RIG Report: Race and Leadership

Overview:

During this year, the focus of this RIG was on building systems to stabilise the operations of the RIG, determine means of communicating with RIG members, canvassing from these members what their interests include and implementing plans to meet these needs. Our inability to communicate directly with RIG members continues to represent a major block in running this RIG; however, we remain committed to the task.

Our re-launch and reading group events were relatively well attended. Sustaining this momentum has proven challenging. Our session at the Annual Conference, though poorly attended, provided insight into various approaches for the upcoming year.

Events Hosted

Date	*Where*	*Format*	*Title*	*Speakers*
July 7, 2026	*Leonardo Hotel Cardiff*	*In Person*	*Race & Leadership RIG Panel*	*Claire Stewart-Hall Stephen Francis*
February 17, 2026	*Online*	*Online*	*Reading Group Meeting 1*	*-*
November 4, 2025	*Online*	*Online*	*RIG Re-launch*	*Gus John*

Feedback

- Two RIG members (Stephen and Claire) were funded to attend the Conference in Cardiff in 2026. This is Claire's second conference. Stephen was an international delegate coming to the conference from Toronto, Canada.

- Our planned RIG session at Conference was unfortunately placed as the final session on the final day, just before the farewell session and, by then, a significant number of the delegates had already left.
- We had three participants:
    - Chantelle Haughton: Conference Keynote Speaker; Founder and Director - Diversity and Anti-Racist Professional Learning (DARPL); Principal Lecturer in Early Years Education - Cardiff Metropolitan University
    - Lauri Johnson: Boston College
    - Pamela Glenn: University of South Florida
- Notwithstanding the low numbers, the session on 'Freedom Dreaming' as it relates to the work that this RIG might do yielded the following insights:
    - There was a noticeable decline in the number of presentations directly naming or otherwise discussing race and its implications for educational leadership, management and administration between last year's conference and this year's

- Conference delegates seem concerned with the risk of backlash in doing anti-racist work.
- US colleagues have been tasked with renaming and editing their theoretical approaches due to governmental funding constraints linked to censorship.
- There is synergy with the Gender in Educational Leadership RIG, and we might consider collaborating for events. We actively networked with RIG members to make connections.
- An output this RIG might consider is putting together a genealogy of anti-racism in UK educational leadership in the form of
  - an online resource
  - a physical display at the next conference
  - Some archives with information on this already exist, but access is gradually being lost/removed. Also, Chantelle and Lauri have access to some resources outside the archives that might be useful (audio recordings of oral narratives)

- The absence of Global Majority leaders was noticeable
  - We might consider hosting or requesting that BELMAS host a panel of these leaders at the next conference

Meetings took place across the year, and covered a variety of different research topics:

First meeting September 16, 2025

Shared vision and theme

Shared vision and theme for the group established:

Global Imperatives for Race and Leadership

Three themes:

- Disruptive leadership
- Moving away from the colonial
- Knowledge creation outside of the mainstream

Aims:

- Make the group an accessible touch point for ECRs, practitioners and academic – provide a space in between
- Encourage knowledge dissemination
- Disrupt whiteness we see in organisations that purport to be representing all

Preparation for Launch 4/11/25

- Gus John has agreed to speak.

Conference 2026 Cardiff 3-5 July

Deadline for submission 30 November 2025

Organisation of roles:

Dates to meet as a group (all co-convenors) are:

12/11/25

4/3/26

17/6/26

VG and OO will lead the Reading Groups dates are: Tuesdays 4-5pm on 27/1/26, 28/4/26 Sept 2026

SF and CSH will lead on Blog and Journals – aim to do/encourage or add something per month and build up to something every month in 2026-2027.

Aim to use the blog and journals as a means of encouraging new members, ECRs.

Second meeting: March 31, 2026
Reviewed our roles as co-convenors after a full year.
Yinka suggests we work towards review on paper in May 2026.This has been delayed.
Action: Yinka to send notes and look at them in the next meeting.

- What does impact mean?
- Who are we trying to reach and influence?
- What have we done so far – what kinds of conversations are we enabling? Who is missing?
- Power and autonomy – how much scope do we have to shape the direction of the group?
- What does this enable and/or constrain?
- What has changed because this group exists? What changes /impact have happened?
- What meaningful impact over the year?

Reading Group Review:

- It was a small group but was beneficial
- There was in-depth reflection around what we were discussing
- Some people registered who didn't show up
- Generative space where people could gather
- Openness in the space – healthy critique of the paper itself
- Stephen's comments very helpful and supportive
- We need a firmer grip on letting people take over discussion
- Chair was there which was a surprise
- It was unclear about roles and hosting. We seek to clarify this, if BELMAS admin attends.
- Time was changed and the fee was changed. Indicators of the sense of agency we have.
- We questioned which colonial empire structures are operating in an organisation through BELMAS.
- In ideology, it is a disruptive RIG. We want to run on decolonial practices in how we organise.

Some things we would like to be reconsidered (CSH to email)
We were surprised our time had changed.
Reflection on launch – BELMAS changed the time.
OO suggests scheduled tightly and agenda – space rules. We required strong adherence to conditions of space, made explicit.

Our practices are key to how we operate. We are clearly focused on decolonial practice and how we run our meetings and how meetings are organised for the wider community, This is a RIG that runs on decolonial practices. We hope colleagues come alongside us and work with us. There is an ideological position to the RIG. Next to make clear ourselves about what our decolonial practice is about for our RIG.

Conference SF and CSH going to conference and have got a bursary

Third meeting:18 June 2026

1. Shared Event request – with Gender and Leadership RIG – email from Prof. Pontso Moorosi to SF about speakers at a book launch; 24 June 2026 (online) – CSH and SF to attend.
2. Conference and workshop by SF and CSH designed is at 11.50-12.50am (Global Challenges and opportunities in race and leadership). Thought through new ideas about how to respond to context as a form of *freedom dreaming*; pull together large cross cutting themes.
3. Reading group – VG and OO to do event form and identify paper.

Our slot is Sunday morning before the ending keynote which is disappointing and is a regular pattern when talking about race.

Stephen's new book is Leadership as liberatory praxis:

- to be shared on the BELMAS Rig page
- Cut of Black Studies at Birmingham – important to support and promote discussion of creeping anti-DEI sentiment.
- CSH new book: Whiteness in Educational Leadership in England with Palgrave

Blog – CSH shared a blog, hoping to publish quickly to populate the page, but it was sent for review.

Actions

- SF and CSH to network with Dr. Moorosi and Dr. Victoria Showunmi in order to generate new events and support collaboration with RIGs.
- Research community around race and leadership – people feeling vulnerable at the moment – is it possible that we could be a port of call for the community through our resources on the BELMAS page?
- CSH to ask Kelly if we can comment and post shared resources to build community and eventual membership. See if we can navigate bureaucracy. We still need more autonomy to be able to function and build community as a RIG.
- We wish we could know what happened with the old RIG leadership. We are still working out how we can build community if we don't know who is in the community. Where are the communities from previous RIG co-convenors? Why is emailing them an issue (GDPR or not). We need to establish a community possibly outside of BELMAS.
- Why is it that we can only engage with the community through a middle-man?
- A newsletter quarterly could share news and to get email addresses to contact people.
- Need capacity to contact people – perhaps we find ways of acquiring email addresses and contact people as part of our network.

Other meetings:

Planning meetings

June 1, 2026 - Planning session to determine focus and approach for the RIG session on the Annual Conference agenda

Meeting attended by CSH and SF and planned materials and plan for conference.

Annual Conference

July 4-7, 2026

Lunchtime Sessions

N/A

Blogs/ Podcasts:

CSH sent a blog for the page but accidentally this went to the wrong process and was sent for peer review. This took time to come back and has been delayed.

MiE Contributions:

N/A

Aims and Objectives for next year: Still to be confirmed.