



### *Evidence Summary*

## **Key Insights into Factors that Shape the Ideal EDI Learning Experiences of Canadian Academic Librarians**

### **A Review of:**

Fitzgibbons, M., & Lei, C. (2024). What is ideal EDI learning for academic librarians? Discovering EDI learning stories through appreciative inquiry. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 50(5). Article 102908. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2024.102908>

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### **Abstract**

**Objective** – To gain insights into academic librarians' learning about equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) to identify ideal learning practices, and to inform the development of EDI learning in academic libraries.

**Design** – Appreciative inquiry-based semi-structured interviews.

**Setting** – Canadian higher education libraries across six provinces.

**Subjects** – 21 academic librarians across a range of professional roles.

**Methods** – Researchers conducted online Zoom interviews, firstly through pilots at two institutions before broadening to any Canadian higher education library, which were then transcribed. The 4-D cycle of appreciative inquiry, a strengths-based approach to change, was used to guide the development of the generative interview questions. The data analysis of the transcripts was

underpinned by hermeneutic phenomenology, with interpretations using meaning assigned by participants themselves, and utilized thematic analysis with open coding and constant comparison.

**Main Results** –The authors identified eleven factors under three main categorizations of learning-specific factors, structural factors, and internal factors, which participants attributed to conditions that shape ideal learning experiences. The researchers identified four key insights as a result of their research that added to previous literature on this topic; the importance of personal identity and positionality in shaping learning experiences, the importance of seeing learning in the context of accumulated learning journeys rather than single activities, the dynamics of different types of learning including informal learning and those beyond professional contexts, and lastly that academic institutions themselves shape individuals learning experiences.

**Conclusion** – The authors identified key factors that shape the EDI learning experiences of Canadian academic librarians and shared their learning experiences, which can motivate other groups of librarians to reflect on their own EDI learning journeys and motivations.

### **Commentary**

The study builds on the work of Dali et al. (2021), who provided recommendations for improving EDI professional development for academic librarians from Canada and the United States based on similar hermeneutic phenomenological interpretive methods of qualitative experiences. The key differences between the two are that this study explored the factors and conditions that contribute to ideal learning, and also focused on learning journeys rather than individual learning instances. The researchers in this study also used similar methods to Attebury (2017), who also explored characteristics which impact the learning experiences of academic librarians, but with a broader learning focus beyond EDI.

This study has been critically appraised using Suarez's (2010) framework for evaluating qualitative library research studies. Overall, this study was conducted to a high standard following appropriate methodology, therefore the findings are trustworthy and reliable and offer the potential for adaption for replication. The study design was highly appropriate for the research aims, with the researchers demonstrating strong understanding of the methodology through included citations and their own methodological reporting. The researchers critically identified the impact of their own positionality on the interpretation of the data and have used reflexive research memos to inform their interpretations, as well as attempting to mitigate bias through the coding process.

Whilst participants were included from only 6 of Canada's 10 provinces, this was not due to lack of trying, with the researchers using a wide range of professional and personal online websites, mailing lists, and social media platforms in order to recruit.

The findings are very thorough, with key points of the eleven factors included in the main body and vignettes from individual participants included as an appendix. A further appendix includes EDI resources mentioned by participants themselves, which could be a useful set of resources for other librarians for their own learning around EDI. The four key insights identified by the researchers, whilst identified in the context of this research, provide considerations that have relevance beyond the setting of this research about learning experiences and how they are shaped more broadly.

The findings of the article are valuable within their own context of the specific Canadian academic librarian participants, however, as acknowledged by the researchers themselves, the findings are not generalizable beyond this study. The study could, however, be adapted and replicated in other academic library settings, and potentially library settings beyond this, in order to gain insights from other librarians. The researchers also acknowledge that academic library settings often provide more

support for and requirement to undertake professional development, so it may be more challenging to replicate similar research in other library settings. The methods could, however, also be adapted to explore participant experiences more broadly than EDI learning practices to contexts more relevant to wider groups of librarians.

## References

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