

Considering Cultural Competence: Reframing Our LIS Practice and Research (updated August 5, 2018)

Diversity Defined

- The state or fact of being diverse;
- Variety
- A point of difference
- The inclusion of individuals representing more than one national origin, color, religion, socioeconomic stratum, sexual orientation, ability level, etc.

SEE ALSO: Peterson, L. (1999). The definition of diversity: Two views. A more specific definition. *Journal of library administration*, 27(1-2), 17-26.

SEE ALSO: ALA Diversity Counts Report: <http://www.ala.org/offices/diversity/diversitycounts/divcounts>

Culture Defined

- Set of customs, traditions, and values within a society/community
- The characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people defined and influenced by such things as language, religion, social habits, cuisine, and styles of dress.

Social Justice Defined

The process of working toward, and the condition of, everyone's basic needs being met and everyone's potential fulfilled to live productive and empowered lives as participating citizens of our global community.

Pre-Cursors to Cultural Competence

- Brené Brown
University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work
<http://brenebrown.com/2013/12/10/rsabear/>
- White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack by Peggy McIntosh
<http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED355141.pdf#page=43>
- What is Privilege (video): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hD5f8GuNuGQ>
- Circles of My Multicultural Self: Identity and Stereotypes:
<http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/activities/circlesofself.html>

Cultural Competence: ELEMENTS

1. CULTURAL DESTRUCTIVENESS
Characterized by attitudes and practices that lead to the deterioration, elimination, and destruction of a cultural group and thus the individuals in that group.
2. CULTURAL INCAPACITY
Occurs when individuals and organizations do not directly seek to destroy a cultural group but lack the capacity to serve or interest in serving various cultural groups.
3. CULTURAL BLINDNESS
The refusal or inability to acknowledge uniqueness of cultures, views, etc.

4. CULTURAL PRE-COMPETENCE
The awareness that the collection, services, and programs are lacking in diverse offerings; a desire to make a positive change to the situation.
5. CULTURAL COMPETENCE
Characterized by an evident commitment to creating (or upholding) policies and practices that provide services to diverse patrons.
6. CULTURAL PROFICIENCY
Advanced stage; mastery achieved.

Cross, T. L., Bazron, B. J., Dennis, K. W., & Isaacs, M. R. (1989). Toward a culturally competent system of care: A monograph on effective services for minority children who are severely emotionally disturbed. *Washington, DC: Georgetown University Child Development Center.*

Cultural Humility

“Cultural humility incorporates a lifelong commitment to self-evaluation and self-critique, to redressing the power imbalances in the ~~patient-physician~~ [patron-librarian] dynamic, and to developing mutually beneficial and nonpaternalistic ~~clinical~~ [library] and advocacy partnerships with communities on behalf of individuals and defined populations.”

Tervalon, M., & Murray-Garcia, J. (1998). Cultural humility versus cultural competence: a critical distinction in defining physician training outcomes in multicultural education. *Journal of health care for the poor and underserved, 9(2)*, 117-125.

Ask yourself

- Where are you on the cultural competence continuum? Where do you want to be?
- Where do think most people fall on the continuum?
- What can you as a LIS professional do to promote cultural competence?

A Culturally Competent Librarian / Library* Will:

1. Value diversity;
2. Have mechanisms in place to assess their level of cultural competence;
3. *Be headed by leaders who are conscious of the dynamics inherent when cultures interact;
4. Be committed to continuous acquisition of cultural knowledge; and,
5. Develop ways to adapt to and embrace diversity.

Diversity in the Profession – It’s an Issue

- Latinos compose 16.3% of the population, but just 3.1% of the credentialed librarians;
- African Americans compose 12.6% of the population, but just 5.1% of credentialed librarians;
- Asian and Pacific Islanders compose 5% of the population, but just 2.7% of credentialed librarians; and,
- Native Americans were less than 1% of the population and just 0.2% of credentialed librarians.

<http://www.ala.org/offices/diversity/diversitycounts/divcounts>

See also, because these issues are wholly applicable to hiring in LIS:

- *An Ivy League professor on why colleges don't hire more faculty of color: 'We don't want them':* https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2016/09/26/an-ivy-league-professor-on-why-colleges-dont-hire-more-faculty-of-color-we-dont-want-them/?utm_term=.1ac540eea22c
- *Recruiting Diverse and Excellent New Faculty:* <https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2018/07/19/advice-deans-department-heads-and-search-committees-recruiting-diverse-faculty>

Transformative Information Services

Recognizes that information transforms one's reality and pushes one towards action for one's self. It applies to librarians because the model assists them to understand the social reality in which they work and to consider information services as a tool for users in the process of self-empowerment and self-learning. It applies to users because it identifies the transformative power of information.

Chu, C. M. (1999, July). Transformative information services: Uprooting race politics. *Presentation, Black Caucus of the American Library Association Conference, Las Vegas.*

How Do You Want to Be Remembered?

When thinking about your own pedagogy, think about the following:

- Stereotype Threat
- Feminist Pedagogy
- Ethics of Care
- Microaggressions
- Privilege + Marginalization
- Your own intersectionality

Finding and highlighting the “new storytellers of LIS” – i.e., Melanie Townsend Diggs (formerly of Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore) and Chera Kowalski (Philadelphia Free Public Library).

And thinking about the hard conversations that need to be included in our teaching and practice – i.e., how do we teach and serve marginalized students in a Post-Charlottesville world?

Reflection and Planning Exercise

- What groups would you like to serve in your library? Why?
- What kinds of services do you see lacking in your library? How can you change that?
- How will you develop or improve your critical practice?
- How does this apply to your leadership skills?
- What steps do you need to take to reach the place(s) you want to be?
- What can you do on Monday to start making changes?

Cooke, N. A. (2016). Documenting your critical journey. In N. Pagowsky and K. McElroy (Eds.), *Critical Library Pedagogy Handbooks, Vol. 1 & 2*. Chicago, IL: ALA Publications, 247-250.

Dr. Cooke's articles / chapters about the courses taught at the iSchool at Illinois

- Cooke, N. A., & Hill, R. F. (2017). Considering Cultural Competence: An Annotated Resource list. *Knowledge Quest*, 45(3), 54-61. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1125482.pdf>
- Cooke, N. A. and Minarik, J. P. (2016). Linking LIS graduate study and social justice education: Preparing students for critically conscious practice. In B. Mehra and K. Rioux (Eds.), *Progressive Community Action: Critical Theory and Social Justice in Library and Information Science*. Sacramento, CA: Library Juice Press. 181-214.
- Cooke, N. A. (2016). Counter- Storytelling in the LIS Curriculum. In P. T. Jaeger, U. Gorham, and N. Greene Taylor (Eds.), *Perspectives on Libraries as Institutions of Human Rights and Social Justice* (Advances in Librarianship series, Volume 41). Emerald Group Publishing, 331-348.
- Cooke, N. A. (2016). Documenting your critical journey. In N. Pagowsky and K. McElroy (Eds.), *Critical Library Pedagogy Handbooks, Vol. 1 & 2*. Chicago, IL: ALA Publications, 247-250.