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Hush.... : The Dangers of Silence in Academic Libraries

Jessica Schomberg and Kirsti Cole

Introduction

Bullying, racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination are ongoing challenges in public life. Minnesota State University, Mankato, a large, public, Masters' granting institution in the upper Midwest, has attempted to address these issues since 2012. Faculty have led the bulk of these anti-discrimination initiatives. The administration's attempt to address hostile workplace issues has been primarily focused in two areas: policy review and the creation of a civility campaign. According to the university website, the purpose of the campaign is to cultivate a respectful campus community. The campaign is introduced as follows:

When civility is present in a community such as ours, it becomes a healthy, vibrant and rewarding place to live and work. Without civility, it fails to thrive...we believe that civility comes down to treating everyone with respect. Each of us is responsible for showing civility in our own actions. That's why you'll see a series of posters, table tents and electronic messages across our community challenging you to think about your choices. You can choose to be civil in a certain situation. Or not. Who will you decide to be?

The call at the end of the introduction asks audience members, "Who will you decide to be?" This question is meant to make a rhetorical appeal to *ethos*, the character, of the audience interacting with the posters and website. However, in failing to adequately define the community, the university's appeal to *ethos* falls short.

We argue that in context of the university environment, this rhetorical framing places the emphasis of the campaign on individuals, but precludes a discussion of the community

membership--of who belongs, who has a say, and who is heard. The campaign fails to define what “our community” constitutes, though a glance at the university demographics and organizational charts display primarily white men in positions of power. Though this campaign is meant to unite the campus community, it places the focus on the individual. This focus points to a compelling dynamic in the relationship between power and language. If the goal of the civility campaign is to provoke members of our community to speak and listen in particular ways, and about particular things, it is setting in place a series of rule for that community. As Cheryl Glenn explains, “rhetoric always inscribes the relation of language and power at a particular moment (including who may speak, who may listen or who will agree to listen, and what can be said)” (1–2).

Geneva Smitherman’s *Talkin’ That Talk* explicitly draws attention to the “socio-cultural rules” of language use “within a paradigm of social transformation” (7–8). The socio-cultural rules of language embedded in particular contexts can be analyzed using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which in turn can help us understand the relationships between language, culture, and inequality (Gee 23). We argue that the ethical uses of language brought up by the civility campaign are not reflected in the campaign itself. We analyse the content of the campaign to reveal the ways in which the language used reflects power inequalities within our community: between administration and faculty, administration and students, faculty and students, and across peer categories as well.

The university is supposed to be an emotionally neutral space, a place for objective inquiry and the production of new knowledge. Of course the pressure to be emotionally neutral creates its own affect. ... The university, which must shepherd students of varying ages and backgrounds through the educational process, also relies on the emotional lives

of its workers to produce correctly calibrated human capital for the labor market, despite the invisibility of such work in yearly performance reviews and merit bonuses.

(Sloniowski 658)

This incoherence has particular implications when applied to a library context, which are also described as neutral spaces. Shockey, in discussing the tensions between intellectual freedom and social justice in the library profession, observes the inherent conflict between “the rhetoric of neutrality” and social justice goals. (103) Library neutrality is a central tenet of librarianship, but “neutrality is the wrong word--we aren’t neutral, we just suppress our feelings as an act of discipline while at work and protest on our own time” (White 73) This supposed neutrality is only valued when it supports the status quo and legitimizes existing power dynamics, no matter the harm that is caused. (Shockey 105; binaohan, “Professionalism”) In this article, we argue that a misguided civility campaign of this nature combined with librarians’ professional dysfunction vis à vis the concept of neutrality creates a dangerous silencing effect.

Below is a table outlining the frame through which we understand this issue. These concepts guide and structure our analysis of the reaction to the campus civility campaign compared with existing literature about civility and silencing in libraries. On the left side of the table are the critiques our faculty association, which includes librarians, had about the civility campaign conducted on our campus. These concerns were taken from the recorded minutes of the April 2015 faculty association executive meeting. That April meeting provided an opportunity for a lengthy and impassioned discussion about the civility campaign, details of which were shared with administration. Following the faculty response, the administration held a “campus-wide listening session” on June 2, 2014. However, there are few faculty on duty, and very few students on campus during the summer, which limited possible attendees. One administrator

described the campaign in a campus newsletter distributed the same month as: “effective and worth it to support the cultural change.” Faculty were deeply concerned by the term “culture,” the the context in which it was used, and the timing of these events. In August 2015, at the beginning of the next academic year, and after the union continued to decry the aims, scope, and content of the original posters, the Vice President of Student Affairs reported in a public meeting between the administration and faculty association that the civility campaign posters would be replaced with “general university belief statement posters.” As such, posters produced in 2015-2016 include the mission of the institution, the goals of various departments, and some of our institutional student learning outcomes.

On the right side of the table are the themes that came out of a literature search conducted using the keywords silencing, civility, and professionalism. This literature search was primarily conducted in the database LISTA (Library, Information Science and Technology Abstracts) and by a call one of the authors put out to librarians on Twitter asking for reading suggestions. The areas of overlap between campus faculty reactions to the civility campaign and librarians’ discussions of civility are telling.

| Faculty Comments Themes | Literature Review Themes |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| What civility or politeness might mean in different cultures | Civility |
| Problems with moving from anti-bullying focus to civility focus | Bullying |
| Singular culture vs. the diverse cultures our campus represents | Monoculturalism |
| Posters encourage passive aggressiveness, not empathy or civility | Silencing |

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Microaggressions | Gatekeeping |
| The 100% whiteness of the president’s cabinet. That people of color are held accountable but white people are not | Power and (White) Privilege |
| Empty rhetoric of the civility campaign: it exists solely for “CYA” so the university doesn’t get sued; protects the institution only but it’s empty, no real promotion of change | Empty Rhetoric of Intellectual Freedom |
| Attention to constant administrative focus on budgetary constraints, and the cost of producing the posters | Precarity/Job insecurity |

In this chapter, we will use Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to compare a campus-wide civility campaign with literature related to civility in libraries. This civility campaign was prompted by concerns about the campus climate related to discrimination and bullying. Within the particular context of libraries, we will examine how the rhetoric of civility has historically been used to control behaviour and limit access to the profession. There is no evidence that this civility discourse has improved the situations of already-marginalized populations or reduced bullying. Instead, it has contributed to a silencing effect which could have dangerous implications for the well-being of library employees and the patrons we serve. We will conclude this chapter with ideas about how librarians might go beyond performative civility to acknowledge the structural and cultural differences that exist within a single community.

Method

In order to explore the civility campaign and understand the possible impacts of such initiatives in academic library spaces, we turn to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA is a

methodology that “looks systematically at one or more of the often unnoticed details of grammar and word choice” (Zdenek and Johnstone 25). Linguists and other researchers use CDA to analyze large textual corpuses, as it can be used to comb through long stretches of discourse (text, talk, image, and gesture) to find patterns that create, circulate, reinforce, and reflect societal norms and ideology (Huckin et al 119). Though CDA was developed by linguists, we will use it to look for patterns in library discourse and in the text and design of the civility campaign posters and table tents distributed throughout the university, including in the university library.

Within the larger umbrella of CDA, “recontextualization looks for and interrogates chains of events and texts” (Fairclough 420). Recontextualization considers the ways in which language is taken from its original context and used and transformed into different messages in different contexts. Through that process, texts “are articulated together in new ways according to the logic of the recontextualising practice; and transformed from real to imaginary, and brought into the space of ideology” (Fairclough 399). For the purposes of this chapter, we found CDA concepts and principles valuable for examining ways in which power is constructed rhetorically, in educational settings generally and particularly in academic libraries (Huckin et al 114).

Ruth Wodak, one of the founders of the field of critical discourse analysis, defines CDA as “fundamentally interested in analyzing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control when these are manifested in language. In other words, CDA aims to investigate critically social inequality as it is expressed, constituted, and legitimized by language use” (53). As such, CDA is based on a number of socially invested principles, paying particular attention to power, the ideological work of discourse, and the mediation between text and society (Fairclough and Wodak 271-80). Cynthia Lewis describes

the value of CDA as a theoretical and methodological tool to examine how social practices are manifested in discourses that establish and maintain ideologies and social structures (374). For the purposes of our investigation, CDA is a useful methodological framework because it allows us to explore the institutional power embedded in the civility campaign at our university. CDA also allows us to take into account and explore the textual “silences, implicatures, ambiguities, and other covert but powerful aspects of discourse” (Huckin et al 110). The ambiguities of the civility campaign we analyze are particularly compelling because of the hostility with which the faculty association responded, and continues to respond, to the administrative agenda surrounding the campaign, despite purportedly sharing the goal of improving the campus climate. We use CDA to coordinate the analysis of larger purposes for the civility campaign with the smaller details of the language used to represent civility to the campus community, particularly in the library. As Brook et al. note in their call for increased anti-racism work in academic libraries, “The use of critical discourse analysis is an attempt to deepen and broaden the set of theoretical tools that library workers can apply to their lived experiences in their particular libraries, with their specific user communities” (249). CDA gives us the opportunity to look at the indirect or implicit meanings that the posters relay to us: how they shape us and our academic library space.

Analysis

We know that communication depends on an intricate interdependence of written and visual forms. In analyzing the civility campaign, we rely on cues from the design and the alphabetic text of the posters in order to determine how meaning is made or how expectations for behaviour are established. The civility campaign has run since 2012. In 2012-2013 the Integrated Marketing team produced 15 posters. In 2013-2014, they produced 18 posters, and produced

another 16 in 2014-2015, resulting in a total of 49 posters. These posters were put up throughout campus buildings, and small table tents for each of the posters were placed on tables in common areas. The posters and table tents were prominently displayed in the library. When the civility campaign was launched, poster frames were installed in the primary library stairwell in order to showcase these campaign posters. The decision to physically alter the building was made by the administration, and library employees were explicitly instructed to support the campaign in all library spaces.

The posters from 2012-2014 were divided in half vertically, the left half in purple and the right half in gold, representing the university colors. The posters were headed with “Civility Scene” and numbered. The scenes were themed. The audience was presented a scenario such as “to express frustration” (16). The purple side presented the “civil” or preferred response such as “keep your language respectful,” while the gold side presented the “uncivil” response such as “Curse a blue streak--it’s great linguistic therapy.” At the bottom of each poster was the appeal “Who are YOU?” After the faculty pushback, the civility posters were modified. The 2014-2015 campaign posters include quotes from famous scholars, artists, writers, and thinkers on an all-purple background with the text written in gold. The ethical appeal, “Who are YOU?,” was maintained at the bottom of each poster.

The design elements establish the boundaries of the community to which the posters appeal. The bold use of university colors shares similarities with our sports uniforms, our websites, and our university chotzkies. An appeal to school spirit, the design elements forestall any answer to the “Who are YOU?” appeal. Who are you, reader? You are a member of this university community. This sort of marketing is a standard practice, but the content of the messages when transposed over the visual appeal contradicts the simplicity of community. As we analyzed the 49 posters,

we turned to word choice as an important category through which to understand possible themes. In coding the language used in the 49 posters, we identified five thematic categories. These categories are aspirational, not necessarily leading to the intended results. For each poster theme, there is a corollary to one or more of the faculty comments identified above.

| Poster categories | Faculty comments |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| Polite Communication | Bullying, passive aggressiveness, and gatekeeping |
| Community Interactions | Protecting the university instead of faculty and students |
| Respectful Behaviour | Silencing, ableism, and microaggressions |
| Social and Cultural Awareness | Reinforcing monoculturalism |
| Power Dynamics | Privilege, precarity, intellectual freedom |

It is worth noting that many of the scenarios presented in the posters created intersections between the thematic categories. In fact, almost none of the posters fall into one category only. However, we review the thematic categories in context of the scholarship surrounding the issue in order to locate the interplay of such things as privilege and ableism, microaggressions and gatekeeping, and monoculturalism and precarity. Because the discussion surrounding many of these issues is contentious, we believe it is important to look at the analysis of the texts in the specific context of the scholarship. For this reason, the next section will serve as both a review of literature and analysis. We look at the ways in which campaigns such as ours shift the focus from anti-bullying to civility; the emphasis on silencing dissent; using credentialism as a form of gatekeeping; threats of precarity--broadly, the ways in which these campaigns reinforce the

status quo. Even with the advocacy power of unions, the status quo at MSU is opaque. Opacity in this sense means that people outside of the established power structure are unable to see how and why decisions are made. Though our mission and values emphasize the role of community and diversity, actions taken on behalf of the administration such as the civility campaign reinforce an individualistic and monocultural status quo that ultimately silences difference rather than cultivating it.

Discussion

One of the American Library Association's core values is Professionalism: providing "library services by professionally qualified personnel who have been educated in graduate programs within institutions of higher education." (ALA Core Values) Professionalism operates as a gatekeeping technique to limit who can claim professional affiliation.¹ Additionally, as Drabinski notes, professionalism not only involves educational certification, but also "the production of an identity, made and remade in part through the discursive contestation of Professionalism itself.... In political economies of crisis and austerity, claims to status become more urgent as fields attempt to secure to themselves access to diminishing capital, both social and material." (607) These educational requirements came in place in the early twentieth century, and were supported not as a way to provide better service for patrons but as a way to garner better salaries and benefits for members of the professional class, at the expense of lower paid library staff. (Drabinski 611)

Farrell, Schlesselman-Tarango, and Macias all note an expectation that librarians comport themselves in a particular manner. However, they have different interpretations of what that ideal

¹ For alternate points of view on this topic, see "In defense of the MLS; or, confess your unpopular opinion" by Roxanne Shirazi <http://roxanneshirazi.com/2017/01/26/in-defense-of-the-mls-or-confess-your-unpopular-opinion/> and "The library paraprofessional movement and the deprofessionalization of librarianship" by Rory Litwin (PDF) <http://libraryjuicepress.com/docs/deprofessionalization.pdf>

is and whether it is a positive expectation. In her article on collegiality in the workplace, Farrell, a library dean at a large research institution, notes that “librarians... have a special role within our society that holds us to higher standards as role models for society at large.... It is clearly our responsibility to behave in a civil manner to promote open dialogue and thinking in our society.” (174) Schlesselman-Tarango, while not citing Farrell, notes that such rhetoric impacts our perceptions of who is fit for the position of librarian, and may limit who might be allowed to claim that professional identity. Macias, speaking from personal experience after being on the receiving end of criticism about his own fitness, observes that this gatekeeping “discourage[s] and actively fight[s] against advancement of those who could create change that would challenge the White racist power structure. Somewhere along the line, being civil and being professional became synonyms for servility, obedience, subservience and getting along within the *status quo*.” (“Ethnic Bullies”)

The concept of a single campus community is itself a form of gatekeeping used in the civility campaign. The discourse surrounding who is civil -- or not -- as represented in the civility campaign in effect tells people that they don't belong if they don't fall into this monocultural ideal of civil behaviour. Who belongs to the MSU community? Who belongs as a librarian at MSU? Who belongs to the library profession?

Civility

Civility does not have a single, universal meaning. In her exploration of civility in diverse organizations, Sampson takes a multicultural approach to civility in the library. She explores several definitions for civility, which range from “deference or allegiance to the social order” to her ideal, which is an “acknowledgement of equality between citizens in private, public or official interactions.” (94) However, she notes that we can't truly achieve this ideal until full

societal equality is a reality. She also notes that in a more diverse environment, there will be conflicting social norms. This means that individuals have to rely on their own self-regulation of their behaviour rather than relying on social support to interpret and guide behavior. While shared experiences and shared meanings make it easier to have shared expectations of civilized behaviour, operating in a diverse environment means working without those shared norms.

In Farrell's discussion of collegiality in library workplaces, she utilizes civility in a way more in keeping with the idea of allegiance to the social order. She notes that "librarians... have a special role within our society that holds us to higher standards as role models for society at large.... It is clearly our responsibility to behave in a civil manner to promote open dialogue and thinking in our society." (Farrell 174) The idea of high standards and role model behaviour is a clear component of the MSU Civility Campaign. The language used in the first civility scene presents the audience with a problem that is in many of the posters, didactic recommendations are made about behaviours or actions with no attempt to model or to educate the community about those behaviours. In Civility Scene 28, the audience is told to "Model civil behavior." On the purple, or positive, side of the poster, we are encouraged to "Demonstrate it, day after day," and encouraged not to, "Pay lip service--activating your mouth is way easier than activating behavior." What is the "it" we are meant to demonstrate? Is it in action and language? Only in language? The scenario presented commands us to *do*, but does not help us learn *how*. And though respecting the humanity of all members of the campus community is important, ironically, in some of the posters they move beyond a muddled message of "activating behavior" and are outright discriminatory.

Some librarians take a more critical perspective of calls for civility. Shockey cites Joan W.

Scott's discussion of the Steven Salaita/University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign controversy, in

which Salaita's offer of a tenured position was rescinded after he Tweeted negative comments about Israel, which the UIUC chancellor decided was enough evidence that his behaviour would threaten "the comfort, safety, and security of his students." (Scott, "New Thought Police") Shockey used this as an example of how calls for civility are a "discourse typically used by dominant forces to silence dissent." (102) Meanwhile, Schlesselman-Tarango argues that historically rhetoric about civility has been used as an assimilationist strategy (676). In this conceptualization of civility, the focus is on standardizing language, being respectful of authority, maintaining traditional gender roles, and creating a labor force that works hard without being disruptive.

The status quo maintenance illustrated by Schlesselman-Tarango is at the forefront of the civility campaign. In Civility Scene 11, the audience is targeted: supervisors. "If you're at the top of a hierarchy...Model civility for those who work with you. OR Act as if you're exempt, civility is for suckers." Arguably nonsensical, the negative side, in gold, says "civility is for suckers."

Though we don't know exactly what this outdated colloquialism is meant to invoke, it is clearly intoning a sort of schoolyard scenario: all the cool kids are civil. In all the ways that this poster lacks clarity or definition of civility, it is attempting to focus on respectful authority and a non-disruptive labor force.

Sloniowski presents the rhetoric around civility as being a standard by which to demand affective labour. "As in all service jobs, librarians are asked to make a pretence of emotional neutrality around the information and people they engage with and to offer service with a smile."

(Sloniowski 660) She engages in a Marxist critique of the affective labour involved in librarians' role as "civilizers" or what Farrell calls "role models" by observing how this form of labour is expected but not valued as labour. As such, this "affective labor is co-opted by capitalism as a

manipulative force.... The affective labor needed to sustain social relations of cooperation and civility and to strategically manage emotions for social effect is also an everyday practice that ... becomes a kind of shadow labor [correlating] to an estranging, sexist, colonization of life by work.” (Sloniowski 655-656)

Interestingly, the shadow labour of civility is acknowledged by one of the quotes used in the 2015 civility campaign. A quote by Ellen Goodman, cited on the poster as an American columnist and author says, “Civility, it is said, means obeying the unenforceable.” If a librarian’s perceived role is as “civilizer” then the manipulative forces of such requirements put individuals in a position where they are constantly working to be seen as neutral. We know this to be impossible; we know this is not civility in the sense of creating a space where all members are treated with dignity. In fact, policing oneself and one’s environment in such a way may lead to microaggressions (sometimes coded as polite behaviour policing) or to outright bullying.

Bullying

While they are often conflated, the difference between bullying and incivility rests in power. Both can cause interpersonal challenges and both are interpreted through one’s own cultural prism, but when looking at how power is constructed rhetorically, there are differences. In the way that we use these terms in this article, bullying tends to appear in peer-to-peer or supervisor-to-employee relationships. Incivility tends to be a component of relationships in which individuals who feel powerless in their role push back against those in power. Hicks argues that concepts such as civility are promoted by organizations as a way of constricting the rhetorical techniques allowed, making it more difficult to challenge those in power. Civility has “been co-opted by powerful governing agents to describe their working procedures for managing

disagreement and resolving problems, procedures designed to reproduce institutional power and to manage radical challenges to that power.” (Hicks 251)

Matesic, in her article on the challenges of civility in libraries, notes several types of behaviours identified as bullying, including “yelling, screaming, threatening... aggressive gossip, refusing to communicate, criticizing or humiliating someone in front of others, insults, isolation and/or withholding information or resources.” (Matesic 164) She also noted behaviours that constitute mobbing, or bullying done by a group, even if some participate only out of fear of becoming a target themselves. Examples of such behaviour includes excessive monitoring of break times, walking past an individual without acknowledging them, punitive desk schedules, withholding communication, and not providing sufficient resources to complete work tasks. (Matesic 164)

However, before we exclaim in horror “Who could do such a thing?!” keep in mind that some of these behaviours – such as withholding information – may be the results of structural problems that lead to strained relationships between individuals. (Galoosiz, “Me and You”)

In the university context, our human resources department and unions recognize these bullying behaviours as a problem. And though there are federal protections against harassment, bullying is much harder to identify, define, and understand, which makes it difficult for workplace hostility policies to consistently account for it (Sepler 1). In most cases, organizations identify a broad, vague list of behaviours that contribute to a hostile work environment, but that are also extremely difficult to prove. As Sepler argues, “For those attempting to unravel bullying situations, it can be difficult to determine whether or not the behavior being complained of is merely an overstated part of a legitimate attempt to manage performance” (Sepler 5). However, a civility campaign functions beyond the realm of policy and enforcement, and so how administrators define bullying behaviours can shed light on the organization itself.

How can supervisors create a more collegial environment? Some, like Farrell assert that collegial relations will help individuals focus on shared goals. Others, like Matesic, assert that shared goals will help individuals maintain collegial relations. Farrell also recommends supervisors call out “inappropriate behavior” in public in order to prevent bullying or dominant behaviour (177), which ironically would constitute bullying in Matesic’s definition. Bullying is a conflated and confused issue: how we define it, how we discuss it, and how we identify it are challenging questions. Anti-bullying, however, is a term that can capture the complicated and negotiable definitions about behaviour.

When looking at how bullying is operationalized, we find research such as Fox and Spector’s analysis of counterproductive work behavior. They found that victims of bullying were not unproductive. “Their problem was that they clashed with the norms of the work group to which they belonged. [Their] conscientiousness went against a group culture characterized by rigidity and low tolerance for diversity. ... As a consequence, the group may have started to harass these individuals, either to enforce conformity or to get rid of the person.” (254)

Using civility rhetoric to accomplish anti-bullying goals is the wrong technique from the outset. Civility rhetoric as used in the MSU Civility Campaign attempts to force all members of the community into a single acceptable pattern of behaviour--to force compliance in order to meet the institution’s needs rather than the needs of members of the community. In order to counteract bullying one must acknowledge that bullying occurs when rigid norms exclude individuals who don’t fit into the dominant culture from full admission into the community.

Monoculturalism

Monoculturalism is the expectation that all individuals conform to one worldview, which assumes itself to be neutral. In North America, monoculturalism prioritizes Whiteness. As

Hathcock says in her examination of the failure of diversity initiatives in librarianship, Whiteness is “a theoretical concept that can extend beyond the realities of racial privilege to a wide range of dominant ideologies based on gender identity, sexual orientation, class, and other categories.” (“White Librarianship”) In the context of campus civility, monoculturalism emphasizes one right way to be civil for the one campus community. This ignores that campuses, and libraries, are made up of individuals from many different communities with many different ideals of civility.

In Schlesselman-Tarango’s exploration of the Lady Bountiful archetype in librarianship, she notes several areas in which so-called civilizing forces are used to ensure obedience. These civilizing forces were coded as feminine and White, and idealized qualities such as submissiveness and nurturing. The archetype, in effect, worked to support colonialism and the myth of White benevolence. Adapted to nineteenth-century librarianship, these values included “the ability to elevate, influence, and morally and culturally uplift ... hospitality and warmth... sensitivity, kindness, empathy and delicacy.” (Schlesselman-Tarango 673-674) This model of librarianship emphasized librarians’ allegiance to the status quo and eased potential worries of those in power by refusing to challenge sexism or other oppressions. (Schlesselman-Tarango 674)

Though two of the civility scenes encourage a broadly accepting point of view (“Be gender-inclusive in your language,” and “Recognize how different each individual is”), most of the posters project a nebulous definition of civility that does not take into account or acknowledge what civil behaviour looks like in different cultures. On a campus that already has a problem with monoculturalism in its leadership, making recommendations for behaviour that would be perceived as outright rude to some faculty members and students is short-sighted and reinforces

white privilege. One example is Civility Scene 19, “If a colleague shows signs of stress...Ask if you can help. OR Ignore it--feeling stress is natural, showing stress is weak.” As suggested above, this didactic framing allows for no subtlety in an individual’s behaviour and ignores social power dynamics totally, but it also ignores cultural power dynamics that may discourage someone directly interceding in a situation in which they perceive “signs of stress.”

Jumping to discourse about twenty-first century librarianship, Farrell’s reference to the “diversity of ideas” meme calls to mind Brook et al.’s warning that rhetoric about diversity and multiculturalism is often used to reaffirm the neutrality of Whiteness while simultaneously ignoring structural oppressions, in a way that actually trivializes injustice (Brook et al. 247).

These power dynamics are more likely to come into play in ways that punish people who do not comply with white norms when conflict arises. For example, when critiquing the idea that reference librarians smiling at patrons is universally perceived as welcoming, Brook et al. state that “this apolitical conception of responsiveness limits reference librarians’ ability to serve patrons of diverse racial backgrounds because it does not guide us toward a more nuanced, political assessment of individual and collective needs” (272).

By only acknowledging superficial politeness norms rather than interacting with each other as full and complete people, we don’t acknowledge the structural layers and nuances that underlie our interactions. We don’t allow people to be their full, real selves with us, which Mountz et al. suggest makes people more susceptible to the negative effects of overwork. On the other hand, this same research argues that “where employees are able to bring their authentic selves to the workplace, and seek and gain support for work-life challenges” their resilience increases (1248-1249). By creating environments where people are not allowed to behave in ways that reflect the

communities to which they belong, we are in effect asking people to silence significant parts of themselves -- especially when they don't fit into monocultural norms. *Silencing*

Brook et al. caution that "As a conflict-averse profession, librarianship must begin to recognize conflict as potentially productive, and not only as bare antagonism." (278) Silencing prevents people from engaging with difficult and controversial ideas. As O'Donnell notes "Education is not a space of absolute control. It has to permit unpredictability and surprise [and allow for transformation] through the encounter with a subject and the perspectives of others". (70-71)

This is only possible when we allow space to make personal connections and become open to learning from people unlike ourselves; it cannot be imposed on us from above; it cannot happen when we're not allowed to speak.

While we have librarians who point out the professional punishment faced by those who speak up, the boundaries of what is worth protecting are unclear. Using popular library blogger Andy Woodworth as an example, he argues on the one hand: "I also believe that the library world doesn't handle honest portrayals of the work place very well. Public dissent is considered gauche in a profession that proudly supports the societal provocateurs, miscreants, and iconoclasts but wants to keep discontent in-house." (Woodworth, "Waiting for Batgirl") On the other hand, he has also said that certain forms of self-expression aren't worth protecting: "If only they were actually about professionalism and not merely screeds about dress codes (or worse) childish temper tantrums over the desire [to] post anything online under the guise of "personal space" without professional consequences." (Woodworth, "Libraryland Festivus")

In Cecily Walker's response to the latter post, she notes that:

"Regardless of what I wear or how I act around some members of the community I serve, my race will always place me outside of the norm. When we place the burden

of being the exception on those who fall outside of the norm, we are furthering an agenda that supports the idea that whiteness is the highest standard, indeed, the **only** standard that should be used to measure suitability.

Rather, I think the responsibility lies with the community as a whole to demonstrate that differences (race, gender, sexual orientation, able-bodied, etc.) aren't just deviations, but are representative of much stronger, deeply entrenched power relations that must be challenged and dismantled if this profession hopes to diversify." ("On Privilege", emphasis hers)

In the area of silencing aspects of one's own identity in an effort to deflect negative professional consequences, b. binaohan notes that "we have a professional environment where many people feel very comfortable saying some really heinous things but those whose lives are negatively impacted by those words must always smile and remain silent. Because calling out oppression is almost always punished more heavily than being oppressive." (binaohan, "Gender and Presenting")

The poster campaign as a whole showcases passivity as a positive trait. Passivity however, can be a problematic civil ideal, particularly if an individual is faced with threatening or harassing behaviour. In Civility Scene 14, audience members are encouraged to "Mind your own business and keep quiet when a rumor comes your way." The alternative to silence is to "Text the details to all of your friends immediately--with a big LOL." Again didactic, again extreme, but what if the rumor is addressed to a reference librarian. Maybe a student reported to you that she was being harassed by another student while using the computers. Aside from the moral aspects, obligatory reporting laws mean that you could face serious repercussions if you keep silent and mind your own business. Though there is a clear indication in the posters that collegiality is a

value on our campus, the passivity demonstrated on the positive side of the posters undermines the possibilities of collegiality in favor of silence.

Power and Privilege

Privilege is a complicated topic with multiple layers, including race, sex, ability, economic class, and more. In Sayer's book on the moral aspects of class, he notes that often those in power demand respect -- not in the moral sense of respecting fellow humans, but in an amoral sense of global efficiency. When the expectation of respect for authority crosses multicultural lines without an understanding of those different cultures or a shared understanding of why certain qualities deserve respect, it creates a situation in which superficial politeness norms and showing leadership in a good light at all times becomes increasingly important. (Sayer 178)

Farrell argues that prioritizing collegiality creates a sense of shared purpose that helps libraries achieve their goals and also supports the work of individual library personnel. (173) What she does not state in terms of the latter, however, is whether this collegial support extends to personal goals that are not aligned with library goals, or which may be in conflict with library goals.

Matesic's research, on the other hand, found that poor behaviour "breeds in chaotic environments with weak leadership, some degree of job insecurity, nebulous task or work roles, indistinct performance measures and strong conformity to organizational culture." (165-166)

Therefore, trying to force feelings of collegiality rather than working to improve structural problems actual impedes civility.

As we've seen in the sections that discuss monoculturalism, silencing, and gatekeeping, existing library and university structures were designed to maintain the status quo. While ideals about service and access are commonly discussed, actually making changes that don't benefit those in power can be difficult, even when those in power claim to want to reach related goals. As Chris

Bourg notes in her post on the whiteness of librarianship, our professional rhetoric claims that we reflect the nation's diversity, but we don't actually hire people of colour. (2014) And even when we do hire people of colour, we don't retain them. (Vinopal 2016) Within the context of power and privilege, whiteness is not the only factor we contend with.

Civility Scene 22 focuses on the role of technology in our face-to-face interactions. "When talking to someone," according to scene 22, we should "Be present in all senses." Audience members are given the negative behaviour: "Be there in body only--and twiddle away with your gadget du jour." This recommendation is ableist, ignoring that embodied experiences vary drastically, and that for some people being present in all senses is simply not possible. For example, common self-calming techniques for someone with autism are stimming and fidgeting, which in some cases involves "twiddling" with a gadget. In Civility Scene 49, Confucius is quoted, "Respect yourself and others will respect you." For a person with disabilities, the social and cultural power dynamics; the inaccessible physical spaces in which they must operate; and the struggle with their specific impairments or body image can have lasting impacts on how they perceive themselves, on how others perceive them, and on how they understand the ways in which others perceive them. This double- or sometimes triple-consciousness impairs the ability to comply with a simplistic directive to respect oneself. This respect for self and others requires education, positive interactions, and sensitivity. Civility Scene 2, similarly, ignores difference in making a recommendation about behaviour. The poster discourages multi-tasking when talking to someone, and instructs the audience to "Look that person in the eyes." In addition to ignoring possible social anxiety disorders, this instruction ignores politeness protocols in other cultures. Power imbalances mean that those with less privilege often have more reasonable ideas about how to change the system. However, their voices are discounted either through rhetoric of

neutrality or rhetoric of civility, while at the same time they are blamed for not advocating for themselves better. As the Library Loon notes in her post on silencing and gender: "Asking a potential or actual target to buck the system—not to mention assuming it's their fault if they don't, or if they do and are punished for it—piles responsibility in entirely the wrong place."

(Library Loon, "Silencing")

In Civility Scene 1, the audience is presented with the scenario: "When you want to get a point across...". Readers are encouraged to, "Be calm, clear, and coherent," and warned not to, "Raise your voice--makes you sound like The Intimidator." Clarity and coherence, though important, ignore individuals who may be learning the primary language of the community. It may also silence someone who is passionate, or speaks with a louder voice. This is reinforced by Civility Scene 32: "In any conversation...Listen to the tone of your voice. OR Ignore it--it's all the words." Women are frequently referred to as "shrill" when they speak, particularly when they are in positions of authority (West). They may not raise their voice at all, but gendered communication expectations can result in impossibly conflicted recommendations about how to behave in professional settings.

Empty Rhetoric

The final category we will discuss is more challenging, and will require us to honestly critique one of the basic tenets of the library profession. That category is how the emptiness of civility rhetoric and the emptiness of the ALA Core Value of intellectual freedom work together to maintain the status quo in ways that librarians often have a hard time acknowledging. Intellectual freedom frequently appears in discussions about power structures and civility within library and university spaces. The American Library Association Core Values describes the value of Intellectual Freedom as "[upholding] the principles of intellectual freedom and [resisting] all

efforts to censor library resources.” One connotation of this that is often overlooked in discussion of intellectual freedom is that librarians are themselves resources within libraries. If you look at the related Code of Ethics, however, you see that Intellectual Freedom refers strictly to access to information. Librarians are considered neutral vessels that facilitate transmission of these information resources to library users; they are not allowed to be active information carriers themselves.

If this argument seems extreme, consider Farrell’s framing of civility in relation to intellectual freedom. She argues: “Librarians are respectful of different perspectives, viewpoints, and arguments **in support of free speech and intellectual freedom.**” (172, emphasis ours) As Shockey notes, the American Library Association’s advocacy for intellectual freedom for librarians only goes as far as providing access to library users, not to protecting librarians themselves. (104) He cites Asako’s study of six decades of intellectual freedom activities. Asako discusses activities during the late 1960s, during which some library employees actively advocated for social change and as a result lost their jobs, moving forward to ALA’s realization that the organization lacked the power and the will to enforce professional ethics. As Asako bluntly states, “the ALA does not endorse or support its members who decide to follow one’s professional ethics and speak out on policy matters: you are on your own.” (101) In addition, ALA narrowed the rhetorical focus surrounding the concept of intellectual freedom to only protect library users. As the Code of Ethics now reads, “We distinguish between our personal convictions and professional duties and do not allow our personal beliefs to interfere with fair representation of **the aims of our institutions** or the provision of access to their information resources.” (“Code”, emphasis ours)

Within a university context, true intellectual freedom requires what Mountz et al. refer to as the “freedom to think” which in turn requires working conditions that provide space, time, and resources to engage in that work (1247). This freedom to think is related to the concept of “slow scholarship” which “is not just about time, but about structures of power and inequality.” (1238) True critical thinking also requires an environment that is open to experimentation, creativity, and dissenting opinions in a way that civility campaigns such as the one we discuss do not allow. In fact, as the faculty association notes, this civility campaign seems to be mostly an empty self-protective gesture, a way to sidestep the underlying issues while saving face.

We are trained as librarians to believe in and preach the gospel of intellectual freedom. When we abandon that belief because it is politically inconvenient -- because administrators don't like what we're saying or because a coworker has different beliefs from our own -- we show how hollow that value truly is. When an administrative body pushes a monocultural, opaque discourse of civility on a resistant campus community rather than open up the conversation in ways that might challenge the status quo, they show how hollow their commitment to an inclusive campus environment truly is.

Conclusion

In August 2015, after the faculty union continued to decry the aims, scope, and content of the original posters, the Vice President of Student Affairs reported in a public meeting between the administration and faculty association that the civility campaign posters would be replaced with “general university belief statement posters.” As such, posters produced in 2015-2016 include the mission of the institution, the goals of various departments, and some of our institutional student learning outcomes. While this was ostensibly a victory for the union, in actuality our requests for a focus on intersectional anti-bullying was ignored. The official rhetoric still

prioritized “civility” which, as we have demonstrated, is used to reinforce the status quo. We are consistently struck by the fact that as our administration is ramping up status quo behaviour maintenance to silence dissent, we are also living through an era of academic austerity. Austerity measures taken at many institutions, including ours, tend to target academic jobs first--sometimes while increasing administrative hires. In their book *Empire*, on the societal impacts of globalization, Hardt and Negri discuss how much we’re impacted by austerity, or in their terms, an environment in which contingent and precarious work situations make the world feel increasingly out of control. While businesses can move from one global location to another at will, workers who “had enjoyed a certain stability and contractual power, have thus found themselves in increasingly precarious employment situations. Once the bargaining position of labor has been weakened, network production can accommodate various old forms of non-guaranteed labor, such as freelance work, home work, part-time labor, and piecework.” (Hardt and Negri 297)

In Gill and Pratt’s examination of labor precarity in cultural and creative industries including higher education, they observed work structures based on the elimination of boundaries between work and play; developing identities of self which are based on our work roles; and constant insecurity about finding work, earning enough money, and keeping up with constantly changing expectations. They described the results as a bulimic pattern of working, “in which periods with no work can give way to periods that require intense activity, round-the-clock working, with its attendant impacts on sleep, diet, health and social life.” (Gill and Pratt 36) These structural expectations of individual behaviours by their nature privilege people of certain abilities, genders, ethnicities, and family structures. They also observed that behaviours used by labour movements such as wildcat strikes and absenteeism aimed at a vision of life that’s not organized

around work are considered radically anti-capitalist. Gill and Pratt also cite Hemmings' critique of concepts surrounding the idea that affective labour is a subversive labour power by noting that affect "often emerges as a rhetorical device whose ultimate goal is to persuade 'paranoid theorists' into a more productive frame of mind." (Hemmings 511) In other words, the rhetoric we use to conceptualize affective labour is a response based on situations of precarity, in which we're bound "into structures and relations that may, in classical Marxist terms, not be in our real interests." (Gill and Pratt 35)

Affective labour includes "fear, anxiety, controlling oneself and one's emotions, modulating subjectivity to fit workplace demands, the psychological preparation to be ready for work's potential (i.e., through constantly checking email), and the anticipatory effects of staying constantly connected and on top of new information in one's field.... pervasive sense of precariousness, feelings of instability and being overloaded.... [and being] always psychically and somatically prepared for work that has no beginning and no end." (Sloniowski 658) This phenomenon of job insecurity also manifests itself in library spaces in several ways, such as organizational climate, organizational structure, worker satisfaction, and service. When looking at service quality and worker satisfaction as an interrelated phenomenon, it is vital to recognize the impact of expanding work expectations in terms of hours and task variety on employee stress levels. (Matesic) In Carlsson's study of how Facebook was used by public librarians in Sweden, she noted "that the labour required to realize the visions of Library 2.0 is characterized by a constant flux between self-determination and precarity (i.e. existence without predictability or security). While the librarians participating in the study creatively construct new routines and strategies for doing work, they are always at the beck and call of Facebook and have only marginal opportunities of influencing the technology they use." (Carlsson 199)

The Library Loon coined the term Coordinator Syndrome to describe another example of structural job insecurity in the library field. Coordinator Syndrome exists when libraries create Coordinator positions, often in new or niche areas, without providing said coordinator with staff, money, or other resources that would actually allow them to succeed. Then, when they fail, either that service is deemed a bad idea and/or that Coordinator is deemed a bad hire. (Library Loon, “The C-Word”; Salo, “My Repository Rant”)

The preponderance of adjuncts and part-time contractors is a structural demonstration of precarity common to libraries and higher education. Within higher education, precarity is something that multiple scholars have engaged in intense debate over. Adjuncts rights activists have made a variety of arguments about the ways in which precarity damages academic work. However, there are also tenured faculty members such as Jason Brennan, who refer to adjunct activists as “madjuncts” (Brennan). What scholars on both sides of the labor debate seem to agree on is that precarity contributes to silencing and harms any possibility of intellectual freedom.

Next Steps

Recognize the dangers of silencing critique

- The prevailing colonial mindset perpetuates the marginalization of already-marginalized peoples within the profession. According to the 2009-2010 American Community Survey Estimates (ACSE) of the number of credentialed librarians, the profession is close to 90% white, a proportion that has remained stable since 1990. Even though approximately 83% of librarians are women, only 57% of academic library directors were women (ALA, “Library Directors”). From the same ACSE survey, approximately 4% of librarians self-identify as disabled. Statistics on LGBTQIA+ status are not collected.

- Our hiring and retentions patterns are not signals of organizational health. What this means for our patrons is that we are perpetuating an unsafe environment for those from marginalized communities because of our adherence to a monocultural “civilizing” gaze.

Recognize how we reinforce silence

- If our discourse is based on prioritizing passivity and squashing dissent, the squeaky wheel gets replaced while non-challenging people get promoted in an endless cycle of bad civility campaign rhetoric.
- By eliminating people who challenge the status quo instead of spending time on doing the real work of combating oppression, we train newcomers to the profession to continue engaging in that silencing behaviour.

Seek remedies to performative civility

- Protect library employees from threats of precarity through collective action and unionization of workers. We both work in an institution where tenure is protected by an active faculty bargaining unit. This means that during times of campus budget reductions, the process of cutting resources and positions is clearly articulated beforehand, and reduces the ability of administration to engage in retaliatory action against any single individual or group of individuals who choose to speak out. Because librarians are part of the faculty union, they also receive these protections. This gives us the freedom to speak out against initiatives like the Civility Campaign and advocate for better methods.
- Prioritize support for librarian scholarship and political engagement. We are lucky enough to work for an institution that supports librarians being engaged scholars and active within the broader professional community. This support is explicitly written into our work contracts. Jessica speaking for herself in the next section: When I first started, I

was extremely anxious and kind of clueless about how to do this work. But over time, as I went through the common librarian-scholar stepping stones of this-is-how-we-did-it articles and then basic-level surveys and statistical analysis, I learned how to write, I learned how to craft arguments, I learned how to do research. These are all necessary skills for librarians to develop, and without opportunities to practice those skills, librarians miss out. They miss out on developing a sense of self-efficacy about their own research and writing; they miss out on challenging themselves and being challenged by others to become better, more critical thinkers; they miss out on significant opportunities to expand their learning. They are, in effect, silenced in their potential as advocates for the profession.

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