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The Economics of Identity
How EDI Initiatives Treat Racialized Identities as Currency in Academic Libraries

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Aller au sommaire du numéro

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Résumé de l'article

Cet article analyse et critique les politiques et les plans d'EDI institutionnels descendants des bibliothèques universitaires canadiennes. À l'aide de la critique de David James Hudson sur la manière dont le modèle de diversité met trop l'accent sur la représentation plutôt que sur des actions porteuses, cet article explore comment les plans et les politiques d'EDI dans les bibliothèques universitaires canadiennes facilitent l'échange de capital racial, réduisant ainsi les identités racisées à une monnaie. Pour explorer les voies à suivre, j'ai effectué une analyse thématique des plans et des politiques d'EDI de toutes les bibliothèques universitaires canadiennes. Cette analyse thématique éclaire les stratégies sur comment les personnes au sein des établissements universitaires canadiens peuvent dépasser le modèle de diversité pour recentrer un travail significatif et efficace en matière d'équité. Le document se termine par un appel à des pratiques intégrées d'EDI conduites par les concepts autochtones d'indigénisation décoloniale et de relationnalité.

The Economics of Identity: How EDI Initiatives Treat Racialized Identities as Currency in Academic Libraries

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines and critiques top-down institutional EDI policies and plans from Canadian academic libraries. Using David James Hudson's critique of how the diversity model overemphasizes representation over meaningful action, this paper explores how the EDI plans and policies at Canadian academic libraries facilitate the exchange of racial capital, thereby reducing racialized identities to currency. To explore pathways forward, I conducted a thematic analysis of EDI plans and policies from all Canadian academic libraries. This thematic analysis informs strategies for how people within Canadian academic institutions can move beyond the diversity model to recentre meaningful and effective equity work. The paper closes with a call towards embedded EDI practices informed by Indigenous concepts of decolonial indigenization and relationality.

Keywords: *academic libraries · equity, diversity, and inclusion · human capital · neoliberalism · racial capital*

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article analyse et critique les politiques et les plans d'EDI institutionnels descendants des bibliothèques universitaires canadiennes. À l'aide de la critique de David James Hudson sur la manière dont le modèle de diversité met trop l'accent sur la représentation plutôt que sur des actions porteuses, cet article explore comment les plans et les politiques d'EDI dans les bibliothèques universitaires canadiennes facilitent l'échange de capital racial, réduisant ainsi les identités racisées à une monnaie. Pour explorer les voies à suivre, j'ai effectué une analyse thématique des plans et des politiques d'EDI de toutes les bibliothèques universitaires canadiennes. Cette analyse thématique éclaire les stratégies sur comment les personnes au sein des établissements universitaires canadiens peuvent dépasser le modèle de diversité pour recentrer un travail significatif et efficace en matière d'équité. Le document se termine par un appel à des pratiques intégrées d'EDI conduites par les concepts autochtones d'indigénisation décoloniale et de relationnalité.

Mots-clés : *bibliothèques universitaires · capital humain · capital racial · équité, diversité et inclusion · néolibéralisme*

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As academic libraries in Canada continue to grapple with untangling their colonial legacies, the processes in place today to combat lingering systemic inequities continue to rely on extractive physical and emotional labour practices. Universities Canada's survey on equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in Canadian universities found that 89 percent of institutions make explicit reference to EDI in their strategic plans (2022, 2). Such numbers suggest that Canadian institutions value diversity within their student, staff, and faculty populations. Yet within the neoliberal model of higher education, EDI initiatives serve to highlight the extraction of racialized labour from racialized members of their academic communities. As EDI policies are put into practice today, they are a shining indictment of how diversity policies reduce EDI to short-term quantitative measurements, with limited incentive to enact carefully crafted long-term anti-racist strategies.

To make explicit the shortcomings of contemporary EDI policies, this article aims to explore how the diversity model and racial capitalism have shaped policies in Canadian academic libraries, and how they uphold existing inequities. As I will make clear, current policies largely fall under the umbrella of the diversity model and racial capitalism. In conjunction, these frameworks serve to enhance the deficit narrative and treat racialized identities as currency with exchange value: this serves to further entrench structures that replicate systemic racial inequities. Within the confines of racial capitalism, race thus becomes a resource to be extracted and exploited.

I will then bring my analysis to present practices. Having conducted a thematic analysis of library specific EDI plans from public, four-year degree granting institutions in Canada, I will discuss the major themes from my analysis. This analysis informs the final section of this article, where I argue towards treating the tenets of EDI as embedded practice, rather than as an accessory. Whereas current EDI practices and policies have a tendency towards treating diversity as peripheral to the core aims of the institution, I argue that embedded practice will be more effective as it sidesteps the hegemonic constraints of the diversity model, in addition to creating space for more constructive and effective conversations regarding anti-racism within academic institutions.

Note on Terminology

There are numerous configurations of the acronym EDI both in the literature and in practice, such as IDE or DEI. There are also longer configurations which include accessibility, belonging, Indigeneity, justice and/or decolonization to expand the acronym (examples include but are not limited to: IDEAL, IDEA, DEIB, DEIA, or JEDI). Apart from direct quotes from scholars or institutions who have opted to use

other iterations of the acronym, I have elected to use EDI throughout this paper. My reasoning is that equity, diversity, and inclusion are the core, unchanged components of the various acronyms. Furthermore, I consider diversity and inclusivity to be logical consequences of effective, informed, and thoughtfully implemented policies that meaningfully address inequity.

Part One: Critical Contexts

The Diversity Model and Diverse Representation

Current EDI initiatives in librarianship are constrained by the limitations of the diversity model. The diversity model is both "a trope of multiculturalism concerned chiefly with questions of representation" (Hudson 2017a, 3) and a form of "ideological communication [that] is not neutral: it defines the context, limits, and possibilities of out (discursive) practice" (Nicholson 2015, 332). Its limitations have been observed by numerous scholars. In her critique of representation in Canadian academic libraries, Silvia Vong notes how diverse representation relies on the consumption of racial trauma stories, where the "commodification and consumption of trauma stories uses suffering of racialized people particularly when these trauma stories are created and consumed for and by dominant people" (2021, 135). Sofia Leung notes that the inclusion that arises within the diversity model is "always precarious and contingent; all of us are expendable in the eyes of white supremacy, settler colonialism, and racial capitalism" (2022, 757).

Librarianship is shaped by the diversity model as it is the "central sign under which we acknowledge and problematize the predominant whiteness of our field . . . , formulate solutions, and express ideas" (Hudson 2017a, 3). The diversity model has shaped how we measure the success of librarianship's diversity initiations, as the "intense focus on the race and ethnicity of their employees may lead to the overemphasis on human resources as a way to access or measure how well a library is doing in terms of its diversity efforts" (Bright 2022, 413). This focus on diverse hiring and the racial makeup of the library profession is reflected in the best practices suggested by professional organizations.

The Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL) published a document titled "Strategies and Practices for Hiring and Retaining Diverse Talent." Their suggested practices include "advertise for diversity" and "hire for diversity," with the primary goal of increasing representation. The British Columbia Library Association (BCLA) has developed a toolkit on "EDI Strategies in Recruitment" while Library Juice Academy offers a course titled "Recruiting and Retaining Librarians from Underrepresented Minoritized Groups." Although there are valuable insights and

reminders in these documents that are not explicitly tied to race or identity (for example: one tip in the BCLA's toolkit is to be transparent about the hiring process), these examples also speak to the emphasis placed on the number of bodies as a factor in determining the success of EDI initiatives. As David James Hudson writes, "diversity's prominent narrative of demographic (mis)alignment hinges on an implicit valorization of the status quo racial power relations of the broader social surround: the conditions (and in some cases putative value) of diversity in society at large are positioned as the yardstick against which LIS measures its success" (2017a, 11).

The overemphasis on representation within the diversity model is not only emblematic of how racialized individuals are reduced to quantifiable metrics, but also how race becomes a form of capital with use value.

Racial Capitalism, Extraction, and Identity Economics

The long-term consequences and ineffectiveness of the diversity model are reflected in the emergence of racial capitalism and personal identity economics. According to French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, capital is typically divided into three forms: economic, social, and cultural (1984, 114). However, the diversity model's emphasis on race and increasing the racial diversity of the library profession has given rise to a fourth form of capital: racial capital.

Racial capitalism has emerged as the result of the diversity model emphasizing and quantifying racial difference as the yardstick for measuring the success of EDI initiatives. The notion of racial capitalism was first defined by Nancy Leong as "the process of deriving social or economic value from the racial identity of another person" (2013, 2153). Leong further breaks diversity into two forms: thick and thin. Thick diversity is the view of "diversity as a prerequisite to cross-racial interaction, which fosters inclusivity and improve all cross-racial relationships, thereby benefitting institutions and individuals of all races" (Ibid, 2169). Thin diversity is when people and institutions are "exclusively concerned with improving the superficial appearance of diversity" (Ibid, 2169). Thin diversity, chiefly concerned with numbers to give the outward appearance of diversity, is the form of diversity seen most often in librarianship. This is the diversity that is reflected in race-based scholarship programs and hiring initiatives.

Thin diversity, due to its focus on superficial improvements to give the appearance of diversity, has very little benefit to the people that it purports to help. This is because racial capital has acquired value to "improve the functioning of a particular social group or institution, so it does not matter whether nonwhite individuals themselves benefits (Ibid, 2213). One example of a thin diversity initiative is that of cluster hiring. Cluster hiring is the practice of recruiting and hiring new

professors and/or librarians in groups, rather than individually.[1] The results of cluster hiring are mixed. Some critics have raised concerns about intellectual freedom and scholarly excellence (Sailer 2023, 36-37), while some institutions have struggled with implementation (Flaherty 2016). A study on cluster hires in the United States notes that that this practice does not appear to significantly affect research output, collaborations, or impact (Curran et al. 2020). As such, the increased value placed on racial capital by institutions does not appear to significantly benefit racialized communities, which is in line with how racial capital "impoverishes our discourse around race, fosters racial resentment, and ultimately displaces more meaningful antiracism measures" (Leong 2013, 2213).

The value attributed to racial capital has broader implications beyond academia and librarianship. For example, Elisha Lim has observed the phenomenon of personal identity economics, which is the "growing cultural treatment of social identity as currency" (2021, 2). It has emerged in online communities as the "systemic cultivation of identity as property, . . . of marginalized identity as an asset" (Lim 2021, 9). Although Lim is writing about the behaviour of people in online spaces, this valuation of racial (and other marginalized) identities as an asset with value speaks to the broader social consequences of thin diversity initiatives. After all, racial capitalism is the "result of our dedication to the concept of diversity in that what was once a means to an end has become an end in itself" (Leong 2013, 2169).[2]

Yet, despite its lack of effectiveness and the harm it perpetuates against marginalized and racialized communities, the thin diversity model remains in place. A charitable interpretation would suggest that institutions remain devoted to thin diversity due to available resources as hiring a racialized body is far cheaper and less complex than untangling the complicated histories that underlie systemic discrimination. A 2020 systematic review of diversity initiatives found that most diversity efforts focus on race because it is "perceived as an easier target to reach" through internships, residency programs, mentorship, and surveys (Kung et al. 2020, 103). If institutions continue to resort to thin diversity for its superficial approach to social inequities, then perhaps the diversity problem was only ever intended to be distorted and repackaged, but never solved.

1. Cluster hiring is intended to "establish a number of interdisciplinary areas for recruitment across academic units through some consultative process, rather than assign faculty lines to departments" (Sá 2019, third paragraph).

2. For example: thin diversity programs reinforce the perception that work conducted by racialized workers is of a lower quality because they needed affirmative action policies to give them a leg up. Such misperceptions can cause racialized scholars to experience higher levels of imposter syndrome (Cokley 2024, under "The Racialized Imposter Phenomenon").

Literature Review

What is an EDI statement? The EDI statement is one method utilised by academic libraries to convey their stance on a variety of intersecting issues including race, gender, sexuality, religion, and (dis)ability. It serves a similar function to the library mission statement: a tool to "define and communicate their purpose or reason for being […] a statement of an organisation's approach to or attitude toward, its work and the nature of that work" (Nous 2015, 1). The past decade has seen a rise in EDI statements, with case studies outlining how specific university libraries have developed, created, and implemented diversity plans (Redd et al. 2020; Edwards 2016; Edwards 2015). These case studies included inventorying past institutional activities relating to EDI, soliciting feedback from stakeholders, and contextualizing their plan within the local community as key components in developing a plan. Analyses of EDI statements have been done in an American context, investigating the extent to which the language of EDI statements employed library-centric or social justice language (Ely 2021). Other studies have found that the most prevalent types of diversity and inclusion initiatives at academic research libraries are revised collection management practices, recruitment, and intra-university collaboration (Koury et al. 2019).

Criticism of the diversity model and the emphasis on demographics in academic librarianship has gained traction in recent years. Although librarians have been concerned about diversity and racism in the field for over a century, these concerns have been steadily increasing over the decades. This increase is reflected in Kaetrena Davis-Kendrick's 2009 annotated bibliography of scholarly publications on racialized library workers in librarianship. Grouped by decades, Davis-Kendrick's work presents a clear upward trend. EDI remains a key issue in librarianship now, as topics relating to racial diversity have been included in the past three issues of the American Library Associations *Top Trends in Academic Libraries*.[3]

With EDI statements, "academic libraries can position themselves as agents for social justice via the presence and content of DEI statements" (Ely 2021, 1) as the "library-specific diversity plan is one way in which librarians can explicitly commit to working towards an environment of inclusiveness, respect, empowerment, and empathy" (Edwards 2016, 7-8). However, the presence of an EDI statement is not an action plan. As people and institutions are not beholden to the promises made in these plans, the purpose of the EDI statement appears largely cosmetic. EDI statements in academic libraries bring us back to the problems identified in the diversity model, where "signaling the presence of nonwhiteness at a school is a way for the school to signal its commitment to creating a safe environment for students of

3. The 2024 issue addresses disrupting and reconceiving collection practices and anti-DEI legislation, the 2022 issue lists critical librarianship, and the 2020 issue notes social justice, critical librarianship, and critical digital pedagogy.

color" (Leong 2013, 2192). But this signalling of safety is more important than actually creating a safe environment for racialized students.

Many studies and statements on EDI also address the role of hiring and retention, which further emphasizes how the diversity model revolves around racial capitalism. In the seven steps identified by Maha Kumaran on incorporating visible minority librarians into library succession planning, steps two and three are, respectively, to assess "library employees to identity underrepresentation of librarians and staff from visible minority groups" and "rewrite employment, and human resources policies, job advertisements and any other policies or systems that affect or cause barriers in identifying and employing visible minorities" (2015, 442). Likewise, it has been noted that increased scholarships, fellowships, and formal recruitment initiatives would improve the racial diversity of Canadian librarianship (Kandiuk 2014, 516-517).

The focus on hiring and EDI subsequently draws attention to the retention of racialized librarians. Racial capitalism is primarily fueled by efficiency, which prioritizes aesthetic changes and numeric efficacy (such as the number of racialized bodies or the number of items about marginalized communities) over foundational reconfiguration. Consequently, there has not been any real increase in the number of racialized librarians in the past decade. Many academic libraries have inadvertently created "a revolving door of librarians moving into and out of the institution, giving the impression of continuous diversity but not acknowledging specific issues with retaining diverse librarians" (Bright 2022, 415).

My goal is not to moralize, as "moral superiority is problematic in that it rationalizes current library practices as socially just when there is attention needed in examining how institutional structures can harm racialized and marginalized people and groups" (Vong 2022, 132). Rather, I explore how current practices of Canadian academic libraries rely on the diversity model, thereby fueling racial capitalism, and propose EDI as embedded practice as an alternate framework. In order to do this, I investigated the EDI or strategic plans of Canadian academic libraries to conduct a thematic analysis of current practices and policies.

Part Two: Results from a Thematic Coding of Current EDI Policies

In this section, I discuss the results of thematically coding the EDI plans and policies from Canadian post-secondary institutes. EDI plans and policies embody the restrictions of the diversity model in limiting long term, sustainable institutional change in favour of short-term gains. As Brian Quinn notes, "the growing popularity of mission and vision statements, service quality concepts, and an interest in leadership" (2015, 340) are how academic libraries have implemented business management and marketing principles to set measurable goals that give the

appearance of productive problem solving. In turn, I will use these statements to capture a snapshot of how Canadian academic libraries are addressing EDI.

Methodology

The focus of my thematic coding exercise is on four-year, bachelor's degree granting, publicly funded institutions. To determine which institutions would be included in my analysis, I looked to Maclean Magazine's list of university profiles (n.d.) as a starting point. From there, I filtered the results to exclude religious and private institutions from my analysis. Institutions that primarily cater to two-year associate's degrees and diplomas have also been excluded as they are beyond the scope of my project. The Royal Military College of Canada has also been excluded. Although they are a degree granting, publicly funded institution, they are a military unit run by the Department of National Defense and, as such, have differing priorities from non-military institutions.

My interest is primarily in the EDI goals of university libraries. Where possible, I have focused on the university library's EDI plan, but there are many libraries that do not have an independent EDI plan or are still in the process of developing their EDI plans. Another problem that arose is in how there is no standardized form for an EDI statement, policy, or plan. For example: the University of Toronto Libraries have an "Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity Statement" (n.d.), but the contents are more indicative of a plan as it includes multiple target areas for improving diversity. As such, eligibility was determined on a case-by-case basis. To determine whether a library's non-EDI specific strategic plan warranted inclusion in my analysis, I used the following guidelines:

1. Does the strategic plan mention EDI in any substantial manner?
   - Example: Western Libraries' strategic plan has sections titled "Partner to Create an Inclusive Library That Values Indigenous Peoples, Perspectives, and Ways of Knowing" and "Collaboratively Advance Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity, and Foster Belonging and Community at Western Libraries" (2022, 9-10) These sections are extensive, and each include multiple goals, desired outcomes, and measures of success.
2. Does the strategic plan discuss an issue closely related to EDI, such as relationships with Indigenous communities or creating inclusive learning spaces in any substantial manner?
   - Example: Half of the University of Alberta Library's Mission, Vision + Priorities document discusses decolonization, Indigenization, and inclusion, and these priorities are backed up by several strategic goals (2024).

This exercise not intended to be a comprehensive dive into what Canadian universities are currently doing to promote EDI. Firstly, several strategic plans, EDI plans, and relevant policies were out of date. I included out of date plans and policies if they expired after January 2021 as delays can be attributed to lingering consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, Canadian universities do not have a standardized governance structure, so some institutions have taken alternative approaches to implementing EDI. For example, McGill University is the only institution in the U15 to have Senate and Board Committees dedicated to EDI (McGill University Senate Nominating Committee 2021, under "Unique in the U15"), but that gives no indication as to whether McGill's approach to EDI is any better or worse than other Canadian universities.[4]

Furthermore, many university libraries, in addition to their strategic plans and EDI policies, have department-run initiatives that are not reflected in institutional strategic planning. Conversely, many institutions have EDI initiatives that are not listed in the strategic plan. For example, some academic libraries have subject guides for topics relating to EDI, Indigeneity, and accessibility in lieu of a targeted EDI plan. In a similar vein, I would like to note that the presence of each theme in an institution's EDI plan or policy is not necessarily indicative of the strength of a policy. Likewise, the absence of a theme is not necessarily reflective of whether an institution broadly determines it to be of value. Rather than gauge the dedication of Canadian academic institutions through a single document, which would be antithetical to having productive conversations around effective EDI at the policy level, the themes I have identified serve as a snapshot into the key ideas currently embedded into institutional EDI policy.

Thematic coding was manually carried out from February 20 to March 18 of 2024. For a full list of institutions included in my thematic coding exercise, see Appendix I.

Defining Key Themes

Through my thematic analysis, eight primary themes have emerged: staff diversity, cultural competency, systemic bias, Indigenous relationships (subtheme: Indigenization), accessibility, initiatives, collaboration, additional resources, and remediation. These themes were mostly identified based on reoccurrence, determined through observation of institutional statements and plans and identifying common factors. There are two exceptions. The first exception is remediation, which was included due to the value of open dialogue as central to meaningful and targeted equity work, though it was only addressed by one institution.

4. The U15 are an association of 15 research-intensive Canadian public universities.

The other exception is Indigenization, which I have included as a subtheme under Indigenous relationships. I tracked Indigenization as it goes beyond relationship building with local Indigenous communities but treated it as a subtheme as it is not possible to engage in a process of Indigenization without establishing reciprocal, respectful relationships with local Indigenous communities. Indigenization advocates for a reorientation of knowledge production processes that continue to contribute to the exclusion of Indigenous ways of knowing. I have defined my themes as follows:

- staff diversity refers to whether staff diversity is acknowledged throughout recruitment, hiring, retention, and promotion practices;
- cultural competency, which includes unconscious bias, refers to whether institutions acknowledge their role in providing staff with opportunities to enhance their cultural competencies and increase their awareness of subconscious bias, as well as acknowledging the diversity of users;
- systemic bias refers to whether institutions acknowledge their role in shaping and upholding systemic biases;
- Indigenous relationships go beyond the land acknowledgement or passing mentions of Indigenous students, staff, and faculty. Given the importance of reciprocity in establishing ongoing relationships with Indigenous communities, this theme was only deemed to be present when institutions have consultations in progress or intended with Indigenous stakeholders, including local Indigenous communities;
- additionally, a subtheme for Indigenization was included. To better conceptualize a process of Indigenization that goes beyond the inclusion (assimilation) of Indigenous people, I borrow Gaudry and Lorenz's conception of decolonial indigenization which "envisions the wholesale overhaul of the academy to fundamentally reorient knowledge production based on balanced power relations between Indigenous peoples and Canadians, transforming the academy into something dynamic and new" (2018, 225-6);
- accessibility refers to whether user accessibility is included in the design and delivery of services, collections, physical, and virtual spaces. For institutions in Ontario, referring to AODA (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act) compliance was deemed sufficient;
- initiatives refers to whether any past or ongoing EDI initiatives were mentioned in the plan or policy;
- collaboration refers to whether the institution made known their intentions to look toward other partners within the institution, or external, to achieve goals relating to EDI;
- I tracked whether universities included additional resources to their plans. This includes resources on the status of EDI in Canadian post-secondary institutions,

resources on institutional offices and/or policies that support or address issues pertinent to EDI (such as a sexual violence policy or an employment equity policy), or general resources on racism, systemic inequities, oppression, reconciliation, etc.;

- finally, remediation, refers to the intention of institutions to take actions to remedy harm perpetrated against marginalized communities, both intentional and unintentional. Remediation also considers how individuals or institutions should respond when harm occurs despite our best intentions. I tracked remediation as I believe in the value of open dialogue as central to meaningful and targeted equity work, but only one institution addressed remediation in their planning documents.

Quantitative Analysis of Thematic Coding Results

Theme	Yes	No
Staff Diversity	9	12
Cultural Competency	12	9
Systematic Bias	7	14
Indigenous Relationships	17	4
Indigenization	6	15
Accessibility	15	6
Initiatives	7	14
Collaboration	12	9
Additional Resources	2	19
Remediation	1	20

FIGURE 1 Chart of results of thematic coding.

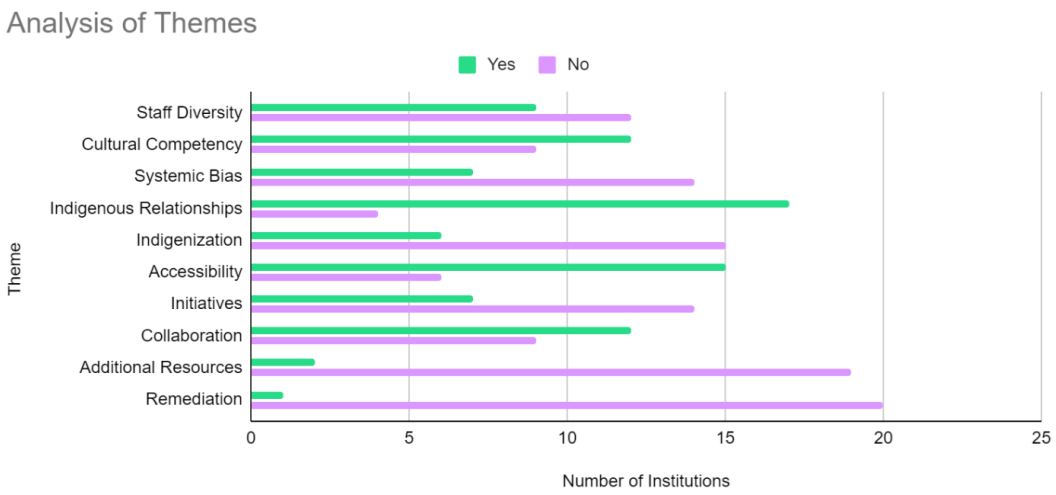

FIGURE 2 Graph of results from thematic coding.

Critical Reflection on Themes

This thematic coding exercise provides insight into what Canadian academic libraries view as the most important components of EDI in practice. However, there are discrepancies between what institutions state they will do and how people within institutions act. After all, "though a mission statement may inform an organization's programs, initiatives, or tasks, it is not a proscriptive document detailing them" (Nous 2015, 1). Of the 64 institutions that met my initial criteria, 21 have been captured in the thematic coding. The remaining academic libraries lacked an EDI plan and there was no significant mention of EDI in a library strategic plan or mission statement.

One notable observation is in the relatively low number of academic libraries addressing staff diversity. An early hypothesis suggested that given the extent to which the diversity model and thin diversity shape institutional approaches to diversity, staff diversity was expected to be more prominent. However, EDI plans tell an incomplete story. Brock University is not represented in my data as they have no library-specific EDI plan, nor does EDI feature prominently in the library strategic plan. However, Brock recently embarked on their Brock Black Cluster Hire initiative, which included a posting for a Collections Librarian (Smith 2024). Another approach to EDI is to maintain an Office of EDI, rather than an EDI plan. This is the approach taken by the University of Calgary (2022) and Queen's University (2022), where the lack of EDI planning has not prevented, respectively, cluster hiring or targeted hiring of designated groups. These discrepancies between what is available in institutional planning documents and practice indicate that the absence of EDI planning does

not reflect the absence of EDI practice. But, seen through the lenses of the diversity model, the absence of an EDI plan or statement that would situate the institutional context for race-based hiring initiatives make it difficult to interpret such practices as anything other than exploiting racial capital.

It is interesting to observe that the coding results suggest that Canadian universities are not fully aligned regarding how to address EDI and which components are most important. While EDI is broadly important to most Canadian universities, there is divergence in how and what aspects of EDI receive attention. The most prevalent theme is Indigenous relationships, with 81 percent of libraries addressing it in their EDI or strategic plans which speaks to the importance academic libraries have placed on reconciliation. Although indigenization is significantly lower with only 28.6 percent of institutions acknowledging it, the current trend towards reconciliation with Indigenous communities shows promise.

After Indigenous relationships, the next most prevalent theme is accessibility, appearing in 71.4 percent of plans. Cultural competency and collaboration follow, with 57.1 percent of institutions addressing it in their EDI or strategic plans. Despite attempts to standardize understanding of the principles of EDI in research through the Inter-agency Dimensions Charter (Government of Canada 2019), and in librarianship through CARL's EDI initiatives (n.d.), there does not seem to be an agreed upon approach regarding which aspects of EDI are important. Such mixed results suggest that beyond Indigenous relationships and accessibility, Canadian academic libraries have differing EDI concerns. Notably, systemic bias is only acknowledged by a third of Canadian academic libraries and remediation is only acknowledged by a single institution.

The mixed results also bring us back to the question of what is the purpose of the EDI plan? Existing literature has identified the primary purpose of EDI plans and statements to be cosmetic — they are intended to broadly communicate support towards social justice-oriented work. This has implications for how individuals within Canadian academic libraries can support EDI initiatives. The language employed in EDI plans indicate that such plans are largely assessed in accordance with measures of success that rely on quantifiable measures. Under staff diversity, relevant policy goals include more diverse hires. For systemic bias, this includes offering more bias workshops. Collaboration often means building more cross campus relationships. Each of these quantifiable goals has the capacity to contribute to creating a more equitable learning environment, but simply offering more workshops or hiring more racialized bodies plays into the trap of the diversity model: where cosmetic changes do not fundamentally address the underlying inequities because they serve the institution, not marginalized communities. The lack of

constructive dialogue is further highlighted by policies that state they welcome comments and engagement but fail to inform potential commenters where to send feedback. This leads to the understanding that EDI plans are retroactive and responsive, rather than proactive, as the lack of consideration for remediation and open communication indicates that EDI begins and ends at addressing harm inflicted historically.

However, if we view the presence of an EDI plan as simply a communication from the institution that indicates the willingness to accommodate grassroots EDI initiatives, it creates room for increased flexibility for individuals to implement practices independent of the EDI plan. Currently, EDI planning by Canadian academic libraries faces an overreliance on measurable markers of success. Multiple institutions listed measuring success through quantitative measures, such as increasing the number of attendees of a workplace equity workshop, or greater numbers of staff who self-identify as a racialized person. However, "that the language of consumerism and commodification dominates beyond the sphere of libraries is not sufficient reason to accept it uncritically" (Budd 1997, 319), and there are many people within these institutions working to untangle the layers of injustice and exploitation that Canadian academic libraries are built upon. Not all "LIS work carried out under the banner of diversity is directly and thoroughly complicit with the very white domination it seeks to challenge" (Hudson 2017a, 25), so let us explore how treating EDI as embedded practice can challenge the diversity model.

Part Three: Implementing EDI as Embedded Practice

Although the purpose of the EDI statement is primarily cosmetic, one of the key messages conveyed through such statements is an acknowledgement of how the marginalization of communities is viewed relative to the institution. For example, we can compare the implications of EDI as a separate plan from the overall strategic plan in relation to EDI as embedded practice at the institutional level. During my investigation, I came across a university-level planning document that employed an integrated strategic plan. Rather than separating EDI and Indigeneity from the strategic plan, the tenets and values underlying EDI and Indigeneity were directly implemented in the strategic plan. This act of entwining the core values of EDI and Indigeneity within the institution allows for a recentring of who belongs to academic institutions as "a meaningful shift away from the diversity paradigm and its pitfalls [...] requires the purposeful creation of spaces within which such work can be undertaken in an ongoing way" (Hudson 2017a, 26).

Recall how the diversity model and racial capitalism operate in tandem by maintaining superficial understandings of inequity, racialization, and

marginalization. Canadian academic institutions largely continue this logic through the siloing of EDI: "by keeping EDI and information literacy separate from other institutional work, they do not run the risk of challenging any of the power structures, if they were ever at the risk of doing so" (Leung 2022, 758). EDI silos are created when labour that is deemed EDI work is outsourced to EDI committees to discuss, treating inequity and the question of diversity as a problem external to the core operations of the university. Rather than an overemphasis on diversity, Canadian academic libraries may benefit from reframing diversity as process-based, rather than outcome-based. To escape the limitations of the diversity model, EDI must become an embedded practice.

As seen in the critical contexts and thematic coding, one of the key areas of criticism for the diversity model is in hiring as "there is a danger in relying solely on numerical representation as the marker for successful DEI work within libraries, especially given the issues with retention of librarians of color" (Bright 2022, 415). Rather than the single-minded focus on the result of hiring racialized bodies through processes such as cluster hires, we can critically reconsider existing practices that can continue to be expanded upon. Adding to the racial body count is a short-sighted approach to EDI that perpetuates harm as it reduces racialized individuals to racial capital, ignores the experience of the interview process, and does not consider the value of workplace environment and morale in retention. Regarding hiring processes: earlier in this paper, I looked to the BCLA's (n.d.) toolkit and noted that it includes tips that are not explicitly tied to identity-based categories, such as giving meaningful feedback. The BCLA's toolkit notes that the lack of feedback can result in racialized candidates making the "assumption that they were invited to interview only as a gesture or box ticking exercise and that they were not being genuinely considered" (n.d., point 16) but this is a practice that would be appreciated by all candidates. There are lessons that can be borrowed from disability activists and the curb cut effect as implementing well-designed practices that improve equity for one group will benefit everyone.[5]

Another lesson that can be learned from disability studies is taking a proactive approach to EDI as "proactively creating a flexible, inclusive workplace minimizes the need to deal reactively with individual accommodation requests" (Oud 2018, 22). EDI as embedded practice creates space to proactively build community and prevent harm. This fundamentally challenges the "whiteness of practicality — making space for messy critiques of white supremacy that eschew pragmatic solutions — [which] requires recognition of the theoretical work enacted through storytelling circles, ...

5. The curb cut effect is the name given to how designing curb cuts to facilitate the mobility of wheelchair users benefits everyone, such as delivery people hauling dollies, parents with strollers, and people with vision-impairments who can more safely navigate streets. This effect "illustrates the outsize benefits that accrue to everyone from policies and investments designed to achieve equity" (Blackwell 2017, under "Access").

through forms of expression that elude easy classification" (Hudson 2017b, 225). To proactively build community and create dialogue about workplace issues, restorative justice circles have been implemented at Virginia Tech (Glenn and Chiraghdin 2024). Restorative justice circles are inspired by Indigenous talking circles, which are a method of discussion traditionally used by Indigenous leader in didactic and community contexts, and restorative justice, which "focuses on repairing the harm [done by offenders] and engaging individuals and community members in the process" (Zehr n.d., fourth paragraph). Implementing restorative justice circles in the workplace was found to improve the active listening and communication skills that are applicable to work life, as well as fostering a positive atmosphere and increased a sense of trust and community within Virginia Tech University Library (Glenn and Chiraghdin 2024, slides 24-27). Such activities create space to have larger conversations, which has broader implications for challenging the diversity model as "we cannot effectively challenge structures of racial domination within the field without being part of larger conversations and movements addressing such systems in other contexts" (Hudson 2017a, 27).

There are also existing practices that have seen real, tangible success and should be continued. Pathways to librarianship are diverse, but on-the-job training and having mentors are key to retaining new librarians (Laynor et al 2023, 809). Furthermore, effective mentorship plays a key role in both welcoming racialized library workers to academic libraries, but also in the retention of racialized library workers. Effective workplace mentorship does not need to be excessively complex — "create a deliberate plan for successful minority librarians and offer them challenging projects that provide the training they need to strategically place themselves for attaining leadership positions" (Kumaran 2015, 443). As racialized library workers have mentors at higher rates than white librarians (Bright and Crabtree 2024, slide 21), mentorship and well-defined onboarding procedures are key in conveying to racialized library workers that they belong in academic libraries.

EDI as embedded practice takes a proactive approach, which challenges the reactive and retrospective approach found in most EDI plans. The emergence of EDI plans has arisen in response to developments in society — in response to the Black Lives Matter movement, in response to privacy concerns, in response to increasing socio-economic, racial, and gender inequities in society. To move beyond the narrow institutional pathways that prop up the diversity model, we can disrupt these systems by employing EDI as an embedded practice. Top-down practices such as the integrated strategic plan move us in the right direction but should only be stepping stones towards the goal of achieving something akin to the curb cut effect in our conversations around EDI. Rather than highlighting race and emphasizing difference,

equity in academic libraries "means turning away from the politics of recognition, the desire to fit in and be a part of, to assimilate into whiteness as it is embodied by academia. That does not mean rejecting the space academia and libraries can create, but to refuse the inducements that can often lure one into thinking that we are doing something for the 'right' or 'good' reasons." (Leung 2022, 761).

Conclusion

Throughout this paper, I have outlined how EDI plans are restricted by the diversity model and racial capitalism sidelining the voices they claim to empower. The combination of treating diversity as primarily a problem of representation gives rise to racial capitalism, where an individual's race becomes the primary asset that is assigned value by institutions, rather than one's unique skills and abilities. Altogether, current policies have resulted in an overemphasis on diversity over equity and EDI plans are reactive, rather than proactive.

Ultimately, I would like to see EDI policies and equity work become embedded in our day-to-day work akin to the curb cut effect. By implementing meaningful policies aimed at minimizing inequity rather than maximizing diversity, what is now viewed as "diversity work" will eventually become an embedded practice that aims to actively identify and remove barriers to equity to everyone's benefit. Some practices that treat EDI as embedded practice include de-emphasizing diverse results in favour of improvements to hiring and workplace processes, restorative justice circles, and mentorship. The overemphasis on diversity has not only fueled racial capitalism but has also sparked accusations of reverse discrimination, resulting in a zero-sum game. I remind the reader that "the numerical representation embraced by the thin conception of diversity is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for progress toward racial inclusion in our institutions" (Leong 2013, 2170-71). As such, embedded practice will be more effective as it sidesteps the hegemonic constraints of the diversity model and racial capitalism, in addition to creating space for more constructive and effective conversations to build equity within academic institutions.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Appendix I: List of Institutions Included in Thematic Analysis, with Relevant Webpages and Date of Analysis

University of Toronto Libraries	Feb. 20, 2024	https://onesearch.library.utoronto.ca/inclusion-diversity-and-equity-statement
University of Alberta Libraries	Feb. 20, 2024	https://www.library.ualberta.ca/about-us/vision
University of British Columbia	Feb. 26, 2024	https://about.library.ubc.ca/about-us/strategic-framework/
MacEwan University	Feb. 26, 2024	https://library.macewan.ca/about/library-action-plan
McMaster University	Feb. 26, 2024	https://library.mcmaster.ca/about/mission-and-vision#tab-strategic-plan-2023-26
Acadia University	Feb. 26, 2024	https://library.acadiau.ca/about/edia.html
Dalhousie University	Feb. 26, 2024	https://cdn.dal.ca/content/dam/dalhousie/pdf/library/Library_Administration/Dalhousie%20Libraries%20strategic%20plan%20penultimate%20draft.pdf
Mount Saint Vincent University	Feb. 26, 2024	https://www.msvu.ca/academics/library/about-the-library/strategic-plan/
University of Guelph	Feb. 27, 2024	https://www.lib.uoguelph.ca/sites/default/files/McLaughlin-Library-Strategic-Priorities-2022-2023.pdf
University of Waterloo	Feb. 28, 2024	https://uwaterloo.ca/library-strategic-plan/
Western University	March 4, 2024	https://www.lib.uwo.ca/aboutwl/index.html
Algoma University	March 4, 2024	https://library.algomau.ca/mission/
Mount Royal University	March 4, 2024	https://library.mtroyal.ca/about/edi
Université de Montréal	March 12, 2024	https://www.umontreal.ca/public/www/images/diversite/documents/UdeM_PlanDAction_EDI_final.pdf
McGill University	March 12, 2024	https://www.mcgill.ca/library/about/edi

Vancouver Island University	March 12, 2024	https://library.viu.ca/ld.php?content_id=34664485
Thompson Rivers University	March 13, 2024	https://www.tru.ca/__shared/assets/TRU_Library_Strategic_Plan__2019-202446580.pdf
Simon Fraser University	March 14, 2024	https://www.lib.sfu.ca/about/overview/policies/edi
Kwantlen Polytechnic University	March 18, 2024	https://www.kpu.ca/sites/default/files/Library/KPU%20Library%20Strategic%20Plan%202021%202023.pdf
Emily Carr University of Art + Design	March 18, 2024	https://www.ecuad.ca/library/about/vision-mission-values
Capilano University	March 18, 2024	https://library.capilanou.ca/about-the-library/library-vision/