Disrupting the Discourse: A blueprint For student voice empowerment in higher education

Presented by:

Kevin. J. Brazant, SFHEA.

Progression and Attainment Project Manager, UAL.

Kevin J Brazant, SFHEA

- **Progression and Attainment Project Manager:** Addressing issues of the Ethnicity Degree Awarding Gap and continuation.

- **Embedding Racial, Social Justice Principles**: Coordinates the students as partners 'Changemakers' initiative at LCC.

- **Content producer and Story teller:** Host of the podcast *Lounge Akademics*, providing an informal platform to discuss the culture.

- **Researcher:** "Disrupt the Discourse: The Culture Decoded" co-creation framework unpacking positionality as part of the student experience.

Session overview

This case study examines a research project that applied Critical Race Theory and Intersectionality within curriculum development. The initiative created a dialogic space for critically reflecting on learning and teaching practices. Through interviews with educators and student partners, the project captured diverse perspectives, which were then curated into a podcast playlist and a co creation framework. The framework foregrounds themes of Race and Racism, offering exploration of these issues within pedagogical contexts.

Associated themes:

- Disruptive pedagogy.

- Students as Partners and co creation.

- Decolonising education.

The student experience in Higher Education

- **Dominance of western-centric traditions and practices** (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Akel 2019; Museus et al, 2015; Bhambra et al., 2018).

- **Disparities in degree student outcomes** – ethnicity degree awarding gap UK Sector 13% (2018) > 9% (2021) (Alexander & Arday, 2015; UUK, 2019, 2022)

7 theoretical perspectives to understanding the student experience of alienation.

1. The postmodern condition – the sociocultural context.
2. Positioned as Subject/Object – the primacy of discourse.
3. **The student as the outsider – Knowledge, power and insight.**
4. **Bereft of the capacity for creativity – the teaching and learning process**.
5. Exiled from the self – loss of ownership of the learning process.
6. Disciplined into docility – assessment practices.
7. Leave me alone – alienation as a strategy for self-preservation.

Author/s and date: Sarah J. Mann (2001)

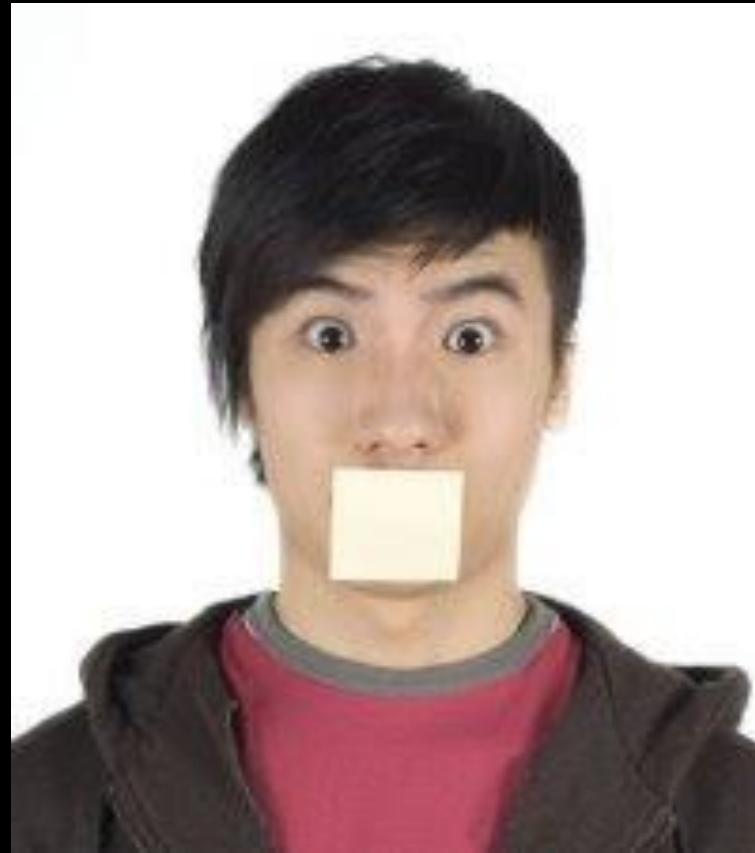Title: Alternative Perspectives on the Student Experience: Alienation and Engagement.

Journal/publisher details: Studies in Higher Education, 26:1, 7-19.

DISRUPT THE DISCOURSE

Idea Dying and Silence in Academic Talk

"If students do not have a sense of connectedness to each other or to a learning community, dialogue will fail."

(Engin 2017 and Marjanovic et al 2019)

Mental Health and Well –being of Black students.

"Black students mentioned white students did not understand that they have to reconstruct their identity in the white image and practice silence to be successful at university and that this process negatively affected their mental health."

Dr. Nkasi Stoll, PhD Research at Kings College London.

'Mental health and mental well-being of Black students at UK universities: a review and thematic synthesis.'

http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0427-3367 Nkasi Stoll1, Yannick Yalipende, Nicola C Byrom3, Stephani L Hatch1,4, Heidi Lempp5

Disrupting the Discourse

THE CULTURE DECODED

Working within the academy and with the sector.

'Disrupting the Discourse: The Culture Decoded' works with Students as Partners roles within institutions exploring themes of intersectionality, positionality and the lived experiences of the student body. For example, Changemakers in collaboration with students engage in a creative process of storytelling, and co-creation as part of unpacking their experience in the academy.

We then co designed a framework cognisant of Race as part of the student experience.
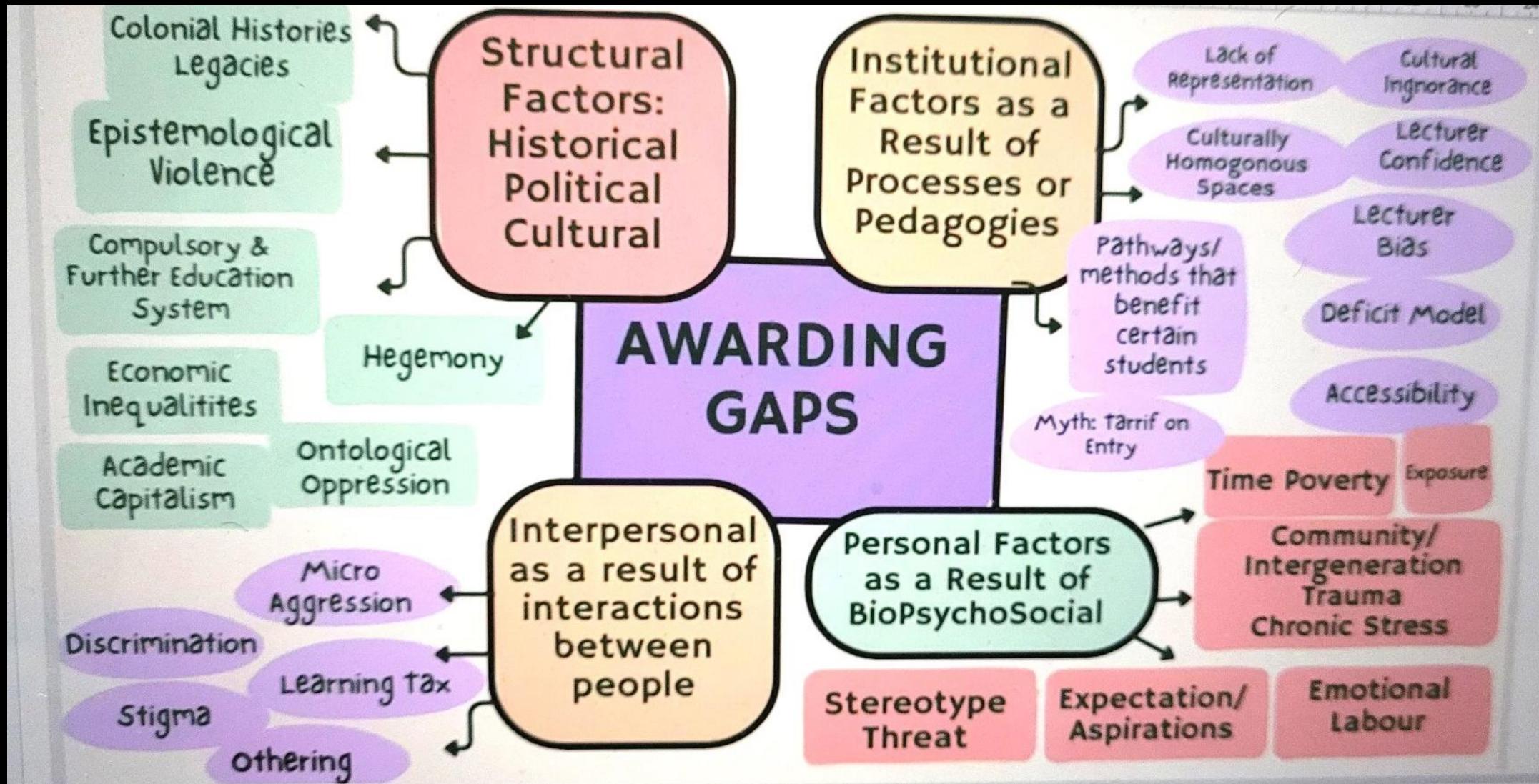
...E PART OF A COMMUNITY OF DISRUPTORS?

JOIN NOW

...EARN ABOUT ANTI RACIST
...ACTICE .
...SE CONTENT CREATION TO DECODE
...THE CULTURE.
...EARN ABOUT CRITICAL RACE
...ORY AND INTERSECTIONALITY
...GOGY FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE.

KEY DATES

9/11/22
16/11/22
23/11/22
30/11/22
7/12/22
14/12/22
18/1/23

Project Outcomes:
Implications for Learning & Teaching Practice

- Fosters learning communities and a sense of belonging

- If students do not have a sense of connectedness to each other or feel disconnected to the learning community, dialogic facilitation will fail. See issues of 'Idea Dying' and 'silence in academic talk' (Engin 2017 and Marjanovic et al 2019)

- Empowers through emancipatory practice and risk taking

- Learners must be viewed as co-creators who can bring their own point of reference to the discussion, with lecturers willing to learn from their students (Stewart & McClure, 2013).

The challenges

- **Facilitated learning by academics and educators who fail to acknowledge power dynamics, risk alienating learners:**

  • The complexities of the learning experience of students e.g. (ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation etc.) needs to be tended to (implicitly or explicitly). The interplay of power dynamics of main and subgroups could further alienate certain groups of students.

- **Resistance to constructivist (peer learning interventions).**

  • Students who are used to banking methods of teaching (Monologic/ didactic) or do not value peer learning or Social constructivist approaches risk sabotage to well-intentioned facilitation.

What are the challenges?

Attribution: Dr. Catherine Murgatroyd, Principal Lecturer for Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion in Academic Development, University of Portsmouth.

DISRUPT THE DISCOURSE

Intersectionality

Disrupt the Discourse (DtD) Framework:
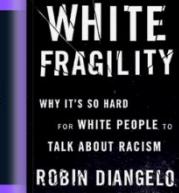**(Student voice within Curriculum Development)**

Key themes

- Centering and Disrupting Hegemonic Whiteness (resistance, fragility and racial battle fatigue).

- Understanding the student experience through assessment and pedagogy (exposing the hidden curriculum).

- Applying Critical theory as praxis in classroom pedagogy.

- Equity as collaboration, co design and co-creation.

CRITICAL RACE THEORY

TOWARD AN ANTI RACIST PEDAGOGY
INFOGRAPHIC

DISRUPT THE DISCOURSE

WHITE FRAGILITY
WHY IT'S SO HARD FOR WHITE PEOPLE TO TALK ABOUT RACISM
ROBIN DIANGELO

DEFINING WHITENESS

"We use the term 'Whiteness' as a social construct, rather than to refer to an essentialised notion of racial categories or colour. The British historical and political context has shaped the use of terminology, where Whiteness refers to the invisible privileges and power relations which systematically maintain structural, racialised, and intersectional hierarchies and oppression, via various ideological and cultural practices."

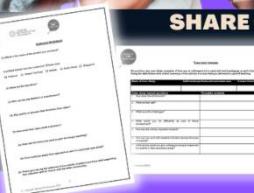(Clark & Garner, 2009).

BUILD A COMMUNITY

"Communities of practice (CoP) are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly." Note that this allows for, but does not require intentionality. Learning can be, and often is, an incidental outcome that accompanies these social processes." (Lave and Wenger 1998).

INTERSECTIONALITY

Our mission is to foster a sense of belonging and learning communities among our students and staff through using dialogue, and content creation. Using live podcasts to create intimate sit downs with professionals, educational influencers and students to explore our social identities, positionality and the challenges and rewards that these bring to our learning and teaching.

DISAGREE AGREE

MARGINALISED VOICES

NO BLM GO HOME YES
INCLUSION MISOGYNOIR DECOLONISE
FREE SPEECH IM NOT RACIST ALL LIVES MATTER BLM

SHARE OUR GOOD PRACTICE

To boost confidence in navigating themes of race, ethnicity and inequality as part of learning and teaching practice. By producing case studies from the Disrupt the Discourse project as a body of exemplary practice.

CASE STUDIES

JOIN OUR DISRUPTIVE COMMUNITY

This toolkit has been co created with anti racist scholars, students, academics and researchers. This resource, along with other opportunities to share practice, will deepen your understanding of how to dismantle structural Racism as part of our pedagogy.

Question

Do you have a strategy for co designing awarding gaps work with students?

(Pop your answers into the chat.)

How will you work with students to address these issues as part of your context?
(Break out groups chat topic)

Our choice in recommended reading/ texts?

Assumptions made about students' academic abilities.

Tackling the lack of engagement with 1-2-1 and individual tutorials?

How we frame events and present curriculum content; exploring inequalities e.g. concerning race and ethnicity etc.

## How we facilitate/mediate classroom dialogue?

Disruption as a teaching act.

"Critical work must be done in order to examine the conditions which might promote alienation and that any changes towards eliminating this experience in higher education needs to be radical and not cosmetic" (Mann, 2001).

"The actual learning process themselves will also need to be both high risk and transformatory in character. A pedagogy of this kind will engage students as persons, not merely as knowers."

(Barnett 2004)
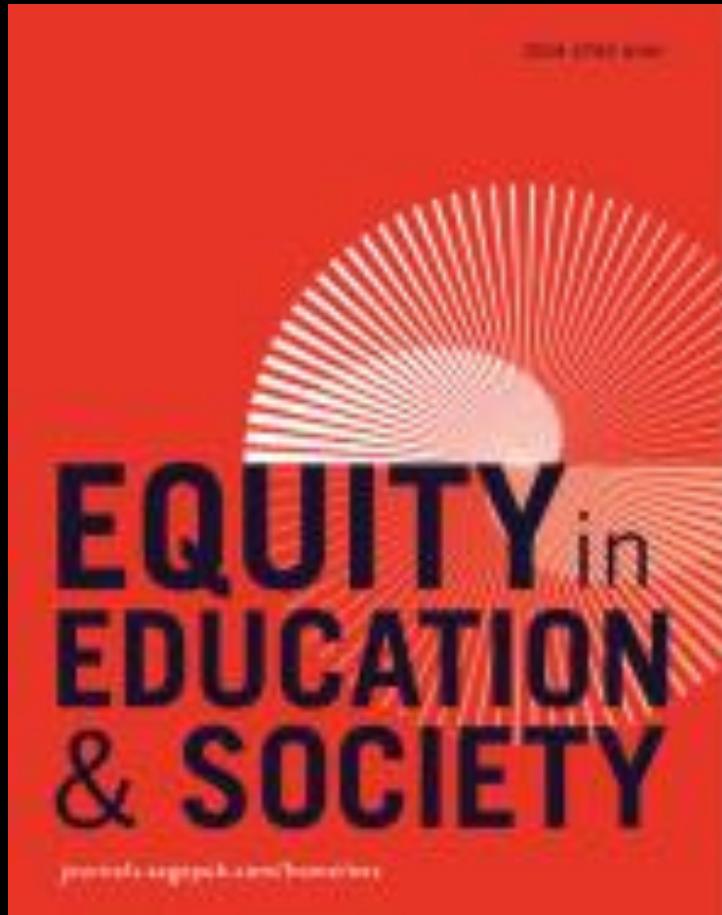
Brazant, K (2023) Disrupt the Discourse: Applying Critical Race Theory as a conceptual framework for learning and teaching. Special Issue on Equity & Inclusion Efforts: Tackling inequality in educational and other contexts. In Equity in Education & Society, (Sage publications). https://doi.org/10.1177/27526461231163325

Check out the playlist

Access the podcast here:

Podcast

Disrupt The Discourse

London Metropolitan University

#9 In conversation with Nkasi Stoll: The Black Students Wellbeing Study and Black Students Talk.

Disrupt The Discourse

Nkasi Stoll is an ESRC funded PhD Candidate at Kings College London and research lead for the 'Black Student Wellbeing study' in collaboration with Student Minds. She is also th...

▶ Feb 2022 · 34 min 59 sec

#8 In conversation with James Hunting: The Ability to BE without BElonging.

Disrupt The Discourse

James Hunting has worked in textiles posing questions on imagery, process and identity for over 30 years. He is an educator who brings this questioning approach to pedagogical...

Question

How could this framework inform your approach to...

- Access and Participation Planning (APP).

- Recruitment Strategy.

- Gaining feedback beyond Course Student Surveys (CSS) and NSS.

- B3 Metrics / Addressing Awarding Gaps (Ethnicity, Disability etc.)

- Students as partners work with students?

- Curriculum development and assessment (final projects and dissertations).

- Cultivating student communities and events.

Find out how: Join the community

Would you like to know how this could work at your institution?

Complete an expression of interest: *https://forms.gle/ryLWPwqQp2NTMC9c9*
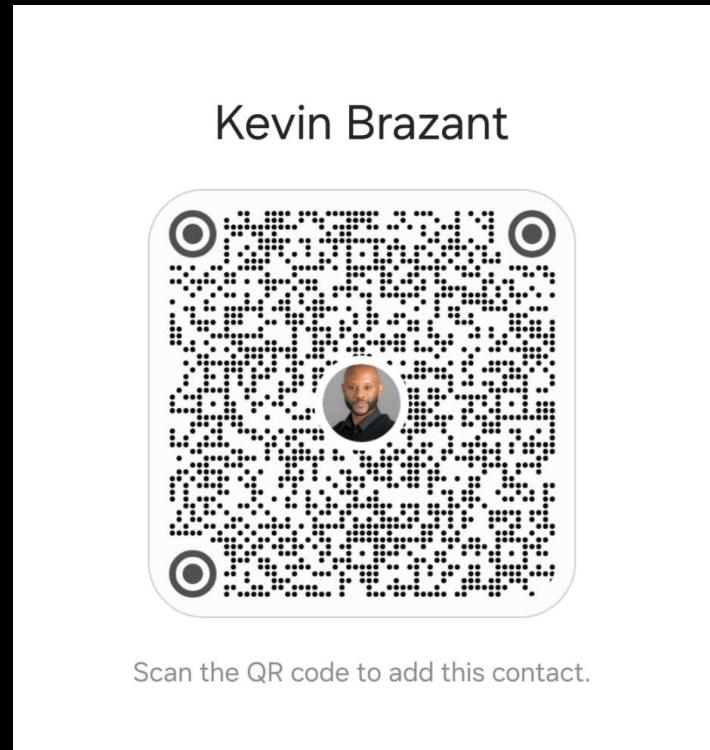
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Kevin Brazant

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Contact: Email k.brazant@lcc.arts.ac.uk and Socials @loungeakademics