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Author

Friedman, Lia G.

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Integrating Identities:

The Intersection of Reluctant Professionals and the Academy

Lia Friedman and Torie Quiñonez

This is a conversation about academia, how our pedagogy and work as librarians were shaped (or not) by it, what our lived life brings to our work, and what impact it may have on our students.

In this chapter, we explore themes around academia and capitalism, how students are “traditionally” taught within established educational structures, and how our untraditional lives and educational trajectories have informed the ways we teach and relate to students. We will also pose related self-reflections at the end of the chapter that can be used by others. These inquiries encourage readers to recognize how capitalism and white supremacy are interwoven aspects of higher education and how these perspectives can inform ways of purposefully working within this system while also challenging it. Our critique of capitalism and the inequity, meritocracy, and white supremacist cisheteropatriarchy that upholds it necessarily includes the institutions that build and support it, including higher education. Our conversation wrestles with how we bring those critiques, which have informed how we live our lives, to our work within that institution.

STARTING OUR CONVERSATION

In Conversation: Lia Friedman

My background is untraditional. My family fractured early, and we experienced poverty in a very middle-class way (knowing there was a potential safety net from my parents’

families). But college was a given for me and my siblings. Both of my parents were in the midst of getting advanced degrees, and the alternative was not considered. I attended an alternative K-12 school as a young child where we learned yoga, art, and music. At five years old, I tested high in language and reading, so I sat in with the seventh graders for that subject—often sitting in someone’s lap. Circumstances changed and I was sent to a traditional school where I balked at the structure and subjects. This resistance led to dropping out of high school at fifteen and immersing myself in punk rock, protest, social justice, and cooperative work from a white feminist lens and eventually expanding my learning practice to focus on anti-racism, black feminism, gender, and queerness.

In addition to various day jobs at record and bookstores, there were ten-plus years of off-and-on community college and eventually transferring to a four-year college that did not assign grades and where I was the oldest in my class by far. Both of the colleges I attended, undergraduate and graduate, did not require standardized testing for admission—this component was essential as I had independently structured my own education after dropping out of high school, skipping subjects like math. These experiences, the naive and the more realized, affect how I interact with students, peers, faculty, and academia as a whole. I see a life inside the body of the student, separate from their work in the classroom.

In Conversation: Torie Quiñonez

My background is also not traditional. I was born into a working-class Mexican American family, to parents who did not have access to higher education and devoted their lives to supporting family by working (in the case of my father, from childhood). When I was growing up, college was seen as something to aspire to, according to the typical American Dream narrative, but *how* I would get there, how I would pay for it, and how I would be equipped to succeed were open questions that my parents could not answer for me. Working hard and following the rules were the most important messages I received from my family, and that served me until junior high when I became politicized through punk music and culture. Despite its whiteness, which I would later grapple with politically and intellectually in my academic work, political punk rock inspired a lifelong journey of inquiry and resistance, which I am proud to say made me the person I am today, but necessarily (to me) included an all-out rejection of authoritarian models of compulsory education.

In high school, I transferred to an alternative school that allowed me to take community college courses for graduation credit, which exposed me not only to more intellectually demanding coursework but also to people in various stages of life, coming from different backgrounds and life experiences. Life beyond high school meant probing the possibilities of what education could be, which for me included traveling, befriending people whose lives were vastly different from my own, working various jobs to support myself, and focusing on community-building through antiracist organizing, radical feminist consciousness-raising, and countless hours of autodidactic pursuit of knowledge in whatever subject areas interested me and supported my concurrent projects. Meanwhile, I kept a toehold on the idea of higher education by dipping in and out of community college for nearly ten years. At eighteen years old, I couldn’t imagine putting my life onto a trajectory

determined by an academic major when so much of my life was yet to be discovered. I recognize the vast privilege that this blithe and unbothered reluctance both required and afforded me. Pushing against the expectations of society and of one's family brings both the rewards and the punishment of being an outsider. The social capital I acquired by my adjacency to whiteness is part of what has allowed me to move through the world in this way, but the means through which I accessed that capital (identification with a subculture) also kept me outside of the mainstream. For example, when I finally made the decision to finish college and transferred to UC Santa Cruz, I felt doubly alienated—by the whiteness of most of the students but also by the fact that I wasn't performing the "right" kind of Chicanismo or Latinidad to fit in with other students of color.

DISORIENTING DILEMMAS AND TRANSFORMATIVE CATALYSTS

Disorientation and Transformation: Lia

I don't know that I had one transformative catalyst that changed the way I taught or behaved as a librarian, but I do know that all of my lived experience up to the time I got my degree informed the person I was in academia. In fact, the knowledge that I lacked a lightning strike-defining moment regarding academia and its worth is part of the issue: I never had an awakening, read a certain book, saw someone speak, or went to a conference as a librarian. I was already a high school dropout suspicious of traditional educational processes. I already knew the system was broken, I already knew the system was racist and classist, and I naively wanted to change the system from within. I received my undergraduate degree at thirty and my master's in library science after that.

When I went to graduate school to get my MSLIS, I did not have a career in mind; I was what many call an "accidental librarian." My experience in library school was that the classes and perhaps even the degree did not necessarily consist of deep scholarly exploration but rather, in my case, rote work that put me tens of thousands of dollars in debt. After I graduated, I got a job at a large corporate media library in New York—an ill-fitting move, considering my background. This position clarified for me how information is sought and disseminated in a large-scale transactional way, awakened me to real day-in and day-out bias, and thankfully introduced me to other radical librarians, including work with the Radical Reference cooperative.¹ Although my eventual transition to academic libraries fifteen years ago provided me with a working environment seemingly more aligned with my values system, I wrestled (and continue to wrestle) with the ways in which hierarchy, authority, and decision-making occurred within a large institution. As I never attended a traditional four-year university, I had no idea how to work within this system and soon learned it would be difficult in ways I could not imagine.

Disorientation and Transformation: Torie

I wanted to work in archives and/or special collections because of my experience with community organizing and research into radical history. I had not taken many history

classes in community college, but I was exposed to incredible people and movements in my social justice work in Southern California. I knew that the primary keepers of our radical histories were not academics. I was inspired by grassroots institutions in my community, such as the Center for the Study of Political Graphics and the Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research, community archives, and special libraries that operated without the imprimatur of academic legitimacy that exist to keep the histories of marginalized people and their radical movements alive.

When I learned about these libraries and archives and then about the professed values of librarianship writ large, I could finally envision a career that was worth finishing school. Graduating from college now had a purpose for me. In that way, I worked backward to figure out how to enter higher education, and I brought all of my anti-capitalist critique with me. My undergraduate work at UC Santa Cruz was rigorous and research-heavy and was supplemented by my position as a research assistant to my advisor. It was my first exposure to an academic library and to the concept of research as a job. In a way, it was a continuation of the years of pursuing knowledge according to my interest and delving deeply into my own questions. Library school, on the other hand, was a means to an end, and like Lia (and with Lia), meeting “my people” through the formation of Radical Reference confirmed for me that I belonged in this profession.

My “turning point,” however, came years later. After earning my MLIS in 2006 and struggling through years of underemployment and exploitative interning, I finally achieved a temporary position as an instruction librarian at an Ivy League women’s college (I know, not a community archives). While I never anticipated ending up in front of a classroom, I was supported and groomed by both my new colleagues and my wider librarian community to be the best instruction librarian I could be. While the direction of my career was being informed by precarity, I was also pleasantly surprised to discover that I liked teaching and I was good at it. It bears noting that this “foot in the door” at such a dire time in the history of employment odds for librarians was no doubt achieved partly due to the relationships I built with other radical librarians who had worked with me through organizing. With this experience under my belt, I was able to secure a position at my current place of work, where I have been an instruction and reference librarian for eight years and recently earned tenure. When I started, however, I struggled to understand how to square my critiques of neoliberal higher education with my new status as faculty member at a public university. My turning point, then, was when I realized I could not do so.

EXAMINING, EXPLORING, AND REFLECTING

As educators, we see year after year students at this age who are studying a subject and often going into considerable debt. In our experience and observation, we see that younger individuals may not be equipped to imagine the development trajectory of their lives, values, and preferences, much less understand the long-lasting impact of their experiences and decisions within a traditional education system. The choice of a major that informs a career path, perhaps one significantly informed by family and remunerative expectations and likely unchallenged by advisors or other external voices, can put someone on a trajectory they may not have the opportunity to critically examine before being “boxed

in.”² The non-traditional path, while often the result of lack of privilege or difficult life circumstances, has considerable power to sharpen one’s value system and lead to a more informed understanding of a scholarly path aligned with preferences, beliefs, and desires. To quote Angela Davis, “When children attend schools that place a greater value on discipline and security than on knowledge and intellectual development, they are attending prep schools for prison.”³ We would say in this case the prison they may be preparing for is the traditional confines of our educational system.

Critical pedagogy, and how we interact with students from a critically-informed standpoint, is not only key to being sensitive to these tensions within the student experience in higher education but also to encouraging learners to challenge those of their assumptions that may be heavily informed by the system—to bring an untraditional mindset to a traditional path. So, we seek to honor students’ lived experiences, think about our own experiences, and recognize that it is not always possible to “meet the students where they are” because of our own backgrounds and values. What we can do is take our experiences, the knowledge that we have gained both in institutional settings and, more importantly, from without, and filter everything that we do through the critical lens that has informed us since we were children in regard to class, capitalism, institutional status, race, and education.

Our teaching and research are grounded in the assumption that the choices that we make are situated and social, influenced by our cultures and communities, not neutral or inevitable. The work we have chosen to do as librarians reflects our own experiences as students, workers, grassroots organizers, and members of communities that value mutual aid and collective struggle. As educators, our professional philosophy has always been that education is fundamentally about freedom and self-determination and should be used to enrich the entirety of a person’s life, to transform the world for the better, and to empower people to be able to solve problems that affect their own lives. When we first became librarians who were required to publish research in our field, the first things to come to mind were not learning analytics, the ACRL *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education*, or alternatives to the CRAAP test. We knew that those issues were important to us as instruction librarians, but the work we wanted to do to change the field was to make space for marginalized learners—students of color, first-generation students, queer and trans students, and other types of “non-traditional” students (transfer students, student parents, formerly incarcerated students, for example)—to see themselves as scholars and to see their lives as sites of knowledge-building.

Examining, Exploring, and Reflecting: Torie

My initial forays into this work—specifically, my research on validation theory—were not understood as sufficiently scholarly as they did not conform to traditional positivist research methods.⁴ Because I approached my research assuming the impossibility of neutrality, a position that clashes with conservative library values entirely, I was not sufficiently internalizing the values of my discipline. Instead of leading to burnout or alienation, however, the conflict of my authentic epistemological and cultural background with the expectations of my profession have produced this desire to pursue research in

a different way.⁵ By using autoethnographic methods, I can more meaningfully employ the situated knowledge that I, my students, and my research partners use to intervene in a space and value system that was not created for us. In turn, I acknowledge that because all perspectives can only be partial, the autoethnographic researcher “acknowledges their partiality, location, and positioning—and is transparent about what those things mean to the analysis—who should be heard.”⁶

Transformative learning theory, as constructed by Mezirow, is seen as “primarily unfolding through critical reflection, a mental process of thinking about past experiences to inquire into the how and why of one’s habits of thinking, feeling, and acting.”⁷ Critical reflection is the basis of my department’s practice of collaborative inquiry into the foundations of our pedagogy and philosophy, starting with thinking about why we approach learning, teaching, and labor the way we do. Only then can we start to excavate where that thinking converges with, diverges from, or disrupts entirely the epistemologies and cultures we were hired to perpetuate.

Perry, in their re-envisioning of transformative learning theory, writes that:

Affective dissonance occurs when one’s ways of knowing (epistemology) contradicts or conflicts with a reality which demands another way of being (ontology; Hemmings, 2012), creating a disorienting dilemma of sorts. Through this affective disorientation, critical subjectivity may emerge and lead to personal transformation and socially critical consciousness.⁸

In my first years of teaching at my current place of work, the “affective dissonance” of my old identities coming up against my role as a kind of authority broke open multiple lines of creative questioning. The Teaching and Learning unit of which I am a part began a tradition of a kind of DIY professional development, starting with a reflective circle inspired by the work of Stephen Brookfield.⁹ The emotional vulnerability of dissecting our assumptions about our students and about ourselves as teachers created an environment of radical self-reflective practice that has strengthened our collaborations as researchers, teachers, and workers. Perry continues,

Recognizing this potential, Ahmed (2017) advocated sharing stories related to the awakening of one’s critical subjectivity, which reflect personal experiences of affective dissonance. Telling such stories enables individuals to better understand their own becoming while helping others deepen their own critical subjectivity.¹⁰

This activity is essentially consciousness-raising, which I learned as a young third-wave feminist participating in radical collectives and which I brought to the table as a continuing practice for my unit’s “Teaching Academy,” another iteration of the DIY PD we create for ourselves every year.¹¹

This early critical reflection group had a reverberating impact on my professional identity and philosophy. Understanding and acknowledging my own positionality had the deepest impact on me when I thought about my attitudes toward education. The reason I

am in the classroom, standing in front of my students, is because I value education for its own sake. The first-year students I work with are not necessarily in college because they want to pursue some higher level of discourse. Many of our students are motivated by the economics of possessing a bachelor's degree, the leap in opportunity that comes with higher education, and being the first in their families to achieve it. My teaching philosophy is that education is ultimately about social justice and self-realization. Supporting students to be critical thinkers who can locate and interrogate historical inequalities, call out injustice, and actively work to transform the world and their lives into those that match their dreams doesn't require a commitment to academic life. More important, and more challenging to me as an academic librarian, is to equip our students with tools to think about themselves in the world. In the meantime, I continue to be interested in deeply interrogating assumptions about education itself and understanding how those influence my pedagogy, my evolving teacher identity, and my relationships with students, disciplinary faculty, and other librarians.

EXAMINING, EXPLORING, AND REFLECTING MORE GENERALLY

In these conversations, our purpose is to recognize that hegemonic structures, cultures, and epistemologies put students and workers into a box regarding how to approach inquiry, education, and research—including those large questions that serve a broader purpose. How do these structures apply to lifelong learning or skills needed after graduation, and how do we apply different ways of existing in the world that are not based on capitalist hierarchies in our pedagogies? There is a lot of talk in critical librarianship about “worker control” and “relational interactions and structures,” but are these conversations or this awareness just akin to “Columbusing” these ideas, since there are many in other arenas that have been doing this work and operating by these principles for a long time?¹² We hope not to colonize thought and to give recognition and celebration for that existing work. Also, when cis white people pursue anti-capitalist practices in academic libraries, even those who attempt to decenter themselves and give credit or recognition to BIPOC and people of other marginalized identities, institutional benefits can and do still occur because of the capitalist, merit-based, or tenure-track structures we are a part of. For this reason, within such white supremacist structures, it is almost impossible to decenter hegemonic identities and privileges.

We want to encourage instruction librarians to be empowered to bring their external lived experiences into the work they do, thereby humanizing difference in the academy and within the pedagogies of librarianship. It is important for people who both do, and do not, have shared cultural identities with their students. We encourage librarians to appeal to people they connect with personally on a deeper level through lived experience. In Lia's case, these groups involve transfer students, queer students, and drop-outs; for Torie, these groups are first-generation, Latinx, and non-traditional students. We also encourage individuals to connect with those who do not share their lived experiences to demonstrate that there are different (and equally valid or valuable) ways to live a life, perhaps beyond what

a community or family unit has modeled. When working with traditional-aged college students, we intentionally question the accepted practice of choosing a major or career pathway (or even choosing to go to college itself) when one is just entering college. Do we want our young undergrads to drop out and go figure out the world and who they actually are before committing to debt and time to graduation? Perhaps. But the intervention of presenting alternative forms of approaching one's career and interests (which does not tend to appear in an academic setting) can illuminate multiple paths toward a student's end goal. We recognize and affirm that the traditional path is the best for some but do not operate on the assumption that it is necessary for all.

BUILDING SKILLS AND CONSTRUCTING KNOWLEDGE

Our “dis-orientation” to the academic pathway and the library profession itself was not intentional. Rather, the recognition that our unusual trajectories could inform our practice as teaching librarians developed over time. When entering our professional positions, we were encouraged to receive training through ACRL Immersion or LOEX and to spend time learning how to become “real” teachers rather than integrating what we already knew how to do into our work. We brought different forms of lived experience that manifested as expertise when we began our careers, but these were largely met within a context of what “not to do.” By virtue of activism, we already knew a set of core principles: Don't talk without listening; don't assume your audience; think about the experience of the person or student in context not just to interaction or instruction but also to school education and communication. Why did we think these perspectives were insufficient or were somehow different from what we were being asked to learn in developing our pedagogical approaches? We were being “taught” these ideas by the culture of our profession. Of course, sometimes skills that we had honed as organizers or as participants in intentional communities or organizations did not transfer wholesale into an academic teaching setting, but we largely found that the academy can be so exclusive that it did not tolerate or encourage outside or unsanctioned (read: not professional) knowledge even when it was completely aligned in practice.

Building Skills and Constructing Knowledge: Lia

I worked my way through my institution with my background skills firmly in mind. I wanted to work cooperatively, make a difference in student life, show inclusivity, and reveal that bias and racism were integral parts of what we move through as educators and students. And it did not always work for me. I found myself in a leadership position while still wanting to be a collaborator and equal with those I supervised, wanting us to be honest with each other and work in a non-hierarchical team, to make substantive change and be reflective even when it was challenging. Within the institutional context, these values were not always able to translate into practice based on the perceptions and expectations of what leadership meant. I stepped away from my leadership position out of a sense that I would be better able to live my values within a less hierarchical framework. Now, again in the position of a subject librarian, I inject my experience and self-taught learning into what I

do: whether in a one-shot, an in-depth course, a display, a presentation, or a LibGuide, I acknowledge white supremacy in cataloging, highlight the myth of the library as neutral, and discuss keywords and subject headings through the lens of the barrier that academic language can be to those who were not raised speaking that version of our (not natural) language. I take time to use examples that center women and BIPOC when discussing search strategies and citation methods or using the catalog.

Building Skills and Constructing Knowledge: Torie

Central to my approach to information literacy and generally in my relational interactions with students is the straightforward transparency about the game we are all playing. Borrowing from the framework used by D'Ignazio and Klein to explain the non-neutrality of data, my goal is always to convey to students that the values, practices, and rules of higher education are structures, just as

the Golden Gate Bridge is a physical structure; Facebook ads are a virtual structure; and the gender binary is a conceptual one. But all these structures were created by people: people living in a particular place, at a particular time, and who were influenced—as we all are—by the world around them.¹³

This characterization provides useful language to describe the conceptual structure of academe or “the university” as well. I try to convey this concept to first-gen students when I resist the idea that academic culture is somehow “natural” to anybody. And, as D'Ignazio and Klein argue, the structure requires maintenance, which means behaving in ways that reinforce its integrity rather than demolishing it brick by brick.

This conceptual foundation urges me to interrogate epistemological assumptions and to pose questions such as that librarian Kristen Dean offered in her presentation on using epistemology in library instruction:

What beliefs and knowledge am I un/intentionally endorsing through my library instruction—from individual lesson plans to programmatic/curricular goals? What questions and assumptions about knowledge are implied in a request to teach students how to find scholarly articles? What would that lesson look like if we started by interrogating the creation and values of different knowledge systems?¹⁴

As librarians, teachers, and faculty members—each and all authority figures in some sense—we are living examples of how situated or subjugated forms of knowledge produce myriad forms of social good. We are responding to the question of what educators can do to make sure students feel that they belong exactly as they are.

Cultural wealth theory has been the foundation of both my teaching and my mentoring relationships with other librarians of color.¹⁵ Grounded in the assets that Latinx students bring to spaces of education, cultural wealth provides a counterpoint to Bourdieu's forms of capital, which are culturally inscribed as Eurocentric. These six forms are aspirational,

linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistant. Dr. Vanessa Bustamante extends these by pointing out that as we communicate to Black and Brown students that college will be so hard, so many of them have already had to work harder than White students to succeed. They have been organizing, identifying injustices, focusing on social issues that impact their communities, juggling priorities, *staying* motivated (not *getting* motivated), and finding support groups wherever they can.¹⁶ Similarly, these are the kinds of skills that we have brought with us in our professional journeys.

PLANNING AND PILOTING IN PRACTICE

We have been given a lot of autonomy in our jobs and are privileged to be able to do that without much sanction. Torie was in the right place at the right time: who was going to tell a Chicana first-generation college graduate that she is not allowed to make radical decisions about validating pedagogy for other first-generation college students through library instruction? Being our true selves was also a catalyst when we were members of Radical Reference, which helped us feel like we could be ourselves in the thing that we wanted to do (librarianship) and bring our backgrounds and our lived experiences to the work we were currently doing without being concerned about it; we were surrounded by people who were also doing that work, either outwardly or under the radar. This background empowered Torie to step into leadership with anti-racist work at her place of employment. Her identity and experience habituated her to always notice who is being left out of a conversation and to look at the entire system in which we work. When anti-racism and anti-capitalism is a lifelong process, the tendency in an institution to have a few meetings to “work on it” or read articles together is frustrating yet common—especially when there is no discussion of how everyone is going to commit to the work.

Planning and Piloting in Practice: Torie

As Sofia Leung and Jorge Lopez-McKnight wrote, “Real, impactful change cannot happen only in library instructional spaces if we truly believe in critical library instruction and social justice.”¹⁷ For me, that has meant taking advantage of my faculty status to work on social justice initiatives on campus with disciplinary colleagues, crafting policy and curriculum toward liberatory goals, and organizing with fellow library workers for collective power. Recognizing that we are attempting to do the work of co-liberation (which we understand to mean that the liberation of ourselves as workers comes out of working together for the liberation of our students), I saw an entry point through which to bring my “punk” skills: collaborative problem-solving, consciousness-raising, collective skill-building, and the constant redistribution of power. The staff, faculty, and administrators at my place of work have begun asking ourselves, together, “What does a more equitable library look like?” The time is right, then, to offer my experience and knowledge of prefigurative politics and autonomous organizing toward liberatory ends. The space of the academic library housed in the neoliberal university is not the same as the infoshop or grassroots community space. I have no illusions that our outcomes will be as radical. My job is not the apex of my experience as a human being, nor is it the

only site where I enact my liberatory values and dreams. But how could I spend so much time and life energy here and not attempt to make it into something better for people like me (and people not like me)?

TAKING TRANSFORMATION FORWARD

Taking Transformation Forward: Lia

In taking transformation forward in higher education and libraries, there are both large and small things that we have accomplished, most of which are works in progress. One example is the UCSD Library Community Collective, where staff and librarians from different parts of the library came together to work collectively to create anti-racist dialogue and learning opportunities for others in the wake of the murder of George Floyd and countless others. This space is non-hierarchical, has a memorandum of understanding among participants (providing a relatively “safe” space), and is themed (e.g., racism in medicine, how to be a good ally). The goal is to provide open reflective spaces where librarians and staff meet to hold space for one another and to learn through more structured presentations and conversations. Outside of my job, I am part of a community of practice of anti-racist white librarians who seek to make a difference in our lives, the lives of others, and in the profession. Some of us are extremely active in union work, some of us are deeply engaged in repatriating First Nation artifacts out of academic archives, and some of us are working to create anti-racist conferences and meeting spaces. But each of us is examining white supremacy in our organizations and in ourselves. We read extensively on issues surrounding anti-blackness, racism, and class and learn from each other in community. The purpose is not just to interact with each other but also to learn and grow together and then put our knowledge into practice and action.

CRITICAL REFLECTIONS FOR INSTRUCTIONAL IDENTITIES

Both of us engaged in different kinds of working-class jobs prior to our time in higher education. While they paid less, our experience of these positions was that the emotional labor tended to be less taxing and all-encompassing, helping to avoid the sense of fatigue and burnout that is so common among teaching librarians. During difficult times at work now, we joke with each other about the “ease” of these past positions and dream together of quitting and returning to jobs at a food co-op. While this example is an undeniable oversimplification and we recognize the problems of so many forms of underpaid labor, there are times when we long for the days when a workday actually ended.

Critical Reflections: Lia

When I worked at the Olympia food co-op, I had many different roles, but my favorite was early morning produce. I would walk out on the floor to see what needed stocking before the store was open. As I unpacked boxes, I might set aside something that looked especially good for my dinner that night, and I would make carrot circles.



FIGURE 13.1. Carrot circle from Flickr (<https://flic.kr/p/5h1RMD>, CC-4.0 BY NC SA).

And I would go home. Would I worry about the carrots that night? Check my email for messages about the carrots or problems that may have come up regarding carrots? No. I did my job, felt good about my job, and then went home and did not think about my job. On purpose. This experience of working cooperatively and using consensus decision-making with a group of people sharing a common goal of anti-oppression is an important piece of my background that I try to bring to my current work life (and something that I cannot fully recreate in an academic environment). Capitalism demands that we work and work, that we are perpetually “too busy”; librarianship rewards these qualities as well. Answer email after work hours? Write reports, grants, papers, and create LibGuides on the weekends? Find yourself seeking positions of power in order to establish change? Yes, yes, yes, and absolutely.

The choice people are making when they choose a career path in our culture is to decide what their worth as a human being will be. We need to stop communicating the idea that college is the only way to be successful. Cultural wealth theory demands that we stop pathologizing choices that do not involve getting a college education. We have both lived the traditional and the non-traditional path, and we have worked to cultivate a means to allow each pathway to inform our practice. While this chapter is part of our story, we encourage readers to look within their own practices and lived experiences and to think about the following:

- Do you honor your own background and bring it into how you interact with students and faculty? What would that look like for you? Have these methods changed throughout your time shaping your pedagogy?

- Do you believe that you are meeting students where they are? How would you know if you were?
- Do you believe you can be open to understanding student or faculty experience leading to this point even if it is different from your own or different from what you think those experiences are?

NOTES

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8. Perry, "Participatory Feeling," 351.
9. Allison Carr and Torie Quiñonez, "I'll Be Your Mirror: Using a 'Critical Friend' Group to Critically Reflect on Our Teaching" (poster presented at the 2016 California Academic & Research Librarians Conference), <http://conf2016.carl-acrl.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/sharifi-poster-abstract-FINAL.pdf>.
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