“Keep Shining, Keep Smiling…”

LIS Collegiality through a Relational-Cultural Theory Lens

Lalitha Nataraj  
Instruction & Reference Librarian  
CSUSM - Kellogg Library  
lnataraj@csusm.edu

Torie Quiñonez  
Arts & Humanities Librarian  
CSUSM - Kellogg Library  
tquinonez@csusm.edu

Dr. Antonia Olivas  
Education & Sociology Librarian  
CSUSM - Kellogg Library  
tolivas@csusm.edu
Relational-Cultural Theory and its LIS context

- Dr. Jean Baker Miller, M.D. (Wellesley College, Stone Center - 1970s)
- Feminist theoretical framework underscores empathy, validation, cultivation of relationship & mutual trust; adaptable for critical librarianship practice (Arellano Douglas, Chiu, Gadsby, Kumbier, Nataraj, 2018)
- Push back against valorization of separation & autonomy (individualist) in favor of relational empowerment (collective)
  - Creating “power with” connections with colleagues rather than imposing “power over” them
  - Shame & humiliation → leads to disconnection & isolation, negatively impacting ability to be collegial and engage in relationships that help us grow
Collegiality in LIS: Relating personal experience

Then

- Cultural insensitivity
- Passive-aggressive communication & gaslighting
- Limited professional development / mentorship
- Inability to be authentic self; public service persona exacts a price

Now

- Intentionality behind actions - cultural sensitivity built into strategic plan
- Open-communication; meeting norms explicitly stated
- Informal mentorships; external/internal professional development
- Authenticity embedded in the work we do w/students & faculty (to an extent)
Librarians as Validating Agents

- Validation is an “enabling, confirming and supportive process initiated by in- and out-of-class agents” to support a student’s academic and personal development.

- When a student is validated, they feel capable of learning, have higher self-worth, feel that they bring something unique and valuable to the college experience, and they are recognized and accepted as such.
Validation Theory and Colleague Relationships

- How do we validate each other, as people of color in higher education?
- How can we foster relationships to support each other in our professional and personal development?
- For those of us trying to achieve things like tenure, a permanent position, or full professor status, who do not conform to expectations and standards that are associated with the dominant culture —how can we motivate and support each other?
What is MTL?

Figure 1.1: Variables Contributing to MTL (Chan & Drasgow, 2001)
RCT & MTL

- Affective
- Non-Calculative
- Social-Normative
URM Librarians’ MTL in Academia

- Highly Social Normative Identities
  - Within institutions (students/staff of color)
  - Surrounding communities (paying it back)
  - Mentoring (paying it forward)

- How do we move from Social Normative to Affective/Non-Calculating?


Icon Credits & Presentation Design

Unknown designed by Bybzee
thenounproject.com

Networking designed by Yamini Chandra
thenounproject.com

You Are Here designed by Kate T
thenounproject.com

Handshake by Chunk Icons
thenounproject.com

From the Duke Innovation Co-Lab.
Public Domain.
Available on thenounproject.com

Book by Gan Khoon Lay
thenounproject.com

Presentation Design adapted from: Veronica Arellano Douglas & April Aultman Becker (LibDesignShare)