

# Envisioning Leadership

## Principles of Feminist Management in Practice

*Karen Stoll Farrell and nicholae cline*

### INTRODUCTION

*Most of us with feminist commitments end up working for organizations that do not have these commitments. We often acquire commitments to do something because of what is not being done. To work as a feminist often means trying to transform the organizations that employ us.*

—Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life*

To approach management from the lens of feminist thought creates a tension; if feminism is rooted in an analysis of power, what does it mean to willingly step into a role that accepts some level of power within an institution? What does it mean to not only acknowledge that power but also to wield it thoughtfully, from a feminist perspective? Incorporating feminist values and principles into the day-to-day activities of management requires a willingness to sit within that tension and to consciously find ways to bring those values forward. In the introduction to their edited volume *Feminists among Us: Resistance and Advocacy in Library Leadership*, Lew and Yousefi (2017) explain their concerns that feminists in librarianship were actively choosing not to enter leadership roles: “Often our colleagues saw an irreconcilable gap between occupying these named positions of power and their personal and professional politics” (p. 1). Their explicit argument is that “a grounding in feminist or other progressive politics is precisely what is needed in library

leadership today” (p. 2). This chapter, then, takes up that call by attempting to offer a series of principles and practices explicitly rooted in feminist thought. We hope that readers can use these principles to help define what is most important to them and incorporate various practices immediately into their daily work.

While both authors have identified as feminists predating our involvement in leadership or management, we also both found inspiration in adrienne maree brown’s (2017) *Emergent Strategy*. Brown does not explicitly refer to herself as feminist; however, in her review of the principles she has gained and developed over years of community building and facilitation work, she brings to the fore a number of values that are shared with feminism. For Karen, it was these ten principles of emergent strategy that became the foundation for their management practice; they began to be able to incorporate these principles and to develop others, using their background understanding of feminist theory to refine what feminist management practices could look like. nicholae has been similarly moved by brown’s work and the theories that ground emergent strategy, and they have committed to incorporating these and other guiding theories and principles into their work as a librarian and their relationships with colleagues and those they supervise. Together, they have worked to develop and expand these ideas and practices into a unified framework that can support other managers who dream of or who have been and want to continue transforming their organizations.

Keep in mind that incorporating feminist values into management practices is daily work and requires ongoing struggle and active engagement. Typical work environments will bring additional challenges to holding space for feminist practices; patriarchal systems and hierarchical organizations traditionally emphasize dominating forms of power (“power over”), whereas a more feminist mode of holding and using power centers collective forms such as power with, power to, power within, and power together.\* This is a significant and challenging shift for many of us to make, and it may take time to imagine, build, and sustain. Those who are white or have other intersecting identities that hold power will need to work regularly at dismantling their own presuppositions and at remaining vigilant to the ways in which the systems in which we are enmeshed constantly works against those who are marginalized. We hope that this chapter will help provide inspiration and guidance toward bringing feminist principles into our work as managers, in whatever form that may take in your institutional and cultural context and whether you work with and supervise librarians and library faculty, staff, student employees, interns, fellows, or other temporary positions.

## A NOTE ON TERMS

Throughout this chapter, we use and refer to both management and leadership, or managers and leaders. This is not to suggest that they are equivalent or interchangeable, nor that all leaders are also managers. While we understand that there are differences, we do want

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\* For more on the concept of power and its various manifestations, see the work of Just Associates (JASS) and its foundational publication *A New Weave of Power, People and Politics* (VeneKlasen, 2002). In this text and on JASS’s website, JASS describes how power flows within societies and organizations and helpfully differentiates the “dominating power” many of us are used to from forms of “positive and transformational power” that can be realized through collaboration, reciprocity, and collective movement (Just Associates [JASS], 2023).

to acknowledge that both hold power within an organization and that there are many ways of being a leader and possibilities for leadership, even if you do not manage others. Management is, of course, one particular way in which leadership work takes form—even if sometimes our managers don't always *feel* like leaders—and we want to recognize that the work of supervising others and overseeing resources and the provision of services is distinct. In this chapter, however, we are focused on how individuals in management or other leadership roles can build and sustain professional relationships in a more holistic, intentional, and responsive way, and one that integrates feminist principles and values.

## POSITIONALITIES

Before moving into the core of this chapter, we felt it was important to position ourselves as individuals, as practitioners, and as managers in our particular cultural and institutional context. In this section, we each offer details about our individual identities and positionalities, as well as our engagements with feminism and management experience across time.

### *Karen*

Karen is a white, middle-aged, educated woman with children and a husband. She is also autistic and grateful for the development of terms such as *neuroqueer* and *autigender*, which more closely describe their complex relationship with gender and sexuality. In library-specific work, they have been in middle management for seven years, but worked in middle management positions in previous jobs outside of libraries. They have been reading feminist literature and identified as a feminist for thirty years, beginning with an introduction to anti-racist work while reading James Baldwin and Toni Morrison in high school, then moving to explicitly feminist theorists in undergraduate college courses. However, they struggled for many years to untangle the tensions between personal feminist values and the paid jobs where they spent most of their waking hours. They found it difficult to reconcile a desire to climb ladders for the money they needed, the joy of mentoring and supporting others, core feminist values, and the imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy in which they were so squarely situated and from which they received even more benefits as they climbed that ladder. While they strove to bring those feminist values to their broader library practices, it wasn't until reading *Emergent Strategy* by adrienne maree brown that they felt truly inspired, and confident that they could move toward a framework to incorporate those values into management practices.

### *nicholae*

nicholae is a mixed-race Indigenous (Coharie), queer, nonbinary (agender), disabled, and neurodivergent knowledge worker. A non-settler, and perhaps a guest, on stolen Indigenous land (cline, 2022), they acknowledge this as a complicated position due to the ongoing reality of colonial dispossession and universities' significant and fundamental role in primitive accumulation and capitalist expansion (Boggs, et al., 2019), particularly the expropriation and enclosure of land and resources from Native tribes and nations (Lee & Ahtone, 2020). They are also a transracial adoptee and first-generation college student

who grew up across southern Indiana, central and eastern Kentucky, and West Virginia in a working-class home and within primarily rural, agricultural environments. Their experiences of poverty, lack of generational wealth, and low financial literacy meant they spent much of their adult life in debt and occasionally without health insurance. Their trajectory through librarianship has included staff (sometimes called paraprofessional) and visiting positions prior to their current tenure-track appointment (in which they were just recently tenured and promoted)—all at the same Midwestern public research institution. For better or worse, they are often perceived as being younger or of lower “rank” than they actually are, including assumptions that they are a student or staff member rather than faculty. They recognize the intersectionality of their experiences and that they are marginalized in multiple overlapping ways, while also acknowledging the privilege that has been afforded to them as a result of their body type (thin), adjacency to whiteness and masculinity (conferred through being light-skinned, of ambiguous race/ethnicity, and intermittently, albeit inconsistently, passing as a queer man), advanced education and institutional backing, US citizenship and native English language, and the fact that they have a full-time, non-temporary career with benefits (including access to subsidized health and psychological care). Many of these factors have allowed them to access and accumulate social, financial, and academic/educational capital, leading to greater material security and overall well-being as a result.

Their earliest engagements with feminism came during adolescence, through bell hooks’ work on power, masculinity, and love. It was not until they had been awoken to the possibilities of theoretical frameworks for better understanding the world and creating change, however, that they were inspired to delve into feminism and feminist theory. Through queer studies and queer theory, they were led to feminist theory, particularly feminists of color, transfeminists, Marxist and socialist feminists, and feminist science theorists. This field, like queer theory, provided them with a deeper analysis of capitalism, white supremacy, patriarchy, heteronormativity, and transmisogyny and helped them to more critically interrogate how these violent systems make our lives more precarious. Over the last decade in particular, they have learned deeply from and been moved by the work of decolonial and abolitionist feminists, as well as those working along the intersections of feminism and disability justice, and these scholars’ interventions in the movement have helped them understand and articulate a fuller and more nuanced account of how power operates and is allocated. They continue to learn from the scholarship, art, and resistance of thinkers who are pushing us toward liberation and a new world and do their best to incorporate those ideas into their practice.

nicholae comes to the ideas explored in this chapter as someone who has been managed in decidedly nonfeminist ways over the years, as well as with experience supervising and managing part- and full-time employees in nonlibrary settings and part-time student employees in an academic library. Their own experiences have led them to build relationships with their colleagues and those they supervise premised on curiosity, mutual learning and growth, supportive mentoring, and care.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Focused publications on the topic of feminist management and leadership in libraries are relatively scarce. A key recent text is the volume *Feminists among Us: Resistance and Advocacy in Library Leadership*, edited by Shirley Lew and Baharak Yousefi (2017). The chapter by Hathcock and Vinopal (2017) discusses this lack of work on feminist leadership in libraries and describes that they found two strands of related research: one on “gendered differences in leadership development and expectations in library and information professions” and an increasing focus on “the application of feminist theory to library practice apart from leadership” (p. 150). The second strand has primarily examined the potential for feminist theory in relation to library instruction.

*Feminists among Us*, on the other hand, delves deep into the concept of feminist leadership and libraries from multiple perspectives. Lew and Yousefi have brought together a collection of articles ranging from self-reflective to theoretical to interviews focused on exploring what feminist leadership in libraries looks like. They begin by pointing out, as many of the authors do themselves, the tension between the personal and political, suggesting that many saw “an irreconcilable gap between occupying these named positions of power and their personal and professional politics” (Lew & Yousefi, 2017, p. 1). However, the authors within this collection continue to explore issues around feminism and power, finding ways to put their feminist values into practice.

In terms of feminist management practices in particular, Maura A. Smale (2017), in her chapter “Always a Novice: Feminist Learning and Leadership Practice,” writes specifically about how she has approached bringing feminism into her leadership practices. She describes leaning on values of transparency, connection, and trust, as well as the importance of intersectional and anti-racist work, especially as a white woman. Smale also describes particular practices that she has put in place that reflect these values, such as establishing regular meetings to increase her connections with those who report to her. Smale reflects on her role as a feminist library leader and her goal to work from a “novice mindset,” in which she has made it a priority to continue to learn about intersectional feminism and its potential impact on her work as a library leader.

The last chapter of *Feminists among Us*, “Feminist Praxis in Library Leadership” by April Hathcock and Jennifer Vinopal (2017), describes a series of research interviews undertaken by the authors with feminist library leader practitioners. Their goal was to ask these leaders about “how their feminist values inform and affect everyday management and leadership activities such as staffing, mentoring, policy development, and decision-making” (p. 148). The authors found that while interviewees expressed some ambivalence about the tension between feminist ideals and the power that comes with traditional leadership roles, they were also passionate about using feminist values within their own leadership practices. For example, participants expressed the importance of “community building, creating a safe environment, valuing diversity, empowering others, and information sharing” (p. 162). The authors return to a feminist analysis of power and conclude that the “common thread that weaves through all of our participants’ remarks on intersectional feminist leadership in the library profession is the ability to acknowledge one’s own power and use it to advance explicitly feminist values that benefit others” (p. 168).

Critical librarianship also offers a number of key publications to incorporate and consider in relation to feminist values and feminist leadership. While early works focused more heavily on information literacy, more recent publications examine the library system itself, offering important considerations for those sitting within its power structure. Critical race theory (CRT), as well, has expanded into librarianship and offers a critical component to any feminist work that aims to understand power. This includes Sofia Y. Leung and Jorge R. López-McKnight's (2021) impactful collection *Knowledge Justice: Disrupting Library and Information Studies through Critical Race Theory*, which brings the analyses of CRT through the testimonies and experiences of Black, Indigenous, and peoples of color into the study and practice of library and information science (LIS) and contains multiple chapters that explore terrain relevant to feminist concerns and world-making.

Further, "Leading from the Center: Reimagining Feedback Conversations at an Academic Library" by Rosener et al. (2019) explicitly references values of psychological safety and compassion and uses a learner mindset approach to explore internal feedback conversations. "Nice White Meetings': Unpacking Absurd Library Bureaucracy through a Critical Race Theory Lens" by Nataraj et al. (2020), on the other hand, uses CRT to dive into the bureaucracy that is often considered neutral and normal, probing the ways in which this bureaucracy works to maintain the status quo of power structures. "White Librarianship in Blackface: Diversity Initiatives in LIS" by April Hathcock (2015) explains the ways in which the whiteness of librarianship is self-fulfilling, continuing this cycle by using the same processes and goalposts in the hiring process. She pushes the reader to consider alternatives and dive deeper into the ways that our systems function to uphold values that we have claimed we want to break away from: namely, that we want more diversity in the field, but without having to take the actual, necessary steps to make that possible.

While not specific to libraries, *Redeeming Leadership: An Anti-racist Feminist Intervention* by Helena Liu (2020) is a thorough takedown of the patriarchal, racist history of leadership, as well as an attempt to define potential paths forward. Liu examines early colonial theories of leadership, as well as more recent definitions of transformational leadership. She problematizes the thinking that simply replacing a "bad" leader with a "good" leader will transform this history into something salvageable, drawing parallels, for example, with so-called benevolent sexism and racism. In the final section of the book, Liu describes places to look for alternative examples of leadership and how to expand our definitions to include, among other ideas, "the bonds of criticality, togetherness and joy that are developed between people committed to social justice and transformation" (p. 135). Ultimately, Liu "reject[s] a homogenizing reduction of these movements into any universal 'how-to' guide for leadership" (p. 159); however, she does explore the ways in which this multiplicity of wisdoms may guide us into a future anti-racist, feminist leadership.

## PRINCIPLES OF FEMINIST MANAGEMENT

There are many definitions of feminism, and feminist thought has shifted in numerous ways and become intertwined with other theories of oppression and justice across

the years. In what follows, we offer a sketch of feminism as we understand it, based on our own relationships and experiences with feminist theories; this is not meant to be a comprehensive summary. There are many tributaries of thought within feminism, as well as interconnections and disagreements among the various ideas, approaches, and movements that constitute the field of feminist inquiry and practice.

In some ways, bell hooks said it best: “Feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression” (hooks, 1984, p. viii). Early conceptions of feminism and the feminist movement were often focused on rights and issues of women’s equality. In her work, hooks attempted to illuminate the ways in which sex and gender were not separable from other categories and experiences of identity, particularly race and class, and joined other feminist thinkers such as Audre Lorde, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and Gloria Anzaldúa in thinking beyond the narrow focus on white, cisgender, straight women. In the intervening years, feminism has expanded to not only analyze (and seek to dismantle) sexist and gender-based oppression, but also to both consider the ways in which these and other categories of identity are interwoven and articulate how identity-based subordination and subjugation is imbricated with and integral to other systems of surveillance, evaluation, extraction, commodification, dispossession, and domination.

We are inspired by these ideas and the intellectual, scholarly, artistic, and community-based inquiries of other thinkers who are part of the long and often misunderstood tradition of intersectional feminism. Because, as feminist scholar Sara Ahmed (2017) tells us, “Feminism... is made out of how we are moved to become feminists in dialogue with others” (p. 5). While the history and origins of feminism are important, we are particularly indebted to marginalized\* writers, artists, and movement-makers who have challenged and intervened in a movement that was long dominated by cisgender white women and thus structured by and entangled with white supremacy, colonialism, imperialism, ableism, and cisnormativity. We also recognize that feminism can be an intimidating or exclusionary movement, and many do not feel included within or represented by feminist ideals. We are not aligned with strains of so-called trans or sex worker exclusionary feminism that seek to erase, decenter, or in some cases even enact violence against these communities, and we reject any movement or theory that does not embrace difference or move toward the liberation of all marginalized individuals. In this way, we are drawing on a tentacular feminism that pushes our analysis and imagination to look beyond (while also being inclusive of and attentive to) singular focal points or binaristic conceptions of identity, including sex/gender, patriarchy and misogyny, or the categories of “woman” and femininity, and engage with oppression as a pervasive and multidimensional phenomenon

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\* We use *marginalized*, here and elsewhere, to denote the vast and beautiful field of identities, bodyminds, and communities that we share our world with and who experience exclusion, subjugation, and other forms of disempowerment and harm as a result of the constellation of oppressive and punitive systems we outlined above. This includes those marginalized by race and ethnicity (Black, Indigenous, Latin[x/e], SWANA/AMEMSA, Asian, and Pacific Islander communities); ability, size, and body type (fat, disabled, and neurodivergent people); sexuality and gender (queer, asexual/aromantic, transgender, intersex, two-spirit, nonbinary/genderqueer, agender folks); nationality, citizenship, borders, and language (migrants, immigrants, non-English speakers, undocumented individuals); religion and spiritual tradition (Muslims, pagans, and other non-Christians); and labor, class, carceral status, and circumstances (sex workers, working class, poor, and precariously employed people, the currently and formerly incarcerated, unhoused individuals), among others and the many intersections thereof.

(and from an intersectional perspective) in order to holistically explore and envision potential alternatives and pathways. As Latina writer Flavia Dzodan (2011) wrote a decade ago, in her titular rallying cry, *My Feminism Will Be Intersectional or It Will Be Bullshit!* In articulating the values we believe constitute feminist thought and that underpin our core principles, we are committed to listening to, drawing on, and honoring an expansive field of feminist inquiry and the voices of marginalized thinkers and activists who are radically imagining a different future for all of us, together.

### *Feminist Values*

Naming the lineages from which our feminist politics flow, and acknowledging those who have come before us, was an important foundation for us as we began to position ourselves within an ongoing conversation and consider the terrain of feminist thought. From there, we worked together to identify the associated values we want to foreground and that we will use to distill and support the core principles of our feminist management practice.

adrienne maree brown describes the foundations of her work through relationships. Through dialectical humanism, brown (2017) learns “the cycle of collective transformation of beliefs that occur as we gather new information and experiences”; in other words, “relationships are everything” (p. 28). While we must all be directed toward shared values in order to move together, none of this can be achieved without relationships and relationality as the core.

In a feminist analysis of power, equity is central; as such, it is central to our feminist values. While practicing feminist management is inevitably tied up in the power structures of our workplaces and organizations, our feminist values push us to continue to examine those power structures and work toward the creation of spaces that acknowledge and understand that everyone’s lived experiences are impacted in specific ways by systems of oppression, recognize the worth of all collaborators and team members, invite in all potential participants and provide support for them to engage fully and safely, and raise and make space for voices that have historically been excluded.

These core values define our conception of the world around us. They are central to our view of how the world functions and to what we consider to be of primary importance to our own places within it. These values also reflect what we believe is critical in continuing to define our world-making practices. In order to move to principles, we consider the ways in which these core values can be made actionable, how they can show up in our daily lives, and how they can guide our decision-making.

### *Core Principles*

In our time leading and managing others in different work settings, and in alignment with the feminist values we articulate above, we have identified a series of core principles that constitute our feminist management practice. This is not a complete list, and readers may have their own principles to add. In engaging with this chapter and other foundational readings, and through reflecting on your own values, take some time to come up with and define your own core management principles.

Once you have gone through this exercise, take time to discuss them with those you supervise, and perhaps those who supervise you as well. Set aside time as a group to listen to what your colleagues value, and work to define a core set of principles together so that your colleagues have an opportunity to shape the principles that will guide how they are managed and the work you do together. While it is critical to create a shared set of values with those that you work closely with, your list of principles does not have to be exhaustive, and it may have variation or change over time.

- *Trust.* An integral quality of interpersonal relationships, trust refers to our confidence or belief in another person's honesty, reliability, consistency, knowability, and competence and the sense we have that others will treat us fairly. When we have and feel trust with others, we generally experience a willingness to be vulnerable and to depend on and engage in relationships of many kinds without fearing that we will be deceived, betrayed, or harmed by them. The existence of trust in a relationship or with another does not foreclose upon the possibility of mistakes or harm, but a trusting relationship is one in which recognition of harm and repair are likely based on a pattern of care and accountability across time. Trust is built through clear and thoughtful communication, consistent behavior, co-investment, and following through on commitments made, and it can also be broken (and rebuilt again). Trust is most often considered a quality of relationships between two people or among small groups of individuals in personal relationships, but it can also be used to describe other kinds of dynamics as well (including our relationship with ourselves). In larger groups or in work or institutional environments, trust is usually understood through the concept of *psychological safety*, which refers to the overall sense of security and stability we feel in organizational cultures that allow us to take risks and be creative, express opinions and ideas, ask questions, and challenge others without fear of being judged, criticized, or punished as a result (Gallo, 2023). *Trust teaches us that safe connection gives us opportunities to share and be seen.*
- *Curiosity.* An orientation toward others and the world characterized by a desire to seek out new information and experiences, ask questions, engage with new and different perspectives, and learn from others, curiosity leads us down new paths and helps us see old ones in new ways. It is a necessary part of learning and growth because it is a capacity that supports adaptability, open-mindedness, wonder, and resilience. As such, it also facilitates creativity, innovation, and motivation in team settings, which can ensure group dynamics are flexible, engaging, and motivating. A curious manager does not foreclose or withdraw from new ideas, possibilities, or questions, but rather moves toward and embraces the potential for growth and change they represent and can inspire. Being curious as leaders and managers shows our colleagues that we are open, willing to listen to and learn from and with them, and able to shift and adjust based on changing contexts or the needs of our team. *Curiosity honors the truths that learning is joyful and that we always have room to grow.*

- *Reflection/reflective practice.* A process through which we closely and critically consider an event, belief, feeling, or situation that we have personally experienced in some way, reflection allows us to look deeply at ourselves, our actions, and our experiences so that we can better understand our underlying beliefs, motivations, and conceptions of the world and others. A reflective practice, then, is a strategy or process that facilitates this kind of inward engagement, such as insight meditation, journaling, and self-critique, and is most helpful when it is consistent and ongoing. Committing to reflective practices allows us to make sense of our experiences, recognize and articulate patterns, and develop new insights and perspectives on ourselves and our inner workings, which are integral to not only our own growth and learning, but also to being more thoughtful and self-aware in our relationships and group dynamics. Reflection can happen individually, as self-reflection, or together with others, such as in a relationship or team. Building a reflective practice as a manager, and within your teams, can help you better understand your work and group dynamics, become a more thoughtful leader, and move toward and sustain intentional change. *Reflection shows us that we are emergent and always becoming (and becoming known to ourselves).*
- *Advocacy.* A tendency to proactively support and promote the rights and interests of others, the needs or wishes of a group or community, or a particular cause, advocacy requires us to assess and understand what others need or want in a particular situation, as well as to have the ability to thoughtfully and strategically communicate those wants and needs. Managers who advocate for their teams and other stakeholders can not only ensure that the needs of those they support are met, but also build responsive and caring relationships built on trust and mutual respect as a result, thus facilitating a cohesive group dynamic. The advocate mindset also recognizes that management is about supporting individual achievement and being committed to working together to support our growth and development. Further, when we use the power we have as leaders or managers to give back to or make our workplaces, institutions, and fields better for others, we demonstrate responsibility and care for our colleagues and the people we represent. Advocacy work can also be key to creating positive change within an organization or community, through speaking up on behalf of community members or when working toward goals of equity, inclusivity, and justice. *Advocacy reminds us to use our power and our voices to uplift and support the people and causes we care about.*
- *Transparency.* A commitment to being open, honest, and accountable in decision-making and when communicating with others. When leaders and managers commit to being transparent in their relationships and determinations, they ensure that as many voices as possible are heard and considered and that decisions are made and communicated in ways that are clear, intelligible, fair, and equitable. Because of the hierarchical nature of most organizations, it can be difficult for those who are not in management or administrative positions

to have access to information or understand why decisions are made, and they are often not included in institutional choices (and even in cases where feedback is solicited, the connections between that feedback and consequent resolutions may be unclear). This lack of transparency can also result in the exclusion of many insights, ideas, and perspectives that could be offered by others, while it prioritizes the interests of those in positions of authority. By using the access to information and administrative prerogatives that are a privilege of our positions, being transparent helps to forestall the frustrations and misunderstandings that are a frequent occurrence in many stratified institutions and is more inclusive and collaborative. Transparency may look like sharing information when and to the extent that we can, being clear about and including our employees in processes and decision making, and being open about the challenges that come with leadership and our own experiences. Sharing information in this way, and committing to making decisions transparently, can address some of the issues inherent to hierarchical organizations in which power is distributed inequitably and can ensure that our colleagues and employees feel heard, engaged, and respected. *Transparency asks us to share what we know and encourages trust within relationships.*

- *Responsibility.* An obligation that comes with power and authority, especially when we can affect or direct others in some way due to our role within an organization. Supervision, management, and leadership are positions in which power is afforded to us; as a result, responsibility is a consequence of the power we have by virtue of our positions (or positionality) and refers to the ethical dimension of our ability to impact those we have power over (and sometimes power with). Responsibility asks: What am I responsible for and how do I enact that responsibility? Given the power I have, how do I responsibly use it? How am I responsible for and also responsive to others? Responsible managers understand their duty to create supportive and engaging work environments and to care and advocate for those they work with and supervise and endeavor to listen to employees and ensure they have the resources and support they need. Being responsible in leadership positions also helps to foster atmospheres of mutual respect, care, and collaboration within our institutions. *Responsibility is an acknowledgment of the relational nature of power dynamics of all kinds, as well as our roles within them.*
- *Adaptability.* A capacity to change and be changed by or in response to the particular needs of a situation, relationship, experience, or encounter, adaptability is the ability to adjust to new situations, changes, and challenges as they arise, involves being flexible and open-minded, and requires a willingness to listen, take intentional risks, and learn through experience and, at times, from failure. An adaptable manager is someone who can call forward and use their past experiences, including mistakes, to inform their responses to new scenarios, conflicts, or situations outside of their comfort zones. Similar to flexibility, this ability enables one to understand what a situation

or the present moment needs and use one's knowledge, experience, perspectives, and so on to support others and shape and impact outcomes. It is important to note, however, that marginalized individuals are often required to adapt or in various ways modulate themselves to dominant cultures, both in workplaces and within the larger culture, that historically haven't been willing to and typically do not accommodate or accept them. As a result of this process and tendency—often necessary for their survival—marginalized individuals are generally socialized to be more adaptable, and thus this ability is also complicated for many of us. So, while this core principle of feminist management is a strength, it is important for adaptability to be paired with self-reflection and self-awareness, as well as a commitment to maintaining a clear sense of self and boundaries. *Adaptability is a reminder that we and the world around us are always in flux and that we must sometimes open ourselves to change.*

- *Care and self-care.* A practice and way of orienting toward oneself and others that centers supporting overall well-being, care can be directed toward others in many forms—physical, material, emotional, and so on—and can include offering support and guidance based on the needs of the individual or group, or oneself in the form of self-care. Managers can exhibit care and caring through making time for, listening and being attentive to, advocating for, and being an example to their employees, as well as creating a workplace environment in which relationships of care, reciprocity, and trust are centered and supported. Caring relationships also ensure that others feel cared for and cared about, which is integral to teams and an overall environment that is meaningful and engaged. Self-care, through actions that facilitate one's own well-being in one's personal and professional lives, is also key, not only because it can be exemplary and thus inspire employees and colleagues to do so as well, but also because it creates a foundation upon which care is reinforced and that supports the time and energy we share with others. It is important to note that we are not referring to self-care in its consumerist or commoditized forms, but rather as a radical technology of self-preservation and self-tending (after Audre Lorde, 1988) that allows us to both enact change and sustain ecologies of care in our communities and workplaces. Importantly, caring and care are more than feelings; they are an action, a practice we commit to in acknowledgment of our responsibilities to and toward those we *care about*, including our colleagues, those we supervise and mentor, and ourselves. *Care, as well as self-care, realizes that we are in a world together and thus connected through relations of reciprocity.*
- *Sustainability.* A consideration and quality of our commitments and actions, sustainability takes into account how and whether they will last and can be maintained over time. This does not mean that everything we do or create must last forever or even for a long time or that we should be doing only things that we know we can maintain for a specific period of time into the

future; rather, it means looking at what we want to do and where and how we want to invest our energies and asking ourselves if we will be able to sustain that for as long as it needs to be sustained and for as long as it needs to have the impact intended; this is about our own capacities and resourcing as much as it is about those who will be affected as well. Sustainability is also connected with care and self-care in that we must continue to approach our work lives with work-life balance in mind and with an eye on our work that explicitly considers whether the work is sustainable over the long term. Keeping in mind sustainability allows us to move toward an environment that does not create burnout and that broadens participation in librarianship as a whole. When we examine our work with this lens to long-term sustainability, we are reminded to encourage those that we work with that they also do not have to do “all the things” in order to be valuable. *Sustainability reminds us to consider how what we do and what we build will endure into the future.*

- *Consent.* A quality of actions, interactions, and relationships, consent foregrounds our individual agency and sovereignty as we encounter and engage with others. In its most basic form and definition, consent is how and whether we agree to an activity or decision and is integral to relationships and agreements of all kinds not only because it prevents us from being harmed or exploited but also because it enables us to participate more fully in processes that affect us. Consensual relationships ensure that we feel respected, understood, and whole and allow us to make informed choices and enter into authentic relationships or decisions from a place of security and self-assurance. Working intentionally toward building consent with others and with ourselves also helps us to trust and act in alignment with our own boundaries because we know they will be honored. Managers who center consent in their relationships with colleagues communicate clearly and directly about decisions and decision-making processes, especially those that affect others, share as much information as they can and are transparent about background information and rationales, and work to resist and prevent their colleagues from doing things they haven’t agreed to. They are also attentive to the needs, feelings, and experiences of others, while also being respectful of boundaries and the autonomy and agency of those they work with (both one-on-one and in group dynamics). *Consent honors our inherent wholeness and allows us to be in more authentic connection with others.*
- *Equity.* A process, or state, in which disparities and obstacles to survival and flourishing are removed and all have equitable access to the resources and support they need, equity is particularly relevant to movements invested in creating a real and lasting transformation of the lives, experiences, and overall well-being of marginalized people and communities. A commitment to equity entails changing policies, practices, and habits that underpin the various systems and structures that facilitate oppression in its many manifestations, from individual bias and localized instances of discrimination to

the larger web of forces that undergird, allow, and perpetuate them. Because equity focuses on addressing the needs of individuals or groups, especially those who have experienced historical and ongoing injustices and structural inequities, it is differentiated from the concept of equality, which applies the same or similar strategies and resources for all. Equity is, then, a distinct form of fairness and part of a framework of justice that emphasizes the need for tailored solutions to systemic and systematized disadvantages while also improving outcomes for everyone. Managers who approach their work with an equity mindset take time to listen to and understand the individual, often very different needs of those they supervise and do what they can in their positions and with the power they hold to be responsive to them, creating opportunities and experiences that best support their employees. Individuals can be different, or disadvantaged, in a number of ways, whether through having disparate work or communication styles, needing varying levels of structure or hands-on management, or coming from one or more marginalized communities. Managers will often need to shift accordingly or be creative so that they can offer individual support and supervision to their teams, which will ultimately make the workplace a fairer and more inclusive place to be and work. *Equity uplifts our differences and seeks to create a better world for all of us.*

- *Humility.* An orientation toward others, and the world, that both acknowledges the immensity and fundamental unknowability thereof and decenters the self in relation to other beings, humility is often seen as a trait or quality that involves being modest, lacking pretension, or having a more balanced view or assessment of one's own limitations, abilities, or understanding (and thus neither over- nor underestimating one's capacities regarding physical, mental, or professional abilities or achievement). It can also be a practice or tendency toward being respectful or deferential, stepping back from prestige or recognition, or focusing on the needs or interests of others over one's own. Humility requires both self-awareness and a sense of one's place within a larger environment, ecosystem, or world and is thus connective and relational as well. It is closely related to curiosity in that learning and growth are facilitated by a willingness to see outside of, even beyond, oneself as a singular, unitary individual toward a more expansive perspective. Humble managers are not merely modest or selfless, but rather know when to lead and when to listen and encourage relations based on mutuality and reciprocity. They are intimately aware of their power and positionality and thus seek to share the resources they have access to so they can support and expand the experiences and well-being of their colleagues and teams. *Humility recognizes that we are not just individuals but are entangled and interwoven with the world around us* (cline & López-McKnight, 2023).

# PRACTICES, COMMITMENTS, AND ACTION

At its core, feminism seeks to identify, subvert and disrupt, and ultimately dismantle oppressive power structures, particularly those premised on patriarchal systems and norms, toward creating more inclusive, equitable, and just ways of being and working together. A feminist approach allows us to see outside of traditional forms of leadership that disempower us in the workplace and then lead with more supportive and sustainable values and principles in mind. Feminist management practices are not simply about ensuring more women or marginalized individuals are in leadership positions (though we dream of seeing more people like us at those tables) or integrating them into existing structures of power and authority. Rather, they are about reimagining and transforming how we organize work and life in ways that resist and dismantle the patriarchal, hierarchical, and exploitative norms that characterize traditional management and leadership styles—and many of our organizations. Feminist leaders and managers, then, “strive to make the practice of power visible, democratic, legitimate and accountable, at all levels, and in both private and public realms” (Batliwala, 2015, p. 18).

In this section we have provided a number of practices and actions that managers can use to incorporate the values and principles we enumerated above. This is also not an exhaustive list of ways to instill feminism into your management work, but what we have included here are examples, and even recommendations, from our own experience and practice. Keep in mind that your own identity and positionality, as well as those of your colleagues and employees, will impact the practices and tools you choose to incorporate into your management style (as well as how they are received and experienced by others). You may also need to experiment, explore alternatives, and adjust as you reflect and grow as a leader on your team and in your organization, as your workplace changes both across time and as a result of transformative efforts like yours, and in response to feedback from your team.

adrienne maree brown’s (2017) first emergent strategy is “Small Is Good. Small Is All” (p. 41). As this motto suggests, it is important to build investments from the ground up and meet yourself, and your colleagues, where you are by committing to daily work, focusing specifically on your interactions with your colleagues and how to better reflect your values in action. Consider where you can realistically begin shifting your orientation and interactions to enact meaningful shifts that you can build upon. For example, you might focus on how decision-making occurs within your group, how you share an important piece of information, or how you will advocate for someone in a particular instance. Each of these is important and deserves your attention and commitment, but remember that you don’t have to change everything or do “all the things” (Literally Media Ltd., 2011) immediately in order to transform your practice or the culture of your workplace. The goal is to work toward sustainable change that improves the lives and experiences of your colleagues and makes your workplace a better and more equitable place to be.

One potential objective you can commit to as a feminist manager or leader is to look for small potential changes you can make across your current work, even if your style

isn't yet aligned with feminist values. This may be done using an equity lens tool, or you might utilize your own already identified core values. Once you have determined values for yourself and agreed on them with your team, find all the places across your work where these values need to be integrated. By keeping up with daily practices of reviewing your own goals and values, you will be better positioned to recognize where these changes are both needed and possible. This can be done ad hoc; for example, you may focus on one core value for the day and look for ways to adjust your work to match your values. It can also be done systematically alongside your colleagues, working together to brainstorm potential changes to your work by drafting outlines of various workflows and activities and considering your shared values alongside them. Remember, too, that Brown's principle "Small Is Good. Small Is All" reminds us that even though some of the actions we take may seem minor, even inconsequential, to us, they may be much more significant to our colleagues and employees. Whether that's a listening ear, gentle encouragement, or just a move in the right direction, our choices have real impact on others, particularly those we supervise, and that means there is always an opportunity for us to make our relationships and workplaces better for all of us.

From these small actions and commitments, your feminist management style and practice will slowly emerge. As you explore different possibilities for enacting your values and principles, take time to review these commitments and reflect on how you are practicing them and how you'd like to continue building onto them. Keeping a list of values, as well as goals, in a place where you can see them is helpful, as keeping them in view will help you hold them in your mind and thus in your practice as well. A reflective practice is integral to ensuring you are working and interacting with others in ways that are in alignment with your values and principles and gives you an opportunity to grow.

### *Building Relationships and Trust*

At the core of feminist management is the importance of relationality and the central role of building relationships and trust with your colleagues. In many cases, building trust will take longer with some people on your team than others, and can be impacted by your identities and positionality as well as those of your colleagues (particularly when those differences heighten and exacerbate existing asymmetries of power that are a consequence of hierarchical organization). A trusting relationship will also look different from person to person and may change across time. Building trust requires respecting the voices, experiences, needs, and preferences of others and working to ensure that your colleagues are seen and heard; it is also about making yourself trustworthy, which you will have to invest time and effort into being and practicing. Additionally, everyone will have different boundaries around what they are comfortable sharing and what kind of relationship they want to have with you as their manager and their colleagues as well. Respecting the boundaries of others and their willingness (or lack thereof) to have more personal or intimate relationships is paramount and must take precedence over your own desires to build a particular kind of relationship with individual members of your team—even if you prioritize cultivating an overall caring and open dynamic therein. The work of building relationships and trust will take effort and attention, but taking the time to cultivate

generous and responsive relationality will help to address and transform environments in which isolation, little interpersonal contact and few supportive structures, and lack of empathy have become normalized.

*Work on listening.* Listening is a gateway to connection and is the other side of developing a novice mindset (see below), with which it should be paired. In the daily life of management, it can be easy to become accustomed to taking up space and talking extensively, and there are times when leading or being at the forefront of a conversation is a necessary part of leadership. To counter this tendency, and to ensure that your colleagues have room to share their perspectives, intentionally set aside time in meetings to ensure that other voices are being heard. Pursue opportunities to develop, and practice, facilitation skills; take time to learn about how your colleagues communicate and provide pathways for them to do so; and commit to listening for when they need something from you (even if, as is the case for many of us, they don't always know how to express needs or preferences directly). Many workplace environments do not allow us to bring our full selves or offer opportunities to share our thoughts or experiences, and this is even more of a challenge for those who, due to our positions or positionalities, have less power within a hierarchy, organization, or community. Encourage your colleagues to speak up when they have ideas or opinions to share or if they need something from you or the team, and do your best to honor what they share so that everyone knows that what they have to say matters and will be heard.

Suggested resources:

- AORTA. (n.d.). *Headwaters facilitation training program*. <https://aorta.coop/headwaters>
- brown, a. m. (2021).  *Holding change: The way of emergent strategy facilitation and mediation*. AK Press. <https://www.akpress.org/holding-change.html>
- Facilitation First. (n.d.). *The power of active listening*. <https://facilitationfirst.com/the-power-of-active-listening/>
- National Extension Water Outreach Education. (n.d.). *Facilitation: Listening strategies*. University of Wisconsin–Madison. <https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/wateroutreach/water-outreach-education/bep-web-site-resources/use-education-resources/tools-for-teaching/facilitation-skills/facilitation-listening-strategies/>
- National Equity Project. (n.d.). *Constructivist listening*. <https://www.nationalequityproject.org/frameworks/constructivist-listening>

*Give and receive feedback.* As managers, it is imperative that we engage in deliberate and continuous efforts to seek out and provide feedback; we must seek it out and give it often. Feedback can take various forms, including being called out for problematic behavior or actions, receiving constructive criticism, and engaging in open and honest self-disclosure. You may also want to incorporate forms of review that allow your colleagues to evaluate your performance as a manager and leader, such as upward feedback or 360-degree reviews, so that you can get feedback from those you supervise and continue to learn and grow from their experiences of you and your management style. Keep in mind that it can be really challenging for your colleagues to share feedback with you,

especially if it is critical or an attempt to address issues or harm; honor their candor and courage by practicing graceful receptivity to their perspective and experiences, even if that means stepping back from a more defensive, emotional, or explanatory initial response. Reflecting on and working through anything that comes up when receiving feedback is an important part of your process and is valid, but be mindful about doing that with or placing any responsibility for that process on your colleagues. This approach to receiving feedback will help build and support a culture in which constructive feedback is possible and encouraged. Giving and receiving feedback also means engaging in respectful truth-telling when you can, including when giving feedback or working with others, as this ensures your colleagues know they can trust you to be honest and authentic in the relationships and dynamics you have cultivated together.

Similarly, do your best to practice accountability (more on this below) through responding to being called out, and work to create an environment where instead you are trusted enough to be called in. Further, actively practice calling others in—and out when necessary—particularly when you see others being devalued, spoken over, ignored, discriminated against, or harmed in other ways; this is an important part of your role as a manager and advocate for your colleagues. You can use some of the examples and scripts listed in the Additional Resources section to support your learning, reflection, and practice. You can also explore the Johari window tool (listed in the suggested resources below), which highlights the importance of self-disclosure and offers a framework for better understanding your positionality and how you are perceived and understood by others. Overall, a consistent practice of giving and receiving feedback not only will help you to expand your own awareness of yourself as a manager and where your strengths and weaknesses lie, but will also ensure that you are working to build a culture in which openness, honesty, and trust are priorities as well.

Suggested resources:

- Rosener, A., Frigo, E., Ponischil, S., Bélanger, A., Rander, J., & Salazar, E. (2019, September 18). Leading from the center: Reimagining feedback conversations at an academic library. *In the Library with the Lead Pipe*. <https://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2019/reimagining-feedback/>
- The Decision Lab. (n.d.) *Johari window* [Reference guide]. <https://thedecisionlab.com/reference-guide/psychology/johari-window>
- Upward/360-degree review
  - Rowell, C. J., & Scales Kettler, H. (2021, March 18). *Cultivating accountability by eliciting upward feedback*. [https://doi.org/10.31274/digirep\\_conf-20210804-0](https://doi.org/10.31274/digirep_conf-20210804-0)
  - Thompson, N. (2012, May). *Improving team performance through 360 degree feedback*. School of Education and Social Policy, Northwestern University. <https://www.sesp.northwestern.edu/masters-learning-and-organizational-change/knowledge-lens/stories/2012/improving-team-performance-through-360-degree-feedback.html>
- Calling in/out

- Ferguson, S. (2015, January 17). *Calling in: A quick guide on when and how*. Everyday Feminism. <https://everydayfeminism.com/2015/01/guide-to-calling-in/>
- Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging. (n.d.) *Calling in and calling out guide*. Harvard University. [https://edib.harvard.edu/files/dib/files/calling\\_in\\_and\\_calling\\_out\\_guide\\_v4.pdf?m=1625683246](https://edib.harvard.edu/files/dib/files/calling_in_and_calling_out_guide_v4.pdf?m=1625683246)
- Office of the Vice Provost for Institutional Inclusive Excellence. (n.d.) *Interrupting bias: Calling out vs. calling in*. Tufts University. <https://diversity.tufts.edu/resources/interrupting-bias-calling-out-vs-calling-in/>
- Communication
  - Chapman, S. G. (2012). *The five keys to mindful communication*. Shambhala. [https://www.google.com/books/edition/The\\_Five\\_Keys\\_to\\_Mindful\\_Communication/QhbvtLEp1mUC?hl=en](https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Five_Keys_to_Mindful_Communication/QhbvtLEp1mUC?hl=en)
  - Sofer, O. J. (2018). *Say what you mean: A mindful approach to nonviolent communication*. Shambhala. [https://www.google.com/books/edition/Say\\_What\\_You\\_Mean/eV-QEAAAQBAJ?hl=en](https://www.google.com/books/edition/Say_What_You_Mean/eV-QEAAAQBAJ?hl=en)
  - Nonviolent communication. (2023, December 18). In *Wikipedia*. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nonviolent\\_Communication](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nonviolent_Communication)
  - Meenadchi. (2021). *Decolonizing non-violent communication* (2nd ed.). Co-Conspirator Press. <https://co-conspirator.press/Decolonizing-Non-Violent-Communication>

*Be intentional about meetings.* Meetings are a necessary part of most teams and workplaces, and it's important to approach them with care so that they are effective and meaningful containers in which to collaborate, build understanding, and work toward shared goals. For many teams, meetings will include one-on-one sessions with individual colleagues as well as team or larger group gatherings to check in, plan, or work together on a project. For one-on-ones, consider creating a structure or template to help you hold your priorities and the needs of your colleague in tandem, as well as reminders to use throughout. For example, this might be a place to remind yourself to give positive feedback, to ask questions about what is going well or not well, to discuss their learning needs or professional goals, to help provide support in their work or offer shared accountability, or to ask what you can do differently. Using a structure that focuses on these issues will help create a caring, consistent space for your colleague, ensure that they know what to expect, and reinforce that you are there to support them in their goals and development, which is especially important for marginalized individuals who are more likely to experience bias, microaggressions, exploitation, and burnout.

For larger meetings, it is generally useful to have an agenda that is shared in advance (whether prepared by you or collaboratively generated), which both helps everyone to prepare and centers consent, while also leaving room for building connection, personal sharing, and diversions as appropriate. There may be times when institutional needs, project time lines, or other factors constrain your ability to create this kind of balance, but it is still important to make time to connect. Whether in a larger meeting or one-on-one, asking about and investing in the lives of your colleagues as full human beings who

have cares and concerns beyond their current to-do list or your departmental priorities is key to building sustained and sustainable relationships with them. This investment in colleagues as full human beings allows all of us to imagine ourselves outside of work so that we can recognize our value apart from and beyond the labor we do and provide within our institutions. Be sure, as well, to encourage participants to engage and share in the ways they prefer, given the allowances of the space and meeting modality, and create an accessible space in which there is time and room for everyone to participate as they are willing and able.

Suggested resources:

- AORTA. (2017, June). *Anti-oppressive facilitation for democratic process*. [https://arts-campout-2015.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2019/02/AORTA\\_Facilitation-Resource-Sheet-JUNE2017.pdf](https://arts-campout-2015.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2019/02/AORTA_Facilitation-Resource-Sheet-JUNE2017.pdf)
- Liberating Structures. (n.d.). *Liberating structures menu*. <https://www.liberatingstructures.com/ls-menu/>
- BC Patient Safety and Quality Council. (n.d.). *Communication style self-assessment* <https://teambasedcarebc.ca/resources/resource/communication-style-assessment/>
- pabdo. (n.d.). *Facilitating through “perfectly logical explanations.”* Equitable Teaching, University of Michigan. <https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/inclusive-teaching/facilitating-through-perfectly-logical-explanations/>
- Nataraj, L., Hampton, H., Matlin, T. R., & Meulemans, Y. N. (2020). “Nice white meetings”: Unpacking absurd library bureaucracy through a critical race theory lens. *Canadian Journal of Academic Librarianship/Revue canadienne de bibliothéconomie universitaire*, 6, <https://doi.org/10.33137/cjal-rcbu.v6.34340>

*Approach decision-making thoughtfully.* It is also important to include multiple ways of navigating decision-making during meetings and in your team more generally. Depending on your style as a manager, it can be easy to either get into a habit of making decisions unilaterally or approaching choices so cautiously that you impede momentum and progress. Knowing what works best for your team, as well as your own style, will make determinations much more easeful overall. Being honest and open about how each decision will be made will ensure greater trust and clarity. For example, you could create a decision tree for when and how decisions will be made, as well as how and at what points in the process to offer feedback, even if a decision will be made by you or a smaller subset of the group. You could also outline when and why a decision-making process might be enacted through consensus or another way to reach a decision in a larger (or the full) group. Take time to discuss these possibilities with your colleagues, as well as what level of consensus might be needed to reach a decision if you choose a consensus model. Whatever you decide, always be forthcoming about how and why decisions were made and be attentive to impact as well; transparency is an important route toward trust in our organizations. Decision-making processes, as well as meetings, are opportunities for generating connection and shared understanding, and thus it is important to intentionally cultivate practices that are in alignment with your relational goals and group norms.

Suggested resources:

- Cultivate.Coop. (n.d.). *Deciding how to decide*. [https://cultivate.coop/wiki/Deciding\\_how\\_to\\_decide](https://cultivate.coop/wiki/Deciding_how_to_decide)
- Cultivate.Coop. (n.d.) *Consensus decision making*. [https://cultivate.coop/wiki/Consensus\\_decision\\_making](https://cultivate.coop/wiki/Consensus_decision_making)

*Trust your colleagues.* Trust, whether with our colleagues, between us and those we supervise, or between different levels of an organization, can be difficult to achieve in workplaces that are driven and structured by competition, hierarchy, surveillance, and control. Management can often be instituted, and is frequently seen, as a necessary mechanism through which employees are monitored so that efficiency and productivity are ensured, thus challenging the possibility of building or maintaining trust. Trusting your colleagues, particularly those who report to you, can be a way of counteracting this tendency and fostering different and more sustainable work cultures and relationships with others. This could look like trusting your team to do their work well and at their own pace without micromanaging or undermining their skills, capacities, or agency and recognizing the knowledge, perspective, and contributions they bring to their work. It can also look like giving them space to determine their own goals, develop ideas and projects, and find a place within the organization that best fits what they have to offer, as well as trusting them to find the right balance between their work and life commitments without imposing unrealistic, unnecessary, or unsustainable expectations on them or their work. Because many of our organizations position managers to exert power and control over employees or to police one another in various ways, centering and building trust in our relationships with colleagues can be an important means of both subverting power dynamics and inequities and creating a more open and inclusive workplace culture.

Suggested resources:

- Psychological safety
  - Leading Effectively staff. (2023, January 10). *What is psychological safety at work? How leaders can build psychologically safe workplaces*. Center for Creative Leadership. <https://www.ccl.org/articles/leading-effectively-articles/what-is-psychological-safety-at-work/>
  - Gallo, A. (2023, February 15). *What is psychological safety?* *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2023/02/what-is-psychological-safety>
  - Ravishankar, R. A. (2022, December 1). *A guide to building psychological safety on your team*. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2022/12/a-guide-to-building-psychological-safety-on-your-team>
- Trust
  - Frei, F. X., & Morriss, A. (2020, May–June). *Begin with trust*. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2020/05/begin-with-trust>
  - Yu, A., Zlatev, J., & Berg, J. (2021, June 18). *What's the best way to build trust at work?* *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2021/06/whats-the-best-way-to-build-trust-at-work>
  - Leading Effectively staff. (2022, June 24). *Why leadership trust is critical in times of change and disruption*. Center for Creative

Leadership. <https://www.ccl.org/articles/leading-effectively-articles/why-leadership-trust-is-critical-in-times-of-change-and-disruption/>

## *Continue Learning*

Learning is, and should be, continuous—it is an ongoing process and commitment rather than an endpoint. Learning can happen on your own, based on your own goals, needs, and interests, or it can happen with others in various ways and forms. In your own development as a manager, it can be helpful to find someone you trust to participate in and support your leadership journey. They will be able to point out where you should put your efforts, talk through scenarios, and be an ally in both your struggles and your learning. As Helena Liu (2020) suggests, you may consider finding or creating groups that are a play on the feminist consciousness-raising groups of the 1970s. Other possibilities to create avenues for your own learning could include making connections with other like-minded individuals, seeking out or creating a community of practice, or participating in professional development opportunities, such as conferences. While you should be thoughtful about how much of your time and energy are devoted to this work (and work in general)—and be strategic about what methods and topics you pursue—holistically and intentionally investing in your own ongoing learning (as a manager, as a feminist, and in other areas of interest and growth) will help you find inspiration, stay engaged, and grow as a leader and colleague.

*Adopt a novice mindset.* As Maura Smale (2017) notes, embracing a novice mindset is a critical part of the learning process as it foregrounds and is supported by traits such as openness, curiosity, humility, and a desire to ask questions and more deeply understand a situation or the experiences of others. A novice mindset is, however, not just about being willing and interested in learning something new, but also about recognizing your own shortcomings and understanding that there are many perspectives and experiences that you either are unaware of or might not fully grasp. As a learner, adopting this mindset before engaging in the learning process will help you be open to fully hearing and listening to other perspectives so that you can learn and grow as a result. As a manager, this orientation is integral because it allows you to approach situations, interactions, or even problems with both an openness and a clarity that allow us to seek out, consider, and embrace new ideas and solutions. This approach in turn encourages psychological safety in your team and helps to ensure your colleagues and employees will offer their perspectives and experiences, ask questions and challenge assumptions or established norms, and feel more comfortable learning and being vulnerable with you.

Suggested resources:

- Readings
  - Smale, M. A. (2017). Always a novice: Feminist learning and leadership practice. In S. Lew & B. Yousefi (Eds.). *Feminists among us: Resistance and advocacy in library leadership*. Library Juice Press.
  - Velasquez, D. L., & Hussey, L. K. (Eds.). (2019). *Library management 101: A practical guide*. ALA Editions.

- VanDuinkerken, V., & Mosley, P. A. (2011). *The challenge of library management: Leading with emotional engagement*. ALA Editions.
- Conference
  - The Conference on Academic Library Management (CALM). (n.d.). <https://www.conferenceonacademiclibrarymanagement.com/>
- Journals
  - ALA CORE: Leadership, Infrastructure, Futures. (n.d.). *Library Leadership and Management*. <https://journals.tdl.org/llm/index.php/llm/index>
  - Emerald Publishing. (n.d.). *Library Management*. <https://www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/journal/lm>

*Cultivate diverse interests and engage with diverse perspectives.* Cultivating a diverse and expansive range of interests is a critical aspect of personal and professional growth and will ensure you are well-positioned to connect with and advocate for your colleagues. While this cultivation might include engaging with professional and scholarly works by and about marginalized individuals, consider how you can take it further and bring a more diverse array of experiences and voices into your life, hobbies, and interests outside of the workplace as well. This is where the novice mindset comes in so that you can cultivate curiosity for perspectives beyond your own. If you read fantasy books, read more BIPOC authors or authors who live with and write about disability and neurodivergence; if you watch TV and movies, seek out media created by and starring individuals outside of your own community. Consider who you follow on social media; which journalists, makers, and other content creators you rely on and enjoy; and where you turn for information and news, and think about how you could expand and diversify this list to include and engage with other communities. Find new ways to learn from and about the wide variety of experiences of and ways of moving through the world, and use this learning to deepen your own worldview. This is also an opportunity to support underrepresented and marginalized artists, creators, and thinkers across various fields and media, which ensures greater equity, inclusion, and diversity in your field as well as others.

Suggested resources:

- We Here. (n.d.). *We reads annual BIPOC literature collections*. <https://www.wehere.space/current-collection>
- WNDB. (n.d.). *We need diverse books*. <https://diversebooks.org/>
- *I need diverse games*. (n.d.). <https://www.youtube.com/INeedDiverseGames>
- Indiana University Bloomington Libraries. (n.d.) Ethical citation practices & citational justice. <https://guides.libraries.indiana.edu/c.php?g=1041101&p=9497300#s-lg-box-30321991>
- Bali, M. (2020, May 8). Inclusive citation: How diverse are your references? *Reflecting Allowed*. <https://blog.mahabali.me/writing/inclusive-citation-how-diverse-are-your-references/>
- Listopia. (n.d.). *Diversity book lists*. Goodreads. <https://www.goodreads.com/list/tag/diversity>

*Make mistakes, take responsibility, and be accountable.* We are all fallible, in our personal lives and in our relationships, and this includes the relationships and dynamics

in which we are enmeshed at work and as managers in organizations of various kinds. Perfection is not the goal, nor should it be, and is not something we could attain even if it were; thus we must acknowledge the inevitability of mistakes, misunderstandings, and harm. As queer, disabled, Korean writer Mia Mingus (2019) encourages us,

We all make mistakes. None of us are perfect. We are all learning. It is okay to acknowledge and honor your arc of learning and how you have changed. This doesn't make you bad, it makes you human. I don't want perfection, I want us to learn how to be more human with each other.

When we are managers, even otherwise small or seemingly minor slights can have real consequences for our colleagues, especially over time, when refracted through the power we hold. Whether a mistake or misunderstanding, an accidental microaggression or instance of assumption or bias, or other type of harm, it is important to set aside your own ego and recognize that you will mess up and sometimes fail, and consider how you can and want to respond when this occurs and if you have hurt others in some form. This is human and natural, and it is possible to move forward nevertheless.

Once you have recognized that mistakes are inevitable, practice what it means to take ownership over, and responsibility for, your actions. There may be extenuating circumstances, there may be misunderstandings, and there may be some other reason that a mistake happened. Accountability, however, asks that we set aside intention in order to acknowledge the harm caused and recognize our role in that—especially as leaders. This includes listening to those impacted by what happened, considering your part in the harm, working with others to discover how it can be addressed and resolved (if possible), and then learning from it and ensuring that it is not repeated (whether through restorative or transformative processes). In practicing acceptance and repair, do not forget to forgive yourself as best as you can as well. Practicing taking responsibility can be done on your own, but it is even more impactful if you work with a trusted partner or group, which can ensure deeper and more lasting change; it is important that systemic and structural factors be taken into consideration and addressed as well so that the harm is less likely in the future. Remember that it is never the responsibility of the person harmed to either hold you accountable, comfort or forgive you, or help you learn from and through the experience, even if you might want or expect that from them. As with many of these practices, being responsive to our missteps and failures helps to generate trust within an organization or team, demonstrates respect and fairness, and fosters a culture of learning, growth, and care.

Suggested resources:

- Barnard Center for Research on Women. (2020, October 13). *What is accountability?* [YouTube video]. <https://youtube.com/watch?v=QZuJ55iGI14>
- Mingus, M. (2019, December 18). The four parts of accountability and how to give a genuine apology. *Leaving Evidence*. <https://leavingevidence.wordpress.com/2019/12/18/how-to-give-a-good-apology-part-1-the-four-parts-of-accountability/>

- Accountability Mapping. (n.d.). *Centered accountability course*. <https://accountabilitymapping.thinkific.com/>
- University of Wisconsin–Madison Law School. (n.d.). *About restorative justice*. <https://law.wisc.edu/fjr/rjp/justice.html>
- Byruck, M. (2020, June 11). *A transformative justice resource list*. The New Modality. <http://thenewmodality.com/a-transformative-justice-resource-list/>

*Learn with your colleagues.* As a manager you have an opportunity to help support the ongoing development and growth of your colleagues and give yourself a chance to learn and expand. This is also an excellent way to share your journey with those you work most closely with and be part of theirs as well so that you can move together and inspire one another. Creating an intentional learning space with your colleagues, in both structured and more ad hoc or occasional ways, can meet a number of identified needs or goals, including identifying shared values, exploring ways to change your workplace culture, finding new theories and tools to inform and support your practice, or just connecting as members of a team. If you engage in this activity with those you supervise, be specifically sure that you are not simply assigning readings or other materials, but rather work together to build a curriculum or select readings that will be engaging and meaningful to everyone involved. Be attentive to the skills, experiences, and knowledge that your colleagues bring to the space and learning environment, and allow yourself to learn both with and from them as well.

Suggested resources:

- Communities of practice
  - LLAMA. (1999, November 30). *Communities of practice*. American Library Association. <https://www.ala.org/llama/communities>
  - Reale, M. (2022). *Communities of practice in the academic library: Strategies for implementation*. ALA Editions. <https://www.alastore.ala.org/copacad>

## *Share and Use Power*

As a manager you have a significant amount of power to affect the experiences of your colleagues, and it is important to use that power responsibly. It is important, as well, to consider and reflect critically on your own relationship to power: what kinds of power you have in your role and position, how it feels to have and wield it, and how you might (and should) use it. Even though most of us work within hierarchical organizations and uneven systems of power, it is possible to find creative ways to both harness your power for the benefit of those you supervise and share it with them. Be explicit about the ways that you can empower your colleagues, when and how you can, as well as how you can use your power to help them—especially if your colleagues are having issues in the workplace. When possible, include your colleagues in conversations and decision-making processes so that their voices and needs are included and so they can be full participants in the work you do together. Feminism is, among other things, a theory and analysis of power, and as a result it is incumbent upon managers and leaders to consider how they hold, wield, and can redistribute power as best as they can.

*Look beyond yourself.* Despite our best intentions and efforts, it can still be difficult for us to see outside of our own perceptions, preconceptions, and habits. Because your choices impact the people you work with, you may also want to seek outside perspectives or use an aforementioned feminist or equity lens to uncover biases in your practices, decision-making processes, the development of new projects, or the workplace more generally. There are different versions of this tool, and you may also prefer to create your own; what they all have in common is that they ask you to consider the impact on others of your habits, decisions, and workflows. This tool can be scaled up in some cases; for example, in creating a new program, it is important to get feedback from many different people. It can also be scaled down for smaller changes so that, for example, you may send only a short list of questions to one or two people. The goal remains to have insight from others in order to point out gaps in your awareness and understanding or your own biases.

Suggested resources:

- Identity reflection
  - Ng, W.-I. (n.d.). *A tool for everyone: Revelations from the “power flower”* [Activity]. [https://acrl.libguides.com/ld.php?content\\_id=66666567](https://acrl.libguides.com/ld.php?content_id=66666567)
  - UK Research Integrity Office. (2022). *Academic wheel of privilege*. <https://ukrio.org/ukrio-resources/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/academic-wheel-of-privilege/>
  - Learning Design and Digital Innovation. *Power and privilege wheel*. Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia. <https://ets.educ.ubc.ca/equity-diversity-inclusion/>
- Equity lens
  - Tan, A. (2021) *Equity lens for decision making*. Office of Diversity and Inclusion, School of Public Health, Harvard University. <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/diversity-dev/wp-content/uploads/sites/2597/2021/08/ODI-Equity-Lens-for-Decision-Making-WCAG.pdf>
  - University of Washington. (n.d.) *Developing an equity lens for visual communications*. <https://www.washington.edu/brand/editorial-elements/equity-lens/eql-visual-communications/>

*Be an advocate.* In thinking about how you can use your power to support and empower your colleagues, consider the ways in which you can intervene in and shift the structures and dynamics that prevent some of us from fully participating in or being a part of the organization, whether that is a result of their position in the organization or due to marginalization and exclusion. Advocacy might mean stepping in or speaking up when you observe inequities, unfair treatment, or instances of discrimination—while being mindful not to inadvertently disempower or rob your colleagues of their own voice and agency—or bringing your colleagues into conversations or projects that they might not have been considered for or included in. Being an advocate also means celebrating the accomplishments of others and supporting them in doing meaningful work: for example, helping your colleagues take their ideas and craft them into proposals and then supporting those proposals as they are turned into projects. Sometimes it also means helping them to slow down, step back, or see that they can let go of projects that aren't aligned with their

goals and offering guidance in navigating a process that can be very difficult institutionally (as a result of workplace expectations or promotion or tenure standards) and personally (due to guilt or imposter phenomenon). As managers we are uniquely positioned to help our colleagues discover, embrace, and maintain their professional boundaries and to both affirm them in holding their boundaries with themselves and ensure they are respected (by you, by other colleagues, and especially by administration and upper management). The work of advocating in this form is also about creating awareness of the meaningful contributions of your colleagues. Make sure, as well, that others in your workplace, particularly upper management or administration, are aware of your colleagues' needs and the work that they do. Finally, consider how you can help support the development of your colleagues, particularly those you supervise, into leadership roles, if that is something they are interested in, by making space for them to be leaders within your team, on projects, or in other collaborative work.

Suggested resources:

- DeEtta Jones and Associates. (n.d.). *To self advocate or not? That is the question* ...<https://blog.deettajones.com/blog/advocacyandinquiry>
- DeEtta Jones and Associates. (n.d.) *How do I get more power*. <https://blog.deettajones.com/blog/how-do-i-get-more-power-let-s-talk-about-it>

*Share information and support transparency*: Sharing of information is a critical feminist strategy. Yousefi (2017) succinctly expresses how important this strategy is, explaining, “Our discretion is being counted on to maintain the status quo” (p. 99). As a result, transparency and sharing information are also fundamental feminist management practices. Because power and inequities are often maintained through monopolies on information (controlling who has access to information and how much access or information they have), transparency is a potentially very powerful counterbalancing measure. You may need to confirm or push back when you are given information that you are unsure about sharing with others or at times when you are explicitly told you cannot relay what you have been told, but the goal is always to share as much information as possible. As Yousefi (2016) also contends, in an earlier publication: “Do not assume that you know what others need/don't need to know (of course, be mindful of all the legal and ethical stuff).” Your assessment of what information can and should be shared is important, but it may not always align with the needs or expectations of your colleagues.

Consider also that sharing information is not only about conveying facts but also about sharing your own perceptions and experiences, as well as making space for your colleagues to do the same even when their perceptions and experiences don't align with dominant narratives or what is being stated by those with power. Yousefi (2017) again offers us a framework for “storytelling, rumor, [and] gossip ... as a tool for decentering power and creating alternative narratives” (p. 98). This is particularly true for and valuable to marginalized workers, whose perspectives may be diminished, downplayed, disregarded, or aggressively rejected, especially when they speak truth to power or critique the way things are and have been. In your role as a manager, give your colleagues space to honestly and candidly share how they feel and what they have experienced so that they have a space where they can be listened to and validated. When you can, share your own

observations about the workplace and organization as well to create an environment in which respectful truth-telling, as we described above, is normalized and accepted.

Suggested resource:

- Yousefi, B. (2017). On the disparity between what we say and what we do in libraries. In S. Lew & B. Yousefi (Eds.), *Feminists among us: Resistance and advocacy in library leadership* (pp. 91–105). Library Juice Press.

*Be difficult*: As John Lewis said, “Get in good trouble, necessary trouble” (Lewis, 2020). Your capacity will vary depending on your own positionality, power, and safety in your workplace, but this is a valuable tool in your allyship and advocacy as a feminist manager. This could mean, for example, pushing back on, working around, finding ways to subvert, or even outright rejecting directives sent from upper management when they conflict with your own values and principles or could potentially harm your colleagues. The caveat, however, is that simply ignoring a rule inside your own, smaller group within larger institutional contexts might not work toward creating wider and more enduring change within the broader institution. Learning how to push back directly and respectfully is a skill that you can develop and that must be practiced, just as with personal and interpersonal boundary work. During any process of pushback or when navigating difficult conversations and conflict, it is important to remain transparent with your own team and to be clear with yourself and others that you are willing to take on any consequences. Additionally, and especially in the case of those with more power and privilege, do not ever engage in this on behalf of someone who has asked you not to, and be sure that you have their explicit permission to do so in advance. These conversations with your colleagues could look like offering paths forward that you are willing to take and then supporting their agency by letting them choose what makes the most sense or feels right for them.

This is also about supporting and being an ally or accomplice to colleagues and members of your team who are seen as troublemakers, especially when that has to do with their identity or their willingness to speak up when they either see something that is not right or experience bias or harm. While there are certainly instances in which causing trouble is not helpful, and we may find that there are members of our teams who are disruptive in ways that actually hinder our efforts to create meaningful and necessary change in our work environments, marginalized individuals are frequently cast as problems as a result of their positionalities, the ways in which they embody difference, or their attempts to uncover oppression and speak truth to power. As a manager, particularly from a feminist framework, it is important to use your position within the organization to support your colleagues in making good and necessary trouble.

Being troublesome in these ways is about your relationship to power—your own and that of others—particularly those who have more power than you or who are in power within your organization. Being troublesome is something you can do with your power, especially when it makes your workplace better for others (and yourself as well). This may not always endear you to administrators or upper management, and you must decide what you are willing to give up or how far you should go in order to make good trouble. There are, however, situations or organizational dynamics in which this is a necessary practice,

and it is important to know when it is worth it and when to use other tactics to create and push for change.

Suggested resource:

- TED. (2021, July 6). *Luvvie Ajayi Jones: How to be a professional troublemaker* [YouTube video]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EfeiKPSBKfg>

*Expand what is possible and valued.* Challenging traditional power structures and the way things have been done is a key component of feminist management, especially from a decolonial lens. One form this can take is valuing ways of being and contributions beyond the personal characteristics or kinds of work that are traditionally esteemed and admired in most workplaces, such as reason and objectivity, linear scholarly achievement, solo authorship of publications, and quantity over quality, among others. Many of these attributes are a legacy of heteropatriarchy and white supremacy culture (Okun, 2022), which have also played a role in the primacy of individualism and hierarchy in our organizations (and the wider culture as well). A commitment to shifting this, especially as managers, might mean centering care work, supportive roles, mentoring, emotional labor, and subjectivity; fluidity and experimentation; creative activity and professional exploration; collaboration, facilitation, community engagement, and scholarship in forms and via media outside of scholarly or peer-reviewed publications; and quality, intentionality, and sustainability over quantity. It also means challenging ideas of progress and what is considered scholarly and professional in our workplaces, disciplines, and fields so that our colleagues can bring more of their authentic selves to their work and contribute in ways that are meaningful to them and aligned with what they have to offer. This ensures not only that we are able to do our work well, but also that we are pushing our workplaces and fields forward in ways that benefit and make these cultures better for those who come after us.

Suggested resources:

- Mentoring
  - Programs
    - American Library Association. (n.d.). *ALA mentoring resources*. [https://www.ala.org/educationcareers/mentoring/mentoring\\_and\\_recruitment\\_efforts](https://www.ala.org/educationcareers/mentoring/mentoring_and_recruitment_efforts)
    - We Here. (n.d.). *We together: We Here's mentorship program*. <https://www.wehere.space/news/we-together-we-heres-mentorship-program>
    - PeMento: Peer mentoring for mid-career library workers. (n.d.). *Welcome to PeMento*. <https://pemento.wordpress.com/>
  - Resources and readings
    - Office of Faculty and Academic Staff Development. (n.d.). *Best practices for mentors and mentees in academic settings*. Michigan State University. <https://ofasd.msu.edu/mentoring/best-practices-for-mentors-and-mentees-in-academic-settings/>
    - Iowa State University Library. (2023, December 7). *Mentoring resources and best practices* [LibGuide]. <https://instr.iastate.libguides.com/c.php?g=837540&p=5981917>

- University at Albany. (n.d.). *How to be an effective mentor*. <https://www.albany.edu/provost/faculty-mentoring/guidelines-resources-mentors>
- Magurany, A., & Dill, E. (2022, December). BIPOC librarians and retention: Mentorship and supportive relationships in the workplace. *College and Research Libraries News*, 83(11), 474–476. <https://crln.acrl.org/index.php/crlnews/article/view/25706/33637>
- Tjan, A. K. (2017, February 27). What the best mentors do. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2017/02/what-the-best-mentors-do>
- Inclusive/supportive management
  - Training
    - Jones, D. (n.d.). *Inclusive manager's toolkit*. <https://www.deettajones.com/inclusive-managers-toolkit>
    - Interaction Institute for Social Change. (n.d.). Facilitative leadership for social change—online [Workshop]. <https://interactioninstitute.org/training/facilitative-leadership-for-social-change-virtual/>
  - Readings
    - Interaction Institute for Social Change. (2014). *Core models of facilitative leadership*. [http://tiach.pbworks.com/w/file/attach/90446663/Handout - Facilitative Leadership 12.9.14.pdf](http://tiach.pbworks.com/w/file/attach/90446663/Handout-Facilitative%20Leadership%2012.9.14.pdf)
    - Manwiller, K., Peter, S., & Deards, K. D. *Creating an inclusive and accessible culture: Supportive management for people with disabilities* [Presentation slides]. CALM. <https://osf.io/vkhnq>

## Cautions

As you are learning about and finding new ways to practice feminist management, you will likely run into uncertainties, obstacles, or issues along the way. This is normal, and while this is always an opportunity to reflect on what is and isn't working for you and your team and then consider ways in which you might adjust accordingly and find new ways to live into and align with your values, sometimes challenges may be indicative or a consequence of a tension between your values and practices, on the one hand, and how many of our institutions are configured, on the other. Unfortunately, our organizations are often not conducive to frameworks that speak truth to or otherwise critique power (and the way things are), such as feminism in its more liberatory and transformative forms; often they are even antagonistic to the changes we are committed to and moving toward. Nevertheless, our work is important, and we can make a difference in our relationships and in our teams.

In this section, we outline a few cautions or considerations to be attentive to as you are building your practice. Others may come up in your own local context and experience, and we encourage you to keep doing this work and connect with others in order to help support you in changing your culture and environment even in the face of disappointments, pushback, or conflict.

*Hands-off management.* For both feminists and new middle managers, it can be tempting to flip the concept of trust into a management strategy that is more hands-off and results in being absent and unsupportive. This is an easy default to fall into, especially if you are in a department in which your colleagues are close to you in age or have similar levels of experience or seniority and you want to ensure they know that you recognize them as peers. In other instances, you may not yet be confident in your own managerial abilities and style, or you may feel uncomfortable with the power you hold as a result of your position within a very hierarchical organization. Many of us, especially those with an uneasy or cautious relationship with power, are wary of having power over others or the ability to impact someone else, and this wariness can prevent us from acknowledging our role and the power we do in fact have; it can also make it harder to see the very real needs of your colleagues, and thus we might not recognize and provide the support and guidance they need from us as managers.

Often, this style of management can be just as harmful as micromanaging because it leaves an employee without necessary support and sometimes even without an advocate or ally. It is your responsibility as a manager to be aware of and a foundation for the work of those who report to you. This includes folks on your team who are high-achieving, seem self-sufficient, or who otherwise don't often ask for or seem to need much support from you. Offering your time, energy, and care to your colleagues in this way will ensure that you are much better positioned to help when they need it and to promote and celebrate them and their work. While we, as feminist managers, should be keenly aware of how we can facilitate and ensure the agency and sovereignty of our colleagues, it's important that we not abdicate our roles as managers and mentors as a result.

*Benevolent leadership.* Helena Liu (2021) gives an in-depth study of the history of leadership and the role of benevolent leadership as part of the white savior mentality. This is worth exploring at length for all white managers, and likely for others in roles of power. Benevolent leadership comes from a glorification of leadership that is rooted in a long history of racism and sexism. Liu describes our "construction of leaders as charismatic, transformational, and ethical," which is "steeped in myths of white strength, innocence, and benevolence that have become so powerful and pervasive that many of us recognize them to be true" (p. 98). This lionization of leadership and of leaders continues even through multiple models of leadership because they reflect a view of leaders as exceptional individuals who hold a particular set of behaviors, qualities, and skills: "This faith in a heroic leader to save us all underpins the perennial tendency to prescribe 'good leadership' as the remedy for 'bad leadership,' while leadership itself evades critique" (Liu, 2021, p. 84). The values and principles that we have defined above are intended to move managers past this view of leadership and of leaders in particular.

*Narrow focus and navel-gazing.* As we have articulated, reflection is integral to a feminist management practice, and it is important to take time to reflect consistently on your values, any recent issues, and your own behaviors. We can also end up in feedback loops in which we struggle to see outside of ourselves or our own perspectives, and this can hinder our efforts to change or honor the needs and experiences of others. To counter this tendency, consider seeking an accountability partner or a trusted colleague who can

give you honest and compassionate feedback in ways that you will hear and be responsive to. As mentioned above, this source of feedback could be someone in your institution, managers at other institutions, or a community of practice for managers. This external feedback can help us see our perceptions and actions in new ways so that we continue to challenge ourselves and grow as managers and leaders, without becoming locked in our own perspectives.

Suggested resources:

- Brundy, C. (2018). Critical views of leadership and the academic library. *Library Leadership and Management*, 32(3). <https://llm.corejournals.org/llm/article/view/7254>
- Liu, H. (2021). *Redeeming leadership: An anti-racist feminist intervention*. Bristol University Press.
- Schlesselman-Tarango, G. (2016). The legacy of Lady Bountiful: White women in the library. *Library Trends*, 64(4), 667–686.

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter, our central question has been this: What does it mean, and what might it look like, to practice feminist management? In response to this question, as we have been grappling with and exploring how we might bring our feminist values and principles into our work as managers and leaders in libraries, it is clear that it is possible, but also challenging as a result of the ways our institutions are organized and the nature of systemic oppression in the larger social context in which our work and field are embedded.

To do this work in this particular way, as feminists, we must draw inspiration and guidance from our ancestors as well as thinkers here with us, in the present. Feminist theory is a rich body of knowledge, and a movement, that critically analyzes and interrogates the social structures and power relations that shape the experiences, opportunities, and even survival of different groups of people, especially marginalized individuals and communities. Putting feminist ideas into practice as managers is, of course, important for anyone who identifies as a feminist or feels aligned with feminist values, but, crucially, it can be a meaningful shift and commitment for all who seek to question, reimagine, and transform both how they manage and lead and the experiences of their colleagues and employees. The usual ways of doing things, of being in this work and these roles, are neither natural nor inevitable; rather, they are historical, social, and cultural consequences of the systems that underpin and structure our organizations, the larger professional culture of the field, and the social contexts in which they are enmeshed, and they both reflect and reproduce certain interests, ideologies, and politics.

For many of us, that includes hierarchical and authoritarian decision-making that silences or ignores alternative voices and perspectives; masculine and aggressive leadership styles that intimidate or exclude those who do not conform to those norms or ways of being; gendered and racialized divisions of labor that create inequities in the distribution of resources and responsibilities; cultures of surveillance and management oriented toward enforcement, punishment, and control; competitive and individualistic performance evaluation that fosters a culture of fear, comparison, insecurity, and ultimately

burnout and depletion; asymmetries of power due to structures and systems of domination and oppression that inequitably allocate rights and value; workplace environments premised on exploitation and the extraction of labor and capital in which workers themselves are seen as resources rather than as whole individuals with needs and desires; untenable expectations and working conditions, including lack of appropriate compensation, consideration, or care; and rational and objective knowledge production that dismisses or devalues other forms of knowing and feeling, among other characteristics of our labor under patriarchy that we have not explicitly named here but that nevertheless require uncovering and deconstruction.

Feminism, as a liberatory practice, is about challenging and transforming these oppressive legacies so that we can build and live in a different world. It is about creating new ways of working together that are more collaborative, caring, relational, equitable, inclusive, and just. But this work and a commitment to being a feminist manager are not always easy or straightforward—and not always without risk either. It will require effort; investments of time, energy, and attention; reflection; and action. But we also believe it can be possible, even manageable (so to speak).

That has been our goal here, in this chapter. Through distilling a clear set of values from the wide-ranging reservoir of inquiry and thought that constitutes feminism, and then identifying a series of integral principles to guide our work, we have been able to use what we have learned from others and our own experiences, perspectives, and embodied knowledge to outline practices that we believe will help create better workplaces and cultures for all of us. We have learned together, in the writing of this and beyond, and have brought what we have shared, what we know, and what we are dreaming toward in this place and our work. We hope that you have found new ideas and inspirations along the way and that you can bring some of these lessons, intertwined with your own positionality, values, and approaches, into your work as a manager.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### *Key Texts*

brown, a.m. (2017). *Emergent strategy: Shaping change, changing worlds*. AK Press.  
 Freire, P. (1984). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. (M. B. Ramos, Trans.). Continuum. (Original work published 1970.)

### *On Feminism*

Ahmed, S. (2017). *Living a feminist life*. Duke University Press.  
 Allen, P. (1986). *The sacred hoop: Recovering the feminine in American Indian traditions*. Beacon Press.  
 Collins, P. H. (1990). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness and the politics of empowerment*. Unwin Hyman.  
 Eric-Udorie, J. (Ed.). (2018). *Can we all be feminists?* Penguin Books.  
 Hernández, D., & Rehman, B. (Eds.). (2002). *Colonize this! Young women of color on today's feminism*. Seal Press.  
 hooks, b. (1984). *Feminist theory: From margin to center*. Routledge.  
 Moraga, C. & Anzaldúa, G. (1981). *This bridge called my back: Writings by radical women of color*. Persephone Press.  
 Nash, J. C. (2018). *Black feminism reimaged: After intersectionality*. Duke University Press.  
 Taylor, K. (2017). *How we get free: Black feminism and the Combahee River Collective*. Haymarket Books.  
 Vergès, F. (2021). *A decolonial feminism*. Pluto Press.  
 Zakaria, R. (2021). *Against white feminism: Notes on disruption*. W. W. Norton & Co.

## On Leadership and Management

- Bell, E., Merilainen, S., Taylor, S., & Tiernari, J. (2020). Dangerous knowledge: The political, personal, and epistemological promise of feminist research in management and organization studies. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 22(2), 177–192.
- Jones, D. (Executive Producer). (2022–present). *CultureRoad*. [Audio Podcast]. DeEtta Jones and Associates. <https://podcast.cultureroad.com/>
- Lew, S., & Yousefi, B. (2017). *Feminists among us: Resistance and advocacy in library leadership*. Library Juice Press.
- Liu, H. (2021). *Redeeming leadership: An anti-racist feminist intervention*. Bristol University Press.
- Sinclair, A. (2014). A feminist case for leadership. In J. Damousi, K. Rubenstein, & M. Tomsic (Eds.) *Diversity in leadership: Australian women, past and present*, (pp. 17–35). Australian National University Press.

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- Boggs, A., Meyerhoff, E., Mitchell, N., & Schwarz-Weinstein, Z. (2019). *Abolitionist university studies: An invitation*. Abolition University. <https://abolition.university/invitation/>
- brown, a. m. (2017). *Emergent strategy: Shaping change, changing worlds*. AK Press.
- cline, n. (2022). *Land acknowledgement resource guide*. Native American and Indigenous Studies Research Guide IU Libraries, Indiana University Bloomington. <https://guides.libraries.indiana.edu/nais/landacknowledgmentguide>
- cline, n., & López-McKnight, J. (2023). Knowing (un)knowings: Cultural humility, the other(s), and theories of change. In S. R. Kostelecky, L. Townsend, & D. A. Hurley (Eds.), *Hopeful visions, practical actions: Cultural humility in library work* (pp. 175–188). ALA Editions.
- Dzodan, F. (2011, October 10). *My feminism will be intersectional or it will be bullshit!* Tiger Beatdown. <http://tigerbeatdown.com/2011/10/10/my-feminism-will-be-intersectional-or-it-will-be-bullshit/>
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