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De-colonizing one-shots
Critical pedagogies and the ACRL Framework

Librarians with instructional duties, particularly information literacy instructors or subject specialists, often rely on the "one-shot" format of instruction as a primary method for information literacy skills training and development. While not the only method of instruction, one-shots remain a foundational tool in information literacy instruction, although instructors are exploring other instructional formats. As a result, one-shots are regularly critiqued by librarians, who cite difficulties with the transactional nature and questionable effectiveness of the format.[1] Many librarians cite concerns with the one-shot format based on time constraints, institutional culture, and discipline faculty discomfort with library instruction that is not directly and perceptibly tied to their own assignment requirements. More recently, conversations have highlighted the problematic nature of one-shots by uncovering the link between library instruction and faux neutrality, feminized labor, and campus power dynamics.[2]

Looking to experts outside of librarianship is necessary for clear and cogent exploration of where bias and prejudice can hide, particularly in information literacy instruction. While finding a direct corollary expert (i.e., an expert in a different field specializing in information literacy instruction) would be most helpful, there is an argument to be made for applying critical lenses from one field to another, since the difference between disciplinary practices can deepen analyses. For this column, Indigenous studies scholar Sandy Grande provides a particularly probing schema in her work *Red Pedagogy*. By applying her schema, The Deep Structures of Colonialist Consciousness, to librarianship and information literacy, in combination with the Authority is Constructed and Contextual frame, instructors can discover biases and identify places where intentional practice can push information literacy instruction sessions to be more accessible and inclusive. While some classroom practices or activities might remain similar, any classroom practice can be harmful unless coupled with self-evaluative and reflective practices based in an active, decolonial practice. This column seeks to provide an example of applying a decolonial lens from Indigenous studies to one-shots in the hopes of inspiring further conversation and exploration.

The authors acknowledge the ancestral homeland of the Seminole Tequesta, and Miccosukee tribes in South Florida, and seek to provide intentional exploration of how knowledge systems based in capitalism and colonialism precipitate, by their very nation, sexism, classism, and racism. The frame Authority is Constructed and Contextual is useful here because it encourages "informed skepticism" and recognizes that "unlikely voices" are equally authoritative.

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Contextualizing authority in our knowledge systems

To begin the work of decolonialist critique of information literacy, it is necessary to first detect the colonialist and capitalist roots of librarianship. The historical origins of contemporary librarianship are directly tied to capitalism. In 1983, Michael F. Winter wrote a University of Illinois Occasional Paper tracing today's librarianship to the late nineteenth century—a time of widespread career professionalization across all fields in response to the rise of industrialization.[3] As information cataloging, retrieval, and use changed to meet the demands of capitalism, colonialism, and massive industrialization, so too did the practices and training of librarianship. Contemporary librarianship must address directly these industrial and capitalist roots that undergird the foundational practices of systematizing cataloging, access, and evaluation of information by embracing de-colonialism as a lens for detecting and unraveling prejudices in practice. Multiple authors have traced the connections between colonialism, capitalism, and librarianship,[4] and have called for de-colonial theoretical frameworks like queer, feminist, and critical race theory. For the purposes of this column, Sandy Grande's work, *Red Pedagogy*, is invaluable because of its clear and grounded scholarship. Grande makes explicit the colonialist assumptions that progress, particularly economic or technological change, is positive change, and that humans are separate from, and superior to, nature.[5]

Within the one-shot, it is possible to highlight the various ways authority and power shape Western knowledge systems. Grande cogently describes five tenets of the modern (and Western) worldview, coined structures of colonialist consciousness that highlight the impacts of global capitalism and education on Indigenous learning systems.[6] While all decolonial and antiracist work is always in-progress, a possible first step is to implement Grande's critical approach as a model, and to share ways of combating these within one-shot instruction sessions. Grande's first tenet criticizes the Western belief that progress is positive change, which appears innocuous at first glance. However, knowledge systems built on capitalist tenets focus on limited information resources, which create ever-widening gaps between the information haves and have-nots. One possible way to initiate conversation around the link between capitalism and knowledge systems could lie within the database demonstration, a key component of library-based instruction. Database demonstrations provide an opportunity for discussing information privilege and the ethical components of information gatekeeping. While many instructors already use the database demonstration in this manner, explicitly linking databases with capitalism and contrasting with Indigenous knowledge systems allow our learners to consider the even broader ramifications of authority.

Grande's third tenet, that the binary of secular/material thinking conquers so-called primitive superstition, speaks to another way in which capitalism and the Western worldview denigrate and devalue Indigenous knowledge systems. The separation of faith from reason is simplistic and it hierarchizes the "objective" Western worldview from so-called "subjective" knowledge systems. The hierarchy created as a result values the knowledge holders, often instructors, over the learner, who still possess valuable experiential knowledge. The emphasis on independence and achievement in classrooms also promotes a colonialist mentality that emphasizes the individual over the collective and inducts students into a consumerist and materialistic culture. More importantly, this worldview negates student personal histories and funds of knowledge and creates a wedge between learners and their family, tribe, and community. In the context of libraries, these beliefs presume that library instructors possess

"objective" knowledge unknown to their constituents, thereby replicating many of the oppressive systems we fight to upend. Lastly, it censors other knowledge systems that are all equally valid.

Although impactful on their own, Grande's tenets are magnified when coupled with the Authority is Constructed and Contextual frame. The Authority is Constructed and Contextual frame explicitly states that "authority is construction in that various communities may recognize different types of authority." Applying Grande's tenets to this statement, librarians recognize authority in terms of a credentialing system that is racist and exclusionary privileges information that has been ratified by systems of publication that reflect Western ideals of progress, and estimates secular/material thinking as the most precise form of knowledge manufacture. Changing the statement from "their creators' expertise and credibility" to "information resources reflect their creators" is more accurate, particularly in the context of the impact of worldview, gender, and other influences that the frame explicitly names. For example, (White) instructors must practice self-awareness and self-reflection to counteract systems of oppression. The *Invisible Knapsack*, a term coined by feminist scholar Peggy McIntosh in the 1980s, describes how White privilege is often invisible to White people but highly perceptible to minoritized/BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) communities.[7] Instructional assumptions and practices are shaped by individual and institutional norms of othering. As a result, being intentional in creating safe spaces where minoritized voices are valued and acknowledged is absolutely necessary.

As issues of racial injustices continue to surface, education professionals must understand how prejudice, racism, and faux neutrality influence professional praxis. Questioning the structures that codify our knowledge systems opens the space for other sources of authority, including Indigenous epistemologies and noncapitalist-focused systems, but this work remains absent in the Framework. Marcia Rapchak highlights the subtle irony that the Framework, which was created to teach criticality, lacks any mechanisms for scrutinizing the structural racism embedded in information literacy instruction.[8] Rapchak provides deeper analysis on these shortcomings, and Grande's work amplifies the call for more critical and decolonial analysis of the Framework. Library instructional sessions, whether or not in the one-shot format, unconsciously sustain White systems of knowledge production.

Critical engagement and classroom practices

While the conversation around decolonizing the Framework is (and should) be ongoing, examining how such biases can be exemplified in the one-shot can be helpful to identify where actionable change can occur. One way to transform the one-shot instructional session into an opportunity to practice decolonialism is through the critique of controlled vocabulary. Grande, again, provides guidance as to where critique can occur by highlighting the Western value that elevates the anthropocentric over the natural world. Problematizing controlled vocabularies can be one way to counter hierarchical assumptions in the one-shot environment. While instructors often teach students that subject headings aid in precise and relevant searches, they are not designed to handle collective or Indigenous worldviews. Controlled vocabularies, like the Library of Congress Classification, are deeply embedded in the evolutionary order and pseudo-scientific racism of the nineteenth century. This does not jeopardize student progress toward chosen majors; rather, it solidifies their growing expertise and practice of critical thinking skills.

Another example of where the one-shot can evolve is through an exploration of format and the information cycle. As a counter to over-emphasizing the "peer-review" process, discussing alternative formats such as zines and graphic novels in tandem with more formalized systems of publication can lead to larger explorations of how knowledge systems manufacture and distribute information within the context of their communities. Although much as been written about the negatives of the peer-review process, broadening the conversation to other formats can provide a more inclusive learning experience that resists the notion that a written article published in a scholarly journal is the ultimate and only research source for all undergraduate needs.[9] Broadening the conversation to other formats can be grounded in Grande's tenet discussing the privileged secular world view as more highly valued by explicitly discussing other formats that include artistic expression while simultaneously modeling for students the value of recognizing that "authoritative content may be packaged formally or informally," as per the Authority is Constructed and Contextual frame.

There are many other areas where classroom activities can be reexamined and reconfigured using Grande's tenets and the Framework. Grande is an excellent starting point for sussing out deep-seated biases in Western knowledge systems. Database demonstrations are ripe for discussions on economic power and information manufacture in contrast to non-Western knowledge systems. Citation tools can lead to the importance of ontological individualism in Western society.[10] Search results can be analyzed from the lens of the superiority of humanity to nature, particularly in STEM research. While classroom activities may evolve only slightly, it is the intentionality of researching and applying a decolonial lens to the one-shot that will support inclusion within the library classroom in a perceptible way.

Conclusion

Overlooking the irony that comes from resisting linking librarianship to colonialism is especially salient in the classroom setting, particularly in the context of the correlation between information literacy and socioeconomic status. Natalie Greene Taylor and Paul T. Jaeger view information literacy as a form of power and means of control.[11] They are not the first to explicitly connect information literacy with economic status or governmental control. Deborah Brandt has argued that literacy is reflected in input, output, and the labor force, and has highlighted the endurance of literacy gaps in relation to race and economic status.[12]

The argument that libraries are neutral, ahistorical, and apolitical spaces that are immune to White privilege is not grounded in reality.[13] During the 2021 Midwinter Meeting, the American Library Association (ALA) passed the "Resolution to Condemn White Supremacy and Fascism as Antithetical to Library Work."[14] This resolution made explicit the relationship between neutrality rhetoric, White supremacy, and fascism in librarianship. In the classroom specifically, encoded power dynamics are present in the didactic forms of presentation that exclude learner interaction. It is therefore incumbent upon all library personnel to interrogate these power dynamics in all areas of librarianship, but especially in the classroom setting.

Throughout this column, Grande's tenets of colonialist consciousness combined with the Authority is Constructed and Contextual frame reveals areas where information literacy instruction in the one-shot format can evolve to espouse increased inclusion. Regardless of the limitations or critiques of the one-shot format or the increase of other types of instruction as vehicles for information literacy instruction, actively exploring biases within librarianship and information literacy using a decolonialist lens is a nonnegotiable for the future

of information literacy, regardless of format. Recognizing and applying Indigenous studies work is one of many ways to do this work. ⁊⁊

Notes

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2. Nicole Pagowsky, "The Contested One-Shot: Deconstructing Power Structures to Imagine New Futures," *College & Research Libraries* 82, no. 3 (May 2021), https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.82.3.300.

3. Michael F. Winter, "The Professionalization of Librarianship," *Occasional Papers (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Graduate School of Library and Information Science); No. 160 (July 1983)*, 1983, https://hdl.handle.net/2142/3901.

4. Nina De Jesus, "Locating the Library in Institutional Oppression," *In the Library with the Lead Pipe*, September 24, 2014, https://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2014/locating-the-library-in-institutional-oppression/.

5. Sandy Grande, *Red Pedagogy: Native American Social and Political Thought*, Tenth Anniversary ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 13.

6. Grande, *Red Pedagogy*, 99.

7. Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack (1989) 1," in *On Privilege, Fraudulence, and Teaching as Learning*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2019), 29–34, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351133791-4.

8. Marcia Rapchak, "That Which Cannot Be Named: The Absence of Race in the Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education," *Journal of Radical Librarianship* 5 (October 17, 2019): 174.

9. Charlotte J. Haug, "Peer-Review Fraud—Hacking the Scientific Publication Process," *New England Journal of Medicine* 373, no. 25 (2015): 2393–95, https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMp1512330; Julia Belluz, "Let's Stop Pretending Peer Review Works," Vox, December 7, 2015, https://www.vox.com/2015/12/7/9865086/peer-review-science-problems; Colleen Flaherty, "The Peer-Review Crisis," *Inside Higher Ed*, June 13, 2022, https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2022/06/13/peer-review-crisis-creates-problems-journals-and-scholars.

10. Grande, *Red Pedagogy*, 99.

11. Natalie Greene Taylor and Paul T. Jaeger, *Foundations of Information Literacy* (Chicago: ALA Neal-Schuman, 2022).

12. Deborah Brandt, *Literacy in American Lives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 171.

13. Gina Schlesselman-Tarango, "How Cute! Race, Gender, and Neutrality in Libraries," *Partnership: The Canadian Journal of Library and Information Practice and Research* 12, no. 1 (August 22, 2017), https://doi.org/10.21083/partnership.v12i1.3850.

14. American Library Association (ALA), "ALA CD#43: Resolution to Condemn White Supremacy and Fascism as Antithetical to Library Work," 2021, https://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/ALA%20CD%2043%20Resolution%20to%20Condemn%20White%20Supremacy%20and%20Fascism%20as%20Antithetical%20to%20Library%20Work%20Final_0.pdf.