

LISCrit: Critical Race Theory as Library and Information Science Pedagogy

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MINI ABSTRACT

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is an intellectual framework intended to explain the situations that affect the lives of members of minoritized groups. Its main goal is to help bring about revised social and systemic structures, which in turn can ameliorate the detrimental effects of racism and racist systems for historically marginalized groups. The LIS field has lagged behind on many aspects related to bringing about racial equality, despite a generalized idea that the field is a pioneer of social equality and egalitarianism. In this presentation the panelists will discuss their efforts to infuse CRT into graduate LIS curricula (LISCrit).

ABSTRACT

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is an intellectual framework intended to explain the day-to-day situations that affect the lives of members of minoritized groups. Its main goal is to help bring about revised social and systemic structures, which in turn can ameliorate the detrimental effects of racism and racist systems for historically marginalized and excluded groups. As a framework, CRT stands on a set of principles which serve as a foundation. Although the wording and structure of these principles varies among scholars, some of the ideas presented are stated throughout. For example, some of the main principles for CRT is that racism is ordinary and not aberrational, that race is a social construct which is not objective, inherent, or fixed on any genetic or biological reality, making it a purely social phenomenon, and that CRT due to differences in their historical experiences with oppression, Black, American Indian, Asian, and Latinx individuals are better equipped to communicate their experiences than their white counterparts (Delgado and Stefancic, 2017).

These principles have been met with active resistance on multiple fronts which have started all the way at governmental levels. The debate is particularly incendiary in the field of education, where there has been strong pushback and hostility. This mostly over the assumption that CRT based curricula is being applied to education in public K-12 school systems. Most of these arguments do not take into consideration that CRT itself is taught at the graduate level as a method of analysis, it is not a topic taught in K-12 settings. This opposition to CRT has been so strong that as of 2021, 16 states were pushing legislation banning the teaching of CRT in public institutions of higher learning (Flaherty, 2021).

This volatile and increasingly resistant environment serves only to highlight the importance of centering CRT, especially for a field such as Library and Information Science (LIS), but particularly for LIS pedagogy. The LIS field has lagged behind on many aspects related to bringing about racial equality, despite a generalized idea that the field is a pioneer of social equality and egalitarianism (Cooke and Colón-Aguirre, 2021; Ettarh, 208; Honma, 2005). As LIS educators, we must focus not only on preparing our students for the work they will perform but also to present the challenges faced by their chosen career.

In what Colón and Cooke have named LISCrit (for CRT in information science) (2022), CRT is foundational to the equity LIS strives for. Seen from this perspective it is essential that as LIS professionals and educators we understand that if we can't name the structural and racist barriers and oppressions that CRT warns of, we can't address them. This inability in naming and identifying barriers means that true and sustainable equity will not be possible. Bringing CRT more squarely into the LIS ecosystem is necessary and provides the language for much needed innovation, assessment, and change.

Buy in from the field at all levels is required in order to bring LISCrit to the future generations of information professionals, and one of the ways to do that is to clearly and consistently demonstrate how CRT undergirds and informs the profession and its teachings. The tenets of CRT are baked into LIS, one only need to look closely and critically through a lens of intellectual and cultural competence and humility.

In this presentation the panelists will discuss their efforts to infuse CRT into graduate LIS curricula (LISCrit). The discussion will focus on three main initiatives geared at bringing about more discussions and enabling the field's multiple facets to benefit from the contexts and discussions which CRT facilitates. The panel will take place in three parts, including:

- Dr. Colón-Aguirre and Dr. Cooke (2022) will discuss their article that introduces the LISCrit framework and its main propositions,
- Dr. Colón-Aguirre and Dr. Cooke will share their scholarly efforts to produce an edited collection (*Advances in Librarianship*) and special journal issue (*Library Quarterly*), which have been designed to enable LIS educators to better include this content in their LIS classrooms,
- Ms. Harris will present and demonstrate a digital CRT in LIS toolkit developed through an American Library Association Carnegie Whitney Grant.

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ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS

Education; Education programs/schools; Pedagogy; Critical librarianship

AUTHOR KEYWORDS

Critical Race Theory; LIS Education; social issues on LIS; diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

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