

(In)visible Forces

A Critical Management Studies Perspective on Managing Staff during a Crisis

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Agenda

- Understanding Critical Management Studies
- Identifying Invisible Forces
- Addressing Inequity and Inequality

Positionality



Privileges

- “Asian”
- Settler
- Able-bodied
- Middle Management Position
- Unionized



Identities

- Chinese-Canadian
- Cisgender Woman
- Mother
- Working Class Family
- Immigrant Parents

Understanding

Critical Management Studies

What is Critical Management Studies?

“Critical management studies (CMS) has emerged as a movement that questions the authority and relevance of mainstream thinking and practice. Its focus is ‘management’ not as a group or as a function but as a pervasive institution that is entrenched within capitalist economic formations.”

(Alvesson, Bridgman, & Willmott, 2009, p. 1)

Why Engage with Critical Management Studies?

“Top management is routinely privileged in decision-making and agenda setting and in defining and shaping human needs and social reality...by questioning the rationality of elite structures, CT seeks to reduce the disadvantages of groups other than those of the managerial elite in determining the practices and discourses that comprise organizational realities.” (Alvesson, & Willmott, 1992, p. 12)



Identifying

Invisible Forces



Invisible Forces

- Consumer Culture
- Managerialism
- Class



Consumer Culture

“How the consumption of goods, services and brands structure social actions and interpersonal relations” (Bradshaw, 2009, p. 54).

Consumer Culture

- Consumer driven decision-making – what we buy, and what services we offer to our patrons. For example, surveys and teaching assessments are heavily used to improve the student experience.
 - Health and Safety are not the general public or patron's expertise, decisions should be driven by public health experts;



Managerialism

“Managerialism is the discourse or ideology which assumes the need for one occupational group to coordinate the aims and activities of [organizations], usually in return for higher pay and status than their subordinates.”

(Parker, 2011, p. 155)

Managerialism

- Decision-making conversations without consultative processes
- The omniscient manager (down to the micro-level)
- Devalues the expertise of staff that conduct the tasks
 - Implies staff are not intelligent enough to understand their work or develop best practices



Class

“Most societies today...have stratification systems based almost entirely on economic relationships. Inequalities in material life-chances are fundamental; status differences and differences in political influence follow on from this.”

(Armstrong, 2011, p. 41)

Class

- Commuting to work (safety and exposure increased via public transportation)
- Working from home and access to funds for technology
- Social distances in the organization
 - Racialized tasks (Wingfield & Alson, 2013)

1. Describe the incident from your perspective? What ideologies influence your thoughts on how you have interpreted the situation?
2. What other perspectives exist on the situation or issue? Speak to some colleagues to gain other insights if you cannot think of anything.
3. Whose interests are served with the decision made for the individual? Who is disadvantaged?
4. Create (with the individual) an alternative structure or decision that addresses issues raised in in your conversations with other people and the employee.

Ideology Critique

(Tripp, 2011)

Scenario: The province has issued a stay-at-home order and the university has decided to close the campus except for the library where curbside service must remain operational ASAP. No library staff were consulted with this decision.

Manager X: "Lately, I've been having to deal with staff complaints about coming to work. If it isn't about masks, it's about number of rising cases and their safety. Our students are paying full tuition and need access to books ASAP. It'll look bad if we don't offer it. The staff should be grateful they're employed. People are losing jobs and these people are complaining. They don't know how good they have it."

What dominant ideologies exist in this thinking?

- **Consumer Culture:** Students as customers and culture of immediacy.
- **Managerialism:** Managers are experts and why decisions are formed by them.
- **Class:** Staff should be grateful they are paid and should never complain.

What are some other perspectives?

- Staff are taking public transit and experience more risk to COVID exposure.
- Schools and daycares are closed, childcare options are limited.
- Staff were not consulted on Health and Safety.

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Whose interests are served/disadvantaged?

- Students, and Faculty can access the collection.
- Administration can promote services.
- Staff safety may be at risk without proper H&S procedures.

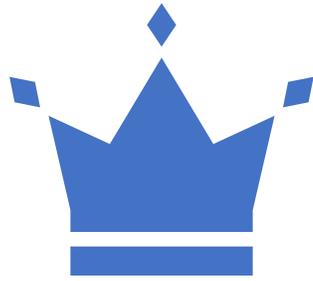
What is an alternative structure?

- Delay operations until schedules, availability, and planning have been done with staff.
- Re-deployment of staff to avoid furloughs.
- Connect with departments and identify immediate needs/priorities in accessing parts of the collection.
- Health and Safety Training & involvement from union reps or a representative.

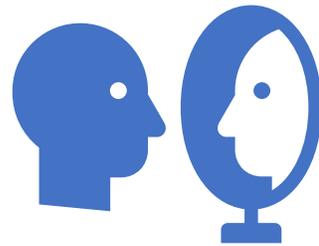
Addressing

Ideologies in Librarianship

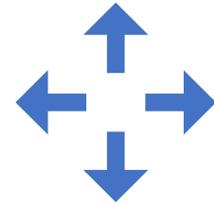
Education and Research



Critical
Leadership



Critical
Reflective
Practice



Reframing
Library
Management
Studies



Considerations

- System-conforming solutions (Klikauer, 2011)
- CMS improves Management Studies; Critical Theory emancipates (Klikauer, 2011)
- Decolonial Management Studies (Faria, 2013)
- CMS is difficult to apply to practice (King & Learmonth, 2015)
- Little is discussed related to racism in management practices and experiences.
- Highly theoretical and draws on many concepts.

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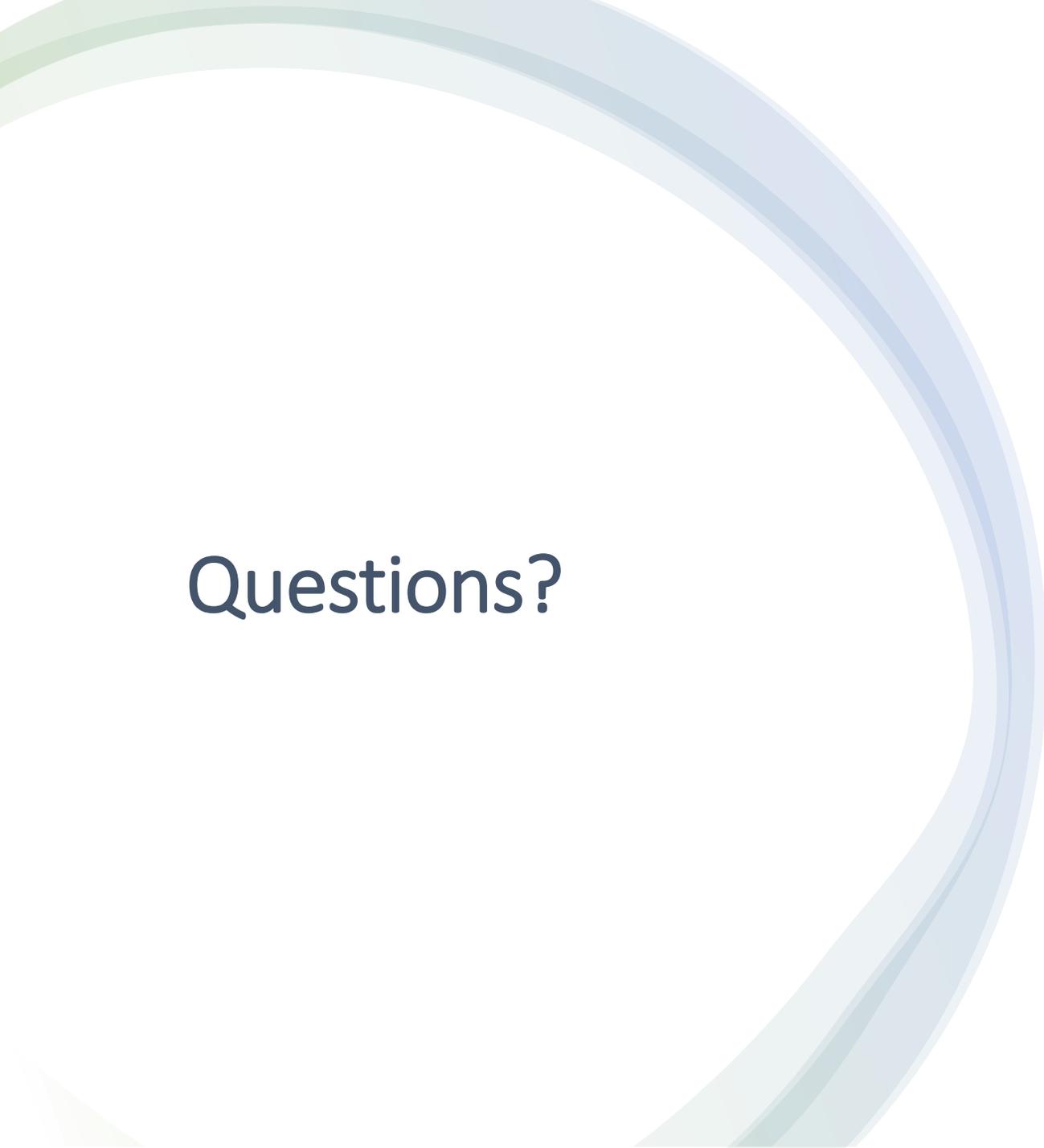
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Questions?