
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.

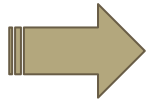


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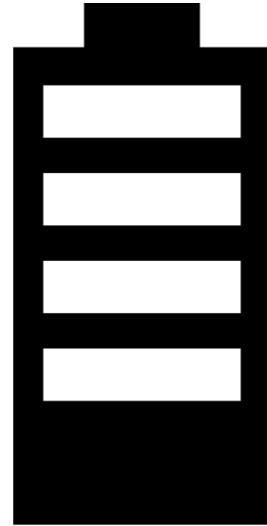
Undermining Factors - “Bandwidth Tax”

Loss of bandwidth occurs with scarcity or insecurity related to:

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



Inability to access complete brain capacity for learning



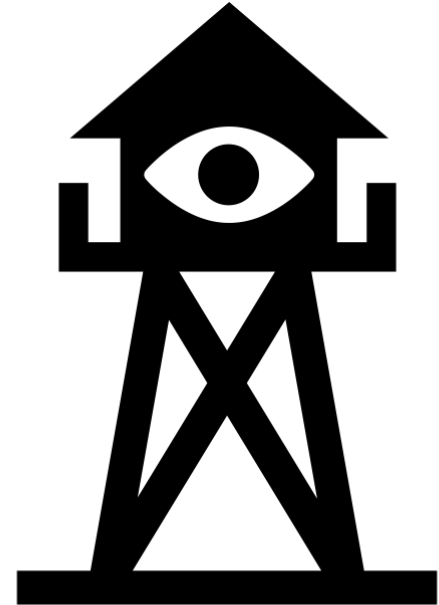
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Belongingness Uncertainty

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?”



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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).



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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.

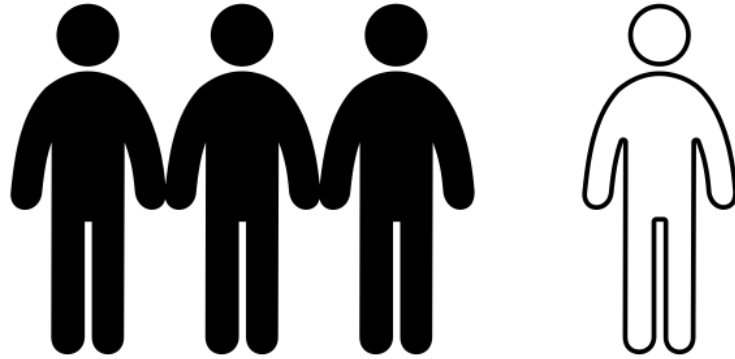
Loss of bandwidth occurs with scarcity or insecurity related to:

- 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...”



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

From Mindset Scholars Network:

<https://mindsetscholarsnetwork.org/learning-mindsets/belonging/#>

Intervening Belongingness Uncertainty

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

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).

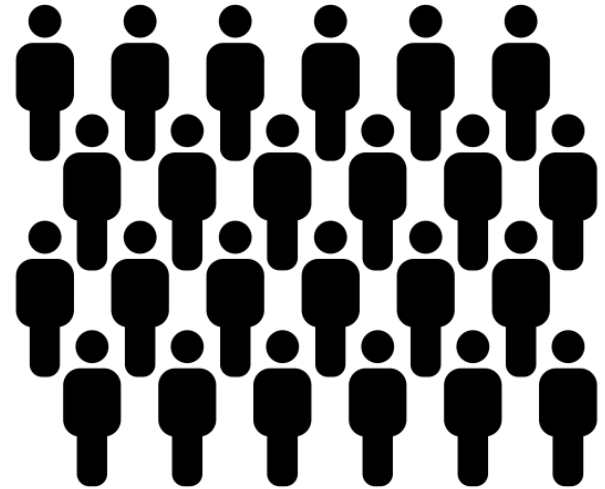


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Critical Mass

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

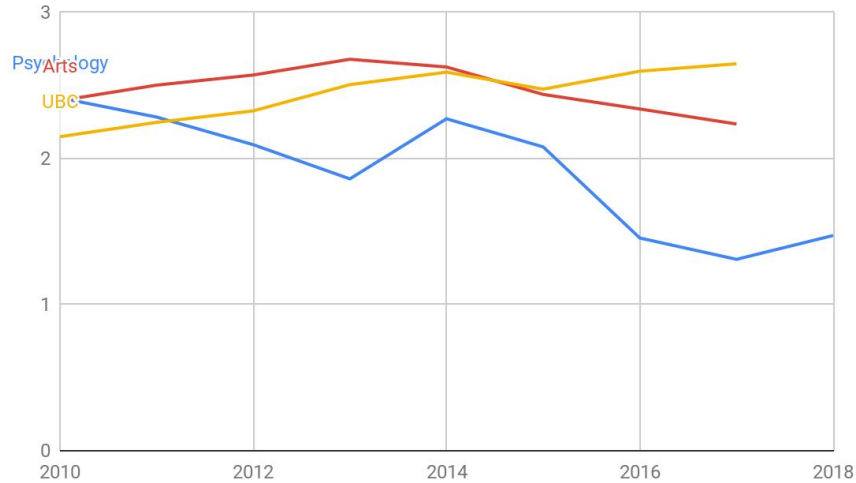
- Exposure to ingroup experts - “a future ‘possible self’”
- Peers in high-achievement contexts.



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Department-Level Initiative: Department of Psychology

Indigenous Student Initiatives



~40% decrease since 2010

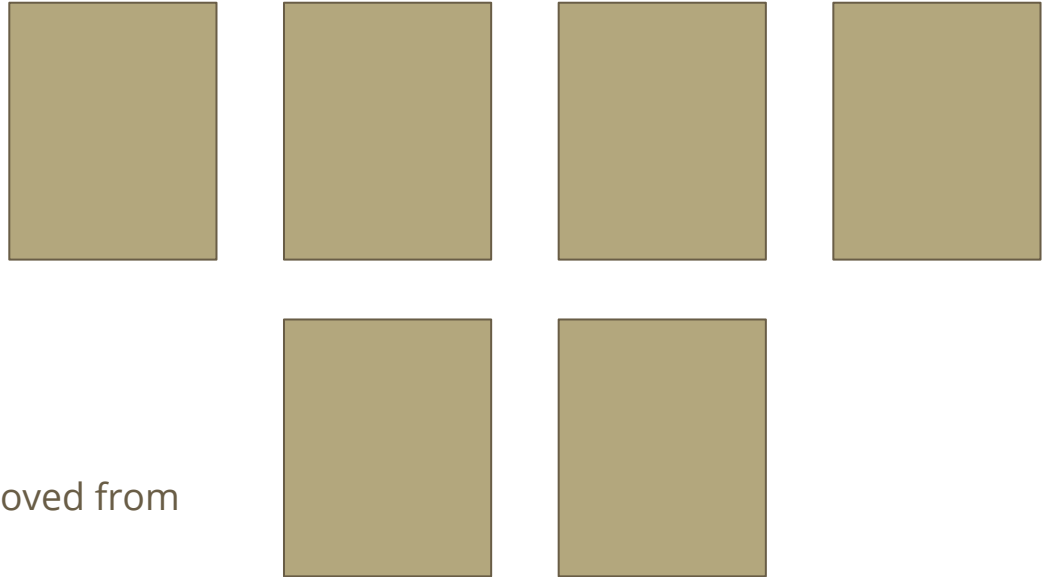
Goes against general trends

Why?

Indigenous Student Initiatives

PURE (Program for Undergraduate Research Experience) Grant funded

2 years



(Project members' photos removed from public view)

Indigenous Student Initiatives



Ethics, Advertisement

Research methods prep
BREB submission
Recruit participants

**Data collection
Data transcription**

Phenomenological
approach
Transcribe responses

Indigenous and
non-Indigenous students,
Aboriginal Student
Advisors

**Data collection
Data transcription**

**Data analysis
Final report**

Report back to PURE

Indigenous Student Initiatives

Experience?

Othering or ostracism?

What would you want to see?

Indigenous Student Initiatives

After analyses:

Present findings and themes to Department head

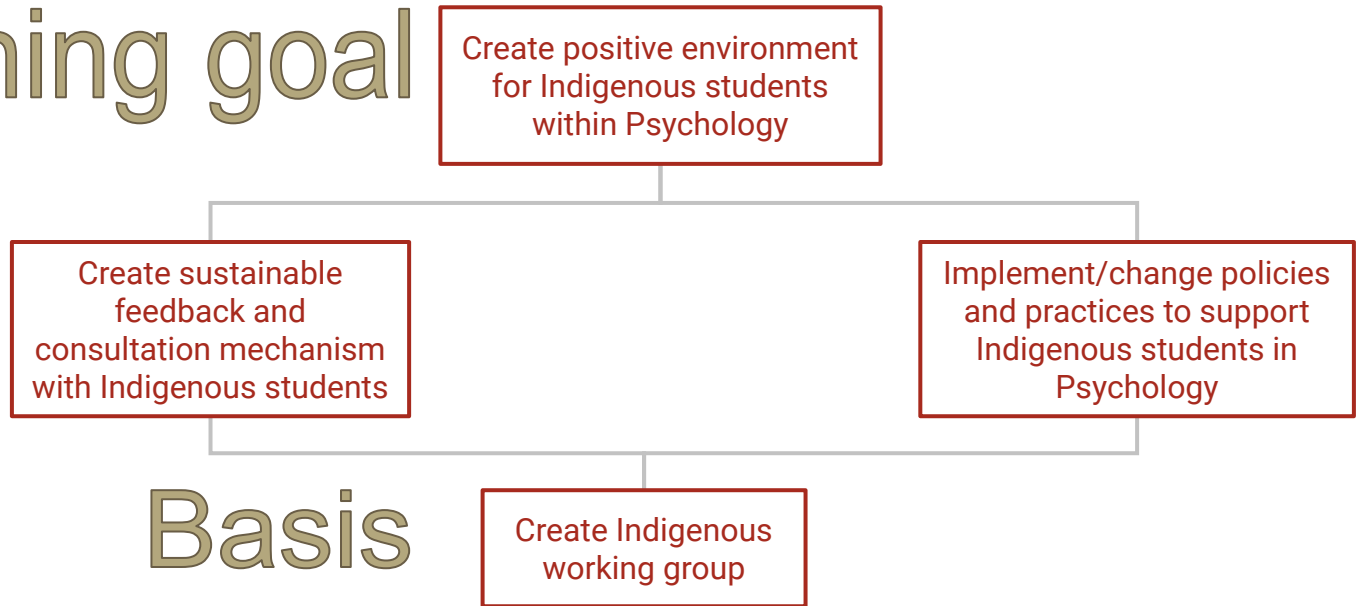
Propose potential interventions

Go back to participants, solicit thoughts on proposals, and solicit suggestions

Explore implementation, then implement

Indigenous Student Initiatives

Overarching goal



Indigenous Student Collegium

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 students' 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/>)

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Thank You