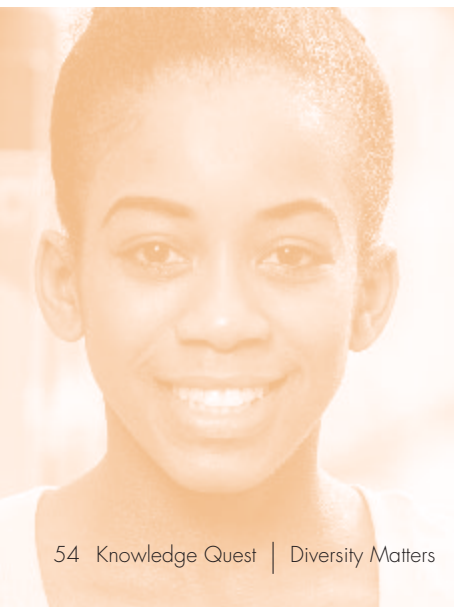# CONSIDERIN CULTURAL C

G OMPETENCE

An Annotated Resource List

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ULTIMATELY, WE USED ONE SPECIFIC QUESTION TO DETERMINE AN ITEM'S INCLUSION IN THE LIST: WILL THIS RESOURCE HELP A LIBRARIAN WHO SERVES CHILDREN AND YOUTH BECOME BETTER INFORMED ABOUT HOW TO EFFECTIVELY SERVE A DIVERSE BODY OF PATRONS?

Librarians who serve children and youth have the honor and privilege of providing information services to a population in the early stages of strengthening their skills of inquiry and knowledge acquisition. It is widely understood that effective children's and youth librarians must be innovative, aware of current/popular trends, and able to build rapport with young patrons. However, more emphasis must be placed on the fact that it is essential for these librarians to be prepared to identify and meet the needs of a patron population that is becoming increasingly diverse.

The annotated resource list that follows shares resources that support children's/youth services librarians in developing and strengthening skills of cultural competence defined as "a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency or among professionals and enable that system, agency or those professions to work effectively in cross-cultural situations" (Cross et al. 1989, 7). Further, the annotated listing of materials serves to increase practitioners' acquisition of equity literacy defined as "the knowledge and skills that enable us to recognize, respond to, and redress conditions that deny some students access to educational and other opportunities enjoyed by their peers" (Gorski 2014). Not every item that appears in the list below was created specifically by or for library practitioners. We believe, nonetheless, that the materials presented and described in this article are significant for raising librarians' overall awareness about providing inclusive services for diverse children/youth.

Selection Criteria

Numerous resources exist that focus on cultural competence and equity literacy, and on related topics (e.g., diversity and inclusion) in children's/youth services; searches for materials on these topics returned over two thousand results. Thus, selecting "just right" items proved a daunting task. We sought to include a total of twenty items that:

1. provided comprehensive coverage of some aspect of the general topic,

2. were relevant regardless of their publication date, and

3. were thought-provoking and instructive without being admonishing.

Unlike traditional annotated bibliographies, the list that follows does not exclusively describe written documents. Rather, we considered it important to include resources in a variety of formats to address multiple learning styles, interest levels, and information-sharing approaches. Ultimately, we used one specific question to determine an item's inclusion in the list: Will this resource help a librarian who serves children and youth become better informed about how to effectively serve a diverse body of patrons?

Listing of Resources

The items below are listed in alphabetical order by author's last name in the category within which they appear; they have not been organized to indicate the authors' determination of relevance. Additionally, several listed resources include references to materials that are directly related to that item and of potential interest and use to the reader and to children/youth library practitioners.

Articles/Book Chapters/Reports

1. Cooke, Nicole A. 2016. "Reference Services for Diverse Populations." In *Reference and Information Services: An Introduction*, 5th ed., edited by Linda C. Smith and Melissa A. Wong, 338–66. Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited.

   This chapter, in the latest edition of a classic reference textbook, introduces readers to the broadness of the concept "diverse populations," a concept encompassing much more than race and ethnicity. The text provides examples of diverse communities, including veterans; seniors; the disabled; New Americans; the homeless, hungry, and impoverished; LGBTQ people; and the incarcerated, all of whom require and deserve quality library services and materials. As part of serving these nuanced and diverse populations, it is essential that library professionals strive to develop and maintain empathy and cultural competence as part of their critical and reflexive professional practice.

   The issues and discussions raised in this chapter are covered in more depth in the textbook *Information Services to Diverse Populations: Developing Culturally Competent Library Professionals* (Cooke 2016). *[Editor's note: The citation for this and other "related works" follow the list of works cited.]*

2. Elturk, Ghada. 2003. "Diversity and Cultural Competency." *Colorado Libraries* 29 (4): 5–7.

   Elturk's piece is a practical companion piece to Overall's discussion of cultural competence theory (see #6). Elturk is a library professional with decades of experience who succinctly and effectively discusses the imperative for cultural competence development, and describes how she has successfully applied it in her practice as a public librarian. Elturk's piece is very accessible and can serve as a solid starting point for those new to cultural competence in the context of librarianship.

3. Gorski, Paul C., and Katy Swalwell. 2015. "Equity Literacy for All." *Educational Leadership* 72 (6): 34–40.

   The authors begin by describing a tense and (unfortunately) actual discussion that occurred during a focus group composed of African American students enrolled in a predominantly white high school wherein the students shared their dismay about a failed multicultural initiative. Gorski and Swalwell go on to describe five principles that educators might employ to move a step beyond focusing solely on culture to infusing concepts of equity and social justice into all areas of the curriculum.

4. Mestre, Lori S. 2010. "Librarians Working with Diverse Populations: What Impact Does Cultural Competency Training Have on Their Efforts?" *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 36 (6): 479–88.

   In addition to providing clear definitions for the terms "cultural competence" and "diversity awareness," this article presents the results of a study that explored the extent to which library practitioners felt prepared to address diverse populations. Current youth services librarians should use this writing as a call to actively consider the methods they use to interact with patrons from varied backgrounds as well as the ways that these librarians can model appropriate and effective behaviors for their colleagues.

5. Naidoo, Jamie Campbell. 2014. *The Importance of Diversity in Library Programs and Material Collections for Children.* Association for Library Service to Children. <www.ala.org/alsc/sites/ala.org.alsc/files/content/ALSCwhitepaper_importance%20of%20diversity_with%20graphics_FINAL.pdf> (accessed September 25, 2016).

   This white paper positions libraries as spaces that serve to help children develop the skills necessary for thriving in an increasingly diverse society. Naidoo explains with clarity the role

that libraries and librarians play in introducing children to stories that promote cultural diversity and aid in strengthening cultural understanding.

RELATED WORK: Hughes-Hassell, Barkley, and Koehler (2009).

6. Overall, Patricia Montiel. 2009. "Cultural Competence: A Conceptual Framework for Library and Information Science Professionals." *Library Quarterly* 79 (2): 175–204.

Overall has been credited with expanding the LIS field's discussion of cultural competence. In this piece, she proposes a theory for developing cultural competence. She also suggests that cultural awareness is not enough, and that LIS professionals should be more knowledgeable and proactive about incorporating cultural differences into our services and collections.

7. Press, Nancy Ottman, and Mary Diggs-Hobson. 2005. "Providing Health Information to Community Members Where They Are: Characteristics of the Culturally Competent Librarian." *Library Trends* 53 (3): 397–410.

Because cultural competence emerged from the applied health sciences, it is not surprising that medical library professionals were among the first to embrace the concept and that they have been discussing cultural competence in the literature for almost two decades. Like the Elturk article (see #2), Press and Diggs-Hobson's piece is particularly valuable because of its practicality. The authors provide concrete steps for acquiring cultural competence. These steps include 1) acknowledging that we have room to grow and learn, 2) recognizing our own biases, 3) being willing to learn from others, and 4) developing trusting relationships with those we serve. The steps require effort, but they are accessible and appropriate for library professionals in any setting.

RELATED WORKS: Articles by Alpi (2001) and Mi (2005) enhance the points and arguments made by Press and Diggs-Hobson.

8. Rios-Balderrama, Sandra. 2006. "The Role of Cultural Competence in Creating a New Mainstream." *Colorado Libraries* 32 (4): 3–8.

This article concludes with a question that every youth services librarian would do well to ponder at the beginning of his or her career: How can we provide quality library services to multicultural communities and establish diverse library organizations if we are unable to value cultural differences? The author challenges librarians to rid themselves of the notion that they should automatically and inherently believe that every patron and every human is the same and instead consider the value of the various lenses through which we all view the world. The author includes a set of suggestions that have the potential to guide librarians—especially those working with youth—through the necessary work of analyzing what the librarians believe about cultures that are not their own and learning more about other cultures.

9. Sue, Derald Wing, et al. 2007. "Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Implications for Clinical Practice." *American Psychologist* 62 (4): 271–86.

Part of being culturally competent is being mindful of the everyday slights that others may encounter because of their race, ethnicity, gender, religion, or other visible and invisible cultural markers, slights otherwise known as microaggressions. Sue is among the foremost experts about the topic, and this article is a classic primer on microaggressions and its partners, microinsults and microinvalidations. Sue and his coauthors provide valuable suggestions for recognizing and dealing with microaggressions, information that is valuable inside and outside of our library settings.

RELATED WORKS: Also worth reading are another article Sue wrote on this topic and his latest book, which is a practical, accessible guide containing useful advice for actually talking about microaggressions and other difficult topics (Sue 2001, 2016).

10. Summers, Laura L. 2010. "Culturally Responsive Leadership in School Libraries." *Library Media Connection* 28 (5): 10–13.

A frank opening statement that "students need culturally responsive teacher-librarians" sets the stage for this article, which describes and defines four levels of evaluation that school librarians can employ to assess their level of cultural responsiveness with the goal of reforming the K–12 curriculum so that all students are exposed to material that leads to success in a diverse society. Additionally, the author lists four actions that school librarians committed to cultural responsiveness can take to encourage student achievement: build trust, value cultural awareness, foster motivation, and establish an inclusive learning environment.

Books

11. Grover, Robert, Roger C. Greer, and John Agada. 2010. *Assessing Information Needs: Managing Transformative Library Services*. Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited.

Perhaps this book is not an obvious choice for a discussion of cultural competence, but at its heart, cultural competence is about relationship building and getting to know the communities we serve. Grover, Greer, and Agada are experts on community analysis (getting to know our communities through a variety of quantitative and qualitative means), and they provide an accessible, step-by-step guide for engaging in this iterative and necessary process.

12. Ladson-Billings, Gloria. 2009. *The Dreamkeepers,* 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Years before LIS professionals began talking about cultural competence, people in the field of education were discussing the need for culturally responsive pedagogy and teaching. Ladson-Billings (along with Beverly Daniel Tatum, Geneva Gay, and, more recently, Django Paris) advocates for actively incorporating learners' cultures into the teaching and learning process. This approach is something that teaching librarians should also be considering and embracing in their professional practices, inside and outside library classrooms.

RELATED WORKS: For more information and perspectives about culturally responsive teaching, please also consult the work of Geneva Gay (2010) and Beverly Daniel Tatum (Tatum and Brown 1998). Django Paris (2012) has extended this conversation by positing culturally sustaining pedagogy, which encourages us to not only incorporate, but celebrate, the cultures of our students.

13. Lazar, Althier M., Patricia A. Edwards, and Gwendolyn Thompson McMillon. 2012. *Bridging Literacy and Equity: The Essential Guide to Social Equity Teaching.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Because school librarians have a role in teaching literacy, this book is useful for helping them consider—and articulate to other stakeholders—the importance of providing youth with culturally relevant literature. The authors of this book have written a clear, nonjudgmental document that is easy to digest. Its seven chapters attempt to bridge the gap between theory and practice to help professionals who work with youth (classroom teachers and librarians alike) to better understand linkages between race, class, social equity, and literacy—with the ultimate goal of making a positive impact on the youth with whom they interact.
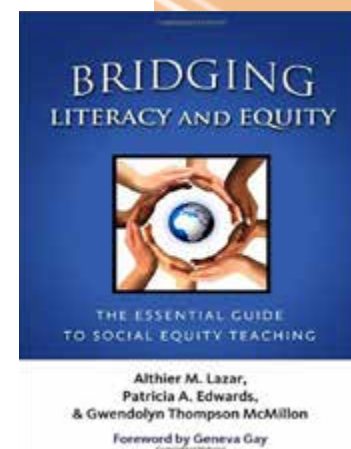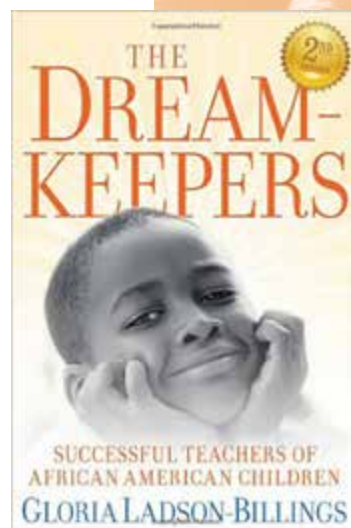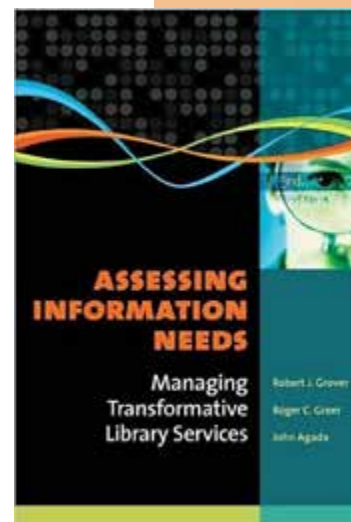
Media/Websites/Exercises

14. Chavez, Vivian. 2012. *Cultural Humility: People, Principles and Practices.* <www.youtube.com/watch?v=SaSHLbS1V4w> (accessed September 25, 2016).

In this mini-documentary, the medical doctors who coined the term "cultural humility" are featured as they and others explain how cultural humility extends the work of cultural competence. This expansion occurs when practitioners move beyond the idea that one's knowledge of various cultures should and will necessarily reach a point of finite understanding (competence) and become committed to perpetual openness in learning about cultures that are different from their own (humility). The material contained in the video is rooted in the medical field but is fully relatable to the library profession.

15. Gorski, Paul C. 2015. "Circles of My Multicultural Self." *Critical Multicultural Pavilion: Awareness Activities.* <www.edchange.org/multicultural/activities/circlesofself.html> (accessed September 25, 2016).

This is a simple but revelatory exercise that asks participants to engage in critical self-reflection. The exercise is most effective when people go beyond cursory, obvious, and visible markers (e.g., I am female; I am a parent), and explore invisible, possibly stigmatized, or conflicting aspects of their identity (e.g., I am an atheist; I am gender non-conforming). Coupled with a discussion about privilege (see #19 on the list) and/or implicit biases (see #17), this exercise goes a long way toward development of empathy and cultural competence.

16. Hughes-Hassell, Sandra, and Amanda Hitson. n.d. "Culturally Responsive Library Walk." *Libraries, Literacy, and African American Male Youth.* <http://librariesliteracyandaamaleyouth.weebly.com/uploads/7/9/2/7/7927688/culturally_responsive_library_walk_with_examples.pdf> (accessed September 25, 2016).

The culturally responsive library walk tool was developed for use in a school library but is ultimately useful for all library settings. All librarians who work with youth can modify this tool as necessary (e.g., replace the term "school library" with "library") to work within a team to objectively view how effective their library is with respect to culturally responsive programs, services, materials, and practices. The series of worksheets provides rationale, instructions for easy completion, focus areas for librarians to consider thoughtfully, space to include observations, and action steps. An additional useful feature is the inclusion of brief and thoughtfully worded questions for practitioners and patrons to answer, yielding additional insight into the process of improving the library program for diverse user groups.

17. Project Implicit. 2011. "Social Attitudes." <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit> (accessed September 25, 2016).

Another simple but profound exercise designed to identify implicit biases: hidden and/or unconscious thoughts and feelings that we all have and that may inhibit our interactions with people who are different from us. These implicit biases are what allow stereotypes and other knee-jerk judgments and reactions to be perpetuated in society. These tests are useful for inspiring personal reflection and for inspiring larger conversations and calls to action.

RELATED WORK: The Implicit Association Test, on which this website is based, is fully explained in the book *Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People* (Banaji and Greenwald 2013).

18. Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. 2009. *The Danger of a Single Story | Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie*. <www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg> (accessed September 25, 2016).

In this video, best-selling author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie transfers her ability to weave stories in written form to a verbal narrative that reminds listeners that it is important to not fall victim to believing the one story that, while predominate, is likely not complete. Adichie's spoken words will motivate school librarians to remain open to learning about the varied experiences of their young patrons as they create and deliver materials, programs, and services.

19. BuzzFeedYellow. 2015. *What Is Privilege?* <www.youtube.com/watch?v=hD5f8GuNuGQ> (accessed September 25, 2016).

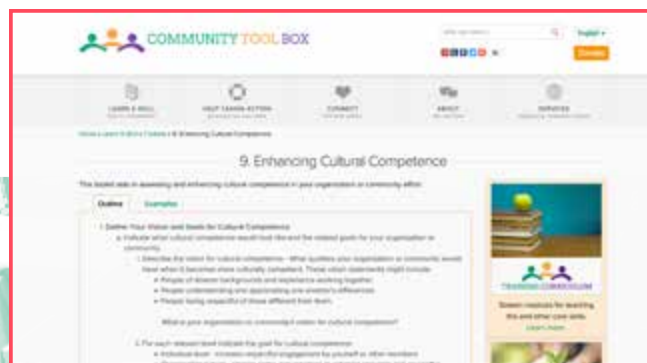A brief but powerful video of students engaging in a physical exercise based on Peggy McIntosh's (1989) "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" article. The exercise is seemingly simple but yields profound reactions from the participants. The video nicely encapsulates privilege and emphasizes why we should be having such conversations with our peers and our students.

20. Work Group for Community Health and Development at the University of Kansas. 2016. "Enhancing Cultural Competence." *Community Tool Box*. <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/enhancing-cultural-competence> (accessed September 25, 2016).

Youth librarians who are interested in considering the big picture as it relates to creating or enhancing a culturally competent library program will benefit from using this toolkit. The online tool provides four broad categories (such as "Define Your Vision and Goals for Cultural Competence" and "Conduct a Cultural Audit") and then shares detailed steps for moving toward goal achievement within each category. Two examples accompany the toolkit, which further help librarians understand its usefulness in their specific library environment.

Conclusion

The conversation surrounding diversity (in its many and varied

forms) is not particularly easy to engage in nor is it new to or exclusive to LIS. The field of education's emphasis on culturally responsive teaching was followed by the first concrete definitions of cultural competence in both social work and medicine. Both of these models have paved the way for the emergence of cultural humility, which encourages practitioners to engage in a constant process of evaluation of self and program. It is our hope that the twenty items described in this writing serve to empower librarians to initiate and participate in difficult conversations as they strive toward the ever-important goal of effectively and compassionately reaching our youth.

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Renee F. Hill *is a senior lecturer and director of the School Library specialization at the University of Maryland's College of Information Studies. In this capacity, she teaches courses and provides guidance that prepare graduate students to become information specialists who serve children and youth. Renee earned a Bachelor's degree in Exceptional Student Education at Florida Atlantic University. Both her Master's and PhD were earned in Library and Information Studies at Florida State University. She is passionate about and committed to research and teaching that focus on examining methods for increasing understanding of diversity issues in Library and Information Studies.*

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Related Works:

Alpi, Kristine M. 2001. "Multicultural Health Information Seeking: Achieving Cultural Competency in the Library." *Journal of Hospital Librarianship* 1 (2): 51–59.

Banaji, Mahzarin R., and Anthony G. Greenwald. 2013. *Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People.* New York: Delacorte.

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