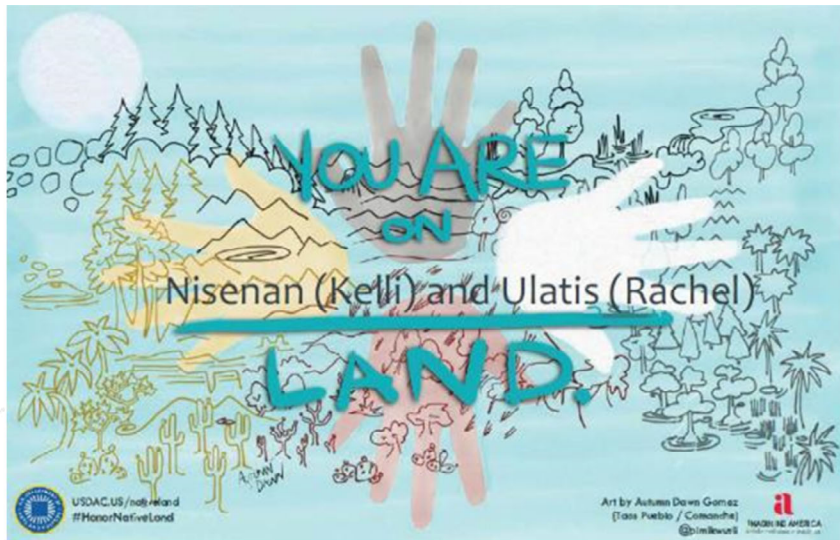# Deconstructing the Self: Reconstructing Assessment through Reflection and Action

Kelli Kauffroath, MLIS
Rachel Keiko Stark, MS, AHIP

If you are viewing these in PDF format, please excuse the differences in presentation aesthetic. We had to make our slides PDF compatable.

Land Acknowledgement

For this virtual only presentation, Kelli and Rachel would like to acknowledge and thank the Nisenan and the Ulatis tribes. We hope that you, the viewer, will take a moment to acknowledge and thank the tribes whose land you stand on.

For more information on Land Acknowledgements and to download beautiful posters, please go to : https://usdac.us/nativeland

Before we begin our presentation we would like to acknowledge the land that we, Kelli and Rachel, occupy as unwilling settlers as we created this presentation.

Hello!

Kelli Kauffroath, MLIS
k.kauffroath@csus.edu
@librarylover8

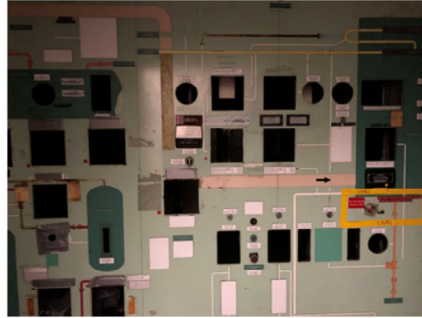Rachel Keiko Stark, MS, AHIP
stark@csus.edu
@rkstark1

Hello, welcome to our presentation. The work presented here is under a creative commons license, please see below for more information.

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Acknowledgement

The first section of this PowerPoint is based on the work of Molly Higgins and Rachel Keiko Stark. Please see our chapter in the ALA book: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Action: Planning, Leadership, and Programming for more information. https://www.alastore.ala.org/DEIaction

Molly Higgins and Rachel Keiko Stark have been presenting on unconscious bias in reference services and literature searching across the nation, and have written a book on the topic. Without those experiences and the knowledge gained through our project and research, I would not have been able to create these slide and I appreciate and acknowledge Molly Higgins for her essential work on our project.

Topics Covered

- ✔ Bias
- ✔ Retraining the brain
- ✔ Thinking and decision making/assessment
- ✔ Reflective practice
- ✔ Self-Care and Intersectionality

As our presentation was converted to a virtual presentation, we attempted to modify our exercises for brain training to the individual and virtual environment.

We hope that our attempt at a fully virtual workshop in this PowerPoint format is helpful. Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have questions and we hope to someday offer this workshop in person.

Definitions

For use in this presentation

In order to ensure an orderly presentation, it will be helpful for all of us to work with the same definitions. Please use the definitions provided in the following slides for this workshop.

Unconscious Bias

- Unconscious Bias is a combination of things, we have identified and then defined some of those things for this workshop. Unconscious Bias is a combination of:
- Racism
- Microaggressions
- Cognitive Bias

Unconscious Bias

✓ Racism is a huge force in which personal prejudice acts with the power of social, political, and cultural institutions to create structural inequalities.

Racism is a very charged topic, and it's a surefire way to make people defensive, whether they're acting in a way that's racist or not.

Unconscious Bias

✓ Microaggressions are small, everyday occurrences that people may enact without malicious intent, but that still have negative consequences. They are a way to describe problematic behavior that the people doing the behavior might or might not understand is problematic.

Microaggressions often cause people to turn to someone they trust and say, can you believe this happened....

Unconscious Bias

✓ Cognitive bias are hard wired into our brain and influence us to make choices even with the evidence right in front of us tells us that the choice is not a good one.

There are many types of cognitive bias, including confirmation bias, in group bias, endowment effect, and halo and horns effect.

Unconscious Bias

  ✓ Even if none of us think of ourselves as racists, homophobic, or otherwise prejudiced, we take in all kinds of messages from the world around us that create and cement opinions, attitudes, and thoughts that are harmful to others.

Unconscious Bias exists in all areas of our lives and is experienced by all people.

Fun Activity

Which is now a fun solo activity

Reflecting on Bias – On Your Own

For the Virtual Setting

Consider the following examples. Think of whether you have experienced something similar, and you if you have seen a library user experience something similar.

✔ I would like to speak to your manager – pointing at our only male employee (he's not the manager)

✔ Are you a student here?

✔ I never would have guessed you're Jewish

✔ What country are you really from?

These are all examples form workshops conducted by Rachel Keiko Stark and Molly Higgins. They have been paraphrased to protect the identity of the participants.

Discussion
(For if you're in a group, Self-Reflection for at home users)

Talk to your neighbor

Which of the shared experiences reflect your professional experience?

Share with your table

Did any of the shared experiences surprise you?

Full group discussion

What would you like to share with the group?

If you are viewing this with a group, please follow the directions listed above each question. If you are viewing this as an individual, please consider if you share the experiences on the previous slide, and if you don't why that might be. Consider what you would share with a table of your peers, and what you would share with a full group of your peers.

Bias and Library Assessment

Library Assessment is a way to hold ourselves accountable. When we do not address unconscious bias in ourselves, we are not holding ourselves accountable for the inherent inequalities in our profession.

We encourage all participants to consider ways that assessment is biased, and how unconscious bias is reflected in assessment done at your library.

Read (or re-read) an article that describes Assessment.

Did the authors consider biases when they wrote this article?

Did the authors address biases in their article?

Can you identify where bias might be present in the assessment the authors used?
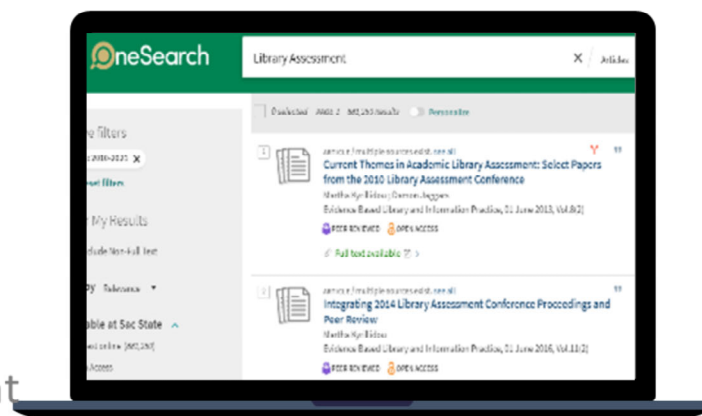
This is a self-reflective (or group) activity that you can do on your computer. Please consider the ways that bias might be in the article(s) you read. For example, did the authors discuss the racial and ethnic background of the students in the library instruction classes that were assessed and how did they consider the historical social/cultural/political systems of power that might discourage students from under-represented groups from actively engaging.

Application

Read, apply, return (reflect for solo-users)

We encourage people to read and reflect on a published article in the literature, and then consider how their own assessment might have similar biases embedded in them. For example, we realize that in many of the classes presented at our institution, our students are often do not speak English as their first language, but at our institution, there are no Library Instruction reflection forms in any language other than English.

There are roads so ancient that deep grooves have been worn into them from longtime use. That is the way I visualize neural pathways in my brain, these really deep pathways or ruts and my thinking just falls into them.

Photo Image by David
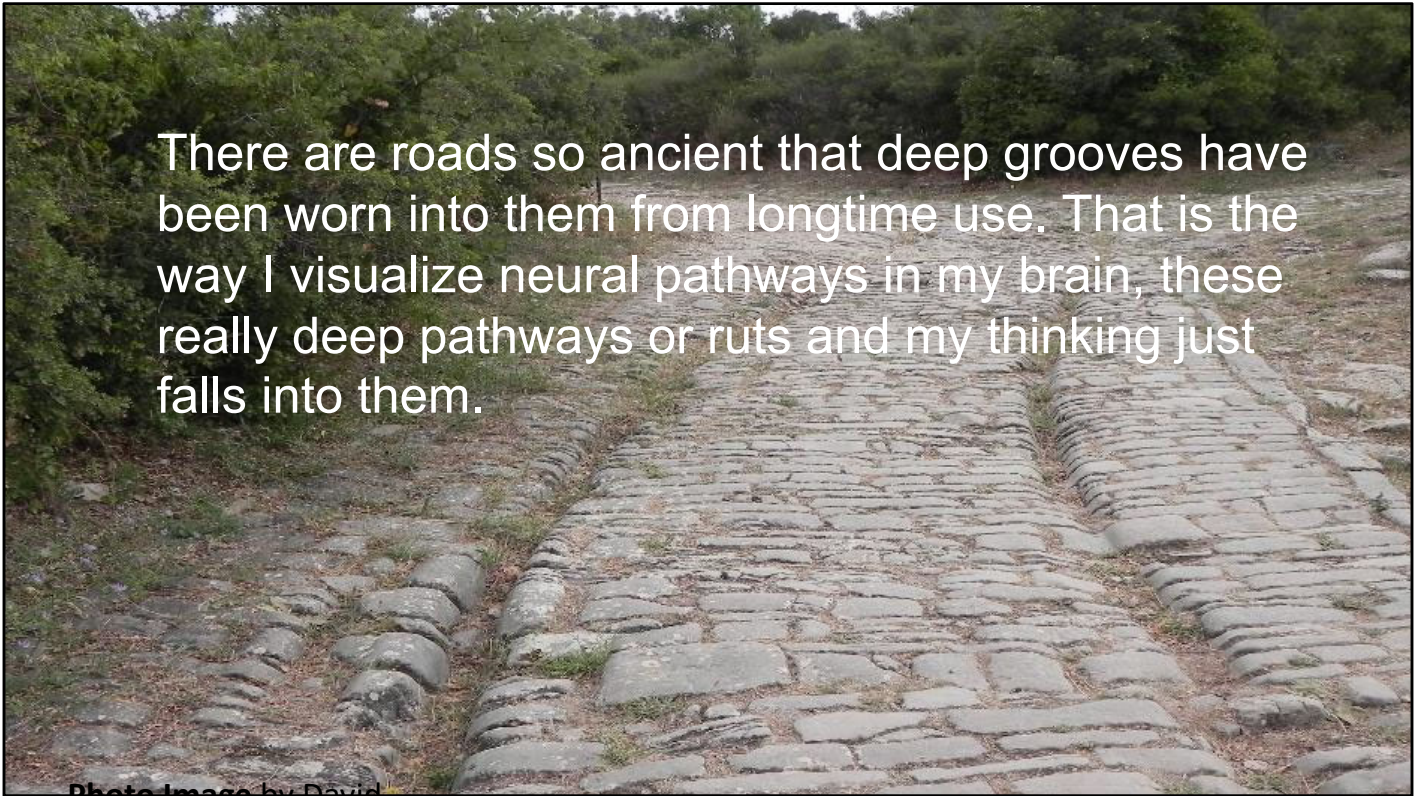
Kelli: my thoughts on cognitive bias and why I use reflective practice to mitigate it.

Cognitive Bias

The Original Assessment Tool
Hard-Wired Origins
Lower Order Thinking
Subjective Reality

Cognitive biases are hard-wired, instinctual and repetitive patterns that we rely on for quick assessment and decision making
 Unfortunately this type of assessment can lead to inaccurate or unreasonable conclusions.
Cognitive biases may help people make quicker decisions, but those decisions aren't always accurate.
it's important to be aware of cognitive biases, and attempt to counter their effects whenever possible.
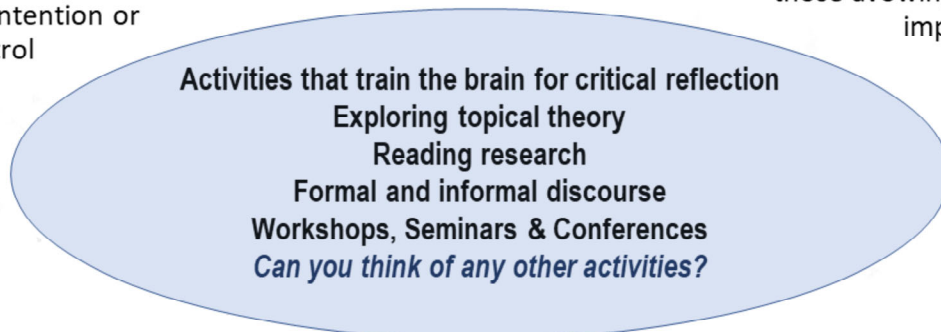
Key Attributes of Unconscious Bias

Malleable

Can be replaced with new mental associations

Automatic

Activated without an individuals' intention or control

Pervasive

Everyone possesses them, even those avowing commitments to impartiality

Activities that train the brain for critical reflection
Exploring topical theory
Reading research
Formal and informal discourse
Workshops, Seminars & Conferences
Can you think of any other activities?

Staats, C., Capatosto, K., Tenney, L., & Mamo, S. (2017). State of the science: Implicit bias review 2017 edition. The Ohio State University, Kirwan Institute.

It is the malleable part that is encouraging because plascticity is a characteristic of the brain.

Research shows repetitive exposure to exercises that engages the prefrontal cortex, the CEO of the brain, increases the use of higher order thinking in decision making (Korteling, Brouwer, & Toet, 2018).

Think about activites that you can do to expand your knowledge on bias and inequalites embedded in our library services. Explore Critical Race Theory, take the Implicit Bias Test, check out social media library for discussion on indigenous librarians, read cutting edge research on dysconscious racism, create a formal group discussion or chat with colleagues to gather different perspectives on assessing student experiences, create a lesson plan using participatory design with a diverse student group, attend a critlib conference, participate in dysfunctional educational ecology workshops or a seminar on systemic inequities.

All of these activities will assist in conditioning the brain to lay down new neural pathways, rewiring the brain to higher order thinking that formulates robust and effective decision making in your library practice.

Assessment & Limbic/Prefrontal Cortex Interactions

Instinctive/Reactive

Safety & survival
Emotions

Lizard Brain

Reflective/Metacognitive

Wizard Brain

Modulation
Regulation
Empathy
Insight
Ethics & Morals
Communication

Let's look at some evidence that supports a physiological component to cognitive bias and how it might be useful when reflecting on our own cognitive biases.

Studies show that humans use shortcuts to make assessments of people and situations. These mental shortcuts, mental models, or heuristics, are developed from perceptions and previous experiences and come from primal regions of the brain (Limbic).

Lower order thinking, Type 1 thinking, has been a part of the brain for the longest evolutionarily speaking. It is part of the primal brain, shared with all animals, an evolutionary throwback to a time when survival depended on a quick and basic assessment of the environment to distinguish between threatening and non-threatening stimuli. We use these same mental shortcuts during conditions with time-constraints, lack or overload of relevant information, or when no optimal solution is evident. Can you think of a time when that was the situation ;). We are also inclined to use heuristics when problems appear familiar and when we do not feel the need to gather additional information. (Korteling, Brouwer, & Toet, 2018).

It is in this part of the brain that cognitive bias, stereotypes, racism originate.

In our modern complex times, these mental shortcuts are often hazardous to optimal outcomes. Modern civilizations complex problems call for higher ordered thinking that occurs in the prefontal lobe.

While still useful for assessing stimuli, relying solely on limbic thinking without

engaging our wizard brain, the neocortex, can lead to faulty even distorted assessment.

Our lizard brain developed far before the more executive portion our brain. It is therefore understandable that it engages more naturally and immediately than the prefontal region. Being aware of this physiological component can assist in training the brain to acknowledge our initial lizard brain response, engage our wizard brain to formulate a response to stimuli/conflict.

> "The reasonable prefrontal cortex usually reins in the boisterous, impetuous limbic system by putting things in perspective, judging the danger, advising compromise or restraint as need be, keeping us in a state of wellbeing"
>
> Diane Ackerman~ *One Hundred Names for Love: A stroke, a marriage, and the language of healing*

It is with conscious, mindful awareness that we retrain our brain to include higher-ordered thinking to get away from the reflexive, reactive response.
To me it is helpful to equate reflective practice with metacognition.
Metacognition resides in the prefrontal cortex and is our highest order of thinking.
Metacognition is where we synthesize new information to augment our present knowledge.

Reflective Practice

Exercise: Please take a moment to define reflective practice in your own words. Write down what you know about reflective practice, then cover your answer.

"An active, deliberate, and cognitive process in which one examines a situation from varying perspectives, is open to new knowledge and information, and looks for numerous explanations and outcomes" (Johnson, 2013).

We can't act blindly. Provide rationales for our actions. Constant exploration, examination and re-examination of our growth. Helps us to decide what is working and what isn't. Illustrates the connection with assessment

True reflective practice can be a tool to help librarians escape impulsive, routine and judgmental assumptions about situations, practice, colleagues, and library users. Reflection allows us to process, learn, grow and move on.

Interconnectivity

Reflective Practice
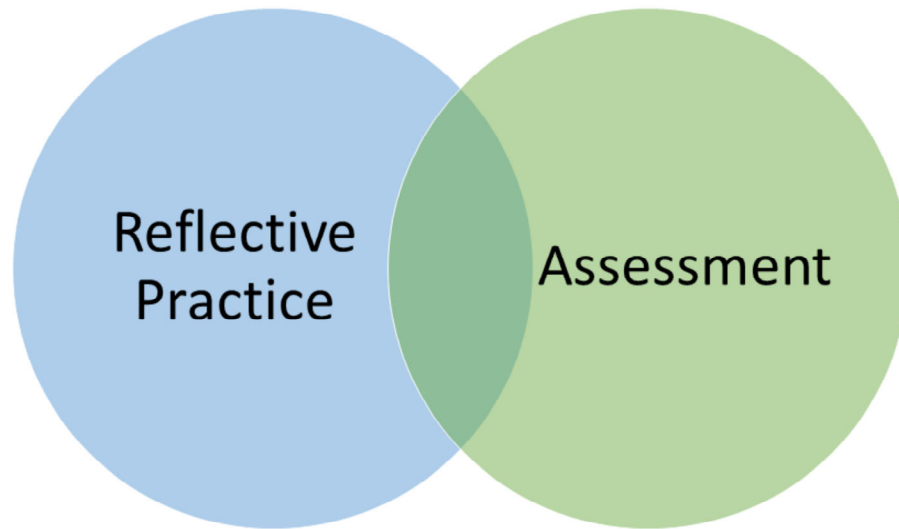
Assessment

"Every reaction is a learning process; every significant experience alters your perspective."
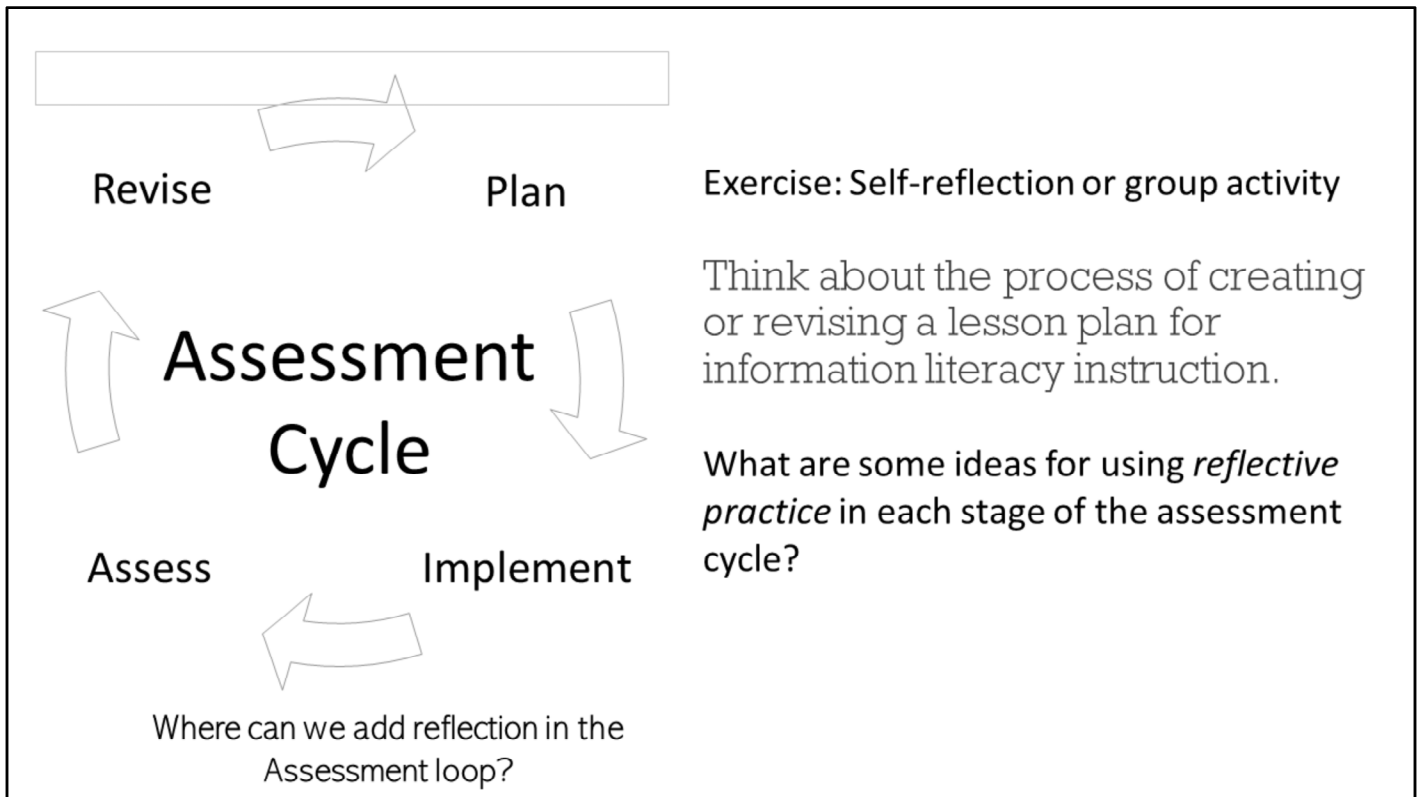— Hunter S. Thompson

Assessment cannot exist without reflection.
We all naturally resist close examination of our own bias.
It may be hard on the ego, but when we become cognizant of the interconnectivity of reflection and practice, particularly critical reflection, we can consciously apply it to individual and systemic issues inherent in our profession.
Identify and understand the kinds of policies that may need to be challenged.
Reflective assessment adds another tool to our librarian toolkit.

Revise   **Plan**

Assessment Cycle

Assess   **Implement**

Where can we add reflection in the Assessment loop?

Exercise: Self-reflection or group activity

Think about the process of creating or revising a lesson plan for information literacy instruction.

What are some ideas for using *reflective practice* in each stage of the assessment cycle?

Reflective practice helps us evaluate our actions and interventions.
I am sure every one of us already doing this. So let's think of some examples of where you are using it in your practice. (Group discourse or individual reflection)

Critical Reflective Practice

Adds to reflective practice by examining one's own assumptions about professional practice as well as assumptions of the profession and the broader culture (Miller, 2020)

Critically analyze structural sources of inclusion and inequality with emphasis on our role and responsibility for reproducing structural conditions in libraries.
This is a very personal reflective journey that must be undertaken in order to align our professional practice with our beliefs.
Acting to align our practice more fully and authentically with a commitment to equity, inclusion, and social justice, requires the realization that every facet of our assessment work and how we frame that work is shaped by our identities, experiences, perspectives.

Helps to bridge the gap between new information and prior knowledge.

What are your thoughts on the statement:

"I don't see color when working with my students, faculty, patrons"

Moving Beyond Binary Assessment

Suggested reading: Annamma, S. A., Jackson, D. D., & Morrison, D. (2017). Conceptualizing color-evasiveness: Using dis/ability critical race theory to expand a color-blind racial ideology in education and society. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *20*(2), 147-162.

Rachel's thoughts: You obviously come from a place of privilege where you don't have to think about this. This statement devalues the experience of people who are forced to "see color" by their lived experiences, and it would be nice if you could get out of your own box and try some empathy. *Rachel is tired of this kind of statement

Kelli's thoughts: Dishonest, Diminishing, Dismissive, Disregarding, Dishonest, Devaluing. The antithesis of critical reflective practice. We cannot change what we do not accept. Woefully lacking in self-reflection. Amatuer. Explicitly evading a discussion on racism and undermines authentic human experience by literally calling it immaterial.

Let's Practice

Exercise: Please read Nicole Cooke's counter-storytelling article highlighting the specific challenges of being faculty member of color in library and information science. What feelings are triggered in you while reading? Does the information in this article spark any new perspectives or connections for you?

Cooke, N. (2019). Impolite Hostilities and Vague Sympathies: Academia as a Site of Cyclical Abuse. *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science, 60*(3), 223-230

Studies show that repetitive exposure increases familiarity with diverse perspectives laying down new neural executive function pathways that will temper cognitive bias.

What feelings are you having during and after reading this article?

The trick to reflective practice is to be open and honest about your responsive feelings.

It can't be addressed if it is not acknowledged. Can you identify feelings of cognitive bias. Is there discomfort? Do you feel defensive or dismissive, etc.?

Can you relate to any aspect of Dr. Cooke's perspective? Are there any "a ha!" moments?

One of the good things about self-assessment and reflection is that you are alone with your thoughts and free to acknowledge them.

Just
Breathe

*It's good
for you*

Now you may be feeling some tension as you explore these possibly uncomfortable topics. One of the simplest measures we can take to control our limbic/frontal interactions, moving out of the primal brain and back into metacognition is breathing.

Deep breathing is more than a hippie flower child concept. It has science to back it up! What happens when you pause and take a breath and what it does physiologically. Cat scan studies. Deep breathing for lactic acid buildup, etc.

I had planned to conduct some breathing exercises during this workshop to illustrate how just simply breathing can improve clarity of thought by simply providing an increase in oxygen.

- Also, the importance of exhalation. Blowing out carbon dioxide.

The latest research: Park, H. D., Barnoud, C., Trang, H., Kannape, O. A., Schaller, K., & Blanke, O. (2020). Breathing is coupled with voluntary action and the cortical readiness potential. *Nature communications*, *11*(1), 289. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-019-13967-9

Mindfulness

& Critical Self-Reflection

Take a moment to reflect on your own dimensions of intersectionality.
Who are you?

"mindfulness—a sustained, receptive attention to present-moment experiences" and can be used as a means to non-judgmentally develop self-reflection, self-knowledge and wisdom. Being mindful diverges our thinking from the "rut" of cognitive bias. Being mindful interrupts our automatic mental shortcuts allowing us to notice and become aware of what thoughts, feelings and emotions come up without judgement (Berry, D., Hoerr, J., Cesko, S., Alayoubi, A., Carpio, K., Zirzow, H., . . . Beaver, V. (2020)
In order to still your mind you have to stop, take a deep breath, exhale, take note of physical tensions, and consciously relax.
Mindfulness or self-awareness can be used to uncover destructive thought-patterns and tensions and in critical self-reflection, instrumental for metacognition and decision making. As we practice being mindful, we train the brain to access its executive, metacognitive mechanisms, the process becomes more natural and automatic, and our assessment more robust.

Practicing Mindfulness

A Guided S.T.O.P. Practice for Focused Awareness
Rhonda Magee, professor of law at the University of
San Francisco trained in Mindfulness-Based Stress.
(27 minutes).

S: stop what you are doing
T: take a few deep breaths
O: observe your body and smile
P: proceed with kindness and compassion

Reflective practice can be used not just in our professional practice but as a means of attaining homeostasis.
Being mindful in our well-being assessment trains our brain to be conscious and aware of what's going on in our bodies, to assess the physical indicators of tension or stress.
Mindfulness can assist in the exploration of our own intersectionality and our connection with our colleagues, library users, and others in our community
After practicing such a method over a period of time, you will begin to notice that your reaction to, as well as the circumstances themselves change.
I found this video on mindfulness.org as part of an article I was reading.
https://www.mindful.org/a-guided-s-t-o-p-practice-for-focused-awareness/?mc_cid=35c663b8e8&mc_eid=0ce36158ef
Now what is missing in our virtual workshop is a sense of community, the experience of us all being and breathing together, but I hope you take some time to view this video.
It is rather long, but consider how to mine these techniques and use them in a brief format during your experiences throughout the day.
Right now we have nothing but time.
●   This is a wonderful solo activity in these days of quarantine
I also encourage you to explore other topics on being mindful as they are very effective in developing metacognition.

Self-care strategies to promote wellbeing require introspective reflection to assess what works for you

Try using the Needs Pyramid to assess where self-care is present and where it could be added to increase your personal wellbeing

Self-Actualization

Self-Esteem

Love & Belonging

Safety

Physiological
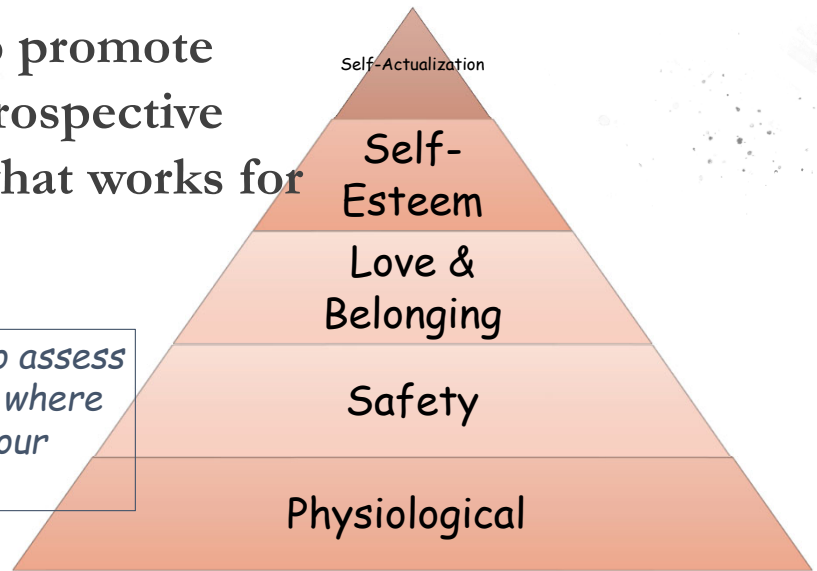
Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Needs Assessment: Our Wellbeing

The goal of self-care is homeostasis or well-being
Homeostasis=optimal health for the mind and body
Prescribed tenets: Sleep, eat, move, be
Reflective self-assessment: What do I need to achieve homeostasis?
Reflective assessment: Examine what keeps me from self-care?
Practice loving kindness
Non-judgmental

Critically Reflect

Homeostasis (Eat, sleep, move, be) ← Self-Care | Intersectionality → Diverse backgrounds, experiences, and identities

Think about fundamental self-care: good nutrition, reproductive healthcare, shelter, etc. Does everyone have access to self-care? Who gets to practice self-care?

Does everyone have equal access to the tenets and practices of self-care?
Is the way we define self-care inclusive of all people-- those with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and identities?
"One main problem with self-care generally is it's **based in a racialized and (cis)gendered middle class value system** that often revolves around leisure, and an assumption of privileges that most people just do not have.
It also is based in a very narrow determination of what life is like, though most people's lives don't fit that bill" (Leonowicz, R., 2016).
The relationship of income to self-care. Have you seen the below recommendations in discourse on self-care? How do they relate to priveledge and oppression?
"I see a mental health professional when I need to"
"I take vacations from work when I can,"
"I don't go to work when I'm sick."

Omphaloskepsis

Navel gazing; refers to self-absorbed pursuits

Assessment without due consideration of unconscious bias and dedicated self-reflection is not serving our community and is underserving ourselves

Final Reflection

Let's review:
Cognitive bias is hard-wired into our brain
Positive and negative biases
Can retrain the brain to incorporate higher order thinking into decision making/assessment (Wizard/lizard)
Reflective practice can assist in developing the executive functions of the brain
Reflective practice is a part of assessment
Critical reflective practice is used to examine systemic inequalities and social justice issues within librarianship
Deep breathing can help engage higher order thinking necessary for complex decision making
Mindfulness is a practice that is useful both personally and professionally
Self-care requires relfective self-assessment
Self-care is a social justice issue
The STOP method is a quick practice of getting you brain out of autopilot in order to be settled and see with clarity.
The STOP Method can assist in resetting our thinking before we act.

"

We should be able to appreciate others' experiences and information needs because we value their humanity, respect their knowledge and culture, and truly want to make a connection with them.

-Dr. Nicole A. Cooke

Thanks!

Any questions? Email us at
k.Kauffroath@csus.edu or
stark@csus.edu

Further Reading

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