Cultural Competence in Libraries: Utilizing the Critical Incident Technique and Reflective Journaling to Encourage Reflective Practice

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In a political climate in which intellectual freedom and Critical Race Theory (CRT), among other concepts, are under attack, courses with diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) content are especially relevant. Examining Library and Information Studies (LIS) curriculum within the United States, scholars have repeatedly found DEI content, despite being foundational to the LIS profession, is insufficient in preparing future LIS professionals. Furthermore, once professionals are employed, opportunities for additional training are limited, given the one-shot nature of many professional development opportunities. This article describes one attempt to effectively integrate DEI content into a continuing education course in which participants can incorporate material into their professional activities via the Critical Incident Technique (CIT) and reflective journaling. The article examines existing scholarship regarding LIS education to establish the need for concerted efforts to implement useful and actionable approaches to DEI concepts. It then describes a continuing education course in which the CIT and reflective journaling can be utilized as effective ways to translate coursework into professional practice. The discussion focuses on the specific nature of this course within the context of continuing education and professional development, with suggestions for incorporating course content into required LIS curriculum, and outlines avenues for future research.

Keywords: cultural competence, continuing education, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), pedagogy, professional development

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are popular buzzwords in the academy, the library and information studies (LIS) profession, and society more generally. Within LIS, conceptions and definitions of these terms have continually broadened to include, among others, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, educational attainment, language, age, ability, gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation. A related concept, cultural competence—the ability to recognize the significance of culture and its impact on providing effective service—has been part of LIS scholarship for decades. Despite the relatively recent attention to DEI, and the longstanding professional dialogue surrounding cultural competence, effective cultural competence training remains limited. This article aims to address the limitations of widespread and popular approaches to cultural competence training within the LIS profession by examining the effectiveness of a continuing education course.

This article contains five parts. First, I examine selected literature regarding cultural competence and DEI within LIS scholarship, which points to the need for post-graduation, on-the-job training. I also examine selected literature regarding the use of the Critical

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KEY POINTS:

- Despite efforts to address scholars' calls to include more diversity, equity, and inclusion content in curriculum and more adequately prepare future professionals to serve diverse populations, library and information science education can, collectively, continue to strengthen the curriculum and offer additional opportunities to produce professionals who can better serve all patrons in culturally appropriate ways.
- Implementing alternative forms of assessment, such as reflective journaling, and introducing various, non-LIS methods, such as the Critical Incident Technique, are two approaches to prepare future professionals more effectively for the demands of serving diverse patrons in contemporary US society.
- Reflective journaling and use of the Critical Incident Technique are effective in the continuing education environment, which suggest that these methods would have utility in other situations, although there is no one-size-fits-all model, nor is there a simple solution to DEI work within the LIS profession.

Incident Technique (CIT) in research and practice, as well as reflection in LIS, upon which my use of these techniques as pedagogical tools is based. Next, I describe the design and implementation of the continuing education course developed during the winter of 2021–2022. I briefly discuss the methods used in evaluating the effectiveness of the course before discussing the findings. I conclude with recommendations for practice and identify avenues for further research.

Literature review

While LIS institutions and professionals espouse the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion in all aspects of the field, this literature review will focus specifically on DEI in LIS curriculum. The need for continuing professional development focused on DEI content is necessary due to a historical lack within LIS curriculum and is a crucial component to prepare LIS professionals to serve patrons in the twenty-first-century United States.

Definition of terms

Defining the terms *diversity*, *equity*, and *inclusion* has and remains a challenge within LIS, which has significant implications, as Poole et al. (2021) indicate: "The meaning of the term *diversity* with respect to LIS education remains protean and contested; this may ultimately muddle efforts to promote diversity related work" (p. 260). LIS scholars have provided various definitions and differing criteria, which has resulted in broad, inclusive conceptualizations that include visible and invisible components (Jaeger et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2015; Subramaniam & Jaeger, 2010, 2011).

Additionally, LIS associations have developed definitions for each term. The American Library Association defines diversity as "the sum of the ways that people are both alike and different" while further distinguishing visible and invisible diversity (ALA, 2017). The Association for Library and Information Science Education states that diversity "refers to the representation of the wide variety of backgrounds (including racial, cultural, linguistic, gender, religious, international, socioeconomic, sexual orientation, differently-abled, age among others) that people possess" (ALISE, 2013). In its definition of equity, the ALA (2017) differentiates between that term and equality. Whereas equality implies sameness, equity assumes difference: "Equity recognizes that some groups were (and are) disadvantaged in

accessing educational and employment opportunities and are, therefore, underrepresented or marginalized . . . . Equity, therefore, means increasing diversity by ameliorating conditions of disadvantaged groups." The ALA defines inclusion in terms of organizational environments "in which all individuals are treated fairly and respectfully; are valued for their distinctive skills, experiences, and perspectives; have equal access to resources and opportunities; and can contribute fully to the organization's success."

In proposing a model of cultural competence for LIS professionals, Overall (2009) defines culture as "acts and activities shared by groups of people and expressed in social engagements that occur in their daily activities" (p. 183) and competence as "highly developed abilities, understandings and knowledge" (p. 183). Overall further states that competence refers to "abilities (rather than behaviors) developed over time, which demonstrate a high degree of knowledge and understanding" (p. 183).

Cultural competence in LIS

Informed by the fields of health, counseling, and psychology, Overall (2009) developed a conceptual framework of cultural competence for LIS professionals that emphasizes the significance of culture in service provision to minoritized and underserved populations. Overall argues that, despite efforts among LIS professionals to meet the needs of minoritized and traditionally underserved populations, a cultural competence framework is required for these efforts to be successful. She suggests the use of a framework because its structure allows individuals to adapt components as they develop an understanding of culture's role in their work.

The development of cultural competence within LIS professionals is procedural and occurs over time. Cultural competence is constructed of various building blocks that include cultural self-reflection, reflection of other cultures, cultural and personal experiences, professional development, education, reading, and travel. Drawing from these components, Overall (2009) defines cultural competence as

> The ability to recognize the significance of culture in one's own life and in the lives of others; and to come to know and respect diverse cultural backgrounds and characteristics through interactions with individuals from diverse linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic groups; and to fully integrate the culture of diverse groups into services, work, and institutions in order to enhance the lives of both those being served by the library profession and those engaged in service. (pp. 189–190)

In Overall's framework, development of cultural competence within individuals occurs in three relational domains: cognitive, interpersonal, and environmental. Each domain contains key components that serve as building blocks of cultural competence: cultural self-awareness and cultural knowledge in the cognitive domain; cultural appreciation and an ethic of care in the interpersonal domain; and language, space, policies, and regulations in the environmental domain.

Designed as a progressive process, in which individuals move from cultural incapacity to cultural proficiency, the strength of Overall's (2009) framework lies in its flexibility and ability to be implemented in ways that suit individuals within local libraries and institutions.

However, although Overall's model implies linear progression, cultural competence is not something an individual learns and then becomes a culturally competent practitioner; rather, the process is an iterative one in which individuals can move back and forth along the competence spectrum as they encounter new situations and contexts. This point is especially relevant in relation to the use of the Critical Incident Technique, which, along with reflective journaling, was the focus of the professional development course discussed in this article.

Cultural competence and DEI in LIS education

Because cultural competence is not innate, nor is its acquisition linear or permanent, LIS programs must integrate components of cultural competence into their curriculum. Additionally, given the history of the United States, addressing issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion within LIS curriculum is a necessary component of LIS programs' offerings.

In a 1967 address at the Conference on Library Education in the South, Jack Dalton, dean of the School of Library Service at Columbia University, identified several problem areas in library education. Dalton called for "efforts to prepare all the people of the South, Negro and white, to live in an integrated society by helping to dispel, through knowledge and understanding, the needless fears of ignorance" and "the development of cultural awareness, of listening and verbal skills, of taste, and appreciation for all citizens from the pre-school to the adult level" (Dalton, 1969, p. 22). Since that time, LIS scholars have directed attention to the lack of diversity within the profession and have identified issues in recruitment (Childers & Adams, 1972), LIS education (Carter, 1978), and training for services to minority populations (Simsova, 1980), while others have placed the onus on educational institutions to require courses to prepare future LIS professionals (Cohen, 1980). Despite the presence of innovative efforts and approaches (Jaeger et al., 2015), increased support for diverse LIS faculty (Roy, 2015), and expanded conceptualizations of diversity within LIS education (Adkins et al., 2015), scholars over the past several decades have continually called for targeted efforts regarding DEI, the presence and frequency of which indicates inadequate improvement within LIS education (Blake, 1995; Chancellor, 2019; DuMont, 1986; Jaeger et al., 2011; Kim & Sin, 2008; Ndumu & Chancellor, 2021; Totten, 1992).

DEI training and content within LIS education, despite scholarly attention and national demographic shifts, has failed to manifest adequately within LIS curriculum or the profession at large (Foderingham-Brown, 1993; Jaeger et al., 2011). While Foderingham-Brown (1993) focuses specifically on ethnic diversity, Jaeger and colleagues (2011) broaden the scope of diversity. They argue that considerable socioeconomic and socio-technical changes have created a situation that requires an expanded conceptualization of diversity that moves beyond ethnicity, which has implications on LIS curriculum and, subsequently, LIS faculty on whom the responsibility for curricular development and implementation falls. To develop, implement, and teach diversity-related content, LIS faculty need to represent diverse perspectives; however, LIS faculty remain predominantly White (Bajjaly & Drulia, 2021). The 2021 ALISE statistical report indicates that 59% of LIS faculty are White, 14% Asian, 4% Black/African American, 3% Hispanic, 2% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and 0.003% (4 of 1,215) American Indian or Alaska Native. While the most recent data demonstrate the prevailing Whiteness of LIS faculty, progress has been made in comparison to historical

data; for example, 85.4% of LIS faculty were White in 1997 (Sineath, 1997), compared to 64.56% in 2012 (Wallace, 2012) and 59% in 2021.

LIS education does not operate independently from larger societal contexts and discourse, which, in the current political climate, includes, among others, an attack on intellectual freedom and on what and how educators teach. Attacks targeting the teaching of Critical Race Theory (CRT) within primary and secondary schools are especially prevalent. Given these larger social conditions, preparing LIS professionals to engage with patrons from minoritized groups, as well as those from dominant groups, is more important than ever, so LIS curriculum should include content that addresses race and racism in the United States. In their examination of reading lists from 20 American Library Association (ALA)–accredited LIS programs in North America, Gibson et al. (2018) found that a majority of required courses provided little or no exposure to CRT. The authors identify that CRT can provide a structural framework for future LIS professionals to recognize and confront racism, while also encouraging them to embrace social justice as an integral core professional value. For these reasons, the authors argue that integrating CRT and other related concepts into required LIS courses is a necessary and crucial first step to prepare future professionals to best serve all patrons across all library types.

While Gibson et al. (2018) focus specifically on integrating CRT into LIS curriculum, Cooke (2018) argues for the purposeful incorporation of any diversity-related content into LIS courses. With an eye to the future, based upon a set of interviews with LIS graduate students and working professionals, Cooke identifies the professional benefits of a more critical, inclusive, and culturally competent workforce. This call is significant, as it addresses long-standing issues regarding professional preparation within LIS, as a majority of LIS curriculum has not included content to adequately prepare students to serve diverse patrons in culturally competent ways (Mestre, 2010; Subramaniam & Jaeger, 2010, 2011).

In addition to scholars' recognition of the impact of larger societal trends on LIS education, cultural competence is a topic of interest among LIS researchers. Villagran and Hawamdeh (2020) identified progress within LIS education regarding the amount of cultural competence content in LIS program offerings. The authors' investigation of the amount of cultural competence material in LIS schools across the United States included course offerings, student learning outcomes, and required readings. Among the top-ranked US programs, the authors' content analysis revealed 102 courses with diversity or multicultural terms in their titles or descriptions, with the terms *diversity* (25), *ethnic* (20), and *culture* (19) appearing most often. Related to the above discussion regarding faculty diversity, Villagran and Hawamdeh suggest a connection between limited diversity and multicultural course offerings with the relative lack of diversity among LIS faculty.

Taken together, the inclusion of DEI and cultural competence content within LIS programs is a major issue deserving of the scholarly attention it has received. Poole et al. (2021), in their review of diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice in North American LIS curriculum, indicate that cultural competence—the acknowledgement, appreciation, and integration of diverse cultures into education and institution practices—is a key vehicle for DEI work within the LIS profession. The continuing education course this article discusses is one way to begin to address this deficiency within LIS curriculum.

Critical incidents in research and practice

Colonel John C. Flanagan (1954), who developed the Critical Incident Technique as part of the aviation psychology program of the US Air Force during World War II, defines it as a "set of procedures for collecting direct observations of human behavior in such a way as to facilitate their potential usefulness in solving practical problems and developing broad psychological principles" (p. 327). Flanagan refined and expanded the technique to research in other fields in the post-war years, and his technique has been frequently applied beyond the psychology field. In practice-, service-based fields, including psychology, healthcare, and education, shifting demographics necessitate attention to biases and the provision of culturally competent service (Devine & Ash, 2022; Vela et al., 2022). With this recognition in mind, Marrelli et al. (2005) discuss strategies for developing competency models in behavioral health via a seven-step process, while Campinha-Bacote (2002) presents a model that considers cultural competence as an ongoing process composed of various components—much like Overall's (2009) framework for LIS professionals—including cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, cultural skill, cultural encounters, and cultural desire.

As a research method, the use of critical incidents allows researchers to engage participants in a participatory way, with the practical benefit of collecting robust qualitative data relatively quickly and efficiently (Angelides, 2001). Education scholars have used critical incidents as a tool to encourage reflection (Bruster & Peterson, 2013; Griffin, 2003). Bruster and Peterson (2013) implemented critical incidents as a tool to encourage reflective practice among teacher candidates, with 10 participants producing a digital blog and 10 participants engaging in traditional, analog journaling. While the authors explored the differences between participants in each group via statistical analysis, their findings also indicated that journaling, regardless of modality, promoted in-depth reflection among all participants who passed through five stages—descriptive, inquisitive, investigative, interdependent, and global—of reflection. While Bruster and Peterson focused on reflection using critical incidents as a tool, Griffin (2003) focused on critical incidents and their capacity to develop critical and reflective thinking. Borrowing from established frameworks (Hatton & Smith, 1995; LaBoskey, 2003; Sparks-Langer et al., 1991; Van Manen, 1977), Griffin categorized critical incident reflection into several categories and modes. Results indicated the use of critical incidents increased participants' value of, and orientation toward, growth and inquiry and contributed to their ability to reflect on their teaching practice.

Reflective practice in LIS

In her systematic review of reflection literature within LIS, Grant (2007) identified a relative dearth of publications focusing on this topic. Of those that met the inclusion criteria, Grant organized publications into two categories: one for publications that took a retrospective view of the profession at large and another for publications that sought to connect past experiences with future events. She indicated that more recent publications tended toward the latter, a trend which has continued in the ensuing years.

The use of reflection as a pedagogical tool was the focus of Sen and Ford (2011) and Edwards (2010). Sen and Ford examined the use of reflective writing as a pedagogical tool for teaching Master's-level graduate students, related particularly to learning outcomes and

self-development. Edwards focused specifically on the incorporation of reflection with the intent to better align course objectives, learning outcomes, and expectations for undergraduate and graduate students. Both Sen and Ford and Edwards identified reflection as a positive tool from which students benefit.

Other more recent scholarship has focused on reflection in the context of information literacy and library instruction. Corrall (2017) notes that, relative to other LIS-adjacent fields, reflection and reflective practice are relatively underdeveloped despite the well-documented relationship between information literacy and critical reflection. For this reason, Corrall argues for purposely designed advice and guidance pertaining to reflective practice within LIS. Foster (2018) connects cultural competence, library instruction, and reflective practice. She applies best practices from various disciplines to LIS, ultimately arguing for the necessity of cultural competence throughout the instruction process, including preparation, instructional design, teaching, and evaluation. The final step—reflection—allows instruction librarians the ability to connect with, engage, and teach students from diverse backgrounds more effectively.

About the course

The continuing education department in the Information School at the University of Wisconsin—Madison offered a four-week course during spring 2022 titled "Cultural Competence in Libraries: Encouraging Reflective Practice." With encouragement from my academic advisor, I developed this course as a PhD candidate based upon my research interests and previous publications regarding DEI and cultural competence. The course development process extended over several months, from pitching my course idea to the department's two continuing education staff members, developing a course outline, creating a syllabus, and, ultimately, delivering the course in February and March 2022.

Adopting a broad conceptualization of diversity, as is common within LIS, the course explored the following general questions: (1) How can one understand numerous cultural, social, or identity groups that differ from one's own? (2) Is doing so even possible? and (3) If not, what can be done to mitigate potential inappropriate or harmful actions? To address these questions, the course utilized the Critical Incident Technique (Flanagan, 1954) and reflective practice (Schön, 1983), via journaling to create a customized framework to better understand and engage with increasingly diverse, changing, and intersecting contexts in public libraries, academic libraries, and archival settings. The CIT is a useful tool to examine effective and ineffective work behaviors. It is a method to identify, study, infer, and analyze a set of events, which can be used to inform future practice. Reflective practice, via journaling, is a continuous process of reviewing and contemplating one's actions to learn and adapt for future situations and scenarios.

Sixteen students enrolled in the course, with one student dropping during the second week. Students represented a variety of institutions, including archives, public libraries, and academic libraries of various types, including public universities, community colleges, and a seminary. The course included students from the west coast, the Midwest, the South, and the east coast and represented nine states. All students in the course worked in libraries or archives in the United States.

The entirely online, asynchronous course comprised four week-long units: (1) The Critical Incident Technique; (2) Cultural Competence; (3) Reflective Practice; and (4) From Theory to Practice. Each week, students participated in discussions with peers and completed a reflective journal documenting their work week. Week 1 also included an assignment in which students identified and explained a critical incident from their work. Each weekly unit also included one assigned reading (with the exception of Week 1, which had an additional reading introducing journaling). In designing the course, I was conscious of the multiple demands on students' time and, as a result, minimized the workload. To minimize the required work, and to provide more context, I included optional readings for students to pursue on their own.

The course was graded on a pass/fail basis. Students received credit for participating in weekly discussions, submitting their journal entries, and completing their examination of a critical incident from their professional experience. I left the discussion open to students, as that was their space to engage with peers and course material. I compiled notes and feedback after reading through the discussion, which I shared with students via email at the end of each week.

For the critical incident exploration and weekly journal entries, I provided individual-level feedback. This allowed for ongoing dialogue between the students and me throughout the course. I often left questions, in addition to comments, on the experiences that students shared, which contributed to the feeling of conversation, rather than a unidirectional interaction. With each student, I left personal anecdotes as they related to the themes and topics they introduced in their journals, which also contributed to the conversational aspect of the weekly assignments.

Methodology

I administered a brief, pre-course survey (see Appendix A), via Qualtrics survey software, which offered students an opportunity to notify me of personal circumstances that might affect their efforts in class, as well as a chance to provide comments related to things that would facilitate a positive course experience. From an instructional perspective, the pre-course survey established a baseline of student knowledge and understanding related to the course's learning outcomes, which can be used as a measure of success (e.g., the course effectively conveyed information and was well organized to allow for effective teaching and learning to take place).

During the final week of the course, I administered a post-course survey (see Appendix B), which offered students a chance to leave feedback. Additionally, the post-course survey revisited the course learning outcomes to assess the extent of student learning. These learning outcomes, used as a measure of success, provided valuable insight into what worked, and did not work, for future iterations of the course and other professional development opportunities and presentations on the topic of cultural competence in libraries. I examined aggregated data[1] from these surveys to determine the extent to which course learning outcomes were met and, ultimately, how effective the course was in facilitating productive teaching and learning.

Results

Each student who participated in the course ($n = 16$) completed the pre-course survey. Seven students (43.75%) completed the post-course survey. Additionally, the continuing education branch of the Information School delivered a separate post-course evaluation survey. Five students (31.25%) responded to this survey.

Pre-course survey

Question four of the pre-course survey asked, What can I do as the instructor to make this course a positive experience for you? From these responses, three clear themes are apparent: (1) relate course material to practice; (2) keep the workload manageable; and (3) provide useful, tangible feedback. A response to this question also indicated a desire to be fair to people of different races, which was understandable given the course topic.

Responses to question five—Is there anything you would like me to know (that you are comfortable sharing) regarding your ability to complete the course?—fell primarilyinto one category: the challenges of completing the course while being full-time professionals. One respondent self-identified as having a disability, which I appreciated their being willing to share, and reminded me to make sure content was as accessible as possible.

Because the course was entirely online and asynchronous, question six asked if students would be willing and able to attend a weekly Zoom meeting to chat about the course. Scheduling proved to be a challenge, but three students indicated an interest and attended a regularly scheduled weekly meeting.

The final item of the pre-course survey asked students to rate their ability regarding four statements (see Table 1), which were the stated learning objectives identified in the course syllabus.

All seven respondents to the post-course survey indicated they would incorporate the CIT and/or reflective journaling in their future practice. The technique(s) students indicated they would implement varied, with some indicating a future use of both techniques, while others indicated their planned implementation of journaling. Despite the variation, all students said they would use journaling to encourage reflective practice. As became clear in the post-course survey, the preference for journaling stemmed from students' familiarity with the activity, as several students mentioned that they already journaled in their personal lives, so doing so professionally would be a relatively easy transition.

I will analyze the responses from the aforementioned results in the following section and discuss students' comments regarding their experience in the course.

Discussion

Professional development

A common approach to cultural competence training within LIS is one-off workshops because they are often available externally and do not require in-house resources. Furthermore, attending workshops meets stated institutional or organizational objectives, and workshops can improve and develop employee skills, knowledge, and understanding.

Table 1: Students' pre- and post-course self-rating regarding course learning objectives

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I can explain the background, development, and procedures of the Critical Incident Technique.	Pre	10	4	2		
	Post			1	4	2
I can summarize common conceptions, understandings, and critiques of cultural competence within library and information science (LIS) literature	Pre	4	6	4	2	
	Post				5	2
I can identify the underlying theory of reflective practice and trace theoretical extension of foundational theory	Pre	6	7	3		
	Post			1	4	2
I can develop an individual reflective practice approach to suite my unique personal and professional contexts	Pre	4	2	4	6	
	Post				1	6

These benefits address various challenges, including, among others, funding and budgetary concerns, time investment, and lack of motivation. Given these conditions, library administrators can play a critical role in encouraging staff to broaden their knowledge base by, for example, offering time management advice to their employees (Farrell, 2014) or making educational opportunities known and building professional development into performance reviews (Ely, 2022). However, limitations of one-off sessions, including appealing to a broad audience, restrictions on time and frequency, and lack of ongoing support, curtail the utility of these opportunities. This course attempted to address these issues and add to the growing body of continuous professional development opportunities, which the Continuing Professional Development and Workplace Learning (CPDWL) section of the International Federation of Libraries (IFLA) suggested as necessary if libraries are to remain relevant and meet patron needs in the twenty-first century (Varlejs et al., 2016).

The course structure required students to participate on a weekly, if not daily, basis throughout its duration. The journal assignments required them to keep track of and devote focused attention to their engagement with patrons from different cultures, broadly defined, in their daily work. Additionally, reflective journals are based in students' professional practice, which makes the course content explicitly relevant to their circumstances, as opposed to the broad scope and audience of many cultural competence or DEI professional development opportunities. The other technique, the Critical Incident Technique, was intended to have students carry course content into future professional practice. I specifically discussed the technique as a way to inform future practice. Via identifying critical incidents, individuals can generate possible explanations for past events, which they can use to provide potential recommendations or solutions for future, similar incidents.

Professional development evaluation

Typically, workshop, course, or program evaluation focuses on learner satisfaction, comprehension, and knowledge acquisition and collects participants' immediate reactions. More difficult to ascertain is participants' ability to transfer knowledge to their daily practice, especially if training targets a wide audience. The post-course evaluation survey attempted to address this issue, provide robust feedback for the instructor, and, most significantly, prompt students to utilize the CIT and reflective journaling in their future practice.

Although the post-course survey was intended to ascertain students' satisfaction with the course and their intentions to use course content and continue to build cultural competence, the survey, when compared to the pre-course survey, did measure students' information acquisition. As mentioned, question four of the pre-course survey asked students to rate their ability regarding the four stated learning objectives identified in the course syllabus:

1. I can explain the background, development, and procedures of the Critical Incident Technique.
2. I can summarize common conceptions, understandings, and critiques of cultural competence within library and information science (LIS) literature.
3. I can identify the underlying theory of reflective practice and trace theoretical extension of foundational theory.
4. I can develop an individual reflective practice approach to suite my unique personal and professional contexts.

In light of the pre-course survey responses, students in the course indicated a limited, at best, collective knowledge regarding the Critical Incident Technique, cultural competence within LIS literature, and reflective practice. Interestingly, especially given these responses, many students indicated that they could develop an individual reflective practice approach catered to their specific contexts. Although only seven students completed the post-course survey, the responses from those who did demonstrate the effectiveness of the four-week course, at least regarding student comprehension as measured via the course learning outcomes, as displayed in Table 1.

Professional development: People and context

I asked students in the pre-course survey to identify things I could do to provide a positive learning experience. I created three categories through my analysis of the responses: (1) relate course material to practice; (2) keep the workload manageable; and (3) provide useful, tangible feedback. Given my experience teaching adult learners, enrollment in continuing education classes, and perusal of professional development literature, these three items prominently featured in my construction of the course.

Stone (1986) defines professional development, more specifically continuing professional development, as "all the learning activities and efforts, formal and informal, by which individuals seek to upgrade their knowledge, attitudes, competencies, and understanding in their special field of work (or role) in order to: (1) deliver quality performance in the work setting, and (2) enrich their library careers" (pp. 489–490). Although dated, Stone's defini-

tion remains as relevant as ever given the decades-long scholarly critique of LIS education regarding DEI in LIS curriculum. By nature, continuing professional development places additional burdens on working professionals' time.

In the context of this course, clearly identifying the learning outcomes early in the course, in combination with asking students what I could do to provide a positive learning environment, contributed to student success (as measured via the learning outcomes). Attuned to the unique circumstances of teaching working professionals from previous instruction experience and familiarity with professional development literature, I was cognizant of the need to clearly state expectations and assign a manageable workload. To this end, I included an array of optional materials for students to complete during the week or take with them as valuable resources for the future.

Despite the limited time students had to devote to the course, there was a high level of engagement, which was evident in the weekly discussions, which included ongoing dialogue among students. I provided formative feedback at the end of each week, so as not to intrude on students' discussion space. When reviewing the discussion thread, I was continually struck by the thoughtfulness and depth displayed. The decision to leave students to contribute and monitor the discussion was deliberate, and one I would not have undertaken in an undergraduate course, given the maturity and commitment of students in the course. The weekly discussions, as well as the individual journal entries, included situations and anecdotes from students' personal and professional lives and demonstrated measured and considered engagement. Asking students to participate in professional discussions outside their usual, local circles, and having them reflect weekly on their professional activities, made the course demands less extraneous, was rooted in practice, and served as points upon which to direct future professional attention.

Professional development: Instructional modality

Online learning poses numerous challenges and provides great advantages, particularly in the realm of professional development. Although there was a level of depth to the discussion that exceeded my expectations, online discussion forums cannot replicate real-time conversations, which I find extremely valuable. To this end, I encouraged students to participate in a synchronous Zoom meeting once a week, with the understanding that coordinating such a meeting would be difficult, which is how things transpired. Still, three students were willing and able to participate, which provided another form of engagement. In addition to the affective benefit of seeing people's faces and hearing their voices, these sessions allowed participants to extend the online discussions with a small cohort of peers. These meetings also provided an additional avenue for students to pose questions and comments to me and discuss them as a group. Lastly, discussions in these weekly meetings inevitably extended beyond the context of the course, and I thoroughly enjoyed getting to know the students who were able to participate in these synchronous meetings as people outside the confines of their profession or course contexts.

Communication turned out to be the primary obstacle of the asynchronous, entirely online course, despite efforts to mitigate issues of this type, which included giving students access to the entire set of course material in the learning management system prior to the

course start date and asking them for their preferred contact information, as the university email created as part of enrollment may not be the most convenient. Two instances demonstrate communication errors that occurred in the course.

In early March, during the last week of the course, I received an email in which a student indicated a misunderstanding and thought students could participate at any time throughout the duration of the four-week course. As a result, the student did not participate in the weekly discussions with their peers, nor submit the weekly journal entries, which served as the primary avenue to connect course concepts and techniques to individual practice. In their email, the student indicated they had not read the syllabus and that, had they done so, they would have contacted me earlier. In this case, as the instructor, I was honestly frustrated that the student had not bothered to read the syllabus, which to me is a contract that documents my responsibilities as instructor and what I expect of students.

In another case, in the department-administered post-course survey, a student indicated their desire for concrete, how-to steps to be a more culturally competent practitioner. My immediate response to this comment was also one of frustration, because I stated that there is no one-size-fits-all model of cultural competence. The techniques I introduced in the course are premised on how each individual, including their personal background, professional context, and experience, dictates their level of cultural competence. After taking a few minutes to reflect, however, my reaction changed. I considered that valuable feedback, for it indicated that I could have more explicit in my pronouncement regarding the nature of how individuals build cultural competence abilities.

Conclusion

Given the ongoing calls from LIS scholars to address DEI content in LIS curriculum, the four-week Cultural Competence in Libraries: Encouraging Reflective Practice course focused on cultural competence, one aspect that falls within the DEI umbrella. Taking a broad conception of diversity, the course introduced two techniques, the CIT and reflective journaling, as ways to increase one's cultural competence abilities. Measured via four course learning outcomes, students demonstrated apparent skill apprehension. A few concluding remarks are necessary.

First, achievement of course learning outcomes is a singular metric of success. This measurement demonstrates a self-identified improvement in one's skills and abilities within the confines of the course. While the techniques introduced are intended to encourage and simplify the transition from classroom to practice, further investigation is necessary to examine this transition. Second, cultural competence is not something one can fully master; rather, one's abilities lie on a spectrum, meaning an individual can possess varying degrees of cultural competence that change based upon experience. The CIT and reflective journaling are tools that one can use, but they are not exhaustive. Individuals can and should use these tools in combination with others. More generally, the course itself is a single opportunity for individuals to, as Stone (1986) says, "upgrade their knowledge, attitudes, competencies, and understanding in their special field of work" (pp. 489–490). These caveats aside, the progress students made in the course demonstrates the utility of the CIT and reflective journaling as techniques that can foster development of cultural competence within LIS

professionals. Additionally, the course's duration, combined with the emphasis on applying course concepts in practice, provided participants with more engagement than is possible in a typical one-shot session.

This course was designed as an innovative attempt to address two primary issues. First, despite the ongoing and increased call of LIS scholars for LIS curriculum to include more DEI content, many graduates enter the workforce underprepared to adequately serve diverse patrons (Mestre, 2010). Second, the course differs from one-shot professional development opportunities. Although the course was only four weeks long, students' continued engagement with course concepts and material throughout each week, as well as the entire duration of the course, required a different and extended type of engagement. By no means am I claiming this course to be a silver bullet; however, I hope it inspires more innovation and creativity among other LIS educators. To that end, the course syllabus and lecture materials are available online: https://tinyurl.com/yj63v5p2. I encourage others to adopt and adapt course material as they see fit so long as they attribute credit to my work in developing this course (e.g., adapted from Eric Ely-Ledesma).

While they were implemented in a continuing education course, there is potential to incorporate the Critical Incident Technique and reflective practice (via journaling) in other contexts. As mentioned, one benefit of external professional development opportunities is that they do not require in-house resources, time, or energy. While the development of this course required work, library departments could spread the labor over time and staff to develop a similar program. With the justified focus on DEI initiatives, libraries could potentially seek external funds and resources to provide an institution-specific program catered to local individuals and contexts. While students in the course focused on critical incidents and interactions with diverse patrons, the Critical Incident Technique and reflective journaling are equally applicable to co-workers, colleagues, and workplace environment. Applying the techniques in this way could address hostile and unwelcoming work environments for faculty and librarians from marginalized groups.

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Note

1. Because this project falls outside IRB purview, data were aggregated and did not include direct quotations from students in the course.

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Appendix A: Pre-course survey

1) What is your preferred name?
2) What are your preferred pronouns?
3) What is the best email address to contact you with course information and updates?
4) What can I do as the instructor to make this course a positive experience for you?
5) Is there anything you would like me to know (that you are comfortable sharing) regarding your ability to complete this course?
6) Are you interested in participating in a weekly synchronous Zoom meeting to chat about the course?
7) Prior to beginning this course, please rate your ability regarding the following statements.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I can explain the background, development, and procedures of the Critical Incident Technique.					
I can summarize common conceptions, understandings, and critiques of cultural competence within library and information science (LIS) literature.					
I can identify the underlying theory of reflective practice and trace theoretical extension of foundational theory.					
I can develop an individual reflective practice approach to suite my unique personal and professional contexts.					

Appendix B: Post-course survey

1) What is your preferred name?
2) After completing this course, please rate your ability regarding the following statements.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I can explain the background, development, and procedures of the Critical Incident Technique.					
I can summarize common conceptions, understandings, and critiques of cultural competence within library and information science (LIS) literature.					
I can identify the underlying theory of reflective practice and trace theoretical extension of foundational theory.					
I can develop an individual reflective practice approach to suite my unique personal and professional contexts.					

3) Will you incorporate either technique (the Critical Incident Technique and/or reflective journaling) in your future practice?
4) Which technique(s) will you incorporate and why?
5) Why won't you incorporate either technique from this course in your future practice?
6) Please share additional comments about your experience in this course.