BEYOND THE PROJECT: CO-CREATING INCLUSIVE PGR DEVELOPMENT CONVERSATIONS FOR EQUITABLE SUPERVISION

How to we move beyond statements of intent to lasting structural and cultural change?

Dr Theadora Jean (she/her)

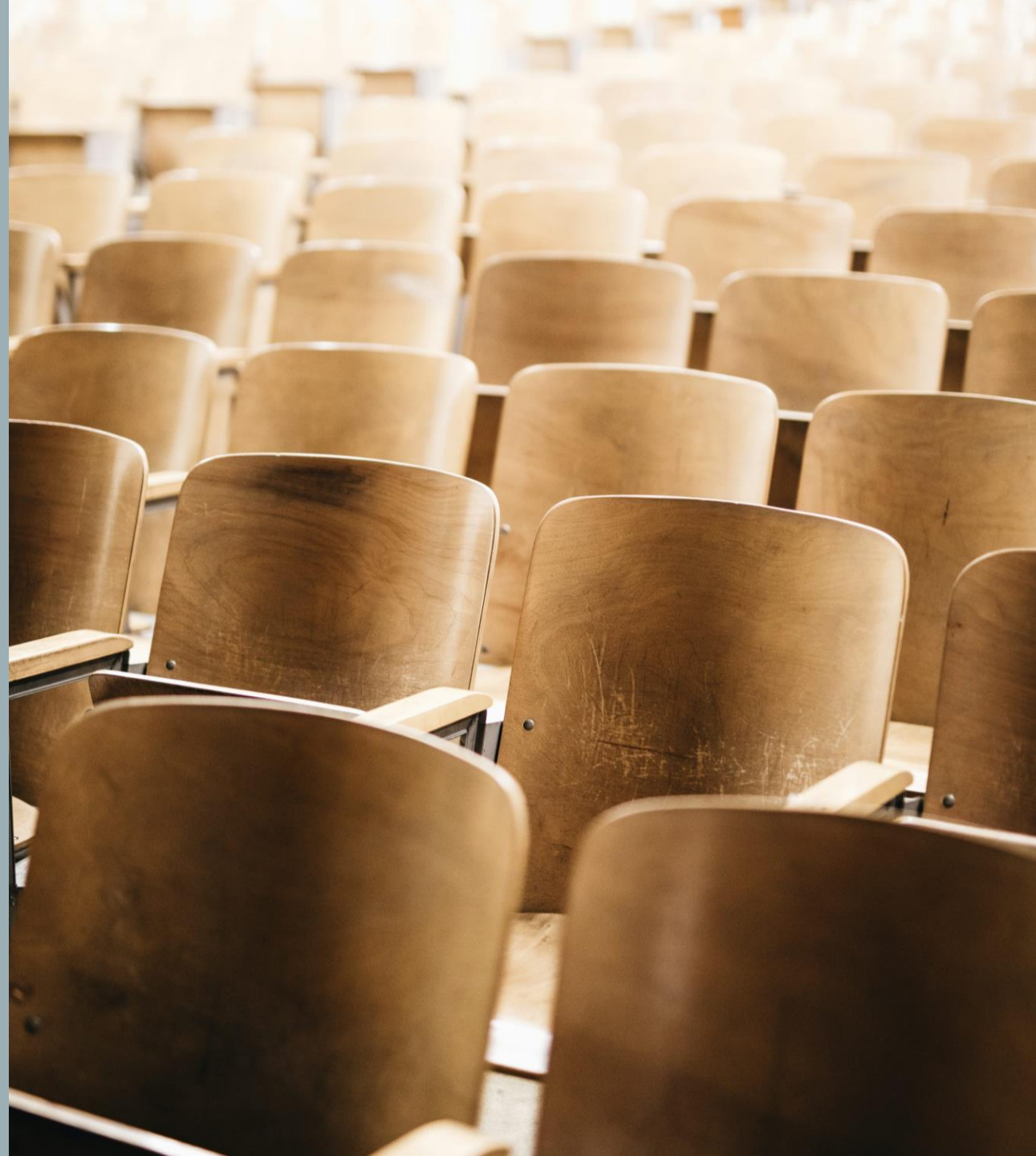
BACKGROUND

- Low-income background, invisible disability, caring responsibilities, mature PGR student 2018-2023, multi-cultural community

- Researcher Developer Trainer at Royal Holloway, University of London
- Alternative Guide to Postgraduate Funding
- Social Media for Academia

- Cultural Competency at King's (Edward Ademolu, Shaungyu Li et al)

- Tamara Kwofie et al, Student Engagement in Higher Education Journal Ethnicity Awarding Gap Project, (2023) + Lazara Morgan
- EDI Champion on the Next Generation Research Supervision Project (RSVP)



MICHEAL DAVID, THE "CULTURE IN CULTURAL COMPETENCE" (2020)

Cultural competence is a journey and a pathway towards **becoming competent in working with, and between, diverse cultural situations and contexts**. There is no single definition of cultural competence, since it is a **continually evolving process**, but there are some useful working definitions such as Cross et al. (1989). These authors use the term "culture" to denote "the integrated pattern of human behaviour that includes thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values and institutions of a racial, ethnic, religious or social group" (Cross et al., 1989, p. 3). But this is just one among a vast array of definitions in the long history of the concept of culture in the social sciences and humanities fields (see, e.g., Billington et al., 1991)."

AHMED, SARA. *COMPLAINT!*
DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2024.

"To hear complaints, you have to **dismantle the barriers**… that render so much of what is said… **invisible and inaudible**."

NEXT GENERATION RESEARCH SUPERVISION PROJECT (RSVP)

- £4.6 million, four-year Research England-funded project to **transform** the professional development and recognition of doctoral supervision.
- Led by the University of York, King's is one of the five university partners (with York, Coventry, Nottingham and Sheffield Hallam), plus UKCGE (UK Council for Graduate Education).
- King's contribution will include facilitating focus groups with supervisors, support staff, and doctoral students, piloting outputs from the project (e.g. via workshops) and much more…

RSVP
Next Generation
Research SuperVision Project

NEXT GENERATION RESEARCH SUPERVISION PROJECT (RSVP)

- **More confident** supervisors who are better able to support a **greater diversity** of doctoral candidates and programmes.
- **Consistency in supervision** which is demonstrated through recognition of individuals and programmes.
- More effective **team supervision** - with greater capacity for interdisciplinary and industry-based collaboration.
- A world-leading suite of **professional development resources** which will continue to enhance UK research supervision.

RSVP
Next Generation
Research SuperVision Project

RAISING OUTCOMES FOR RACIALLY MINORITISED WOMEN ON DOCTORAL DEGREES IN ENGLAND. (2026) GENERATION DELTA BRIEFING

"Racially minoritised women remain significantly underrepresented and unevenly supported across doctoral education in England. Doctoral education plays a critical gatekeeping role in shaping the future workforce in academia and beyond. Strengthening doctoral pathways for racially minoritised women is central to research excellence, talent sustainability, institutional credibility and economic growth."

Generation Delta

HIDDEN CURRICULUM BARRIERS HINDERING GRADUATE STUDENT SUCCESS: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY ON STUDENT STATUS DISCRIMINATION, JUSTIN PATRICK, *POWER AND EDUCATION* (2025)

"The importance of social and cultural capital and the difference they can make in a student's education journey are exacerbated by the hidden curriculum of education, which takes the form of **unspoken rules, good practices, and job requirements** that are not explicitly mentioned in curricula, but which are paramount for a student to achieve a meaningful, sustainable career in their field (Bandini et al., 2017; Calarco, 2020; Elliot, 2020). The mysteries of the hidden curriculum are **especially detrimental to students from marginalized identities** who may not have extensive networks in education institutions (Gable, 2021; Hopkins et al., 2024; Oztok, 2019; Stergiopoulos et al., 2018)."

SUPPORTING PGR DEVELOPMENT BEYOND THE PROJECT

Two-hour workshop

- Both online and in person
- Self-reflection
- PGR Development Discussion Template
- Case Studies

Learning Objectives

- practise using reflective models to evaluate and improve research supervision
- identify strengths and limits in their supervisory role
- develop strategies for balancing support, setting boundaries, and apply inclusive approaches
- use a structured tool to guide meaningful PGR development conversations
- co-create structured development plans with supervisees

WORKSHOP: SELF REFLECTION ON SUPERVISION (BEYOND THE PROJECT)

EVERITT (2024)

"…supervisors will often draw on their own experience of being supervised, resulting in them replicating or rectifying the practices they experienced"

WORKSHOP: SELF REFLECTION ON SUPERVISION (BEYOND THE PROJECT)

QUESTIONS

- What worked, what didn't?
- What was missing?
- **What did you have to figure out for yourself?**
- What's the one thing you wish someone had said to you or told you about when you were a PGR that would have helped with your development?
- What had the biggest impact on your success in your career (besides your doctoral qualification)?

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR SUPERVISORS AT KING'S COLLEGE LONDON

- As an integral part of the supervision and review processes, supervisors are required to ensure that the needs of students with regard to personal development and training in transferable skills are assessed regularly.
- **Supervisors are expected to support** their students' attendance at appropriate courses or participation in other activities to meet those needs.
- Supervisors should actively encourage students to consider a conversation with one of the Careers Consultants for researchers within the first year or two of their PhD, in order to be in a position to maximise the opportunities by the end of the PhD.
- **Supervisors should discuss with students** their training, careers and skills development requirements with at regular intervals through their programme of study. From these discussions, **students should identify training and development needs** and where appropriate participate in relevant development activities to help meet those needs.

KING'S College LONDON

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What does PGR Development mean?

Clear results

7/7

WORKSHOP – DEFINING PGR DEVELOPMENT

Understanding research careers within and beyond academia

Working with industry partners- internships/placements

Career management and planning

Professional networks / networking skills

Teaching / HEA Associate Fellow accreditation

Impact / Public Engagement

Applying for funding

Publishing / Peer Review process

Current UK and international employment landscape and trends

Presenting at conferences

WORKSHOP – ETHICAL SIGNPOSTING

- Careers & Employability
- Centre for Research Development
- Faculty / department resources e.g. PGR Leads, events
- King's Doctoral College – Funding, training, community, guidance…(e.g. **presenting with confidence**)
- Library Support Services
- Money, Saving & Housing
- Report & Support (Bullying & Harassment)
- Royal Literary Fellows (121 writing support)
- Student Wellbeing Team

WORKSHOP – HIDDEN CURRICULUM

All doctoral scholars are able to access the hidden curriculum if they are provided with support to recognise learning opportunities in a vast array of settings, locations, and from a wide selection of people. These kinds of 'academic, emotional, social and psychological support[s]' are vital for all doctoral scholars but especially for international scholars 'as they settle into a "foreign" learning culture and environment' (Elliot et al., 2020, p. 14)….they are also particularly useful for other transcultural (migrant, refugee, culturally diverse and international students) and non-traditional (Engels-Schwarzpaul & Peters, 2013) (e.g. working class or first in family) scholars who may be unfamiliar with research learning cultures.

Developing Researcher Independence Through the Hidden Curriculum, edited by Dely L. Elliot, et al., (2023).

DOCUMENT

- Structured discussion template that aims to **make the implicit explicit**
- Ongoing document that applies to any stage of the doctoral journey and any level of experience for supervisors
- Creates acceptance of limitations of supervisory capacity
- Clearly articulates the resources that are available beyond the supervisor
- Clearly articulates the specific benefits and opportunities that individual supervisors offer
- Creates something bespoke for each supervisory relationship & shifts power dynamics
- Has a sister document for supervisees….

CHALLENGES

- Time and resource pressures
- Preaching to the converted
- Other frameworks already in play
- Discomfort, with delivery and self reflection
- Non-specific, and indirect – lack of metrics

BENEFITS

- Person centred – both supervisor and supervisee
- Applies to everyone
- Future-proof attacks on “EDI”? – See Texas
- Feels structured and contained
- Transforms the supervisory relationship

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS, HIGHER EDUCATION LEGISLATIVE AGENDA REPORT (2023)

"Right-wing lawmakers continue to wage a coordinated attack against public colleges and universities with legislation that would undermine academic freedom, chill classroom speech and impose partisan agendas on public higher education. Currently, at least 57 such bills have been introduced in 23 states…The major categories and trends include bills to:

- **Limit teaching about race, gender and sexual orientation;**
- Require intellectual and viewpoint diversity statements and surveys;
- **Cut funding for diversity, equity and inclusion efforts;**
- End tenure for faculty."

Texas

NATHAN GHANN, DOING EQUITY AND DIVERSITY FOR SUCCESS IN HIGHER EDUCATION (2021) P25

"There is no evidence to suggest that diversity training leads to behaviour change in the groups for whom it is most intended....the only consistent way to address bias is to **reflect, review and where necessary amend any policy, process or procedure that may allow bias to negatively impact outcomes** for both staff and students across the whole institution."

HOW DO WE MOVE BEYOND STATEMENTS OF INTENT TO LASTING STRUCTURAL AND CULTURAL CHANGE?

Embed inclusivity in all our working practice – not siloed off

Consider wider approaches that change the discourse for everyone – not only specific marginalised groups

Look out for what you had to figure out for yourself

Make the implicit explicit

Tackling structural barriers takes structural change.