indian?" and I get worried that I'm going to get perceived in a way before people know me… even if nobody said anything I almost have this barrier up as people can make up loads of different narrative about me after seeing my name.* **Jenn**
		At this stage, I don't feel that being a black woman will stop me but moving up the ranks it might be a bit difficult… but it's unspoken and always kind of covert, you don't know why you didn't get the job… but when you learn there were 10 black people all saying we haven't got into this job at this level…it will be on my mind as I'm applying or if I go for the interview, I need to really relay my skills so I'm not seen as just a black woman. **Zaida**
	Recognising whiteness and white privilege	*Some Psychology related organisation are very European centred and the (black) community is completely missed out, so we're learning about the (white) demographic instead… unless you seek out that support network for black people in mental health professions, the default therapies were more likely to be white European and you just kind of accept that as the norm… but a (black) health professional can help you with your needs a lot better because you've got a cultural kind of understanding around those unspoken words… you don't need to say them because they get it without you having to explicitly explain.* **Zaida**
	The importance of language and terminology in accounts of race and education	*I actually hate the term BAME it's being being put in a box… so everyone else doesn't have a box, (white people) just have a box of their own, or they're just like it's not a category… it's just such a weird concept…it's like, oh, yeah, we're getting you out of this whole stigmatism, just come along on board… it shouldn't be a thing in the first place, in my opinion* **Jenn**
Theme 2: Valuing having people of colour in professional roles and educational spaces.	Greater visibility of people of colour in professional and educational roles	*Even during secondary school, I looked around and didn't see enough representation of course I'm looking out for people of colour, but there was not enough representation for ethnic minorities.* **Ashley**
	Valuing representation by and access to people of colour in professional roles	*When I was doing assistant physiotherapy work on the wards, there were no other physiotherapists who were people of colour in the hospital where I worked… there were many people of colour in nursing and hardly any white nurses… some people I've spoken to say that our parent's generation taught us growing up that nursing was a good professional role and in great need in this country and would encourage their children into nursing… my parents and my grandparents just tended to steer towards either be a nurse at that lower level or doctor at a higher level, but never that in between bit* **Fabia**
Theme 3: Questions around configuring services to address racial graduate outcome gaps.	Identifying how university services could help address the G.O. gap	*Highlighting the graduate outcome gap is really important because we do live in an unequal society and sharing that information helps (people of colour) know that it's not you it is the system… most students of colour know that anyway, that the higher up the ladder you go, the spaces that you go into change and it's difficult… we have an awareness of that… but acknowledging that and putting it out of there is definitely something universities should do.* **Zaida**
		There was a thing during the lunchtime period where you could do it over the phone and like she'd give a little talk… so I did the first one but it was very generic and I didn't really get anything from it… I just thought it would be better to have a proper 1 to 1 sit down and go through what my individual needs were that kind of thing. **Fabia**
	Could dedicated career-related schemes for learners of colour work.	*Maybe having a forum dedicated towards careers of black students to help share knowledge, events and things like that, and support us with the next stages of our journey… we had a really insightful initial session… the speaker was professional with more experience and could draw these things out of you in a different way to going through it on your own.* **Sienna**
		Another helpful thing would be a programme that would help us to get work while we're studying aimed at like people of colour or helping us reach out to prospective employers, like a sort of career service, just something that would just help the students find work, especially those that are struggling while we're studying and it being a bit harder for us people of colour **Fabia**

Background

It is well-recognized that students of colour studying in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) under-achieve relative to white students. One way in which inequality is apparent is in terms of a 'graduate outcome gap' reflecting ethnicity-based differences in graduates entering highly skilled graduate employment (i.e., 'graduate employment'). The key metric here concerns the relative proportion of graduates who are white students and graduates who are of colour in graduate employment six months after completing degree studies. Evidence shows that fewer graduates of colour than white graduates in employment are working in meaningfully defined graduate-level roles (59% vs 69%) and that fewer graduates of colour than white graduates earn above £25,000 six months after graduating (25% vs 30%) and fewer graduates of colour employed full-time than white graduates (70% vs 80%) (Social Market Foundation, 2021).

A growing body of evidence associates these discrepancies with structural racism in educational contexts and areas of university life (McGee, 2020; Razack & Naidu, 2022; Ugiagbe-Green & Ernsting, 2022). Recent scholarship has unpacked factors that help explain and might help address the graduate outcome gap highlighting that the gap is partly sustained by assumed equality of opportunity ('the myth of meritocracy') (Ugiagbe-Green et al., 2021, p. 10). These authors also highlight the need for bold policy actions designed to address the graduate outcome gap including, illustratively, innovation to move away from competency-based assessment approaches and commitment to developing targeted internships and work experience schemes. Recent articles have reported similar interventions to address structural racism in both child and adult educational settings (e.g., Byfield & Talburt, 2020; Coles & Kingsley, 2021).

Little is known about what learners of colour have to say about the ethnicity linked graduate outcome gap. Given the critical importance for all learners of securing graduate level work, understanding factors relevant to addressing the graduate outcome gap as identified within the experiences and views of key stakeholders, i.e., of learners of colour, have been neglected in the literature to date. This internal report presents exploratory research designed to help address this area of neglect and to contribute to the relevant evidence base.

Therein, the aim of our research was to understand the experiences of learners of colour based at a post 1992 North London university setting pertaining to developing career plans, to accessing careers and employability services, and to viewpoints of 'the graduate outcome gap' as defined above. Our research applies locally, to a post 1992 university setting, but transfers to some degree to the stake held by all learners of colour studying in higher education and, by extension, to all relevant educators working in higher education institutions.

To achieve our aim, we sought to address the following research questions:

1. 'What are students of colour's experiences of exploring career possibilities and career goals?'
2. 'What are students of colour's experiences of accessing careers and employability services while studying at university?'
3. 'What are students of colour's viewpoints on factors that help explain, and may help mitigate, the ethnicity linked graduate outcome gap?

This report will provide provisional evidence to help address research questions 1, 2 and 3.

Methods summary

Participants

Sample details are included as Table 1. Learner participants were six individuals studying at London Metropolitan University who self-identified as individuals of colour or from a Black or Asian heritage background. Participants could be learners at any study levels (i.e., Levels 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7) and studying at any university School. Participants were aged between 24 and 52 (Mean age = 34.3 years). Most participants were studying degrees in the School of Social Science and Professions (n=5) with participants also studying in the Guildhall School of Business and Law (n=1) and in the School of Human Sciences (n=1). Most participants were studying at level 6 (n=4), with other participants studying at level 5 (n=2) and level 3 (n=1).

Table 2. Project sample

ID	Subject area/ degree	Pseudonym	Self-identified racial identity
001	Education	Caroline	Black British
002	Education	Jenn	Mixed: White and Asian (Indian)
003	Psychology	Zaida	Black British (Caribbean heritage)
004	Education	Sienna	Black British
005	Education	Ashley	Mixed: White and Asian
006	Sports Therapy	Fabia	Mixed: White and Asian
007	Business and marketing	Samuel	Black African

Individuals were recruited to the project via liaison between the project team and academic mentors, via correspondence with course teams and Subject teams, and via word of mouth and snowball recruiting. All individuals approached to take part received a participant information letter and provided written informed consent prior to research participation.

Procedure

Ethical approval was acquired for this project on 7th December 2023 (Ethics ID: SSSP-2023-0011). Semi-structured interviews were conducted between March and July 2024 and were completed either face to face in a university campus room (n=4) or online via Microsoft Teams (n=3). Interviewers were a White British man in his late 40s (n=3), a British Asian woman in her late 20s (n=3), and a Black woman in her late 40s (n=1). Full project team details are included on Page 16 of this report. All interviews were guided by an interview schedule (see Appendix A). Interviews were between 14 and 68 minutes in length (Mean length = 48 minutes).

Analytic approach

Thematic analysis was conducted on the anonymised/ de-identified transcribed interview data. We used a Reflexive Thematic Analysis approach to understand patterns and dynamics in project data (Braun et al., 2023). Transcript data was read, re-read, and coded. Initial themes and sub-themes were developed, reviewed and amended as required. This involved integrating codes, within and across stakeholders, which appeared to hold shared meaning, ideas, or points of emphasis. The final thematic structure reflected a linked set of themes, sub-themes, codes and collated extracts which held robust connections with each theme.

Results

The summary table at the start of this report presents the core illustrative textual data associated with each theme and sub-theme. The description of themes below builds on the summary table by explaining the themes alongside additional relevant illustrative extracts. All relevant transcript material connected to themes/ sub-themes is presented in Appendix B. All extracts in this report have been edited for clarity, consistency and brevity.

Theme 1: Surrounding real world context of systemic racism and white privilege

This theme comprised three sub-themes Unfairness, racism and prejudice in career seeking or workplaces, Recognising whiteness and white privilege, and The importance of language and terminology in accounts of race and education. Stakeholder interviews contained a range of material suggesting the broader context of prejudice and racism faced by learners of colour throughout career exploration and planning and through job application and interviewing. Other material related more to experiences of whiteness and white privilege, often in the context of specific disciplines like Psychology. A final selection of material for this theme concerned the role of language and terminology related to describing or categorising learners of colour in higher education.

Sub-theme 1.1: Unfairness, racism and prejudice in career seeking or workplaces

In some cases, prejudice was relatively more explicit (e.g., relating to reactions around surnames) but in most cases bias appeared in unspoken forms and covert behaviours which were prejudicial but not always straight forward to label clearly as forms of prejudice. Importantly, apprehensions around experiencing prejudice could take their toll on participants by creating lingering doubts and distinctive pressures while pursuing career goals. The extracts below represent evidence relevant to this subtheme:

I did some recent temping in a car showroom in a mostly white dominated area, and worked one day with an Asian lady wearing a hijab and she was told by my manager like, you know, "ohh you're so pretty why do you have to wear that thing?" and then she didn't respond and kind of let it go, and then the next day somebody else said to her "ohh you gonna wear that again tomorrow?"… they probably didn't mean to be personal, but didn't have that social awareness which is quite shocking as we live in (diverse) England… and then lo and behold, within 2-3 days, she was fired and the reason was "ohh she wasn't engaging" we were the only people of colour in the whole showroom **Fabia**

I've not had bad experiences of applying for roles which makes sense cause my surname is just like a white English name but when I turn up to interview people, like surprised to see me because of obviously my like, ethnicity… but I would assume it could be worse, if I had a like a different turn because I know other people find it hard because of their names. **Samuel**

Different things have made building a career more difficult… ethnicity, maybe gender and then being a `mum so it was a lot not just one thing… in my previous work I applied couple of times for a managerial role. they didn't give it to me, you know, but rather it was given to someone it was like "ohh why give it to a black person when there's a white person that can take the role?" so yeah, I mean, at some point I stopped applying for those roles because I was an immigrant as well so it was a combination of things. **Ashley**

Sub-theme 1.2: Recognising whiteness and white privilege

Interview material concerning white privilege was another feature of how the real-world context and systemic nature of prejudice exerted a significant influence on pursuing career plans among participants. Whiteness and white privilege were rarely referred to explicitly but, instead, were apparent, for example, in reference to disciplines like Psychology and the tendency for White and Western authors and theorists to dominate the curriculum in such these Subject areas. The extracts below represent evidence relevant to this subtheme:

As a discipline, psychology's history and how it came about in a very different world than today and black people definitely not included in a lot of spaces, just the ongoings of slavery and racism being quite rife… the lectures had lots of citations and studies and these theories from authors with very similar demographics… we tend to apply these ideas to everyone, but you do feel "how am I seen? how are we seen? how can I apply this theory then to this demographic that hasn't been included?"… more effort should be put into find less popular studies which include (marginalised) populations… it wasn't until the third year when we had an assessment involving a black woman, and open conversation about discrimination and bias and nothing was mentioned at all prior to that. Zaida

There's that experience that black people always do just kind of shelve it because what can you do you can't really escape it… but sometimes with grades you think well, hang on a minute I really feel like I deserve a higher grade than this, it's just it's a mental like that this is this is how it is this is how it's going to be when I leave here… and that's partly the nerves about graduating or not or being uncertain. Sienna

Sub-theme 1.3: The importance of language and terminology in accounts of race and education

A final context/ system focused sub-theme concerned the language and terminology used to talk about race and ethnicity within educational settings and more broadly. Material here partly attested to the difficulty with phrases like 'Black and Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) students' or (the term adopted by Talking Careers) 'learners of colour'. Importantly, these phrases could work to disregard racial identities and/ or centre Whiteness/ White racial identities as the norm against which other racial identities are understood and compared. Material here also evidenced the tensions and difficulty of open discussion around race and racial identity in educational spaces. The extracts below represent evidence relevant to this subtheme:

The term person of colour to me is not representative enough I'd rather go with ethnic minority because you could be any colour, but if you are a in the minority bracket you're still gonna experience some of these things… even during secondary school, I looked around and didn't see enough representation of course I'm looking out for people of colour, but there was not enough representation for ethnic minorities. **Ashley**

There should be opportunities for people who don't necessarily have the opportunity or people from low income houses or low, you know, so the an opportunities desk without saying it, if that makes sense, without reaching out to being like "hey, you're part of the BAME community, we've got an opportunity to just for you" I say all of this as if it's going to be a perfect world but we're talking here about how these things are approached and the role of language and the danger of putting people in any kind of box, let alone a box that isn't an appropriate kind of label I shouldn't be slamming it as much as because it's there to give opportunities… maybe just in general giving people who may feel like they've not got an opportunity or are struggling with an opportunity to easily go to the careers department with the confidence of I'm just going to speak and air out everything that I'm thinking, and try and get some guidance on it. **Jenn**

It's a diverse university but there's still quite a lot of hostility when it comes to discussing race on my course… like when we discuss education and socioeconomic disparities in attainments, we are talking about racial issues and there is that divide in lectures between the people of colour and you can feel the tension with people that are white… it sometimes doesn't feel like you have that safe space so we are all thinking and feeling it, but not necessarily being able to address certain things… we did actually bring it up to a lecturer recently but it was like his hands were tied… it makes you feel uncomfortable even though equally I'm sure it makes (white students) feel uncomfortable when you're talking about colonialism, but these are the things that are still in effect today, socioeconomically, educationally, society, you know in employment… it also prevents a lot of people from sometimes answering questions you know, really engaging in debates or conversations through the lectures… and actually having some support outside of the lectures would actually really be helpful for those people **Sienna**

Theme 2: Valuing having people of colour in professional roles and educational spaces

This theme comprised two sub-themes Greater visibility of people of colour in professional and educational roles and Valuing representation by and access to people of colour in professional roles. Stakeholder interviews consistently referred to the relevance of historically not having had representation by people of colour in key educational or professional roles during their educational journeys and during professional working lives prior to their degrees. Other material also concerned representation but focused more on the importance of access to people of colour in professional/ graduate roles to which individuals aspired to. This material particularly focused on the importance of learning about the lived experience of professionals of colour in their graduate working careers and positions.

Sub-theme 2.1: Greater visibility of people of colour in professional and educational roles

Most interviews contained some focus on the importance of feeling racially and ethnically represented by those in positions of power and influence whether in educational or professional areas of life. Participants could make a connection between this lack of representation and lack of visibility of (for example) educators of colour and the delay in their own career plans and trajectory. The extracts below represent evidence relevant to this subtheme:

I sometimes look at my own education journey from secondary/ primary school, it was very different to now and wasn't the greatest experience… there was no-one that I really aspired to, you know? None of my teachers inspired me, and I didn't feel like I was reflected anywhere in terms of the teachers and the curriculum, that gave me any hope or aspiration… I went pretty much straight from leaving school into work for many years until I started to do courses and then progressed to my degree bringing me to this place, and that was because of life not my educational experience, so yeah, I think I can see those connections with some young people and I wish that there was someone that could have supported or council or guided me or spoke to me in a certain way that could have got me to this stage a lot earlier. **Sienna**

I've had therapy in the past and really couldn't connect with any of the therapists because none of them looked like me… there was always this kind of unspoken challenge that I had culturally, which probably made my problems worse… so my push for wanting to be a therapist as well as wanting to do it for myself, but also think about other people within my community that may have had the same experience as me of going to see a therapies but not being able to connect on that level and therefore maybe not receiving the help that they would have received like there be someone you know culturally similar… and that really stood out for me, really pushed me… and if I can help my community by being present and being knowledgeable and becoming qualified then I can help with the stigma around it in the black community of what therapy is and that's partly about the healthcare system and how it's been perceived by the black community like how it's out to get us has not been helpful… and that kind of stigma just continues to brew and you could stop that by having more representation. **Zaida**

Sub-theme 2.2: Valuing representation by and access to people of colour in professional roles

Another way in which having people of colour in professional roles and educational spaces was important concerned having exposure to professionals in graduate roles who were also individuals of colour as part of participants' degree studies. Having this exposure was partly about having proper visibility of people with the same skin colour and racial background as yourself but was also about having exposure to authentic and relatable lived experience from someone in the world of work in a role to which participants aspired. Material for this sub-theme also concerned 'paying forward' personal career experiences and successes within relevant communities (e.g., within black communities) to motivate and lead others to overcome obstacles to prejudice and bias in professional spheres. The extracts below represent content relevant to this subtheme:

Having alumni or people in industry is always a great thing to see the challenges and the success stories or you know the journeys that people have taken so maybe more guest speakers where you can actually ask questions… some of it seems to be directed towards younger people… so having that in the lectures even if it was virtually might be beneficial… recently we had an ex teacher with SEN who was also a parent who gave this really in depth presentation on what being neuro neurodivergent looks like in day-to-day life and experience of getting diagnosed as a mature woman… so just hearing that experience and that opening up, bringing in that expertise or people in the field and getting them into the university to show their career paths and educational journeys, the different options would help reference interviewing skills etc with that real life experience to address the grey areas of "what's this like?" **Sienna**

The payment is a very important reason for wanting a degree, to go into a profession where I can be paid well for what I'm doing… within my community, it can be rare to have role models of people who are qualified, who've studied and who are getting paid well… so wanting to do that in my community as well is something that pushes me to get a good career as a clinical psychologist… I've got some really, really encouraging feedback and words around changing the stigma and narrative around black women in professional roles and breaking the glass ceiling… realising it's a difficult but also very rewarding field for yourself, for your family and for the whole community and that feedback has really driven me to do this. **Zaida**

Theme 3: Questions around configuring services to address racial graduate outcome gaps

This theme comprised two sub-themes: Identifying how university services could help address the G.O. gap and Identifying how university services could help address the G.O. gap. Material for this final theme focused on how university initiatives including the contribution of the Careers and Employability service could help address the graduate outcome gap between Black and White learners. One selection of material was focused more generally on how services could be configured in a way that might help the career planning and aspiration of learners of colour. Another selection of material dealt with the possibilities and potential challenges of developing dedicated career-related initiatives for learners of colour during their degree studies.

Sub-theme 3.1: Identifying how university services could help address the G.O. gap

All interviews contained material about experiences of accessing the university services, particularly the Careers and Employability service. There were insights from this material around how university services currently worked or might work to promote uptake of career-building resources among learners more widely and, in doing so, to potentially help address the graduate outcome gap in some way. The extracts below represent evidence relevant to this subtheme:

I think more tailoring would help develop career planning, so with the psychology degree and students all wanting to do something in the mental health field it would be good to have career relevant workshops showing work available areas… there are odd jobs that will come up and then nothing for few months and it feels a bit disjointed… you've got to be really proactive with doing it… there could be more collaboration between the department and careers to show students what's available, more sort of career psychology specific careers related support and there could be a survey at some point of what kind of jobs people are interested in. **Zaida**

As a mature student with life experience and knowing work in different sectors sometimes I'm trying to navigate learning, plus I have to work and be a parent, look after the household, to juggle and sometimes that's too overwhelming… so for me personally I haven't utilised a lot of the resources out there but I think more face to face more, maybe lectures, more on guest speakers could potentially help… younger students might be, you know, really great with technology, that's everything in their life, but for people that are slightly older, that's not the case we prefer more that one to one and I think maybe that there needs to be more, more one to one presence. **Sienna**

Sub-theme 3.2: Could dedicated career-related schemes for learners of colour work

Other material presented more challenging questions around how services could be configured more radically to deliver interventions designed to address the graduate outcome gap between Black and White learners in some way. There were no easy solutions for how such interventions could work. Participants talk for this sub-theme highlighted the importance of targeting learners with multiple social identifiers associated with risks of relative disadvantage (e.g., first in family to university, of minoritised ethnicity, from relatively disadvantaged socio-economic background). Drawing on these intersections, interventions could then target those most in need with additional support to secure graduate level work via internships, coaching, etc but also via some follow-through to monitor and support relatively disadvantaged graduates after they had completed their degrees. There were, however, clear difficulties identified by participants with how such interventions could work in practice or be perceived by others. The extracts below represent content relevant to this subtheme:

There could be career-related interventions targeting learners of colour, but also learners who are first in the family to go to university or learners from poorer backgrounds or those who tick both those boxes… it's a bit difficult, isn't it? In one sense, some pockets of people definitely need more support than others but then equally if you've come through to university level, you've already kind of been through a certain level of academia that's got you to be at university… once you've at this point I think maybe it's just the coaching that's more supportive because you don't want to only offer these jobs for black people… because you know, as a black person, would I only wanna go for these jobs that are just designed for me? then I'd be thinking, well, what are the expectations of me is that am I gonna be the only black person in this department because it's a project to get more black people and I'm gonna be the token black person? and that might put me off I would just rather know that my skills are gonna be just as valuable. **Zaida**

There could be more graduate outreach programmes or internships aimed at ethnic minorities and just for people of colour… London is diverse but in (home counties towns) there's not many people of colour and they probably don't quite look like everyone else so may not fit in… and the attitude from bosses can be "well, if we don't like them, we don't have to have them here, no one is gonna challenge us" so maybe things like that should be challenged more on a on a national basis to make sure and check that every company has a certain percentage of ethnic people working there so there'll be an equal opportunity… that way (employers) will go out of their way to hire people who are not just all white… the uni could help bridge the gap by ensuring that people of colour that have left our university are treated fairly… it would be helpful to have some sort of support network for us during our period of transition to walk with us along the way till we're actually settled into work or make sure we're not just left dangling, but that we actually have people with us through the whole employment process when we're preparing for work, when we get a job and actually till we settle in just sort of hold our hands. **Fabia**

Conclusion

The Talking Careers research project was designed with an aim to understand the experiences of learners of colour at London Metropolitan University pertaining to developing career plans, to accessing careers and employability services, and to viewpoints of 'the graduate outcome gap' as defined above. We sought to do this as a team of educator and learner stakeholders motivated to understand and help address the outcome gap between White graduates and graduates of colour. In Table xx below, we present a summary of findings set alongside our project research questions.

Table 3. Research questions mapped against project findings

#	Research question	Summary of relevant project findings
1	'What are students of colour's experiences of exploring career possibilities and career goals?'	Most participants reported feeling highly motivated in pursuing graduate level career goals and identified time, finances and clashing responsibilities as key obstacles to achieving career goals. Participants could feel highly motivated, as learners of colour, to achieve success in pursuing graduate career goals, partly to enhance and model the visibility of career building success and to 'pay forward' success within their communities.
2	'What are students of colour's experiences of accessing careers and employability services while studying at university?'	Participants had greatly varying experiences of accessing Careers and Employability services during their degree studies, but experiences were mainly positive. There was evidence that mature students particularly would appreciate more opportunities for face-to-face contact and more dedicated/tailored forms of career building support from educators.
3	'What are students of colour's viewpoints on factors that help explain, and may help mitigate, the ethnicity linked graduate outcome gap?	Project findings suggested how career-related experiences should be understood within a broader context of systemic racism, covert forms of bias and prejudice and White privilege. All career-related activities also took place within a broader and longstanding historical context of typically limited exposure to professional and educational role models who were individuals of colour.
		Mitigating factors included having more opportunities during degree studies to have consistent, straight forward access career-specific insights from professionals who are individuals of colour. Gaining these insights into the lived experience of professionals who could be understood as representative of participants or who participants could identify with were often identified as key to pursing next steps in graduate career planning or as key to expanding career networks.

Informing initiatives, policy and interventions: Research team response to stakeholder themes

The themes/ sub-themes included in this report can help inform different strands of London Metropolitan University's current and future policy relating to improving parity of successful graduate outcomes between White graduates and graduates who are Black, Asian or from mixed/ other minoritised ethnic backgrounds. Table 4 below outlines the research team's provisional reflections on where and how the themes and sub-themes might be drawn on to help develop relevant initiatives, interventions and policy at an institution or School level.

Table 4. Project findings mapped against potential implications

Themes	**Sub-themes**	**Research team responses**
Theme 1: Surrounding real world context of systemic racism and white privilege.	Unfairness, racism and prejudice in career seeking or workplaces	Acknowledging macro level/ systemic injustice involving racism and racial prejudice within all aspects of curriculum delivery will help keep causes of ethnicity related graduate outcome gaps consistently visible to educators and learners alike.
	Recognising whiteness and white privilege	Educators need to develop well planned workshops for all staff which explicitly acknowledges white privilege (and its intersections) in the context of prior and current educational experiences and in wider society including the job market.
	The importance of language and terminology in accounts of race and education	A working group should be set up to discuss the role of language used to refer to learners and educators. The working group needs to be led and participated by educators and learners who are of African or Asian heritage and should focus on the preferences and views of these stakeholder groups. Particularly focus should attend to the risk of using language and cultural terms which, while well meaning, may code as 'non-White' and serve to reinforce racial prejudices and simplified understandings of racial history and dynamics. A workshop should build on working group findings.
Theme 2: Valuing people of colour in professional roles and educational spaces.	Greater visibility of people of colour in professional and educational roles	Senior managers in all areas of university life should explore with their teams how individuals who are people of colour could be more visible in, illustratively, course materials, career related events and in teaching and extracurricular sessions. Where possible, graduates of colour who have been successful in subsequent studies/ careers, should be approached to speak and/ or provided career-related testimonies to current learners and educators. Efforts here should concentrate on careers and areas of work that have been historically under-represented by people of colour (e.g., clinical psychology and academic psychology).
	Valuing representation by and access to people of colour in professional roles	
Theme 3: Questions around configuring services to address racial graduate outcome gaps.	Identifying how university services could help address the G.O. gap	Relevant working groups need to explore how careers services can continue to develop provision in a way that implicitly targets uptake from learners of colour. Our evidence suggests that this more targeted approach to provision may partly involve careful communications and timely messaging via course/ module teams.
	Could dedicated career-related schemes for learners of colour work.	Relevant working groups need to explore how targeted careers service initiatives could work in a way that provides meaningful dedicated support to learners of colour in a sensitive and appropriate way. These working groups need to involve all relevant educator and learner stakeholders and need to be judicious in approach but also bold in decision making. Where dedicated interventions/ schemes are executed, these need to be monitored and have oversight from a steering committee. Where possible, dedicated interventions should be disseminated at relevant sector platforms (e.g., Advance HE Annual Conference).

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Project team

The research team members detailed below at London Metropolitan University were involved in study conception, project promotion, participant recruitment, data collection and analysis. For more information about this research please contact Principal Investigator Dom Conroy (d.conroy@open.ac.uk).

Team member	London Met role	Main project responsibilities
Dom Conroy	Academic staff/ lecturer	Project conception, project administration, project budget management, project promotion and marketing, recruitment, data collection, data analysis, report write up, research dissemination.
Mary-Jane Poku	Academic staff/ lecturer	Project conception, project promotion, recruitment, data collection, report feedback.
Jade Patel	Current learner	Research Assistant: recruitment, data collection, report feedback, report feedback.
Leah Diop	Alumni	Research Assistant: data collection.
Nahid Huda	Academic Mentor	Project conception, project promotion, recruitment, data collection, report feedback.
Jade Benn	Academic Mentor	Project conception, recruitment, report feedback.
Awesome Olasope	Student Union President and current learner	Project consultation, project promotion, recruitment, report feedback.

Appendix A – Project interview schedule

Interview schedule

Check on comfort- water, seating arrangement, etc. Underscore interview transcript will be anonymised/ de-identified and that participant can stop the interview at any time or withdraw consent (ideally within 3 weeks of participation).

1. Please tell me about your degree studies so far at London Met.
2. What made you want to study the degree course?
3. What are your current post-degree work and career goals?

4. What does 'a career' mean to you?
5. Tell me about your experiences of pursuing your career goals.
   a. What kinds of things have *helped you* pursue your career goals?
   b. What things have *made it more difficult* to pursue your career goals?
   c. Can you tell me anything about your experience of pursuing your career goals as a person of colour?
6. Have you made use of the Careers and Employability (C&E) service yet during your time at London Met?

7. The next few questions are about the Graduate outcome gap which reflects that a higher proportion of white graduates than black graduates secure graduate level employment after completing their degrees.
   a. Have you heard about the graduate outcome gap before?
   b. What support should universities provide to do something about this graduate employment gap between black and white graduates?
8. Is there anything else that you would like to talk about to do with careers, employability, or experiences of gaining graduate level employment as a learner of colour?

Prompt questions to use in follow-up to any question.

- Can you tell me a bit more about that?
- How/ why do you think that is?
- Can you provide a recent example of that?

Appendix B – Theme table (embedded file)

Appendix B
Complete Transcript