

**Title:**                    **Positionality and reflexive interaction: A critical internationalist Cultural Studies approach to inclusive student collaboration**

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### **Session Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- identify potentials for formal curriculum as a platform to meditatively address student interaction;
- understand the potential for critical internationalist cultural studies approaches to curriculum to enhance internationalisation at home;
- consider means for helping students explore their situated and negotiated constructions of identity and difference as these impact on group inclusivity

### **Session Outline**

The session is based on research with fashion media students exploring the place of formal curriculum (Leask 2005) in structuring student interaction patterns as they engage in collaborative group work. Early findings showed the cultural economy of fashion and fashion media representations in the wider world impact on student identifications of self and others (Waldron 2013, 2014). This at times constructed problematic boundaries and patterns of exclusion.

The paper focuses on action research which emerged from this, investigating the possibilities for intervening mediatively in student interaction to help students develop most inclusive collaborative behaviours. It used engagement with the discipline subject area itself as a means to address group dynamics.

Based on a mixed methodology including observations, interviews, questionnaires and a Frierean (2005) intervention, it applied critical internationalist cultural studies perspectives (Abbas and Erni 2005) to interaction. This involved students in the joint project of identifying and negotiating the potentially very different responsibilities and possibilities accompanying their various positions relatively to locally dominant norms within fashion media. This includes the responsibility to learn critically to question those norms themselves.

Scholarship on representation and communication has been greatly enhanced by increasing awareness of the fraught intersections of culture, power, and identity (e.g. Hall 1996). The need that this gives rise to of considering the connections between representations and the cultures with which they connect is also an opportunity for developing heightened awareness with students of their own culturally situated relations to these, including as they constitute

themselves as a multicultural group. The paper shows how this engagement with curriculum can connect right down to the micro-level factors of interaction at which frequently unconscious exclusions occur, and so give students the critical and dispositional tools to interact sensitively, creatively and justly.

### **Session Activities and Approximate Timings**

The outline of the workshop is as follows;

- **Presentation section A, 5 minutes**  
Background context and findings in relation to the project, in which curriculum is found to articulate with student interaction patterns of greater or lesser inclusivity within the fashion media subject area.
- **Discussion A, 10 minutes**  
Delegates are invited to reflect on the relation of presentation A to the subjects in which they work. They will consider in what ways their students' relations to each other as multicultural groups may be constituted in part through their different relations to (perceptions of) the subject area. They will also consider means of integrating learning about interaction within the formal curriculum.
- **Presentation section B, 10 minutes**  
Intervention account and findings, in which critical exploration of subject area is found to be a means of enabling students to identify the need for and make dispositional changes in interaction patterns as part of the formal curriculum.
- **Discussion B, 20 minutes**  
Delegates are first invited to ask questions about or comment on the research project and intervention as outlined in the paper.  
They are then invited to consider the relevance of the approach outlined to their own subject areas. Areas for consideration will include:  
How might students in their subject areas be brought into critical engagement with the limitation of any aspects of the existing subject area in accounting for different cultural positions?  
How can students be engaged with the process of seeking together to distribute communicative rights as equally as possible as part of formal curriculum within delegates' subject areas?  
What is the place of a reflective understanding of the culturally situated nature of knowledge within delegates' subject areas? In what ways is that developed with students? In what other ways could it be? Are students' invited to identify its potential relevance to their own interaction patterns, and if not, would that potentially be useful and how might it be effected?  
What are some of the limitations in addressing the culturally situated nature of knowledge within the university?

### **References**

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