

LIS 681

Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Special Collections

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When we look at the history of the archival field, one can see that the Archives and Special Collections play an important role in preserving people's histories. Now, when analyzing their history a bit further, it is important to understand that marginalized communities have often been ignored and erased, which has caused them to be underrepresented in archival institutions. The lack of representation that occurs can also be seen to continue the power imbalances and historical biases that we have observed throughout history. I've asked myself many questions as I've done my research, but a question that I think is worth looking into is, "What can educational institutions that teach archival science currently do to create diversity in their curriculum in order to address the underrepresentation of marginalized communities in the archives?" There's a lot of work that needs to be done, and it is important to uncover what these educational institutions are doing to create diversity in their archival education. In my research, I've found that the use of Critical Race Theory (CRT) could be a good way to begin unpacking the biases that we have continuously seen in archival institutions.

In this research, one can observe that marginalized groups have often been erased and misrepresented in archival records. Historically, archives have been shaped by societal power dynamics that have been characterized by cultural perspectives that are dominant in society. This has caused the histories of marginalized groups to be completely left out. Daniel (2013) notes in their article that the representation of immigration and ethnicity within the North American archives has been framed through a white and Western perspective. This ultimately has led to the marginalization of non-white communities. Neal (1996) explains that the archival profession overall has been historically homogenous and that little diversity can be seen, which further contributes to marginalization and the removal of marginalized voices within the archival field.

There have been articles that have highlighted how the standard of archival institutions have been centered around whiteness. A good example of this is Ramirez (2015), wherein in the article, there is a general critique of the practices that occur in archival institutions and their centering on whiteness. We have seen throughout history that the centering of Eurocentric perspectives causes the erasure of non-white histories. This erasure leaves marginalized groups unable to preserve and document their culture and histories. When considering how to tackle these issues that occur in archival institutions, specifically marginalization--I would say that the best way to approach the biases that occur is through a CRT framework. Dunbar (2006) offers a perspective on CRT within the archival field, and the author offers a framework on how to assess how race and power dynamics shape the field. To start confronting the implicit biases that occur in the archives, one would need to recognize them first in order to start doing the work of addressing the inequalities that occur in the field.

CRT is an extremely important tool that can be used in archival education because this tool allows us to understand the racial biases that are ingrained within the field. According to Dunbar (2006), CRT can help archivists recognize the ways that race has impacted the field. The framework that Dunbar provides allows archivists to reflect on their own position within society. The integration of CRT in archival education can be very important because it can help students identify the issues that are occurring. It can aid in addressing the racial biases that occur within archival collections and practices. By incorporating CRT in archival education, we can potentially see future archivists become more aware of the cultural and racial biases that have historically occurred in the field. This, in turn, would equip these future archivists to question the traditional practices that are in place in order to consider more equitable and inclusive ways of preserving the histories of marginalized communities. Including CRT in the field can overall help

diversify the field by ensuring that archival collections and records reflect the experiences of all communities.

When addressing the underrepresentation of marginalized communities within the archival field, it's important to consider adding education on diversity, equity, and inclusion into the field. These courses have to educate students on how the archival field has historically marginalized voices and as an outcome, they should also provide strategies to ensure that future archivists steer clear of those same practices. Ramirez (2009) mentions the importance of Latino/a/e archivists when it comes to understanding the complexity that comes with the Latine identity, specifically when it comes to archiving their histories. This would make sure that the history of these communities is not oversimplified and that they are also accurately depicted and represented. I would say that this would stand true for other marginalized communities as well.

Sutherland (2017) calls for "Archival Amnesty" as a way to address the historical erasure of Black Americans' experiences. Part of Archival Amnesty as Sutherland explains, is that there is a recognition and preservation of the histories of the communities that have been systemically excluded from archival records. Sutherland particularly brings focus to the traumatic events that occurred, such as lynchings. Including these practices (like Archival Amnesty) in archival education would help students understand how important it is to address historical injustices, and it would also highlight the importance of fostering a more inclusive approach in the field.

Now, when it comes to my methodology, I've attempted to design it to fit in a short amount due to the time limitations that I have. The way that I designed my methodology was to explore how archival education could address the underrepresentation of marginalized communities. This research will use a combination of qualitative methods, which include interviews and content analysis.

- **Content Analysis:** I would conduct a review of available syllabi and course descriptions from different archival courses to see if they're utilizing DEI and CRT frameworks. This analysis will focus on trends in the courses that are offered to see how these frameworks are being taught. The content analysis will also focus on determining the extent to which issues that involve race and cultural representation in the archives are being addressed.
- **Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with professors who teach archival education from several universities to see how diversity and inclusion are being integrated into these courses. In these interviews, I would specifically ask the professors what their approaches and strategies are when it comes to teaching students about the underrepresentation of marginalized communities in the archives. I would also like the professor to address how they're preparing their students to challenge existing biases and practices that are harmful to marginalized communities, specifically when they enter the field.

With a short timeline, I would say that this methodological approach would be practical and would provide me with a lot of information that I could use in my research. The content analysis would provide my research with a broad view of what is being done in archival education, while the interviews would offer a more in-depth perspective into the initiatives. With this information, I would incorporate it into my research to then continue finding other strategies that could be used to continue challenging the field.

A lot of challenges still remain, but there is a lot of information out there that could help us when it comes to archival education. Through the articles that I've encountered, I would say that the best approach to challenging the biases that occur in the archival field is to start utilizing the CRT framework in both the field and education. The CRT framework would help students

examine the racial biases that have shaped the archival field, by recognizing this, students and professionals can start coming up with ways to create a more inclusive field. The underrepresentation of marginalized communities in the archives is an issue that has occurred for a long time and requires ongoing attention. While I have actively observed archival education become proactive in their approach to recognizing the injustices and imbalances that occur, there is a lot of work that still needs to be done. Archival education must continue to expand its curricula to include frameworks such as CRT. Having this framework in archival curricula would ensure that future archivists are fully equipped to continue advocating for marginalized communities and that they can confront the historical biases that have shaped the profession. This, overall, would ensure that we are moving towards an equitable future for all communities.

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