Research Frameworks for Multiple Ways of Knowing: Social Justice, Methodology, and Policy

Lynn Silipigni Connaway[a], Clara M. Chu[b], Dick Kawooya[c], Andiswa Mfengu[d]

[a]OCLC Research, United States

[b]University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, United States

[c]University of South Carolina, United States

[d]University of Cape Town, South Africa

connawal@oclc.org, cmchu@illinois.edu, KAWOOYA@mailbox.sc.edu, andiswa.mfengu@uct.ac.za

ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic, the treatment and death of George Floyd, the Black Lives Matter and the MeToo movements, and restrictive immigration policies have more recently brought to the forefront the inequities in our everyday lives. From the inequity of access to COVID-19 vaccines across the globe, inequities of the treatment of people of color and women and access to broadband and online information, social justice issues have prompted not only increased media attention but also an increase in scholarly research. "There are five goals of social justice: access to resources, equity (provision of equitable resources that focus on the needs of communities and their members), diversity, participation in policy making by diverse groups, and human rights regardless of socioeconomic status (freedom of speech, voting rights, and other basic rights)" (Connaway and Radford, 2021, 442). These also correspond to the underlying principles of librarianship – access to information and the technology to obtain this information regardless of religion, political affiliation, gender identity, race, or economic and educational levels and intellectual freedom. The digital divide, the disparity between those who have access to technology and those who do not based on educational and economic levels, creates an imbalance of access to information. Equal access to broadband, information, healthcare, education, and socio-economic opportunities are critical issues in engaging social justice in LIS pedagogy and research.

Social justice research is not new to the scholarly community, including the library and information science (LIS) community. However, the current social and economic environments have increased the awareness of inequitable practices and policies and the shortcomings of LIS offerings, programming, collections, procedures, and practices. These biases are present in our classification systems, knowledge management, vocabularies, algorithms used for discovery and access, and in our hiring, promotion and retention practices and policies in regard to diversity,

equity, and inclusion in an international and development context. Integrating inclusive and equitable policies and practices into the LIS curricula also is imperative for preparing future professionals to meet the continually changing needs of diverse staff and communities.

The panelists will discuss how LIS researchers and educators are integrating social justice into their scholarship and teaching, within a context of decolonizing research and advancing multiple ways of knowing. They then will highlight LIS social justice research, methodologies, and frameworks as well as future directions for research. Examples of how these research findings can be translated into LIS curricula will be highlighted.

Lynn Silipigni Connaway will provide an overview of some of the social justice research topics being addressed in the LIS literature. She also will discuss ways to include diversity in research sampling and to be more inclusive in our participant recruitment and collection, analysis, interpretation, and dissemination of our findings.

Clara M. Chu will introduce the scholarship of dialogue framework for LIS research that engages the voice of the research participants to provide them agency and enhance equity throughout the research process. She will discuss the perils of drive-by and helicopter research when studying the Other, including conducting research in marginalized and Global South communities.

Dick Kawooya will discuss information policy research, why it is important, and how to integrate it into LIS curricula. Information policy research provides a unique opportunity to address social justice and inequality because it focuses on identifying social problems associated with information, segments of society affected by the problems, recommends solutions in the form of policy choices and if policy choices are implemented, it informs distribution of public and private resources (Braman, 2011). Information policy research focuses on issues such as the digital divide, library funding (school and public), censorship, privacy, net neutrality, data protection and integrity, intellectual property, and others. He will show why and how the above policy issues should be integrated across the LIS curriculum and which marginalized communities should be the center for each policy issue.

Andiswa Mfengu will provide a discussion on socially just research impact assessment support from the LIS discipline. Research and research impact assessment have been greatly transformed over the years and thus providing an opportunity for the LIS discipline to explore equitable and context-sensitive approaches that cater for marginalized groups; and how these approaches can be embedded in LIS scholarship and education. She will discuss challenges and propose solutions on how research impact assessment support from the LIS discipline can be more inclusive, flexible, and equitable in practice and in curricula.

The panelists will lead attendee discussion groups on ways to integrate inclusive and equitable policies and practices into LIS research and multiple ways of knowing. Examples of discussion questions are:
1. In what ways can LIS research increase its impact to create more welcoming academic and public library spaces within our communities?
2. How can we embed the core principles of equitable, diverse, and inclusive research practices to advance multiple ways of knowing in LIS?
3. What should be included in an LIS social justice research agenda? Why? What makes these topics relevant and appropriate?
4. How do we meaningfully engage marginalized communities in LIS research?

The session will conclude by connecting the frameworks and the discussion of implications for research and teaching.

References:

Braman, S. (2011). Defining information policy. *Journal of information policy*, 1, 1-5. https://doi.org/10.5325/jinfopoli.1.2011.0001

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ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS

Social justice; Pedagogy; Research methods; Information policy; Special populations.

AUTHOR KEYWORDS

Social justice research, Research frameworks, Information policy, Inclusion, Diversity, LIS education.