

# Motivation & Diversity:

## Factors that influence the choice of LIS as a career

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“...growing up around your people and to be educated by them, it's just more impactful, you become empowered and when you can empower children, you don't have any problems out there, they are confident in the skin they are in.”

# Introduction

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- Why this study?
  - Diversity Issues
    - U.S. Population – 61% Caucasian (Census, 2000)
    - Librarians – 85.3% Caucasian (BLS, 2004)
  
    - LIS Students – 11.9% Ethnic Minority (ALISE, 2004)
    - LIS Graduates – 10.6% Ethnic Minority (ALISE, 2004)
  - Recruitment

# Theoretical Framework

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- Cultural Hegemony
  - Prevailing Culture/Power
  - Class Structure
  - “Top Down”
- Discursive Formations
  - World View & Culture
  - Experience

# Literature Review

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- What's being done?
  - Diversity Initiatives
  - Recruitment
- Personal Experiences
  - Expectations & Opportunities
  - Support System
- Visibility within LIS
- Career Choices

# Methodology

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- Semi-Structured Interviews
  - Why Questions & Personal Histories
  - Ability to focus on the 'unusual'
- Participants & Setting
- Questions
  - Interest in LIS
  - Role of Libraries
  - Diversity
  - Education

# Themes

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- Libraries
- Librarians
- Library Work Experience
- LIS Graduate Program
- Career Plans & Goals
- Education & Family
- Support
- Mentors
- Ethnicity & Community
- Acculturation
- Views of Diversity

# Libraries

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## ■ Library Use

... I grew up and realized that there was a direct relationship between my interest in reading and reading and my comprehension level at school. And because I knew that I knew that was a directly relationship between that and that made me feel good, that kept me going back to the library. (Mary)

## ■ Introduction to the Library

... we used the library a lot, even as...young children, we always went to the library...we didn't have a lot of money, but we always went to the library...it was something we did, our whole family. (Serena)

# Libraries

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## ■ Library as Place

...the lunch room and the study halls were so, like, I couldn't think in an environment like that. I wasn't afraid, I was more afraid of how I would react because I came from an environment where, from kindergarten to the 4th grade, I was like tortured, every way tortured, not physically...I went to the library to seek solace, it was the only quiet place.  
(Luisa)

# Librarians

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- I would really say that, I really feel like every librarian I've come in contact with has been a really great person, really excited to help me. I feel that if I had not had such good experience in the library when I was little, it wouldn't be the same, I wouldn't have wanted to volunteer at the library in the first place...(Jill)

# Library Work Experience

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- ... the initial interest came from working at the library. I believe I was an associate librarian 2 at a public library...my administrators and supervisors, and from attending conferences, and interacting with other colleagues, encouraged me to attend library school. I was doing a lot of the work that some of the master degreed librarians were doing. So, in addition to doing outreach, I was doing reference work and collection development, that type of thing. So when this opportunity came up, they said “Well you’re already doing the work that we’re doing. Why don’t you think about pursuing a degree?” (Jamie)

# Support

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- Family

I would complain about [my job] and [my husband] would wrack his brain and was like, you love research...he would come see me in the library [when we were both at college] and he was like, you used loved that job, you thought it was great, so I thought okay I'll go back. (Marta)

- LIS Program

Here, it's like, you know, you have so many people to turn to if you're having a great day or you're having a not so great day or you feel like you should be doing something else. They're very, very open. They want this program to work. (Lydia)

# Mentors

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- ...there's an African American woman that has, you know, she's really wonderful to me. She's like, "I'm going to teach you the ropes, I'm going to show you this, show you that." I guess you can kind of say she's been my mentor, she's been really good...part of mentoring is also showing you the bad side of things and teaching you how to get around all that. And that's what she's done. Everybody else kind of tells you the good stuff, but she [tells me about]... the reality of dealing with it. (Sadie)
- ...I really had to say to [my mentor], my reality as a woman of color, as a single mom, is really different from your reality as a white European academic, with a good reputation behind you and I can't do that. Um, but he kept encouraging me. (Lynn)

# Education & Family

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- ...[my father] and my mother would tell us, we're not wealthy so the only thing we can give you is to ensure that you have a good education so that you can support yourself through life...Both of my parents, actually, you know, they felt that education was extremely important...I think, from the very beginning, when I was in 4th grade I remember thinking, I have to plan so I can get into a really good high school and a really good college... (Jill)

# Education & Family

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- ...I'd say education was stressed. Education was stressed, but a certain type of education, a certain, not education, but a certain type of profession, or that you want to work yourself towards. Not professions that deal with arts & sciences or the humanities, but more so, technical, technical profession like dealing with computers, medicine, um, engineering... I think, there is that connotation when you say 'my son is an engineer' or 'my son is a doctor' it's like, you know, it's like all the other, whichever group you want to chose, be it Korean, Asian Indian, Japanese, Chinese... (Dean)

# Career Plans & Goals

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- ...you don't need money to come in [to the library], it provides information to anybody regardless of fees, the concept is universal access to information...libraries are all about sharing... (Maggie)
- Because the public's not nice, in general. It's hard working with the public. It's really hard. I see, on a daily basis, the librarians working with different people, all kind of people. You don't have a real set kind of clientele that comes in and... I'm not interested. (Tami)

# Career Plans & Goals

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- ... I think I would prefer to be in an inner-city school because I feel like, I feel like I could touch more lives that way. I know that inner-city schools tend to have more, a larger amount of minorities and I feel like I could be an inspiration to one of them. Plus, I don't know, it's just, I just really enjoyed it. It's a challenge, it's a challenge that most people don't want to do, they don't want to do inner-city because it is a challenge, but they need love too, they need to know that somebody cares. (Ruth)

# LIS Program

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- Clark Atlanta University's library program was going to be shutting down, so that's why I really came back here to [this LIS program]. I wanted to go [to Clark Atlanta], but unfortunately it was out of my hands. I appreciate being here because it's my first time being at a non-historically black college/university, so it's been an open minded experience for me to come here...and I appreciate the opportunity they've been giving me to expand my knowledge and grow here...(Martha).
- ...when I looked into the other programs, I had heard about [this LIS program], if you come here, they will make you work until you sweat blood. I have heard this from people who got their master's, their MLS 10 to 20 years ago. The reputation was the same, it hasn't changed... I think it's a good thing, you know because having come here and having done the majority of the work I've had to do, I've actually learned more through doing all those things... (Seta)

# Ethnicity

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- ... instead of saying I'm Asian American, I specifically say I'm Cambodian American, I think that makes a big difference to show other people who aren't as familiar with Asia as I am, that there's a lot out there. That you can't just classify one thing as one group, that's about it. (Molly)
- Everyone's aware of the immigration act of the 60s, the numbers did explode and...the face of Asian Americans is from post 60s, but there are those of us that grew up before then... Hawaiians and the ones from San Francisco, they pre-date us. They deserve it, because of numbers, they assimilated much more quickly than the ones on the East Coast, we had a harder time. (Josephine)

# Ethnicity

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- So my dad is completely Americanized. He sounds like someone from Fargo, ND, you know. I try to speak Spanish with him, he won't, he ignores it. It really hard, I'm like, this is your language, but... (Lydia)
- [My uncle] would often tell [my mother] that he was worried that I wouldn't pick up English and she'd tell him it was everywhere, I was going to get English, but [I] might not get Spanish. (Jill)

# Ethnicity

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- Unfortunately I wasn't around a lot of black people at school, I think there were maybe three other black kids in class. So, I really didn't know how to fit in because I noticed the difference between the kids I grew up with... I got into a lot of fights because I was the kid who came from white [community] and spoke properly and um had real long hair and they thought, "she's too good, she thinks she's too good." So I had to learn to adapt and I did, but I hated it. (Amanda)

# Acculturation

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- You know, we've been so integrated into the culture since birth, at least my sister and I, we don't see that we stand apart. We don't see ourselves as a minority, until we have to bubble it in on a standardized test. So, it's never been a factor of, you know, oh, I'm a minority. It's more like, wow, I'm one of these people who has the unique situation where I do speak another language, you know and I want to be able to use that. But not because I am Hispanic because I don't think that makes a difference. (Alanna)

# Acculturation

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- ...I've learned to cultivate silence and I think a lot of people of color learn to hide their light that way and the profession doesn't benefit I think from those who are in it...I would I think, fare a lot better if I didn't and I was one of those needy minority students, if I needed to find my way through and there was sort of a white man's burden fulfillment they could have with me and what do you do with someone like me. And so, I question, what do we do with people of color that really are stellar? Do we really allow them to bring what they could to the profession? Or do, again as I feel I've been, um, put into a position where they're sort of trapped into a subservient role or into, you know, a conspiracy of silence, or what I've decided to do, not [care] and shoulder really difficult moments. (Lynn)

# Views of Diversity

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- ... the first thing we need to do is to say we are different and we're okay with that. We make an effort to understand other people and not that we have to be the same... I think that should be what diversity is, that we acknowledge that we're different and we're not afraid to be different, we make an effort to understand other people (Jill).
- That I see these issues not as something we solve, but as a state of consciousness, that we need to be aware of. I introduce them to the traditional literature in the field, as well as more cutting edge issues about it. And validate the fact that it will remain a discomfort zone for the rest of their lives. They're never going to solve this. You know, there will always be only partial realities that get represented. (Lynn)

# Where do we go from here?

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- Evaluate recruitment policies and procedures – are we reaching the best possible candidates? Who are we missing?
- The role of majority (white) culture in LIS – what does LIS as an institution need to do in order to achieve diversity besides recruiting librarians of color?
- Diversity as a management issue and the role of conflict.



Questions?

