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Disrupt the Discourse: An
eLearning Course and Digital
Toolkit to aid the Development
of an Anti-Racist Pedagogy

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Abstract

Kevin J. Brazant presents *Disrupt the Discourse*, a digital tool kit of resources and content inspired by Critical Race Theory, values of social justice and anti-racism practice. This toolkit incorporates a web-based eLearning course builder that allows the development of online courses for any device. This toolkit has been purposefully designed and developed, cognisant of the challenges of digital poverty (i.e. lack of access to laptops and the adoption of mobile learning, such as using smartphones and smaller devices and navigating intermittent and unstable internet connections). It serves as a reference point and guide for educators seeking to facilitate courageous conversations relating to both staff and students who identify as Black Indigenous People of colour (BIPOC) and their lived experiences as they navigate colonial and white spaces both figuratively and physically. Users of the toolkit will gain an understanding of issues of racial discrimination, oppression and structural inequality whilst equally fostering white allyship and critical consciousness for self-actualised activism and praxis for racial and social justice. Using this toolkit, educational activists can find creative ways to collaborate with each other and students across schools of thought and subject disciplines, and by sharing their practice for the evolution of racially

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conscious learning and teaching. The *Disrupt the Discourse Toolkit* fosters agency, promotes resilience and builds capacity for anyone to become an agent for racial justice. Through the process of co-creation and collaboration, the toolkit combines contributions from academic research and teaching innovation in a bid to mobilise a community of disruptors, using digital technology to create accessible content that informs and facilitates critical dialogue.

Disrupting the Discourse for Race Equity

Biological notions of race have been used to perpetuate acts of violence against racialized peoples, Black communities, and colonised peoples [including Muslims], significantly reinforcing scientific racism and eugenics. Also, theorists of coloniality and scholars of race, such as Fanon (1952), have called attention to ways in which race has been epidermalized in order to mark bodies and reinforce slippery ideas and hierarchical structures. Finally, in *The Introduction to Critical Race Theory Delgado and Stefancic* (2011) discuss that race and races "are not objective, inherent, or fixed . . . People of a common origin share certain physical traits, such as skin colour, physique, and hair texture. But these constitute only a tiny portion of their genetic endowment, are dwarfed by what we have in common, and have little or nothing to do with distinctly human, higher-order traits, such as personality, intelligence, and moral behaviour. That society frequently chooses to ignore these scientific truths, creates races, and endows them with pseudo-permanent characteristics is of great interest to 'Critical Race Theory'" (Delgado and Stefancic, 2011, p. 8).

-- Ibtisam M. Abujad, opening comments provided by this edition's collaborating editor of *Decolonial Subversions*.

Abujad's opening remarks present a compelling provocation, inviting us all to problematise ideas of 'race' and engage in a dialogue concerning its origin. This provocation helps to ground and situate this latest submission of an eLearning course titled 'Disrupt the Discourse' as part of the broader debate and colonial context. Following the murder of George Floyd in the United States (US) and the subsequent global Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement and protests, the response has been a 'push-pull' dynamic where Western authorities have further enacted oppressive policies and legislation to restrict freedom of speech, as well as try to progress conversations of race inequality (Miller, 2021). Far-right extremist groups have used racial harassment, hate speech and, in some instances, violence in opposition to the movement. This is considered a time fraught with significant challenges to advancing race equity in what appears to be an increasingly hostile environment deeply rooted within British Western society (Miller, 2021). This has highlighted stark issues of structural and racial inequality. Closer to home and on a granular level, in the United Kingdom (UK), our academic institutions and educational establishments reinforce this structural inequality, and this takes the form of awarding differential degree outcomes between Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups and their white counterparts, referred to as the 'Degree Awarding or attainment gap.'

With students calling for the decolonisation of their taught curriculum, universities and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are being tasked with addressing these differential outcomes, with some institutions and their staff feeling emboldened to amplify shared values of emancipation and social justice as part of their teaching and learning practice (Brazant, 2022). This initiative is such an example, influenced by Paulo Freire's philosophical approach to education from his seminal works *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). '*Disrupt the Discourse*' is an online multimedia resource inspired by critical pedagogy and social justice values (Brazant, 2021). Critical pedagogy is a philosophy of education and social movement that applies critical theory concepts and traditions to education and the study of culture. It insists that issues of social justice and democracy are not distinct from acts of teaching and learning. The goal of critical pedagogy is emancipation from oppression through awakening critical consciousness, based on the Portuguese term *conscientização*. When achieved, critical consciousness encourages individuals to self-actualise to effect change in their world through social critique and political action (Brazant, 2023).

Positionality and local context

I identify as a male educator of the African Diaspora, based in the UK at a diverse, London-based university which seeks to promote the values and practices of an equally equitable and inclusive learning community with a commitment to anti-racism and social purpose. As the author of this toolkit and resource, it acts as an invitation to other academics and teaching staff around the world to engage in new, fresh and exciting ways to advance race equity and social justice and look at the world through the lived experiences of our staff and students. Through this resource, educators and activists are encouraged to embrace new ways of seeing in an uncertain world, to embrace disruption that augments traditional discourse in learning and teaching through the lens of critical theory and praxis.

The *Disrupt the Discourse Toolkit* is an output from a broader conceptual framework intended to help lecturers find creative ways to advance race equity and inclusive learning through collaborating with students and their peers as part of learning and teaching (Brazant, 2023). This is occurring in a time of increased hostility, where questions of safety are being raised for educators like me who are in the pursuit of freedom and a more equitable society (Oladipo, 2023). This initiative and subsequent toolkit embodies a subversive act of resistance by providing resources and content that encourages students and academics alike to question the status quo and develop their capacity to be agents of positive social change (Brazant, 2023). Those engaging with this resource will become more cognisant of how critical theories, combined with the advent of technology and digital content creation, can help to recognise and dismantle issues of racism, sexism and oppression that manifest in the social inequalities that divide our society.

Toolkit methodology: using digital technology to advance a dialogue of racial justice

The resource takes the form of carefully curated online digital content and multimedia, exploring themes of decolonising education by applying theories of Critical Race Theory (CRT). This intersects across themes associated with positionality and lived experiences (Brazant, 2020), all in a bid to support today's educators and academics in introducing these ideas and concepts as part of their pedagogy. One of the main components of this project is the creation and curation of digital interviews with scholars with lived experiences with racism. This foregrounds counter-storytelling to privilege the stories of marginalised voices from people of colour, a core tenet of *Critical Race Theory* (Rollock and Gillborn, 2011). This resource takes the form of autoethnographic encounters through dialogue, captured in video and audio podcast interviews, as well as accompanying text, forming a consistent themed narrative between the sections of the Toolkit.

The toolkit is structured to foreground issues of race as part of learning and teaching within the Western world, legacies of colonialism and imperialism, and how they have consequently influenced the creation and validation of what is seen to be 'true' and 'accepted' knowledge. The toolkit's development is influenced by Critical Race Theory, firstly, by locating racism as systemic and prevalent in Western society. Secondly, by privileging the voices of the contributors, some of which are Black and indigenous people of colour (BIPOC), in the exploration of their lived experiences of positionality regarding issues of race as part of learning and teaching (Taylor et al, 2000). Thirdly, to acknowledge their contribution through non-traditional (Western, Eurocentric) means of referencing and citations by, instead, presenting their knowledge and ideas through podcasting, video and content creation to aid the accessibility and visibility of their ideas. These stories of learning and teaching practice recount indigenous, cultural and passed-down oral dialogic traditions as told through the stories of my contributors. In this instance, knowledge is co-created and curated in the toolkit through themed sections as follows:

Developing Racial Dialogue: using dialogic interactions to explore race and racism (privileging the experiences of scholars of colour and lived experience).

Survival Guide: of crucial reading and content for racial justice and praxis (recommended readings and materials for starting the journey).

Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a tool: in praxis to explore race as a social construct, such as how whiteness and Blackness are related to privileging, othering and racism. Disrupting Hegemonic Whiteness: unpacking privilege, colonial legacies and the commitment to resisting the sustaining of systemic racism within Western society (Clarke and Garner, 2010).

Intersectionality as a tool: of seeing the world and its inhabitants in its complex, nuanced form.

Applying theory to praxis: illustrative case studies modelling practical application of CRT to learning and teaching in the classroom.

This toolkit has inspired the mutual exchange of dialogue as part of praxis (Freire, 1970) which has led to an accompanying dissemination series, which includes live-streamed intimate conversations and fireside chats with academics, community partners and activists based in the UK and higher education sector. The project's natural evolution is to invite the voices of the global majority to add to the discourse and contribute new knowledge and perspectives to our understanding of social issues, particularly the debate concerning race, of it being a social construct vs a biological reality. This resource will provoke, challenge and stimulate debate about our world and our role within it.

Conclusion: Inspiring a community for collective action

To learn is to engage in dialogue, to be inspired by your peers, to become custodians of our own stories, and to develop critical consciousness through dialogue, mediating understanding and meaning. This is a worthwhile endeavour, an adventure of discomfort, exploration and self-discovery in applying values of social justice in the pursuit of praxis. In this instance, the proposed motion is the formation of a worldwide Community of Practice (CoP), as discussed by Lave and Wenger (1991), that exists beyond the boundaries of your tenure or institution, where you will get to exchange ideas through a digital interface with other colleagues from different disciplines and backgrounds who share the same values of building an equitable world.

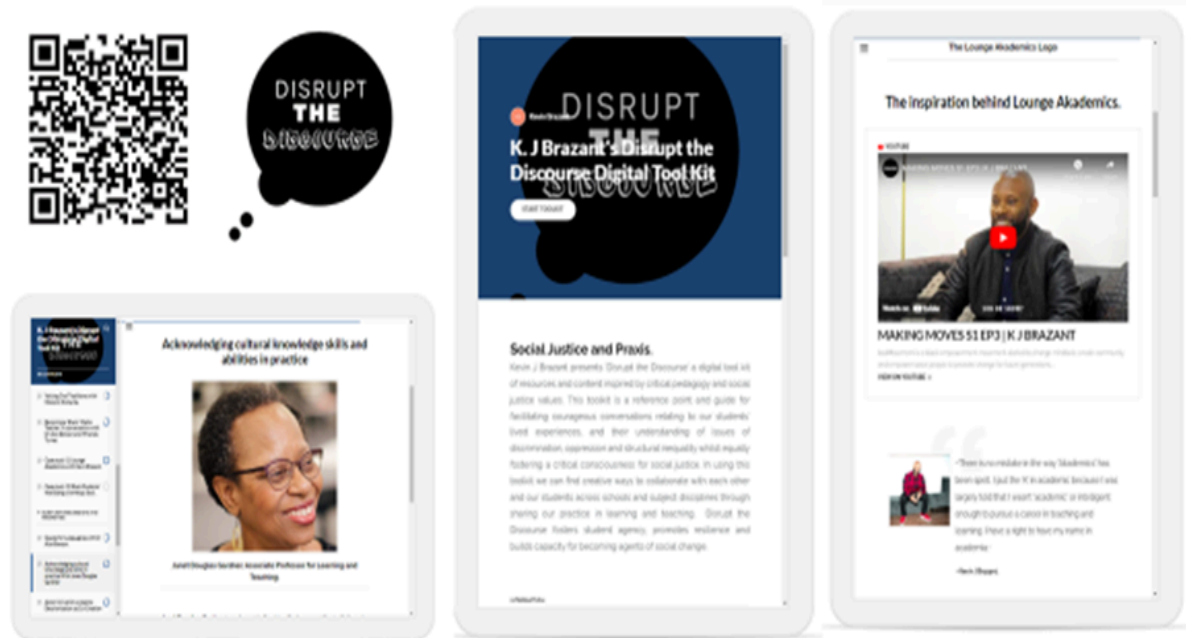
How to get involved:

Educators are invited to share their activism or specialist areas of research relating to advancing equality and racial equity through a case study. If you are interested in submitting a case study or simply getting involved in the community, please complete the following '*Disrupt the Discourse*' [**sign up form**](#).

I am particularly keen to hear from colleagues who are cognisant of the power of digital technology in making ideas more accessible and have included interdisciplinary approaches and theoretical ideas, to inform an anti-racist pedagogy as part of their learning and teaching practice. Together, I want to make this innovative practice more accessible through the form of digital content. I am inspired by what we can co-develop through collaboration, which combines research, teaching innovation, civic action and digital technology to create content as part of a disruptive and accessible online community. The *Disrupt the Discourse: The Culture Decoded Toolkit's* process and aspirations are illustrated in the following infographic below. Scan the QR Code to access the platform from your smartphone. Alternatively, click on the link from a desktop or laptop.

The Disrupt the Discourse Toolkit is accessible here:

https://rise.articulate.com/share/Mm0hPwi1vi20cmftgFkJeb_W9oODM2XM



You can Access the Disrupt the Discourse Toolkit here: https://rise.articulate.com/author/eXDzN_g_eGNYelQ8eInW3dxsjiIn5vVAii/author/course/preview

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