

6C—NEOLIBERALISM AND ISSUES OF IDENTITY #2

On Cultural Competence in the Library World: Situating Anti-Racist Self Work as Neoliberal Racial Politics

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Cultural competence occupies a central space within the library world's broader anti-racist discourse of diversity. With a focus on realizing inclusion through staff cultivation of awareness, attitudes, and behaviours around dynamics of (racialized) difference, cultural competence has come to represent one of the field's chief anti-racist strategies, achieving formal prominence in the academic library world in particular through the Association of College and Research Libraries' (ACRL) Diversity Standards (2012). Extending existing work that details the deep limitations of the individualized racial politics of the concept (and of diversity more broadly), this presentation explores cultural competence as a specifically neoliberal anti-racist formulation, situating it historically and examining the ways in which its centering of a racial politics of self-work operates in concert with key logics underpinning neoliberal political and economic arrangements and thus with the (racialized) violence such logics obscure.