Understanding and Supporting Indigenous Students

Benjamin Y. Cheung, Jennifer Doyle, Hanae Tsukada
FYE Symposium - February 20, 2020

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Remember Your First Year?
Objectives

● Gain an awareness of the importance of bandwidth and student wellbeing - with a particular focus on a sense of belonging; and

● Consider possible actions to support Indigenous students’ bandwidth.
Bandwidth - What Is It?

Cognitive and mental resources that are available to one to learn and perform.

Key to effectively accomplish various tasks, including:
- Learning
- Keeping track of information
- Planning
- Making decisions, etc.
Undermining Factors - “Bandwidth Tax”

Loss of bandwidth occurs with scarcity or insecurity related to:

- Safety
- Health
- Money
- Belonging
- Respect, etc.

Inability to access complete brain capacity for learning
Belongingness Uncertainty

Factors that can cause belongingness uncertainty include:

- Low exam score
- Critical feedback
- Feelings of loneliness
- Membership in an underrepresented group in an educational context
- Stereotype threat (Steele, 2010) - Negative stereotypes about one’s group

“Do I fit in?” “Do I matter to people here?”
Strategies to Recover Bandwidth Lost from Belongingness Uncertainty

● Normalize challenging experiences
  ○ “This experience is not typical” vs. “It’s common to have challenges at first.”

● Create a critical mass
  ○ i.e., in-group role models and peers in high-performing settings

● Create counter-spaces
Academic and Social Counter-Spaces

“Sites where deficit notions of people of color can be challenged and where a positive collegiate racial climate can be established” (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000, p. 70).
Department of Psychology - A pilot project

- One of the most popular programs in Arts among Indigenous students

- How to support bandwidth for Indigenous students?
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We are uninvited guests on the Unceded, Ancestral, and Traditional Territory of the Musqueam.
Introductions
Agenda

- Activity
- Presentation on bandwidth
- Department of Psychology project
- Indigenous Collegium
- Discussions
Activity

After we start, please read the first set of instructions, and follow those instructions as you go through the activity.

You will have 5 minutes.
Activity slides removed from public view
Bandwidth
Recap: Bandwidth & Undermining Factors (“Bandwidth Tax”)

Bandwidth - Cognitive and mental resources that are available to one to learn and perform.

Loss of bandwidth occurs with scarcity or insecurity related to:

- Safety
- Health
- Money
- Belonging
- Respect, etc.
Study: Impact of Bandwidth Depletion (Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013)

- Participants were given a scenario where their car needed $300 worth of repairs and asked to decide whether to pay.
- Then they were given an IQ test; poorer participants and richer participants’ IQs were about the same.
- In a follow-up experiment, the cost of repairs was raised to $3,000; The richer participants scored 14 points higher on the IQ test than poorer participants.
Belongingness Uncertainty

Created by Nicolas Vicent from Noun Project
“See? I don’t belong...”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Membership in an underrepresented group</th>
<th>Examples of Adversity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This experience is not typical...</td>
<td>Mindset: If the student believes...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“People like me don’t belong and aren’t welcome here.”</td>
<td>Psychological Interpretation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawal</td>
<td>Behavioural Response to the Academic Environment and Learning Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diminished</td>
<td>Academic Engagement and Performance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Mindset Scholars Network: [https://mindsetscholarsnetwork.org/learning-mindsets/belonging/#](https://mindsetscholarsnetwork.org/learning-mindsets/belonging/#)
## Intervening Belongingness Uncertainty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Membership in an underrepresented group</th>
<th>Examples of Adversity</th>
<th>Low exam score, feelings of loneliness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This experience is not typical...</td>
<td>Mindset: If the student believes...</td>
<td>It is common to have challenges at first...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“People like me don’t belong and aren’t welcome here.”</td>
<td>Psychological Interpretation</td>
<td>“It’s common to go through challenges like this.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawal</td>
<td>Behavioural Response to the Academic Environment and Learning Process</td>
<td>Sustained involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diminished</td>
<td>Academic Engagement and Performance</td>
<td>Increased</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Mindset Scholars Network: https://mindsetscholarsnetwork.org/learning-mindsets/belonging/
Academic and Social Counter-Spaces

“Sites where deficit notions of people of color can be challenged and where a positive collegiate racial climate can be established” (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000, p. 70).

Created by Thibault Geffroy from Noun Project
Critical Mass

“Social vaccine” against self-doubt (Dasgupta, 2011, p. 233):

- Exposure to ingroup experts - “a future ‘possible self’”
- Peers in high-achievement contexts.
Department-Level Initiative: Department of Psychology
Indigenous Student Initiatives

~40% decrease since 2010

Goes against general trends

Why?
Indigenous Student Initiatives

PURE (Program for Undergraduate Research Experience) Grant funded

2 years

(Project members’ photos removed from public view)
Indigenous Student Initiatives

2019 T1
Ethics, Advertisement
Research methods prep
BREB submission
Recruit participants

2019 T2
Data collection
Phenomenological approach
Transcribe responses
Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, Aboriginal Student Advisors

2020 T1
Data collection
Data transcription

2020 T2
Data analysis
Final report
Report back to PURE
Indigenous Student Initiatives

Experience?

Othering or ostracism?

What would you want to see?
After analyses:

- Present findings and themes to Department head
- Propose potential interventions
- Go back to participants, solicit thoughts on proposals, and solicit suggestions
- Explore implementation, then implement
Indigenous Student Initiatives

Overarching goal

Create positive environment for Indigenous students within Psychology

Create sustainable feedback and consultation mechanism with Indigenous students

Implement/change policies and practices to support Indigenous students in Psychology

Create Indigenous working group

Basis
Indigenous Student Collegium
My name is Jennifer Doyle

- I graduated last year from UBC with a major in Psychology
- I currently work out of the longhouse as the Indigenous Work Integrated Learning (WIL) Program Analyst.
- Working with Dr. Ben Cheung as a Research Assistant.
Indigenous Student Collegium

This place is located in the Longhouse. Both the Collegia and Longhouse are Indigenous student’s home away from home. However, this collegia allows all Indigenous students access across all years.

We have seven collegia advisors. Their role is to support Indigenous students through discussion and providing a safe space.
Indigenous Student Collegium

- The Collegia includes a kitchen, lounge, study space, and elders room
- This place was created to foster a safe place for the student Indigenous population
- It also offers knowledge on resources like counseling, sex education, nurse on campus, tutoring, and food banks.
- One goal of the collegia is to build community as a safety net for when students go through challenges in school
Student stories and pictures removed from public view.
Discussion
Discussion

- In your department/unit, what is under discussion with respect to Indigenous students?
- What kinds of policies, guidelines, practices etc. are in place in your department/unit to support Indigenous students’ bandwidth?
- What can you do to make a positive change for Indigenous students in your role in a way that does not reproduce a pattern of colonization?
Resources on Campus

- Academic Advising: https://aboriginal.ubc.ca/students/academic-advising/
- Indigenous Student Collegium at the Longhouse: https://aboriginal.ubc.ca/indigenous-student-collegium/
- Indigenous Portal, UBC Vancouver (https://indigenous.ubc.ca)
  - Students (https://indigenous.ubc.ca/students/)
  - Student Life (https://indigenous.ubc.ca/students/current-students/student-resources/student-life/)
References

Thank You