



## Listening with Compassion: Using a logic chain and theory of change model to evaluate the use of podcasts to foster compassionate pedagogy within an academic enhancement programme

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### ABSTRACT

This paper presents a process evaluation, using logic chains and a theory of change model, of a pilot academic enhancement programme that aims to develop compassionate pedagogy to reduce ethnicity awarding differentials. In this small-scale qualitative study that combines interviews with graphic-elicitation methods, I focus on the experiences of academic and support staff of listening to two podcasts that explore belonging and relationality in higher education. The evaluation provides insights for future design and iteration of educational development to address inequity and informs recommendations to create compassionate cultures for staff; devise inclusive and affective resources and develop interventions that provide space for both epistemic and practical considerations

**Keywords:** compassionate pedagogy, academic enhancement, logic chain, theory of change, process evaluation, visual methods

### Introduction

This study presents a process evaluation, using logic chains and a theory of change model, of a pilot academic enhancement programme that aims to develop compassionate pedagogy to address inequality. Eight academic staff at a UK-arts university participated in semi-structured interviews using graphic-elicitation methods. The paper offers insight for future design and iteration of academic enhancement activity that develops compassionate pedagogies to increase impact and address inequity both within the institution and across the higher education sector.

Ethnicity awarding differentials continue to persist in UK higher education despite ongoing efforts to address racial injustice in both outcomes and experience. In UK higher education, ethnicity awarding differentials (also referred to as the attainment gap) are the proportion of home-fee status, undergraduate students who identify as Black, Asian or minority ethnic compared to white students who are awarded a first class or upper second class (2:1) degree. The figure for 2019/20 shows that white students are 9.9 percentage points more likely to be awarded a 'good degree' compared to their peers of colour (AdvanceHE, 2021). Although there have been successes in narrowing this gap, it has been well documented to show little change over 25 years (Bhopal, 2018). It is important to recognize that the term Black, Asian and minority ethnic is contested as it homogenizes individual experiences, can mask inequalities experienced by different racialised groups thus reinforces inequitable experiences and power relations (Gabriel, 2021). Throughout this study I refer to those who are racially minoritized to recognise that race is socially constructed and ensure the inclusion of "white beneficiaries from processes of racialization" (DaCosta et al., 2021, p.23). Disaggregation is important as the use of an amalgamated statistic often conceals stark differences between ethnicities, particularly for students who are Black African

(18.8 percentage points); Black Caribbean (16.6 percentage points) and from other Black backgrounds (22.8 percentage points) compared to white peers (McMaster, 2021). Research has demonstrated that the causes of this disparity are institutional – such as teaching and learning cultures, leadership, pedagogies and assessment practices rather than prior attainment, language ability or cultural background (Singh, 2017; Mountford-Zimdars et al., 2015). This challenges a student deficit view (Valencia, 2010) urging universities to claim responsibility to address systemic inequalities. The Office for Students' (the independent regulator of higher education in England) sector-wide key performance measure focuses specifically on the awarding differential between white and black students to eliminate the 'gap' by 2030-31 and institutional access and participations plans (APP) "set out how higher education providers will improve equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups to access, succeed in and progress from higher education" (OfS, 2018).

The Academic Enhancement Team at the arts university are educational developers who deliver and evaluate part of the institutional access and participation plan that aims to eliminate ethnicity awarding differentials. The team collaborate with undergraduate courses to support those whose National Student Survey (NSS) results and attainment are below institutional threshold. The NSS is a UK specific annual survey commissioned by the OfS that informs stakeholders about student experiences (OfS, 2021). In August 2020 the team developed three strands of enhancement work: Enhancing Assessment for Equity, Decolonising Pedagogy and the Curriculum and, the focus of this study, Fostering Belonging & Compassionate Pedagogy. As co-lead on the Fostering Belonging and Compassionate Pedagogy strand, I followed a constructive change approach (Lueddeke, 1999) to support 15 course teams to reflect on the psycho-social, relational aspects of their teaching and to develop compassionate pedagogies within their creative disciplinary context (Mountford-Zimdars et al, 2015).

In this evaluation, I focus on the experience of academic and support staff of listening to two podcasts prior to attending the workshop: *Belonging in Higher Education* (Bunting et al., 2020a) and *Belonging in Online Learning Environments* (Bunting et al., 2020b) that curate a collection of interviews with alumni and students from the arts university alongside academics from Canada, India and the UK and offer both theoretical perspectives and practical approaches for developing compassionate pedagogies to foster belonging (Bunting & Hill, 2021). Prior to the workshops participants are invited to share their thoughts on listening to the podcast on a Padlet. Podcasts had not been commonly utilised as an academic enhancement tool at the arts university so the aim was to understand how the podcasts informed changes to participants' pedagogy. In the following sections I review the literature on compassionate pedagogy and educational development before presenting the evaluation design informed by a programme theory model of logic chains and theory of change. Finally, I present three themes:

- Embodied responses to listening
- 'How do we make visible the invisible?' Reflecting on the relational
- Agency and self-compassion: How staff perceive changes to pedagogy

I discuss the implications of the learnings for future iterations and development of attainment focused academic enhancement resources within the arts university and more generally.

## Literature Review

There has been a paradigm shift in response to the global pandemic with a recognition of the importance of interactions in a digital/blended context; structural injustice and the need for wellbeing and care (Austen et al., 2021; Bali & Zamora, 2022). I introduce compassion as a relational and affective pedagogic approach that responds to psycho-social and relational needs. Compassion is “the noticing of social or physical distress to others and the commitment to reduce or prevent that distress” (Gilbert, 2017, p.189). Gibbs (2017) repositions compassion away from the connected emotions such as altruism, empathy or kindness and reframes it as a form of judgement and action with a focus on transformation. I follow the definition that compassion is “attentiveness to, and an agency, or willingness, to alleviate the suffering of others...” (Gilbert, 2017, p3). This approach engages with power and inequality by “...identifying and challenging the emotional investments [...] and seeking to make a concrete difference in sufferers’ lives” through human connection (Zembylas, 2013, p.515).

There is compelling evidence that student attainment is strongly influenced by relational experiences and this is of particular relevance to students who are racially minoritized (Strayhorn, 2019; Goodenow, 1993). Compassionate pedagogy can be utilised as a form of praxis to redress inequitable relational experiences as it “encourages educators to foster belonging by creating conditions that acknowledge structural oppression and reduce their impact on our students” (Hill et al., 2020). The report *What Works? Student Retention and Success Programme* demonstrated that feelings of isolation and not ‘fitting-in’ contributed to undergraduate student withdrawal (Thomas, 2012). If students feel they are “valued, respected, supported, included, and that they matter by teachers and peers” (Hill et al., 2020, p.4) they are more likely to feel part of a learning community and to achieve in their studies. In their integrated literature review on access, retention, attainment and progression, Austen et al. (2021) state that “interventions which focus on supporting the psycho-social-behavioural aspects of student learning do show impact” (Austen et al., 2021, p.43). Mountford-Zimdars et al. (2015) identified psycho-social and identify factors; curricula and learning; relationships between staff and students and social, cultural and economic capital as explanatory factors in ethnicity awarding differentials. They state that, “The extent to which students feel supported and encouraged in their daily interactions within their institutions and with staff members was found to be a key variable” (Mountford-Zimdars et al., 2015, p.iii).

Academic enhancement is a key lever to “systematically change educators’ behaviors, perspectives, assumptions, and unintentional or implicit biases regarding race” (Karani et al., 2017, p.53). Historically, academic enhancement programmes have not been systematically evaluated, but often rely upon indicators of satisfaction and participation (Chalmers & Gardiner, 2015; Kolomitro & Anstey, 2017). Thomas expands on three challenges that need to be met to implement strategic evaluation and these are: “A clear purpose, acknowledging different evaluation types and acknowledging the need to assess causal relationships” (Thomas, 2020, p.70). Findings of the *What Works? Projects* (Thomas, 2012) suggested that staff want to feel supported to take a student-centred approach and that this can be achieved through facilitating exchange of practice and offering opportunities for training and feedback (Thomas, 2012, p.66). This position has informed the design and development of the podcasts as academic enhancement resources to develop compassionate pedagogies (Bunting & Hill, 2021). The resources sit within a wider programme of planned workshops on the themes of ‘Belonging Online’, ‘Debiasing’, ‘Microaffirmations’ and ‘Courageous

Conversations’ (Hill et al., 2020). These sessions include a range of multi-media resources, including the podcasts, that staff can engage with asynchronously.

Further to this, the resources are intended to be dialogic (Friere, 1970), asynchronous (Bali & Meier, 2014), affective and address epistemic and procedural needs for academic staff (Deneen & Boud, 2013). In the following section on methodology, I outline the programme theory evaluation tools before introducing visual methods.

## Methodology

### Programme theory evaluation (logic chains and theory of change)

For the Fostering Belonging and Compassionate Pedagogy strand, the leads designed an evaluation methodology aligned to the institutional approach for preparing the Office for Students access and participation plans. The Office for Students is an independent regulator for higher education in England. This was supported by Professor Liz Thomas and learnings from the What Works? Student Retention & Success programme (WW?2) that evaluates both impact and effectiveness of change interventions (Thomas et al., 2017) using both logic chains and theory of change as programme theory evaluation tools (Rogers et al., 2000). The logic chain articulates the relationship between the programme and time period intervention – immediate benefits – intermediate outcomes – longer term impact (Fig.1) and was informed by Kirkpatrick’s Four Levels of reaction, learning, behaviour and results (Kirkpatrick, 2007).

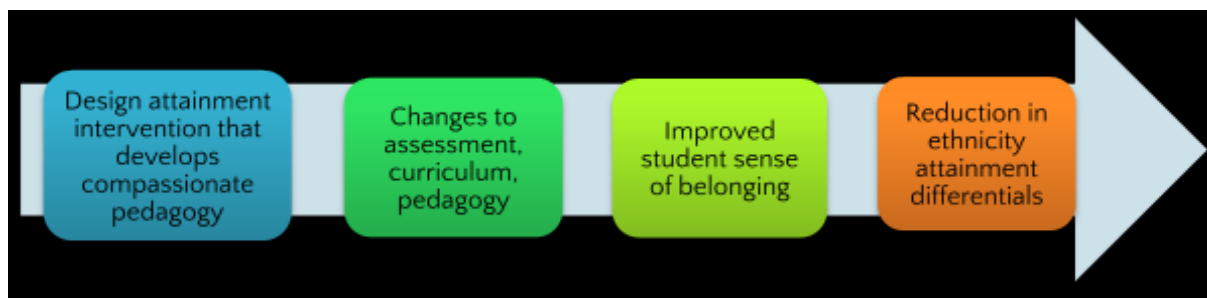


Figure 1. Evaluation logic chain

Thomas’s model recommends the incorporation of both theory of change and logic chain “to further clarify the relationship between the activities and the longer-term impact. While the logic chain approach starts from left to right, the theory of change approach works in reverse, effectively right to left” (Thomas, 2020, p.74). Indicators of success can be more easily identified and monitored. Theory of change offers “powerful insight” (Vogel, 2012, p.5) and can articulate change pathways through an impact assessment framework that challenges normative practices and unexamined assumptions (O’Flynn, 2012). The theory of change narrative outlined the approach for Fostering Belonging and Compassionate Pedagogy:

This intervention will achieve a reduction in attainment differentials between Home BAME and Home White students by empowering the development of compassionate pedagogies

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that include: supportive relationships between staff and students; understanding belonging in HE; addressing bias; anti-racist practice; micro affirmations; facilitating challenging conversations; and creating compassionate leadership. By focusing on staff-to-student and student-to-student interactions within teaching practice, we encourage staff ownership of fostering student belonging to enable immediate changes.

As this is an impact-driven process evaluation initiated 10 months into an 18-month project cycle it assesses the underlying assumptions and whether they are being delivered as intended (TASO, 2020). Table 1 articulates the logic chain and shows the first six steps that are reported on within this study. This also points towards the impact evaluation planned at the end of the project cycle that would include both qualitative and quantitative data including student attainment and continuation rates, NSS data, feedback from academic staff and course leader participants, Padlet comments from workshops, Annual Course Monitoring reports and complaints data.

**Table 1: Logic chain showing process and implementation evaluation of first 10 months of programme delivery (1-6) and subsequent 8 months (7-11).**

1	<b>if</b> we create a polyvocal dialogue around student and personal experiences of the impact of bias, racism, oppression and silence within teaching	Process & implementation
2	<b>then</b> course teams will be motivated to examine the relational dimensions of their practice and the current nature of their interactions with students	
3	<b>if</b> course teams agree on opportunities to employ compassionate pedagogies in their teaching and aim to eliminate oppressive interactions	
4	<b>then</b> course teams will collectively develop teaching strategies in response	
5	<b>if</b> staff in turn feel agentic in nurturing student sense of belonging	
6	<b>then</b> individual staff members will make changes in their everyday interactions in teaching e.g. compassionate pedagogies within assessment feedback, crits, tutorials, seminar discussions, group work	
7	<b>if</b> staff address the inequities in their teaching practice <b>then</b> students should feel supported, safer and affirmed within the teaching and learning environment	
8	<b>if</b> student-staff / student-student relationships subsequently improve	
9	<b>then</b> we create the conditions to foster student belonging	
10	<b>if</b> students consequently feel a (greater) sense of belonging	
11	<b>then</b> continuation will improve, and awarding differentials will reduce.	

## Methods

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The following research questions aligned to the first six steps of the programme evaluation model:

**RQ1:** How did listening to the podcast contribute to academic staff's understanding of the relational dimensions of their teaching practice?

**RQ2:** What (if any) changes did academic staff make to their own teaching practice in relation to compassion?

To effectively capture subjective experiences, changes in attitude and behaviour as indicators, I employed qualitative research methods – specifically visual methods and online semi-structured interviews. Visual methods are a way to explore multiple subjective realities and ways of knowing as visual stimuli contribute to how we understand the world and we communicate differently when using visual materials (Pink, 2013). Visual artefacts are “inseparable components to learning about our social worlds” (Stanczak, 2007, p.3) and using visual-elicitation offers deeper reflexivity through the visualisation of verbal narratives (Glegg, 2018). Expressive and non-linguistic approaches in research may generate “new ways of interrogating and understanding the social” (Bagnoli, 2009, p.547). Using visual methods within the interview can reduce the power imbalance between researcher and participant as new knowledge can be co-constructed and can be of benefit to both actors.

Four course teams were identified as being representative of different colleges, distinct disciplinary cultures and varied engagement with the academic enhancement work. Fifty members of staff were emailed and invited to contribute to the study. Eight members of staff participated, with job roles spanning programme director, course leader, senior lecturer, technician and associate lecturer. Four participants identify as women and four as men. A range of ethnicities were represented with two participants of Asian heritage, two of Black heritage and four identifying as white. Each participant met with me initially to discuss the project and were given the following instruction to bring to a semi-structured interview: Please make a drawing to diagram or map any aspect of your experience of listening to the podcasts and if/how it relates to the relational dimension of your teaching practice.

## Ethics

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Ethical approval was granted by both Lancaster University (as part of a doctoral programme) and the arts university where this study was located. There are specific ethical considerations that need to be responded to for visual researchers. Cox et al. (2014) presents six categories that informed my approach. These are: (1) confidentiality; (2) minimising harm; (3) consent; (4) fuzzy boundaries; (5) authorship and ownership and (6) representation. Careful explanation of authorship and ownership was explored with participants, particularly as this research was undertaken in an arts university where many of the staff are also professional creative practitioners. My relationships with participants was of particular importance to the research design as all were participants in the Fostering Belonging and Compassionate Pedagogy programme. I mitigated this by applying the visual method and spoke transparently about my positionality as educational developer and programme evaluator. Finally, all participants were sent their interview transcriptions to review and return with any changes made before textual analysis began. To respect the participants' identities, they have been given pseudonyms.

## Analysis

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Participants sent me a digital copy of their visual image prior to - or at the start of - the interview. I first encountered the image alongside the participant. This was a critical choice in developing a sense of trust and partnership and ensuring that their experience and interpretation of image-making was given primacy over my own. I draw on Gough et al. (2012) and recognise researcher subjectivity as a psycho-social construct of meaning-making that presents further opportunity for reflexive analysis (Gough et al., 2012). Interviews were recorded and transcribed and I used NVivo to organise the 8 scripts and 8 images. I applied an inductive approach to reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013; 2019) as a flexible, qualitative analytical method that supports iteration. To ensure that I “integrate images into conceptual thinking, not as an addition but as key to creative and critical insight” (Lacković, 2020, p.118) I followed Lacković’s approach by applying a Piercian triadic semiotic model of *Representamen – Object– Interpretant* (Pierce, 1900/1940) coding the sign vehicle (the form); the sign object (what it represents) and the sign meaning (the interpretant). To avoid a logo-centric approach, I began with the image and iteratively coded the interview transcript to develop a multi-modal anchorage - the relationship between image, text and concept (Lacković, 2020). I constructed the following themes:

- Embodied response to listening
- ‘How do we make visible the invisible?’: Contextualising the relational to the arts institution
- Agency and self-compassion: Compassionate changes to pedagogy

### *Embodied response to listening*

The act of listening to the podcasts was explored in participants’ drawings (I use this term loosely to denote visual images created – including text) and in the interviews. Diverse locations and accompanying bodily actions were recalled and connections were made to how these contributed to an affective response to listening to the podcasts. Locations discussed included; home, office, park, neighbourhood, bedroom and accompanying actions were; walking, running, walking the dog, sitting, doing admin, getting dressed, making food and resting.

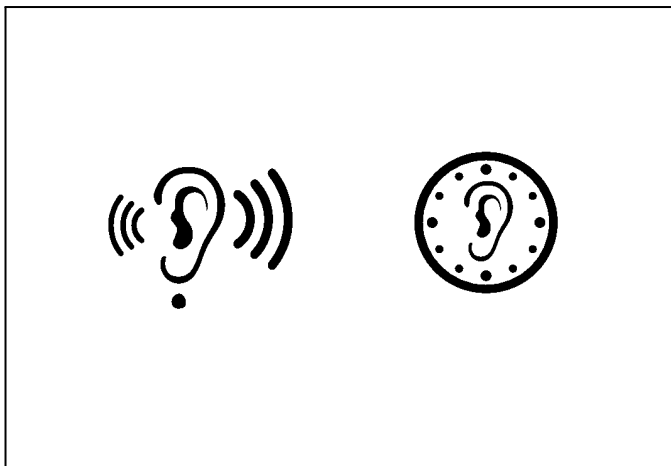


Image 1. Daryl

Image 2. Ayesha

Daryl created a black and white graphic image of two ears (Image 1). One ear has the audio symbols travelling in two directions signifying a dialogue of both internal and external input/output – a conversation or sense of reflexive dialogue. The second ear is surrounded in a circle that could be seen both as a volume button and as a clock that plays with ideas of time and being. Daryl’s image is clear, uncluttered and considered. He explained his physical encounter with the podcast at his home: “I’ll take off the watch have no reference to time at all. It’s got to be slightly dim and dark. And then I’m, I’m in that third space. So that’s, that’s what I was able to do” [Daryl].

In direct contrast to this, Ayesha created a digital collage (Image 2) on her phone and placed a self-portrait on a mobile phone at the centre of the image. The background is a pattern of black and white fabric and the symbols surrounding her to communicate a sense of busyness – a list of ‘things’ to do, booking holidays, deciding what to eat, responding to texts, completing work and study tasks. By centring herself in context of relationality, Ayesha’s image prompts us to consider her experience as a member of staff listening to the podcast – one of many priorities - and notions of self-care and overwhelm. Ayesha asked me, “What does compassion and care look like for staff? (...) What do we all need?”.



Both Ayesha and Daryl identified their external home circumstances as contributing to whether they felt they had time and space to listen to the podcasts. It was apparent that different contexts of listening to the podcasts shaped listeners' response and recollection. Simon highlighted the difficulty of concentrating on the content when running in the park as "you don't tend to take in everything" and that he listened to both podcasts "but I couldn't really distinguish between the two". *Eloise stated that, "I like listening, and I'm tidying my room or cleaning up or something and it's like more experiential."* The accessibility, portability and a-synchronous format of the podcast encourages diversity in approaches to listening and each of the participants reflected on their own choices and how they might do it again in the future. Eloise spoke to the iterative nature of the podcasts and how it can be re-played and re-listened to and how this connected to her emotional response.

...because I remember, you know, I listened to it and then I listened to it again. And that's like, the second time I listened to it, I was like, there's things that I missed the first time around, which I was glad to listen to again. And I think for me, it felt the most spiky - the most provocative of the ones that we had. [Eloise]

The mode of listening in different spaces and re-listening to the content allowed participants to make new meanings and connect to their own, personal experiences. George reflected on how the act of listening, thinking and walking felt significant to him, allowing a sense of distance for self-reflection. He connected this to his own undergraduate experience of walking tutorials and how the dialogue had offered him a sense of recognition and affirmation. He explained that,

...what's interesting for me there is that it's removed from my computer and my desk and my associations directly to work, perhaps. So, just listening to them in another space, I think was really productive. Because then it kind of splits off in terms of its usage. And I find, then I'm thinking about it in terms of conversation. [George]

The dialogic design of the podcast encouraged a sense of being part of a conversation as Daryl depicted in Image 1. This connection also provoked strong emotional responses for some of the participants, particularly in how they reflected upon and connected to their own embodied experiences of belonging, compassion and racialised inequalities within their course team context. Ayesha explained that,

Do you know what it made me feel like? You know, when we talk about allyship, it always made me feel like, 'ah, see, there's more people thinking and talking like me. I'm not the only one'. But it becomes like a divide between us and those. Everyone becomes in their little groups and gangs. [Ayesha]

The emotional impact of staff working to address inequality by developing compassionate pedagogies and cultures permeated through participants' responses. It is well documented that academic staff experiences of working during the pandemic have been increasingly stressful and overwhelming. Participants spoke frankly about their own experiences and how difficult it was to create compassionate conditions that build a sense of belonging when staff were struggling to cope. Simon expanded on his reaction when listening to the podcast;

I think what surprised me was actually just how much I ended up thinking about staff and not students... I don't really know where it's left me. It's actually just made me feel really frustrated. It's so hard, you know, so hard. [Simon]

*How do we make visible the invisible?': Contextualising the relational to the arts institution*

The following section explores how participants encountered the process of meaning-making when reflecting on the relational aspect of their teaching practice and how they considered this in context of their colleagues, course and discipline within the arts institution.



**Image 3. Simon**

Simon produced a pencil drawing that is a tracing of letter type '-ing'. As a typographer, he worked through his ideas through drawing within the familiarity of the design discipline. Ideas of softness and slowness, of tracing and mapping and a focus on the form also prompted thoughts about unexamined biases and assumptions that are overlooked by speed and the hyper-performative culture of the university. The graphite marks leave traces of the traced and the contrast between computer generated type and the hand-drawn connect to the podcast's exploration of belonging in online, digital contexts. The choice of the suffix 'ing' is, in part, an approach to evaluating the podcasts and educational enhancement work that Simon explored further.

I was using words that are being used to describe the workshops like fostering, belonging. And they're all present tense. And it made me think about the fact that the problem, sometimes that we find ourselves in is that learning, teaching, belonging is all about, it's kind of like this constant

state of becoming, you know, it's always present. And if something is always happening, it's very hard to evaluate, take stock, make changes. And to know that what you're going to do is going to be effective, I suppose. It's very hard to measure if various things are always happening at the same time. And, you know, I think that's possibly why sometimes we find ourselves making kind of slightly knee-jerk reactions to things. [Simon]

All of the participants, in some way, rooted their thinking about the relational aspects of their teaching practice to the course and college they were affiliated to. The process of meaning-making for a specific community of students within a particular subject discipline was revisited both in the interviews and the drawings as participants explored the tensions and challenges in creating compassionate cultures and a sense of belonging. Eloise spoke about the challenge of creating community within her discipline.

...because we're in an art school. And we're around people who literally do things, who literally make things, who literally design things, right, there's like an obvious, tangible physical outcome to what they do. Whereas we are the course - we are about concepts and ideas and dialogues, which are just as important to the making and the physical doing, but there's no... you know you can't touch this ephemeral stuff. [Eloise]

Understanding the subject discipline was connected to the idea of becoming a community with a shared identity and navigating the perceived hierarchical positioning within both university and the industry. Anina shared how students on her course have a “inferior complex” as they are seen to be “kind of at the bottom of the ladder. That's how they feel, a lot of them.” This sense of hierarchy was also reflected in how staff felt about being an employee at the university and also within a college. Daryl asked,

What does it what does it really mean to walk into a college and be part of that community? And then what does it mean to actually be a valued member of staff and so I think all of this becomes comes from being valued from the top down to, to being really recognised. [Daryl]

Value and recognition are key concepts explored throughout the interviews and in the drawings. The notion that compassion is cyclic, that it needs embedding within the structures of the institution to allow compassionate pedagogies to flourish was explored in various ways. Again – the issue of compassion and equity for staff was explored as a key barrier in developing pedagogy. Asif surfaced the course teams’ perspective by stating that,

I knew that what was whirling in people's minds, and it wouldn't sort itself sort out - the issue of belonging, issues of compassion, unless the issue of casualization was addressed, the issue of employment was addressed. So that among staff members, because, you know, you could see that there's a huge level of cynicism, of people attending, partly because they feel, actually, you're not giving us any kind of material basis from which to anchor ourselves off and put this thing in properly, because we're gone in the next hour. [Asif]

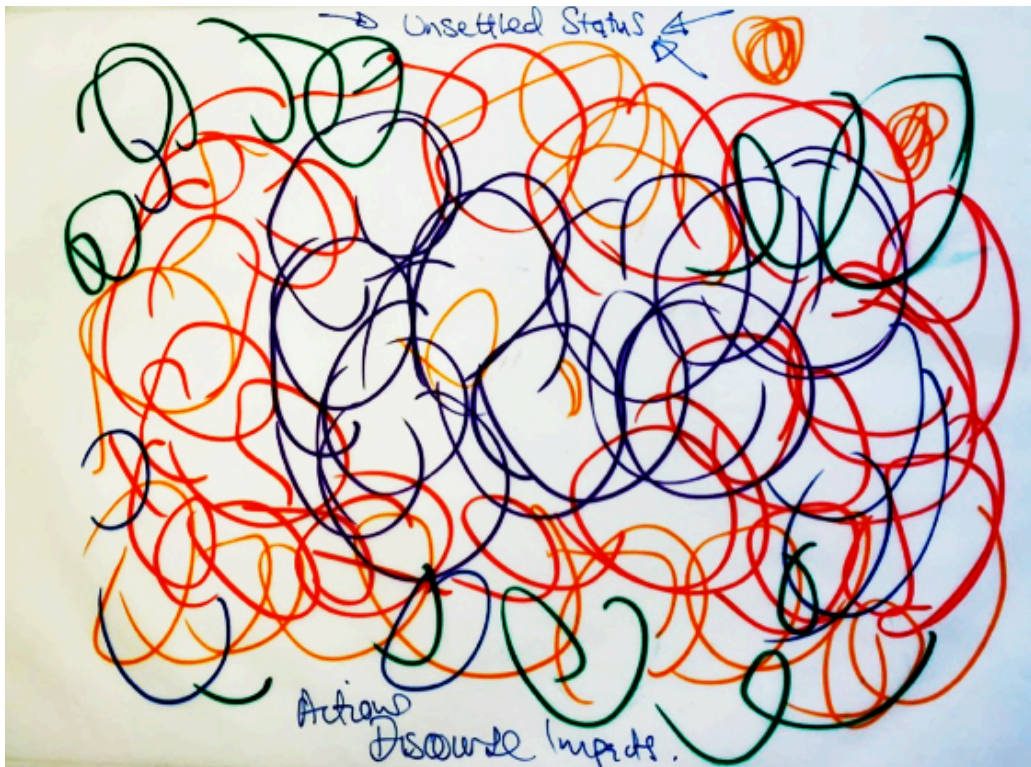
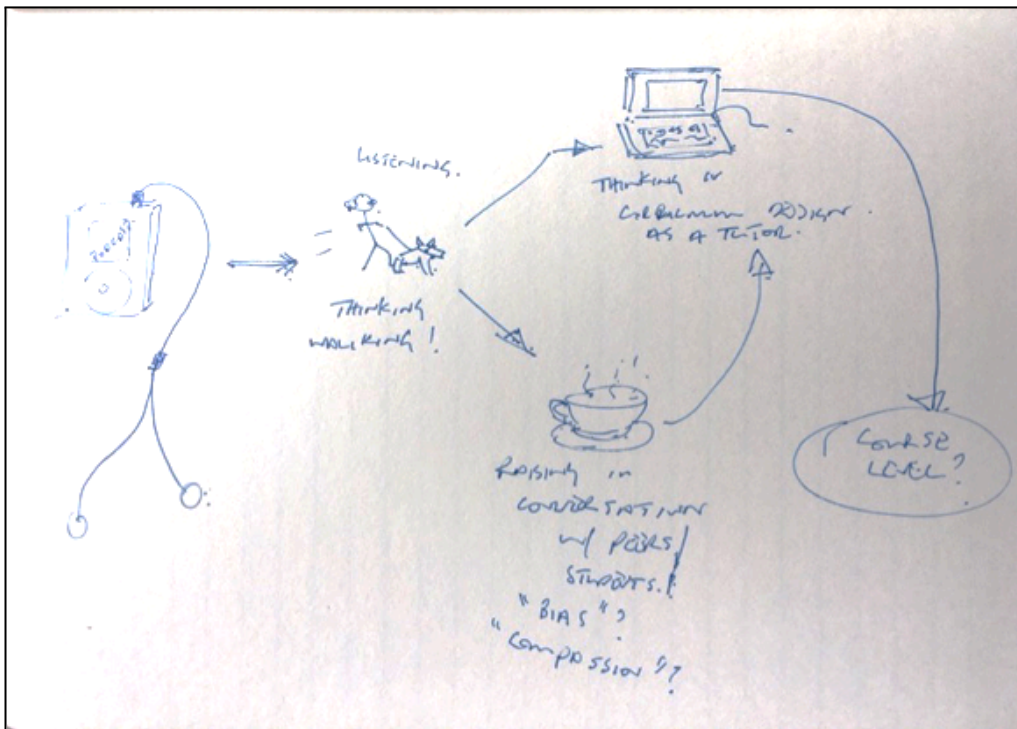


Image 4. Asif

The affective impact of student to staff and staff to staff relationships was explored in Asif’s drawing (Image 4). The different colours and energy of circular marks communicated a disconnect – particularly as the orange spheres sit apart and outside, the green marks remained in the periphery with the purple in the middle – each representing a different grouping of people. The text “Unsettled Status” above and “Actions Discourse Impacts” connect Asif’s personal experience of relationality to the institution. The lack of a framework or structure signifies the chaotic attempt to address inequity and a sense that this is haphazard. Asif spoke of the need for accountability of individuals within course teams to give feedback on how they have implemented the ideas and practices inspired by the podcasts but that there was “not a sausage” [Asif]. Simon also highlighted the need for the course to evaluate pedagogy to understand the impact on students rather than creating performative interventions.

You know, I think that sometimes it feels like, we do things, and a form has been submitted, and our box has been ticked somewhere. (...) I think it's like how to do something's then evaluate what were the successes, what were the major drawbacks of what we did? What's the next step of that? [Simon]

*Agency and self-care: compassionate changes to pedagogy*



**Image 5. George**

In George’s drawing, he visualised the connection between the podcast and changes to practice through a cartoon drawing in blue pen. This mapping starts with the podcast (depicted as an ipod) on the left and then moves to an image of himself walking the dog with ‘listening, thinking, walking’ written above and below. The arrows then point in two different directions – one towards a computer and the other towards a cup of coffee with another arrow that circles back to the computer and then to course level. Through this mapping, George revealed a need to verbalise, discuss and share ideas through conversation with colleagues and students. This journey was an integral process of meaning-making that informed his approach to designing curriculum and pedagogy. George reflected on how he had perceived changes to his practice,

There’s not a moment where you go, ‘Oh, my God, I have to change everything’. There’s a moment where you realise how much you’ve changed what you do as a result of lots of contributing factors and how acutely that’s bought in. [George]

Participants identified aspects of their pedagogy that could cultivate compassion. Some of those discussed were about framing existing practices and strengthening others. Table 2 lists only the new changes that staff explicitly identified as a response to listening to the podcasts.

**Table 2: Changes to pedagogy after listening to the podcast**

Using student names
Personalising emails
Identifying bias in assessment
Improved listening
More confident to articulate relational practice with team
Strengthened commitment to practice relational pedagogy
Designing small activities to create a sense of belonging
Checking in on personal circumstances with students
Re-designing assessment to become more inclusive/ multi-modal

The need for self-reflection to inform pedagogy was seen as a key factor in articulating change. The content of the podcast, the flexible space to listen to it and the sense of dialogue (both between contributors and as a sort of internal dialogue with the listener) all contributed to reflexive changes to practice: "...it's been good to like just reflect and understand my pedagogy and why I choose to approach things and then having like, a contextual thing that helps me explain myself and why I do what I do" [Eloise].

Participants identified moments of the podcasts that had particularly resonated with them – moments where they felt a sense of recognition of their own desire to build relationships with students that were supportive and caring. Nazli described the part of the podcast where Professor Terrell Strayhorn speaks about students feeling valued "really thinking about how that kind of translates - or how you create those, that experience of feeling value" [Nazli]. Despite the acknowledgement of inequitable structures and working conditions, participants explored their own sense of agency in changing practice and addressing the experiences of their students. Nazli also spoke of a moment of "realization" around staff to student relationships and that "maybe the most important things to unlock is actually how I relate to the students and that's more within my control than actually connecting the students together."

The agency to develop compassionate pedagogies was spoken of as complex, drawing out personal values, experiences and emotions. The concept took on a kind of fluidity as participants explored the need for compassion for students but also for themselves. Simon stated that, "I think compassion and caring is really important. And I think that it's really difficult to turn off." His reflection on the need for self-compassion whilst working within inequitable working conditions was striking. Nazli developed this notion as she described how this sense of agency felt to her,

Because now when you know that, the impact that - if you get this relationship, right, that the impact can be so great, it also then puts a lot of responsibility on me to get it right almost. (...) a lot of this responsibility falls on me. It feels then that I'm the one that can fail. I think that's the thing that felt a bit then, maybe heavy, or like wow! [Nazli]

Reflections on the relational prompted exploration of value and recognition around lecturer identities. The role and responsibility of the lecturer, particularly in response to the pandemic where the need for pastoral support has been unprecedented, was explored. Ayesha connected the balance between self-compassion

and the needs of the students as being about care. She shared student feedback following a session that she had run,

...and they felt like [session] was healing to them. And I was like, really?! I didn't think that they felt that those sessions were healing to them, but goes back to the teacher, the healer, sort of quote, I think healing is a two-way street. [Ayesha]

## Discussion

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This paper reports on the first six steps of the logic chain and I establish that after listening to the podcasts as academic enhancement resources for staff development academic staff participants made changes to their practice to develop compassionate pedagogies (Table 2). This research demonstrates that the podcasts were perceived as dialogic and provided a space for reflexivity (Bunting & Hill, 2021). The act of listening was identified as powerful and affective allowing staff to make connections to their embodied, lived histories and experiences. The diversity of how participants listened to the podcasts as asynchronous resources and the ways that they responded notably supported the design aim of flexibility and inclusivity. The changes to practice that staff have made in response to listening to the podcasts speak to a deeper understanding of the relational aspect of their teaching and personal agency to make small transformations that can have a great impact upon students (Mountford-Zimdars et al., 2015).

The sense of un-belonging and lack of compassion that staff experience has a negative emotional impact. Staff feel a heightened sense of responsibility and stress in coping with workload and pastoral demands alongside changing their practice to respond to enhancement work. The ethical imperative is clear – staff must feel cared for and valued to recreate these conditions for students. Notions of feeling valued and recognised (Strayhorn, 2017) are closely intertwined here as staff explore compassion as a kind of mirror that reflects the relations between staff and students, staff to staff and institution to both. There is space here to further explore this complexity of relationality and how it can be understood to embed compassion as a core value within the culture of the institution.

By applying the logic chain the change pathway is articulated through the framework that reveals unexamined biases and practices in the intervention design. During the interviews it became clear that the first step of the logic chain (to create a polyvocal dialogue around student and personal experiences of the impact of bias, racism, oppression and silence within teaching) was interconnected to other discussions, interventions, decolonial work and anti-racist activities happening both within and outside the institution. Acknowledging and linking to these wider influences was seen to strengthen the changes in practice that staff communicated. Clearly, this further complexifies the evaluation of an already atypical intervention, where staff are able to engage independently with the resources that are housed within the wider set of activities of the Fostering Belonging and Compassionate Pedagogy Strand (Hill et al., 2020). This paper demonstrates that by designing resources within a planned intervention that creates the capacity for staff to engage with them, change in practice occurs. Although changes to practice were identified, it would be of benefit to gather further data for step 6 of the logic chain to evidence where changes to everyday interactions are taking place (assessment feedback, crits, tutorials, seminar discussions, group work).

An unintended aspect of this research that is worth noting was the power of visual methods as a channel to explore affective, embodied and relational connections. The reflexive quality of the visual and the diverse ways that participants were encouraged to encounter drawing opened a space for further reflection that moved beyond the logo-centric narrative.

## Conclusion

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This paper reports on the short and medium term changes listed in the first six steps of the logic chain and demonstrates that listening to the dialogic podcasts on belonging have contributed to staff enacting compassionate pedagogies. The process of reflexivity enabled through diverse ways for staff to listen to the podcasts within a wider programme that builds in capacity for staff to share and discuss learnings has encouraged change. Implications for future academic development work are concerned with developing the confidence of staff to reflect and practice change and developing interventions that create the space for dialogue and reflexivity. Embedding shared practices of compassionate pedagogies across teaching teams can help to shift culture and ensure the emotional burden of relational work is not felt by individual staff members. Further contributions of compassionate pedagogical practice offered by course teams on the programme can be found on the website *Belonging Through Compassion* (Hill & Bunting, 2022). Obstacles to developing this work were identified by staff and contribute to my recommendations. The institution should review policies and consider how to effect a culture change and remove structural barriers to creating a compassionate university (Maratos et al., 2019). This includes ensuring accountability rests with senior management; addressing workload issues, precarious contracts and developing compassionate leadership cultures.

The changes that have been identified will inform the longer-term impact evaluation of the *Fostering Belonging and Compassionate Pedagogy* strand of academic enhancement work and whether the changes reported here have contributed to changes in practices, relationships, belonging and reduced differentials. Some of the limitations of this study are highlighted by the need for a deeper understanding of where these changes are taking place, who is implementing them and in what context and this would further inform the educational enhancement work. This is likely to be explored through case studies and student interviews alongside institutional data on awarding differentials, course meeting documents, complaints and National Student Survey comments.

I recognise that this study does not strictly adhere to a standard evaluative approach and propose that in seeking to understand the experiences of staff through creative methods, the learnings here can be shared across the higher education sector to respond to an urgent call to create compassionate universities that care for our communities of students and staff.

## Biography

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I would like to acknowledge the support of academic staff on the PhD in Educational Research – Higher Education, at Lancaster University where this study originated as well as the participants of this study who were generous in sharing their time and experience. Also, thanks to Liz Bunting whose commitment to belonging and compassionate pedagogy has helped inform this chapter.

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