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CHAPTER 16

Examining the Information Literacy Dreamfield

Applying a Sentipensante Pedagogy to Library Research Consultations

Sheila García Mazari and *Samantha Minnis*†

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* Growing up in a conservative Midwest city as the daughter of first-generation Mexican immigrants, Sheila found herself often struggling to reconcile her lived experiences with the narratives that have been centered in academic research. As a result, Sheila is continually learning to lean into her privileges while questioning traditional methods of ascribing value to information and information creation. Engaging in a Sentipensante approach is one of several ways that Sheila has engaged with information literacy through an inclusive pedagogical lens. However, as a tenure-track faculty member, Sheila knows that she speaks from a position of privilege and that engaging in approaches that challenge the status quo continues to be difficult for many of her peers in academic libraries. Sheila hopes to continue to examine the intersection of critical pedagogy and information dissemination within first-generation and Latinx communities, seeking to hone an increasingly equitable and inclusive librarianship practice.

† Because her mother is a university professor, Samantha has always been comfortable with how to navigate higher education and how to ask for and receive assistance. Her education and experience working with students have led her to understand the privilege of that inside view, which, combined with her whiteness, allowed her to be in higher education with confidence that she belonged. When she works with students, she brings an awareness of her privilege and works to demystify scholarly research. Before collaborating with Sheila, Samantha had not heard of Sentipensante pedagogy, but as Sheila and she worked together and talked about their approaches to their work, they noticed overlaps and connections between Sheila's grounding in Sentipensante pedagogy and Samantha's grounding in feminist theories. Samantha plans to continue to develop her approach and contribute to creating a more inclusive, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive space for students.

Introduction

As librarians, we guide students in learning about information literacy as a framework, allowing individual choices and evaluation to guide how they interpret sources and, by extension, the world around them. While information literacy instruction focuses on critically examining the context of a source, it does not focus on examining the context of the learning environment itself—an educational context that values Western notions of learning, where the student seeks one correct answer as a passive participant. Within this context, students do not have the choice in source selection that we believe they do; they search for sources that are deemed legitimate through a dominant white male narrative of knowledge production.[1] This in turn can lead to a learning process that disempowers the learner, particularly for our Black, Indigenous, and students of color, who are not equitably represented in the research landscape. In an attempt to intervene in this learning environment, the authors identified a pedagogical approach that showcased the value of both intellectualism and intuitive knowledge in Laura Rendón's model of Sentipensante (Sensing/Thinking) pedagogy. In this chapter, the authors combine the Sentipensante approach with other theories and models used in librarianship that center intuitive knowledge to survey the information literacy instructional landscape. Through a focus on the one-on-one research consultation, the authors share their personal experiences to highlight areas of opportunity toward actively practicing an inclusive Sentipensante approach.

Contextualizing Sentipensante Pedagogy

In her book *Sentipensante (Sensing/Thinking) Pedagogy: Educating for Wholeness, Social Justice, and Liberation*, Rendón applies Don Miguel Ruiz's concept of a societal Dreamfield to educational pedagogy. Don Miguel Ruiz contends that humans spend their entire lives dreaming. When our minds are physically awake, our thoughts and actions are shaped by a societal Dreamfield. The Dreamfield consists of shared societal agreements, ideas, and beliefs, many of which we do not choose but that we inherently agree to in order to be accepted as members of our societies.[2] If we attempt to resist these agreements, we are punished; therefore, we remain in a dreamlike state, as we subconsciously follow the agreements to survive in the societal Dreamfield.[3] During the times in which our minds are physically asleep, however, our dreams are not beholden to the beliefs created in the societal Dreamfield, allowing our dreams to change freely and challenge the status quo.[4] Rendón notes that the Western educational Dreamfield values intellectualism and reasoning over intuition or emotions, positing them as two separate forms of

knowledge creation and ascribing value to an intellectualism/thinking approach rather than an intuitive/feeling approach.[5] Rendón makes the call to move toward a practice that values both the feeling and the thinking aspects within education; a pedagogy steeped in the difrasismo, or third space, that comes from valuing both aspects as two equal parts of a greater whole[6]—an approach that she names a Sentipensante pedagogy.

Drawn from the term used by Colombian fisherman to refer to "language that speaks truth,"[7] Sentipensante pedagogy focuses on educating for Wholeness, social justice, and the cultivation of wisdom by validating the lived experiences of students as sources of knowledge.[8] Rendón draws on Toltec wisdom and Aztec culture in her construction of the model of Sentipensante (Sensing/Thinking) pedagogy as shown in figure 16.1. The model is comprehensive, providing a total of six dialectical spaces that are constructed from the difrasismo of "sensing and thinking processes and the balance between inner and outer knowing."[9] For example, the model illustrates how Sentipensante pedagogy can be applied to research, by integrating Object and Subject toward a practice of Participatory Epistemology. Similarly, a Sentipensante assessment approach should integrate Academic Learning Outcomes and Personal Development Outcomes. For the purposes of this chapter, the authors will focus on one aspect of Sentipensante pedagogy, that which explores the difrasismo found when valuing both Intellectualism and Intuition toward a practice of educating for Wholeness.[10]
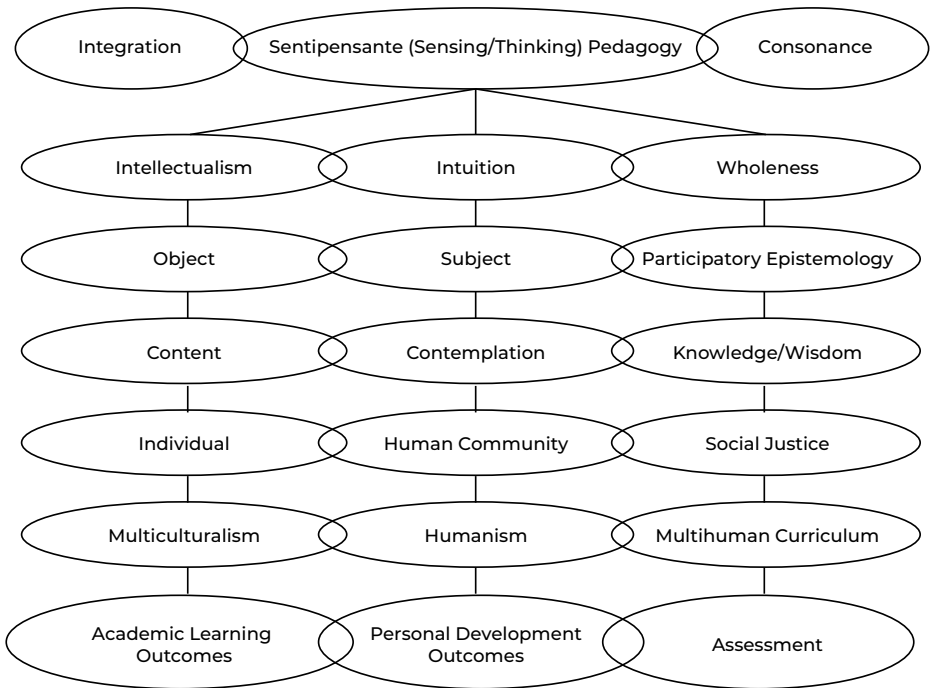
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Figure 16.1
Model of Sentipensante (sensing/thinking) pedagogy

Examining the Information Literacy Dreamfield

Within librarianship, the Association of College and Research Libraries' (ACRL) *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* is the basis of our profession's pedagogical Dreamfield. Information literacy instruction, as defined by the authors of this article, includes, but is not limited to classroom visits, learning objects, and one-on-one research consultations. The *Framework* focuses on the ways librarians can contextualize the creation and application of information in instruction, providing six overarching frames.[11] However, within both the knowledge practices and the dispositions listed for each frame, the main focus is on the extrinsic effect of a student's choices. Students are asked to think about their audience and their responsibility to present a holistic understanding of a topic through the use of outer knowledge[12]—which includes varied and at times conflicting sources—in order to present an informed and therefore "objective" stance. This focus aligns with the "intellectualism/thinking" approach that Rendón identifies as being valued over intuitive/feeling knowledge within the educational Dreamfield.

An example of this can be found, within the frame Authority Is Constructed and Contextual. Among the knowledge practices presented is the ability to

> Acknowledge they [students] are developing their own authoritative voices in a particular area and recognize the responsibilities this entails, including seeking accuracy and reliability, respecting intellectual property, and participating in communities of practice.[13]

The *Framework* posits students as either novices or experts when engaging with the frame. This knowledge practice, in particular, notes that it is incumbent on students to seek differing viewpoints that are considered accurate and reliable, which naturally leads students to question prior knowledge. This is further reinforced through the disposition "Develop and maintain an open mind when encountering varied and sometimes conflicting perspectives."[14] While the frame does list within its dispositions that students should "Question traditional notions of granting authority and recognize the value of diverse ideas and worldviews," it does not provide language that notes how intuitive knowledge can be valuable.[15]

As the *Framework* does not speak directly to intuitive knowledge, information literacy instructors often focus more on seeking outer knowledge to validate research. When information literacy instruction is happening in a one-on-one research consultation, a teaching environment that is particularly vulnerable for the student, this focus on intellectualism can lead to harm.[16] By not acknowledging the inner knowledge

that students bring with them when they engage with research, instructors may inadvertently lead them toward sources that conflict with their intuitive knowledge in a manner that disempowers them. In sum, acknowledging lived experiences as an authority requires an intentional equity lens to the frame that is currently missing.

A review of the six frames shows that the Scholarship as Conversation frame is the only instance in which there is acknowledgement of intuitive knowledge within both its knowledge practices and dispositions:

> Recognize that a given scholarly work may not represent the only or even the majority perspective on the issue; See themselves as contributors to scholarship rather than only consumers of it.[17]

These examples showcase how the *Framework* is written primarily in line with a Western pedagogical approach. Because outer knowledge is likely to have undergone a peer-review process or be built on preexisting knowledge, the education Dreamfield, and likewise, the information literacy Dreamfield views these sources as objective. As a result, the *Framework* primarily values an intellectualism or "thinking" approach to evaluating, consuming, and creating information. Through the lens of Sentipensante pedagogy and educating for Wholeness, the *Framework* lacks explicit language that speaks to the value of the intuitive aspects of knowledge creation. This omission conflicts with efforts to build and empower intuitive knowledge within the information literacy Dreamfield, which can be particularly harmful when this knowledge originates from the beliefs and values of traditionally marginalized communities.

Research as Violence

The absence of valuing intuitive knowledge in research is highlighted in Jessie Loyer's work "Indigenous Information Literacy: nêhiyaw Kinship Enabling Self-Care in Research." Loyer dedicates a section to detailing how research can be violent, explaining that Indigenous peoples are seen as "Othered objects of research and rarely as researchers…."[18] As a result, Loyer notes that information literacy instruction must include awareness of a student's physical, emotional, and spiritual health, particularly when research itself is traumatic.[19] The violence that research can inflict can be further magnified when paired with the phenomenon of stereotype threat.

Claude M. Steele, author of the book *Whistling Vivaldi: How Stereotypes Affect Us and What We Can Do,* explores stereotype threat in depth as one of several identity contingencies, which are defined as "the things you have to deal with in a situation because you have a given social identity."[20] Stereotype threat specifically stems from a desire to not confirm stereotypes about our social identities, whether they are related to gender, race, or social status, among others.[21] Steele further explains

that "places like classrooms, university campuses, standardized-testing rooms, or competitive-running tracks, though seemingly the same for everybody, are, in fact, different places for different people."[22] In the information literacy teaching environment, stereotype threat can deeply affect students who did not receive the same opportunities to engage in research as their peers. The actual act of research and, further, finding research that may negate personal experiences, can compound this stereotype threat. And as Loyer has noted, when a student's prior knowledge is not represented in the academic information landscape, this can at times be a source of disempowerment rather than validation.[23]

Steele's research further shows that this violence is not limited to emotional and spiritual well-being, as short instances of stereotype threat "are enough to raise your blood pressure, dramatically increase ruminative thinking, interfere with working memory, and deteriorate performance on challenging tasks."[24] Long-term effects may lead to chronic health problems including hypertension and higher levels of visceral fat, which raises the risk of diabetes and cardiovascular disease.[25] In this way, the stereotype threat students may face from conducting research and finding sources that contradict their lived experiences can lead to physical violence.

Redefining the Dreamfield

Calls to improve upon or redefine the information literacy Dreamfield are not new. Librarians such as Laura Sanders have previously called for the addition of an Information Social Justice frame to the ACRL *Framework* that would expand on limitations of the current *Framework*; however, her draft knowledge practices and dispositions continue the focus on the extrinsic impact of research.[26] Although the dispositions in this proposed frame encourage the interrogation of outer knowledge, this interrogation also occurs primarily through an intellectualism/thinking approach.[27] While the information literacy Dreamfield at its core values an intellectualism/thinking framework to analyzing and synthesizing information, librarians have been incorporating pedagogical tools and theories from adjacent disciplines to build an increasingly holistic practice. In the following section, the authors present a general overview of two examples of practices that can shift the Dreamfield toward educating for Wholeness.

Ethics of Care

In her chapter "Feminist Reference Services: Transforming Relationships through an Ethic of Care," Sharon Ladenson names the key tenets of ethics of care as "developing and nurturing caring relations, valuing concrete experiences, and healing and transforming society as well as personal relationships."[28] Incorporating an ethics of care

approach in a research consultation creates an opportunity to tend not only to students' intellectual needs, but also to the emotional and affective components of research as well. Sara Howard points out the "emphasis on listening and shared conversation" in the reference interaction in her work "Purposeful and Productive Care: The Feminist Ethic of Care and the Reference Desk."[29] Listening to students and valuing their concrete experience begins to break down the hierarchical structure that exists between librarian and student toward a collaborator model. Because ethics of care is also concerned with healing and transforming society, Ladenson discusses using a feminist approach to engage students in a critically reflective practice around their topic.[30] This helps the student reconsider their topic not only from an information-seeking perspective, but also in a way that can potentially produce social change. While both Ladenson and Howard discuss scenarios at a reference desk, these scenarios apply to the types of questions and interactions that can also happen in a research consultation.

Trauma-Informed Pedagogy

In an ACRL blog post, Karina Hagelin describes trauma-informed approaches for libraries, stating that it is impossible to tell if someone is a trauma survivor just by looking at them.[31] Because of the many circumstances that can lead to trauma, library workers can assume that we are helping traumatized people in our libraries. This is especially true in light of the current global pandemic, a collective trauma that, for some, is compounding several preexisting traumas as well. Hagelin asserts that trauma-informed approaches are important not only because of past trauma library users might have experienced, but also because we want to avoid re-traumatizing the people we are working with. This can be especially relevant to consultations where students do not see their intuitive knowledge reflected in published literature. Hagelin lists six key principles of a trauma-informed framework, any of which could be explored in the context of a research consultation. One example is "Empowerment, Voice and Choice." In a research consultation, this could look like offering a student a few different options for how to get started with searching, empowering a student by validating the work they've already done, or taking time and care with questions and listening to be sure their needs are understood.

Engaging in a Sentipensante Approach

While librarians continue to grapple with shifting practices, an area of teaching that provides great opportunity for growth is the research consultation. Symphony

Bruce speaks to this opportunity in her article "Teaching with Care: A Relational Approach to Individual Research Consultations" by explaining that these spaces require a level of vulnerability that librarians can use to "provide care or perpetuate the practices that lead to the disconnection a student may experience."[32] In the following section, the authors present our experiences engaging with Sentipensante pedagogy in one-on-one research consultations, noting areas of growth toward an increasingly intentional practice.

Sheila García Mazari: Educating for Wholeness

Prior to my current role as a liaison librarian, I was a Teaching and Learning Resident Librarian. As part of a shared curriculum, I would use an Evaluating Sources lesson plan that engaged with the Authority Is Constructed and Contextual frame for first-year students. In this activity, students were tasked with examining several information sources related to the Flint water crisis. The resulting discussion led students to understand that all the sources—from a tweet to a journal article—could be valid sources of information as they provided diverse perspectives and served to minimize bias. I encouraged students to examine their own biases as well and how these may influence how they engage with information. In response, a student asked me, "I lived in Flint when all of this started. That would make me biased, right? So I shouldn't write a paper on this topic." I backtracked immediately, noting that personal experiences were valuable, particularly for such a politically and racially charged topic.

When I started my position as a liaison librarian, the lesson learned from this interaction was instrumental in supporting students through a global pandemic. While my research consultations shifted online, I found that this allowed me to apply a Sentipensante lens in an intentional manner, building stronger relationships with students and ensuring that I could lend to their success as whole people. One common belief I encountered was that of students viewing their experiences during a global pandemic as a detriment rather than a source of knowledge. Students would share with me the competing priorities they balanced, including how the loss of peer support and structure in the asynchronous environment impacted their ability to complete assignments. Within my role as a liaison, I found an opportunity to guide students to the understanding that they knew how they learned best, and we worked together to ensure they had the tools they needed to succeed. For some students, I was an accountability partner, periodically checking progress on a research assignment. For other students, I provided structure through a set time every week during which we could co-work virtually and I would be available to answer questions. While these changes may seem small, I found students appreciated my approach

to looking beyond the assignment (Intellectualism) as a marker of their success to also include the learning space they needed (Intuition) to support their individual development (Wholeness). While my university is gearing up for a return to campus in person, a subset of students will remain in an online or hybrid environment. I hope to continue to build on this approach so that I can be a source not only of knowledge, but of support as well.

Samantha Minnis: Empowering Students to Participate

There are two reference consultations that I have had multiple times throughout my time in libraries that have become almost archetypes to me. The first I think of as "the silver bullet source." The first time it happened, a student came to the reference desk looking for a source for an assignment. It eventually became clear that he was looking for one source to connect his ideas that he could lean on to prove his thesis, the one source that will bring an assignment together. As I demonstrated the databases to help him look for a source, I explained to him that there might not be one perfect article to connect his ideas and that, in fact, this was where he and his ideas came into the research process. Another type of recurring consultation I've experienced is "weird ideas," where students tell me they have an idea but they're not sure if it's right. It seems a little out there because they are not seeing it reflected in the literature and they don't know if they should pursue it. While very different from the silver bullet sources, there are similar underlying reasons for this request and similar interventions I use as a librarian when they occur in a research consultation.

In both cases, the students are experiencing elements of frustration, self-doubt, and fear. These reflect Kuhlthau's findings in her Information Search Process model, which describes the confusion and uncertainty students experience as their research becomes more complex.[33] These emotions can be compounded if a student doesn't see identities like their own reflected in the research process. Students who express doubt about their "weird" ideas or who are looking for a source to reflect their ideas back to them are doing so because it disrupts the Dreamfield they have of themselves as passive participants in knowledge collection rather than active knowledge creators, which causes discomfort.

In these reference consultations, I attempt to intervene in a way that will attend to the whole student by addressing their intellectualism and their intuition in a way that aligns with Sentipensante pedagogy, founded in ethics of care and a trauma-informed approach. I express enthusiasm for students' "weird" ideas and encourage them to pursue them. I validate their intuition by elevating their narratives in an ethics of care approach, asking questions about how they got to their ideas or, in the case of silver bullet sources, ask them questions about their topic, what got them

interested in it in the first place, and what they have learned so far. I give them choices about what research steps they might want to try, whether we should try looking in some new places for more sources, or whether they're ready to move on with the sources they currently have, empowering them in their process and choices. I frequently check in with students to ask how they are feeling as well as to check that we've accomplished the goals they had for our session. I model and name frustrating moments in the research process and assure students that being frustrated or fearful are normal reactions to doing something new, as is being excited and curious about what they're discovering.

Moving Forward

In this chapter, the authors have examined the information literacy Dreamfield through the lens of Sentipensante pedagogy and, specifically, the difrasismo of educating for Wholeness. The authors offer this pedagogical tool to reframe how librarians contextualize intellectualism/thinking (outer) and intuitive/feeling (inner) sources of knowledge in one-on-one research consultations. More specifically, this chapter serves as a starting point toward intentional integration of inclusive pedagogies that can disrupt the current information literacy Dreamfield. By focusing on an intellectualism/thinking approach to research, while also elevating the intuitive/feeling knowledge that students bring to the scholarly conversation, we can begin to shape a Dreamfield that encompasses and empowers an array of voices and, by extension, redefines how we ascribe value to sources of information.

However, the authors also recognize that the information literacy Dreamfield operates within the larger context of the educational Dreamfield. This creates barriers that may seem insurmountable for the solitary instructor, and Rendón speaks to this by listing common methods that instructors have employed to engage in pedagogical dissent.[34] These include operating under the radar screen, building a scholarly reputation to legitimize their approach, adopting an ethic of working harder than others, finding supportive colleagues, assuming powerful roles on campus, and having a strong mentor.[35] Such approaches are also common within librarianship and can compound unequal labor expectations, as well as potentially lead to vocational awe.[36] To truly move forward as a profession, the value of intellectualism/thinking and intuitive/feeling knowledge must be equitably and intentionally integrated into professional expectations and practices toward a new pedagogical Dreamfield.

Notes

1.   Rebecca A. Reid and Todd A. Curry, "The White Male Template and Academic Bias," Inside Higher Ed, April 12, 2019, https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2019/04/12/

how-white-male-template-produces-barriers-minority-scholars-throughout-their.

2. Laura I. Rendón, *Sentipensante (Sensing/Thinking) Pedagogy* (Sterling, VA: Stylus, 2008), 24, ProQuest Ebook Central.

3. Rendón, *Sentipensante,* 24.

4. Rendón, *Sentipensante,* 23.

5. Rendón, *Sentipensante,* 27.

6. Rendón, *Sentipensante,* 67–68. Difrasismo is a literary device used within Aztec ritual speech. This refers to exploring the adjacent space that two concepts or terms create when juxtaposed with one another. Laura Rendón provides the example of flowers and song being used to indicate artistic pursuits that capture beauty, such as poetry. This allows for the exploration of two seemingly contrasting terms or concepts toward a third space, where the two concepts bring to light new understandings that are not restricted to the duality through which we often understand our society.

7. Rendón, *Sentipensante,* 131.

8. Rendón, *Sentipensante,* 135–36.

9. Rendón, *Sentipensante,* 142.

10. The authors note that there is value in taking a comprehensive approach to applying a Sentipensante pedagogical lens not only to teaching information literacy, but also to library assessment practices, research, and curriculum development, among others. As novices to Sentipensante pedagogy, we have not had the opportunity to intentionally engage with the model beyond the information literacy instructional Dreamfield. There is ample opportunity to continue to explore the application of this model toward a comprehensive approach in the library profession.

11. Association of College and Research Libraries, *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* (Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2016), https://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework. The six frames in the Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education are as follows: Authority Is Constructed and Contextual; Information Creation as a Process; Information Has Value; Research as Inquiry; Scholarship as Conversation; and Searching as Strategic Exploration. There is value in a close examination of all frames individually and as a whole through the Sentipensante lens. However, such an analysis is beyond the scope of this chapter.

12. Rendón, *Sentipensante,* 27. Outer knowledge, or "outer knowing" as used by Laura I. Rendón, refers to knowledge that adheres to our societal Dreamfield and with which we interact through "intellectual reasoning, rationality, and objectivity." Inner knowledge is based on meditation and reflection and is characterized as "wisdom, wonder, sense of the sacred, intuition, and emotions."

13. Association of College and Research Libraries, *Framework.*

14. Association of College and Research Libraries, *Framework.*

15. Association of College and Research Libraries, *Framework.*

16. Symphony Bruce, "Teaching with Care: A Relational Approach to Individual Research Consultations," *In the Library with the Lead Pipe,* February 5, 2020, https://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2020/teaching-with-care/.

17. Association of College and Research Libraries, *Framework.*

18. Jessie Loyer, "Indigenous Information Literacy: nêhiyaw Kinship Enabling Self-Care in Research," in *The Politics of Theory and the Practice of Critical Librarianship,* ed. Karen P. Nicholson and Maura Seale (Sacramento, CA: Library Juice Press, 2018), 147.

19. Loyer, "Indigenous Information Literacy," 149–53.

20. Claude M. Steele, *Whistling Vivaldi* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010), 3.

21. Steele, *Whistling Vivaldi,* 5.

22. Steele, *Whistling Vivaldi,* 60.

23. Loyer, "Indigenous Information Literacy": nêhiyaw Kinship Enabling Self-Care in Research,"

146.

24.   Steele, *Whistling Vivaldi,* 132.

25.   Steele, *Whistling Vivaldi,* 132; Isabel Wilkerson, Caste (New York: Random House, 2020), 307.

26.   Laura Saunders, "Connecting Information Literacy and Social Justice: Why and How," *Information Literacy* 11, no. 1 (2017): 67–68, https://doi.org/10.15760/comminfolit.2017.11.1.47.

27.   Saunders, "Connecting Information Literacy."

28.   Sharon Ladenson, "Feminist Reference Services: Transforming Relationships through an Ethic of Care," in *The Feminist Reference Desk: Concepts, Critiques, and Conversations,* ed. Maria T. Accardi (Sacramento, CA: Library Juice Press, 2017), 76.

29.   Sara Howard, "Purposeful and Productive Care: The Feminist Ethic of Care and the Reference Desk," in *The Feminist Reference Desk: Concepts, Critiques, and Conversations,* ed. Maria T. Accardi (Sacramento, CA: Library Juice Press, 2017), 67.

30.   Ladenson, "Feminist Reference Services."

31.   Karina Hagelin, "Moving towards Healing: A Trauma-Informed Librarianship Primer," *ACRLog* (blog), June 23, 2020, https://acrlog.org/2020/06/23/moving-towards-healing-a-trauma-informed-librarianship-primer/.

32.   Bruce, "Teaching with Care."

33.   Carol C. Kuhlthau, Jannica Heinström, and Ross J. Todd, "The 'Information Search Process' Revisited: Is the Model Still Useful?" *Information Research* 13, no. 4 (December 2008), http://informationr.net/ir/13-4/paper355.html.

34.   Rendón, *Sentipensante,* 114.

35.   Rendón, *Sentipensante,* 114–17.

36.   Fobazi Ettarh, "Vocational Awe and Librarianship: The Lies We Tell Ourselves," *In the Library with the Lead Pipe,* January 10, 2018, https://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2018/vocational-awe/.

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