Learning and Change Through Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Professional Development: Academic Librarians' Perspectives

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Where to Find the Published Study?

Dali, K., Bell, N., & Valdes, Z. (2021b).
Learning and change through diversity, equity, and inclusion professional development: Academic librarians' perspectives. *Journal of Academic Librarianship, 47(6)*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2021.102448

Study Participants

Responses of 141 academic librarians in Canada and the U.S.

Study Methodology

- Hermeneutic phenomenology
- Transtheoretical Model of Change (TTM) as a frame
- Qualitative Survey
- Retrospective Reflection
- Critical Incident Technique

Qualitative Survey & Critical Incident

- One memorable and impactful professional development event
- Attended at least one year prior
- Memorable in a positive or negative way

Focuses on one event that stands out and is critical for understanding the phenomenon
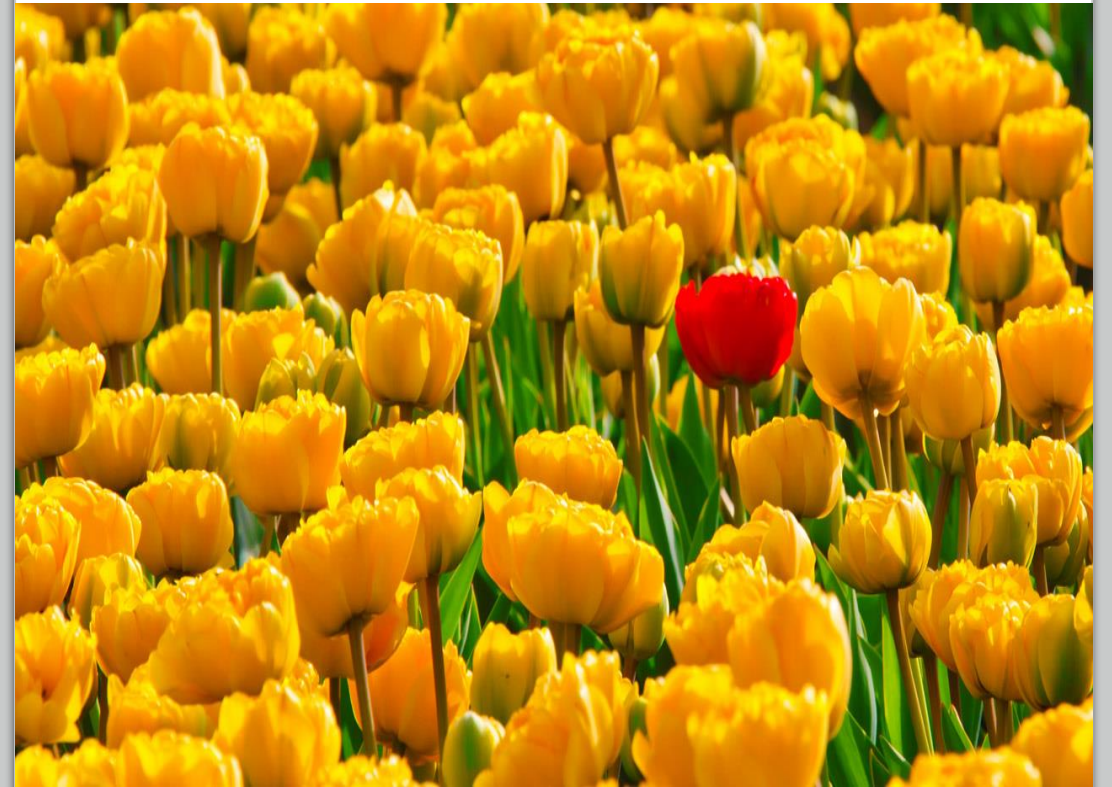
Retrospective Reflection

- Common approach to professional development evaluation:
  - "point in time" reactions, which do not gauge impact and focus on "documentation" of gut reactions rather
- Our study:
  - retrospective reflection, which emphasizes sustainability of change (are there any changes in thinking, behaviors, organizational practices 12 month or more after the event?)

- Asked librarians about past DEI experiences and looked for evidence of sustained change.

Hermeneutic Phenomenology

- Examines participants' lived experiences.

- Focuses on people's constructed realities.

- Holds participants narrative as true.

- Suited for documenting diversity of human experiences.

- Importance of context.

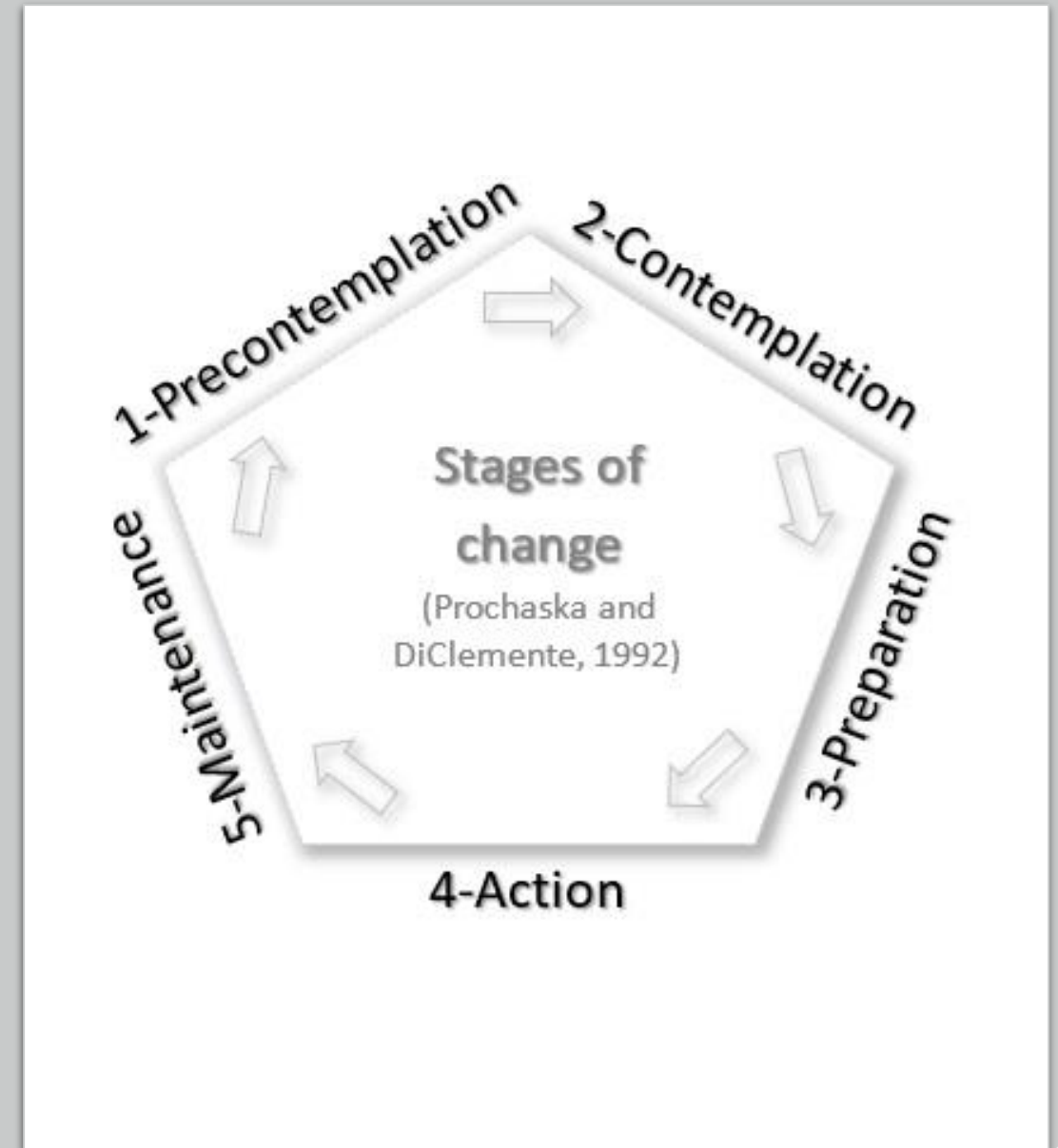- Prior knowledge – important & needn't be "bracketed"

Transtheoretical Model of Change (TTM)

- Describes specific processes a person goes through when they are changing their personal thought patterns and behaviors.
- Six stages:
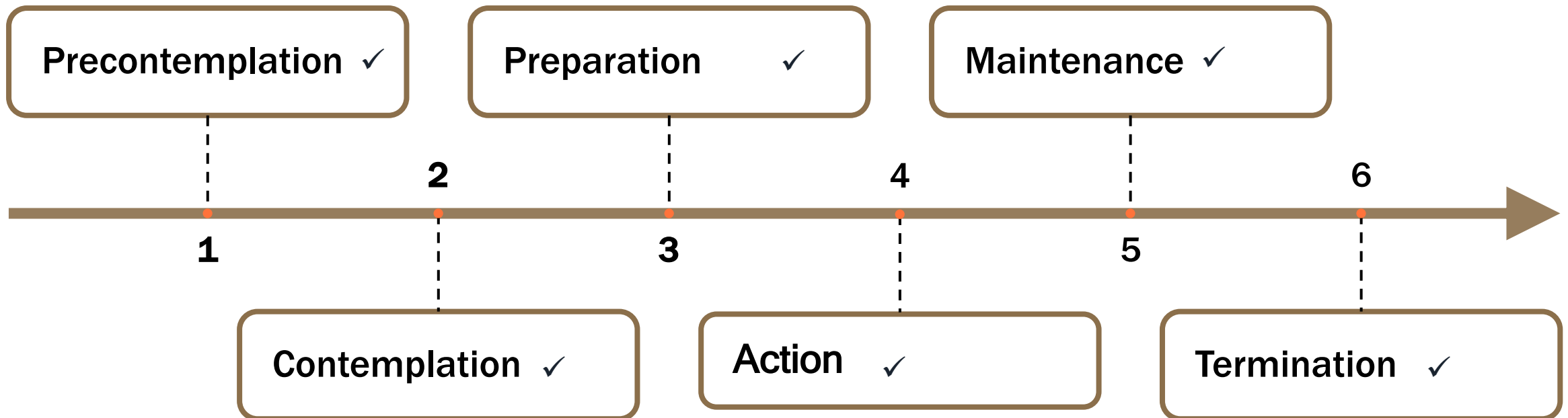
TTM History

- **TTM originated from a series of health science studies on people who tried to quit smoking** (Prochaska et al.; several iterations since the 1970s)

- **Examples of use in LIS**
  - Information-seeking behaviors in young men seeking to adopt healthier exercise habits (Hirvonen, 2012)
  - Knowledge and skill readiness of health sciences librarians for partnership on research involving human participants (Mazure and Alpi, 2015)

Stages of change
(Prochaska and DiClemente, 1992)

1-Precontemplation
2-Contemplation
3-Preparation
4-Action
5-Maintenance

Aspects of Learning

- Aspects of learning were reflected in response to these open-ended questions:

  - What were your goals, expected outcomes, or intentions in attending this event?

  - How did the event affect you personally in terms of perceptions of and attitudes toward diversity, equity, and inclusion?

  - How did the event change your workplace/organizational practices, if at all?

- Expectation: to learn intellectual contents and specific techniques

  Reality: affective and social learning

  with implications for personal growth and organizational change

Aspects of Learning - Summary

Type of learning and change	Aspects of learning reflected in responses to open-ended questions		
	What were your goals, expected outcomes, or intentions in attending this event? (n = 105)	How did the event affect you personally in terms of perceptions of and attitudes towards DEI? (n = 126)	How did the event change your workplace/ organizational practices, if at all? (n = 101)
Cognitive: Awareness	**39 (37.1%)**	**51 (40.5%)**	**49 (48.5%)**
Personal: Self-awareness & self-improvement	17 (16.2%)	22 (17.5%)	6 (5.9%)
Behavioral: Action	**30 (28.6%)**	**28 (22.2%)**	**38 (37.6%)**
Social: Interaction	16 (15.2%)	7 (5.6%)	1 (1%)
Affective: Emotion	3 (2.9%)	*18 (14.3%)*	7 (6.9%)
	Context	*Change*	

COGNITIVE

Cognitive Learning and Change: Awareness

- The largest number of responses related to the awareness of systemic issues.

- One of the most significant realizations that participants had was the urgency of having safe spaces created for groups that have traditionally been excluded.

- The most transformative awareness-related experience derived from hearing from and learning about personal experiences with which they were unfamiliar with.

- Many expressed skepticism about sustainable large-scale change.

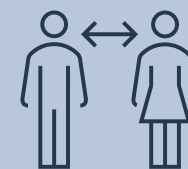| Cognitive	Personal	Behavioral	Social	Affective
Awareness & Learning ✓	Self Awareness/ Self Improvement	Action	Interaction	Emotion

COGNITIVE – Quotes

Cognitive Learning and Change: Awareness

"I had very mixed experiences with white attendees. On the one hand, it was heartening to see how many people were there who seemed to really want to learn and [be] allies. On the other hand, it was difficult to see so many white people there (and my understanding is that there were more than ever before) because that risks this conference becoming like every other conference where 86% of attendees are white. And finally, there was an incident of a white person finding the work of librarians of color to be "aggressive." My white mentor later wanted to speak with me about the incident and made it clear that they agreed with the white librarian and they expected me to agree as well. This made me wonder if every white "ally" in attendance was really posturing and only there because they know they should be or because they themselves want to professionally benefit from engaging in work around EDI"

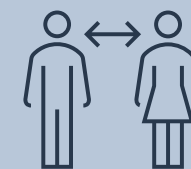| Cognitive	Personal	Behavioral	Social	Affective
Awareness & Learning ✓	Self Awareness/ Self Improvement	Action	Interaction	Emotion

PERSONAL

Personal Learning: Self-awareness/Self-Improvement

- Responses indicated how the event personally transformed participants and their self-awareness.

- Responses also addressed improved awareness of their own privilege and personal biases and increased personal sensitivity.
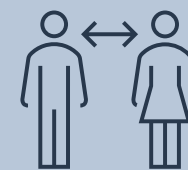
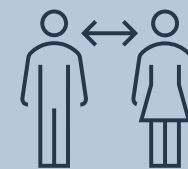| Cognitive	Personal	Behavioral	Social	Affective
Awareness & Learning	Self-awareness/Self-Improvement	Action	Interaction	Emotion

BEHAVIORAL

Behavioral Learning and Change: Action

- The second largest number of responses addressed changes in participants' behaviors and commitment to action.

- Most behavioral changes related to organizational culture and procedures – specifically, improving hiring, recruitment, and retention practices.

- Recurrent themes in responses included advocacy and the ability to hold DEI conversation in a more effective way.

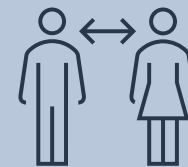| Cognitive	Personal	Behavioral	Social	Affective
Awareness & Learning	Self-awareness/Self-Improvement	Action ✓	Interaction	Emotion

BEHAVIORAL - Quotes

Behavioral Learning and Change: Action

"The session made me feel a bit uncomfortable. Although everyone listened attentively and said they support diversity/social justice issues (e.g. letter writing campaign, etc.) – people didn't seem aware of the issues present in our own workplace culture (e.g., bullying, team dysfunction, lack of empathy, etc.)."

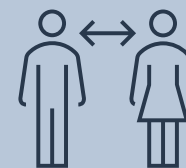| Cognitive	Personal	Behavioral ✔	Social	Affective
Awareness & Learning	Self-awareness/Self-Improvement	Action	Interaction	Emotion

SOCIAL

Social Learning and Change: Interaction

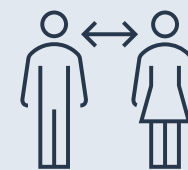- There were scarce references to social learning in survey responses.

Cognitive	Personal	Behavioral	Social	Affective
Awareness & Learning	Self-awareness/Self-Improvement	Action	Interaction ✓	Emotion

AFFECTIVE

Affective Learning and Change: Emotion

- Positive emotions included feeling encouraged, "galvanized", inspired, energized, more understanding of their colleagues, surprised, humbled, and hopeful.

- Some participants had mixed and negative emotions including feeling puzzles, unsettled, skeptical, worried, frustrated, and upset.

- The feeling of discomfort was often a transformative experience.
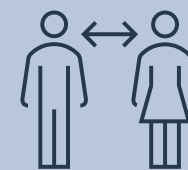
Cognitive	Personal	Behavioral	Social	Affective
Awareness & Learning	Self-awareness/Self-Improvement	Action	Interaction	Emotion

AFFECTIVE - Quotes

Affective Learning and Change: Emotion

"Honestly, I'm more uncomfortable around people of color now realizing what they're going through than I was growing up in a very diverse neighborhood and not noticing and just being what I thought was friends with people of various backgrounds and colors."

Cognitive	Personal	Behavioral	Social	Affective
Awareness & Learning	Self-awareness/Self-Improvement	Action	Interaction	Emotion

Organizational Change

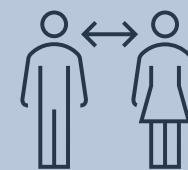**"How did the event change your workplace/organizational practices, if at all?"**

- Most change was cognitive and encompassed awareness and learning.

- Other responses addressed change in actions and behaviors such as policy changes, decolonization approaches, or adjusting hiring processes.

- Organizational, workplace-related, and systemic changes are connected to changes in individual and group behaviors

- Awareness alone isn't enough to make a real difference unless followed by "planning and protocols developed to implement institutional change." Many organizations did not change.

Organizational Change - Quotes

"Our institution is committed to asking questions about our practices in a DEI framework, so there's good institutional support for this work. Comfort with old ways is the biggest obstacle - people sometimes feel like supporting DEI work is "one more thing," so the challenge is shifting the frame to articulate how it makes all of us, and all that we do, better and more accessible for all. We do searches differently now - much more information is shared with candidates to enable them to shine rather than waste time together trying to figure out what we are looking for."

"If anything, I cared less [after the training]. The exercise and the aftermath [were] so demoralizing, it was like "why bother saying anything? why bother going to another one of these?" It's affected my job satisfaction in that I've lost a lot of trust with my library's and my unit's administration.

Glass Half-Empty?

- Genuine transformative experiences
  - "I changed many things with respect to how and where I included pronouns and my language when discussing many topics. "
- Expressions of Optimism
- Early realizations of the need for a different type of thinking and action.
  - "I don't know that it changed practices, but I hope it improved my interactions and communication with staff - that would make me a better manager."
- Intellectualization, performative statements
- Personal change in a negative direction (disappointment, giving up, exhaustion)
- Skepticism about systemic change

Personal Change Is the Hardest

- Fewer participants expected personal change than participants who expected change in awareness and learning specific techniques

- Even fewer expected personal self-improvement to affect organizational change

- This expectation materialized at the professional development in question

- Much easier to achieve intellectual understanding and acquire factual knowledge
  - Helps people feel empowered, intentional, ready to take action
  - May translate into knowing what the right thing to do and say is
  - Does not always translated into a moral imperative and inner drive

- Some realize the enormity of the task; others happy with intellectual change
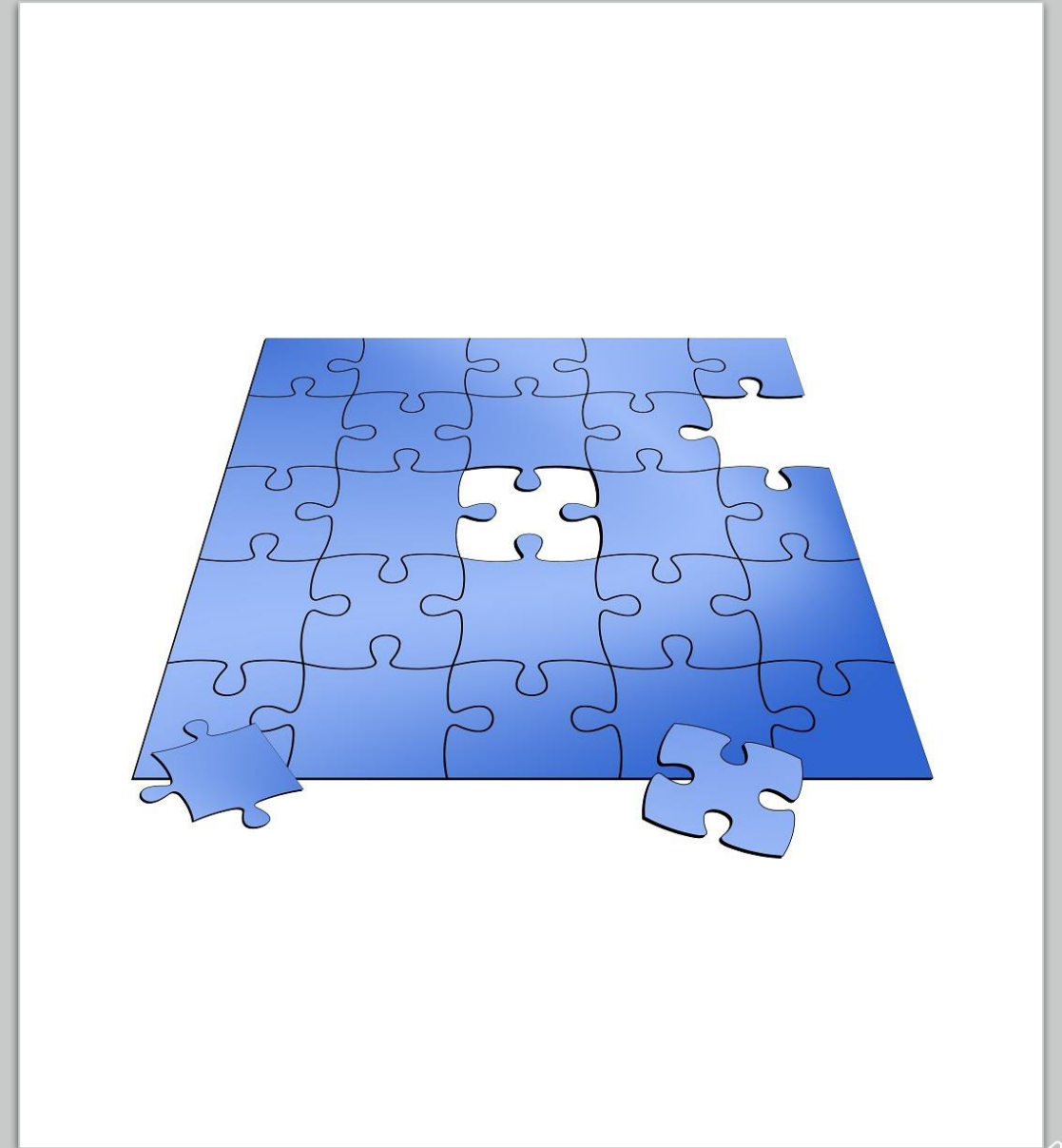
There is a distance to go
from cognitive awareness to self-improvement

Missing pieces of DEI discussions

- Immigration/Forced migration
- Religion
- Disability

- DEI vs. DEIA

Mapping Study Findings to TTM

TTM	→	Study Findings	→	Quotes

Increased awareness of the causes and consequences of certain behaviors

Cognitive Learning: Awareness →

"It made me aware of other issues affecting people of color in academic libraries, especially those considered 'staff'."

Dramatic relief, driven by positive or negative feelings that motivate people to act

Affective learning: emotion →

"The sea of diverse faces was inspiring."

Mapping Study Findings to TTM

TTM	→	Study Findings	→	Quotes

Self reevaluation, including impact on others

Personal learning & change: self-awareness and improvement

"It made me uncomfortable when I realized I had done some of the things that were perceived as threatening."

Environmental reevaluation, including the impact on others

Behavioral learning: action

"[Our practices have changed] [s]ignificantly. Re-evaluated our values, made our value statements clear, started programs that are still ongoing."

Mapping Study Findings to TTM

TTM	Study Findings	Quotes

Self-liberation tied into the belief in the possibility of change and commitment to change.

Personal learning & change: self-awareness and self-improvement

"Got me even more fired up to integrate and advocate for these issues at my institution."

Helping relationships

Social learning: interaction

"I felt like there were more people involved with this work than I had thought."

Mapping Study Findings to TTM

TTM	→	Study Findings	→	Quotes

Social liberation resulting in opportunities and alternatives for changed behaviors

Affective learning: emotion

"It made me both hopeful because of the amazing people doing the work that I meant and worried because of the sheer amount of work that still needed to be done."

Counterconditioning or adoption of improved behaviors

Behavior learning: action

"We do searches differently now – much more information is shared with candidates to enable them to shine rather than waste time together trying to figure out what we are looking for."

Mapping Study Findings to TTM

TTM	→	Study Findings	→	Quotes

Stimulus control or "removing cues" for problematic behaviors → **Behavioral learning: action** → "People [feel] supporting DEI is 'one more thing.' The challenge is shifting the frame to articulate how it makes all of us [better.]"

Reinforcement management, tied into self-encouragement for making progress → **Behavioral learning: action** → "I was already trying to decolonize my collection practices before attending the event, but after attending the event I felt much more confident in my approach. I was confident enough to do a presentation to fellow librarians."

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Thank you!