The Specter of Whiteness: Experiences of BIPOC in the MLIS and on Social Media

by

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Abstract

Through qualitative in-depth interviewing and inductive thematic analysis, this research seeks to amplify the experiences of a population in Library and Information Studies (LIS) that is often underrepresented**:** Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) who are in the Master of Library and Information Studies (MLIS) program or are early career professionals. This research also addresses another element often missing in research about BIPOC in LIS: their unique relationship to social media. By understanding the MLIS and social media as two information environments, this research addresses three important research questions: 1) How do BIPOC describe and understand their experiences of race and racialization in the MLIS?; 2) How do BIPOC describe and understand their experiences of race and racialization on social media?; 3) How are participants' experiences of race and racialization shaped and impacted by the information environments (of social media and MLIS programs) in which they are operating?

While centering BIPOC experiences and trying to decenter Whiteness, the findings of this research indicated that Whiteness was always present, in the shadows. The specter of Whiteness was central to this research, describing how Whiteness is haunting: felt, embodied, and understood but often not perceived clearly. Findings indicated that BIPOC were impacted by the specter of Whiteness in descriptions of being isolated or othered in the MLIS and by experiencing second hand racism on social media. While participants described the ways that social media allowed for more opportunities for connection and community than the MLIS, both environments were greatly influenced by the reproduction of Whiteness. However, participants also described resisting Whiteness by refusing to be hyper-visible and through community building with BIPOC. Additionally, this research demonstrated that calling out Whiteness made the specter of Whiteness more material, less invisible, and thus less powerful in some sense.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Luthfia Friskie. The research project, of which this thesis is a

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Thank you to all my family members for your love since the moment I arrived on this Earth: my grandmas, grandpa, dad, mom, aunt, uncle, cousins, step-dad and sister. Thank you to my in-laws who I love dearly. And an endless thank you to my life partner, Kevin, the absolute best partner anyone could have ever asked for. Thank you for cooking meals, organizing the house, preparing snacks, keeping studying music on, and encouraging me so that I could feel confident in this process.

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Introduction

<u>1.1 Why this research?</u>

1.1.1 Background

Luthfia Friskie is 13 years old, on the bus with her grandmother Saida. The summer is hot (not quite as hot as it is now) but there seems to be consistent thunderstorms to cool the evening off (more than there are now). Luthfia and Saida get off the bus and approach the dark green awning, with three blue books and in white the words "Edmonton Public Library." They enter the Lessard branch and are greeted by the staff while looking for their respective destinations. Saida walks off to ask a question but Luthfia makes a beeline for the computers. She logs on, first going to the library's website to enter the Back to Cool contest hoping to win tickets to see Beyoncé. Then she logs onto Nexopia, to catch up on forum posts and private messages she might have missed. While Nexopia seemed to be filled with scene kids and their pale skin and long black hair brushed from one end of their head to another, Luthfia knew some other Black people there. One of her what we would call now "mutuals" shared something that they found on another website called BlackPlanet. It was a quote: "Freeing yourself was one thing. Claiming ownership of that freed self was another." Luthfia knew that this friend was older and that she knew a lot more about a lot of things than her, and Luthfia wanted to know more. Luthfia asked who that was from and the mutual wrote "Toni Morrison, she's a Black writer." Fascinated by this quote, Luthfia wanted to see what kind of books Toni Morrison wrote and so she found a copy of *Beloved* at the library. She took this copy home and struggled her way through it, complex and dense, written in a prose she had difficulty understanding and with themes frankly inappropriate for her level of understanding. But it sparked something in her, an interest in learning about racial identity, history, and community. Nexopia is now permanently shut down as

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of this year (2024). The Lessard branch closed for a new branch to open and was replaced with the MAC Islamic Center that Luthfia has been to with her family for Eid celebrations. But what remains is her curiosity and interest in what it means to be a person of colour in this society, as well as her interest in whether libraries and social media enable the ability to explore our identities through access to information, to knowledge, and to community building.

I, of course, am Luthfia. I was born in Canada but my family immigrated here from Kenya. We are settlers in amiskwaciy-waskahikan, colonially known as Edmonton, and I take seriously my responsibility to this Land as a settler. This includes my intentions to minimize the negative impact I have on the Earth, to minimize the negative impact I have on my community (meaning all those around whom I live and to whom I live in relation), and a responsibility to forming good and healthy relationships within myself, with the Land, and with community. This includes acknowledging I live in the Land of nêhiyawak/Cree, Niitsitapi/Blackfoot, Nakota, Anishšināpēk/Anishinaabe, Dakota, Saulteaux, Dene, Métis/Michif Peoples and many other Indigenous peoples who are stewards of this Land. It includes acknowledging that the institution in which I produce this work is a colonial institution, integral in historic and contemporary colonialism; that the work itself (who is highlighted and who is left out) is influenced by colonialism in academia; and that this work is produced by myself as a settler with my own experience with colonialism (including the consequences of British imperialism in Kenya and my continued experience as a settler in the colonial state of Canada). Stating my position and intentions in this research are important, as it is part of my personal and professional ethos.

1.1.2 Rationale

So, what is my intention with this research? As I have established, libraries and social media have always been important to me. Much like many of the participants of my study, I have a great nostalgia for my formative years in the library. In addition to expanding my social circle and my understanding of the world through books and classes, the library also introduced me to social media. Social media became a way for me to discover ideas and engage with people talking about things I wasn't being taught in formal education systems. Even though I grew up in a Black household, I learned a lot about Black history (my own and that of my kin) and Black liberation through social media and the friends I made online. In many ways this research is very personal and intimate, because I have always seen the value in social media for community building and unique forms of information sharing. And while I always saw a relationship in my personal life between social media and libraries, because for a long time they were so uniquely connected, I saw them from a new perspective when I decided to enter the Masters of Library and Information Studies program. Suddenly, social media became much more important to me as it was one of the only avenues I had available to meet and connect with students and professionals connected to LIS (Libraries and Information Studies) who were also people of colour. Before I entered the program I was not aware of how much of a minority I would be both in the classroom and in the professional world. Once this was established, I felt isolated and had a hard time finding a community that I was actually looking for. This was exacerbated by the pandemic, when I found myself even more isolated from community. But I have always found community on social media and so I explored what communities I could find. And it was no surprise that communities of library professionals of colour had already been built: meeting, sharing, complaining, helping, commiserating, celebrating, educating and creating together. And

so after time to think about a variety of ideas, I decided that I wanted to do research with others like me, interviewing other BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) about their experiences of race and racialization within the MLIS (Master of Library and Information Studies) and with social media.

With some preliminary research, I found that there was a gap I wished to address by researching BIPOC about their MLIS experiences. There has been very little research conducted on the experiences of LIS students who are BIPOC generally. More specifically, there exists little data to illuminate these students' experiences and practices in MLIS programs and their understandings before and early on entering the profession of librarianship. And yet, I am struck by the plethora of writing on the issues of diversity in the professions, ideas, and values associated with LIS. This contrasts with the very few researchers interested in how these issues are understood by the very people of whom library professionals and researchers hope to be more inclusive of – that is, BIPOC MLIS students. And so, I decided that researching how BIPOC students in LIS (like me) feel about LIS (and the programs they are enrolled in particular) was of value. This is because we are often ignored, both in our programs and in the existing scholarly literature. However, based on my own experiences, I felt an additional element was missing and also ignored. While it may not seem immediately obvious, social media seemed like an important element of learning, communicating, community building, and relating that also is frequently ignored in the LIS literature. The MLIS and social media are both what I call information environments (a concept I will discuss later in this Introduction); both of these information environments are personally important to me as an individual who is currently obtaining her MLIS credentials, works in a library, and uses social media often. However, I

believe that a comparative study of these two information environments is also important to add richness to the literature already written about the experiences of BIPOC MLIS students.

1.2 What is this research?

1.2.1 Methodology

As I have mentioned, this research was conducted with BIPOC who were attending or attended MLIS programs at Canadian institutions within the last 7 years. If participants were not currently students they were early career professionals. Interviews were semi-structured and in-depth, lasting from 45 minutes to 1 hour and 30 minutes. I interviewed 11 participants between February 2023 and July 2023, either via Zoom or in person depending on geographic location and preference. Participants residing in the Edmonton region attended interviews in person, primarily on the University of Alberta campus but two were conducted in participant homes as this was their preference. The first part of the interview covered questions about participant experiences in the MLIS and the second part covered questions about participant experiences on social media. The final part of the interview covered questions about BIPOC as an identifying term. Data took the form as transcriptions from these interviews and were analyzed iteratively with inductive thematic analysis.

1.2.2 Study overview & Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to highlight and understand the experiences of race and racialization of BIPOC in two information environments: the MLIS and social media. It is interested in understanding those experiences individually (within each environment) and it is interested in understanding those experiences holistically. Research findings are divided into three chapters , although the themes run throughout all three chapters. The following is a review of what each finding chapter includes.

The following questions will be addressed in this study:

- RQ1: How do BIPOC describe and understand their experiences of race and racialization in the MLIS?

- RQ2: How do BIPOC describe and understand their experiences of race and racialization on social media?

- RQ3: How are participants' experiences of race and racialization shaped and impacted by the information environments (of social media and MLIS programs) in which they are operating?

The first two research questions seek to understand experiences of BIPOC within these respective information environments individually, to identify the ways that their experiences are unique within each. The first two questions are concerned with how BIPOC understand their experiences in the MLIS and social media through the lens of their racial identities, in ways that are unique to their White counterparts. The third research question seeks to understand how these two information environments converge and diverge, comparing and contrasting how participants' experiences in each environment were different or similar.

1.2.2.1 Experiences in the MLIS

This chapter focuses on participants' experiences in their MLIS programs. Starting from establishing how participants of this study came to the field of LIS and why they chose to enroll in the MLIS, it is established that most chose to pursue a career in LIS because of formative childhood experiences in libraries and a belief that the profession can have a positive impact on the communities in which they live. However, participants found that when they entered the program, some felt like outsiders or at least in some sense "othered" because of their racial identity. Early in my research I establish a theme that arises throughout: *the specter of Whiteness*.

Participants describe a feeling that the MLIS and the LIS community at large is demographically predominantly White and throughout their reflections describe the impacts of Whiteness, even when they do not explicitly use the term Whiteness. This chapter unpacks how participants describe their experiences in the MLIS, particularly how they perceive those in the MLIS as having good intentions when the MLIS addresses issues of equity and accessibility; how they did or did not feel supported in their programs; and how they do or do not use the term "racism" to describe experiences of discrimination, isolation, and othering. It turns to identifying how participants described withdrawing themselves or being silenced by these experiences. This chapter concludes with a deeper discussion about how these experiences are manifestations of the specter of Whiteness, a term I use to describe how Whiteness is felt, embodied, and understood but sometimes not perceived clearly.

1.2.2.2 Experiences on Social Media

This chapter focuses on the experiences of the participants with social media. Participants articulated that they were able to access more diverse communities and more diverse information in online spaces. Nevertheless, participants also noted key overlaps between in-person MLIS spaces and online spaces. Both carry risks of racism and racialization for participants, even as the participants also found more readily available opportunities for connection online. However, participants described their online activity in disengaged terms by using terms like scrolling and lurking. In addition, they described how breaches of privacy and surveillance online were of concern but, at the same time, that they were personally unconcerned because their passive and disengaged online activity would prevent them from being greatly affected. I argue that the practices in which the participants engage are actually self-consciously chosen ones that are informed by their knowledge of the potential harms for BIPOC in online spaces. While

participants did not describe being directly impacted by racism online, they did describe instances of secondhand racism (a term I define at length later in this Introduction); it is clear that they are impacted by these experiences and by their understanding that racism can and will occur online the more visible that a person of colour is. This chapter also incorporates a discussion of the specter of Whiteness in that Whiteness instigates the experiences of race and racialization online that participants describe.

1.2.2.3 Discussion and Conclusion

The final chapter is a conclusion. It brings together the issues addressed in the preceding two chapters to identify more clearly how these respective information environments impact the experiences of race and racialization that the participants describe. It looks at the convergences and divergences between the two information environments of the MLIS and social media, and posits considerations for how these two environments privilege Whiteness and engage in reasserting White hegemony. This chapter identifies how participants' behaviors of withdrawal and self censorship revealed how the two information environments reproduce Whiteness. There is also discussion of how Whiteness became the unintended center of this research and what the implications of this are. The chapter outlines how participants work around Whiteness, particularly how their actions could be interpreted as acts of resistance to Whiteness including their choices to refuse hyper-visibility as BIPOC and their experiences with community building amongst other BIPOC. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of what possibilities future research could take.

1.3 Definitions

It is important to establish definitions and context for some of the more complex terms and ideas that are fundamental to this research. Accordingly, in this section, I provide definitions for some of these keywords.

1.3.1 LIS & MLIS

I want to start by briefly reviewing what I mean and what the difference is between the terms LIS and MLIS. The MLIS is the abbreviation for the Master of Library and Information Studies or Science, a graduate degree often but not always required to pursue employment in professions associated with LIS, particularly librarianship. While there may be variation amongst the terms used to describe the MLIS degree (such as Masters of Information (MI)), all programs included and referenced in this study are American Library Association (ALA) accredited programs. These programs must maintain specific accreditation standards to comply with the accreditation process and thus are deeply shaped by the accreditation process, and by extension the values and goals of the ALA (ALA, n.d.,a). LIS is the abbreviation for Library and Information Science and, although this is a scholarly discipline and not a group of people, I will make reference to the LIS community in this research. Since this is a very broad and diverse community I want to establish exactly what I mean by this. I use the term LIS community because it was a term that I found was colloquially used in the interviews I conducted. There seemed to be a shared understanding of the term amongst myself and the participants to mean not only all those involved in the MLIS (i.e. fellow students, faculty, other LIS researchers, and administrators) but also those who occupy professions that require an MLIS to pursue (e.g. librarians primarily but also archivists, managers, researchers etc). However, this broad group of

people is ostensibly educated and socialized professionally within a similar framework, i.e. the same principles and theories that I will review in the literature review. I will only use the term "LIS community" when either discussing the very general and broad communities of people associated with LIS professions or if the participants have implied or directly used the term. However, in an effort to provide greater specificity, if I am talking about individuals in specific MLIS programs (i.e., faculty, coworkers, fellow students, administrators) I will use the acronym MLIS.

This nevertheless raises a question: why does the term LIS community even come up in this research? I argue that when accounting for the experiences of BIPOC in the MLIS program it is important to talk about the broader community and specifically the profession of librarianship. This is because the MLIS program seeks to educate and socialize future librarians primarily. While information studies is included in LIS, few graduates of the MLIS will continue on to enroll in an information studies PhD and become a researcher or professor in information studies. However, regardless of the profession that is pursued after graduation, professionalization is part of the MLIS. The value or merit of professionalization as a focus of the MLIS has been discussed by many researchers, however it is agreed upon that the MLIS often is professionalizing and primarily educates and socializes students to be librarians (Fraser-Arnott, 2019; Garcia & Barbour, 2018; Oliphant & Branch-Mueller, 2018).

Students are influenced by what they have learned and been exposed to in the MLIS, and this influence carries with them when they go into the field. So, when I am discussing issues of Whiteness, racism, and racialization in the MLIS, LIS, and librarianship, it is not because I am conflating these three terms. On the contrary, I believe that the foundational theories, practices, knowledge, and experiences from the MLIS have implications for how these issues show up in

libraries and other LIS professions. For example, one of the themes in this research is that of self-censorship. Participants describe censoring or controlling themselves in preemption of, and in response to, experiences with Whiteness and, by extension, racism and racialization in the MLIS (and, so too, on social media). This self-censorship has implications for individuals of all races both in the MLIS and when they go on to work in the professional settings of libraries, archives, special collections, etc. BIPOC students do not enjoy as full or rich of an education experience in comparison to their White peer and, as a result, perhaps learn to control themselves from speaking out once they enter the workforce. I should note that additional elements like job scarcity and precarity can also be influences here. In addition, White students in the MLIS are potentially unaware of the impacts of Whiteness in the field and their Whiteness, and the lack of good-faith consideration of the unique experiences and opinions of BIPOC in their education and in their workplaces can have implications for how they do or do not provide support for BIPOC (Daniels, 2013). In other words, what White people do or do not learn in the MLIS is critical for how they continue in their personal and professional endeavors. Consequently, understanding LIS more broadly is important.

1.3.2 BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour)

I refer to the participants of this study as BIPOC, which is an acronym for Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour. In fact, identifying with this term in some way was the main requirement for participating in this research (see Appendix A for language used in recruitment). Many researchers and scholars use the term People of Colour (POC), and I will use that terminology when citing one of those scholars who uses this phrase. However, I prefer the term BIPOC to refer to my participants in an attempt to acknowledge that POC is a highly contested term due to its pan-racialization and its potential rejection of the particular complexities of

different racialized experiences, as well as its potential reduction of Indigeneity and Indigenous peoples to a racial category. Although BIPOC could be interpreted to possess the same potential limitations and tensions, it is nonetheless a term that seeks to acknowledge that Indigenous invisibility and anti-Blackness are unique features of White supremacy and are unique to those groups of people (The BIPOC Project). Furthermore, I would argue that Indigenous invisibility and anti-Blackness are unique in that they are commonly perpetrated by other non-Black, non-Indigenous POC. My use of this term is not to disregard the complex history and ongoing reality of colonization for Indigenous peoples or to conflate the uniquely anti-Black racism that Black people experience both historically and contemporarily. Nor do I seek to conflate these experiences with formations of racism experienced by non-Black or non-Indigenous people of colour. Rather, I use this term because it can assist us in understanding the many features of discrimination, inequity, and forced assimilation that Black people, Indigenous peoples, and people of colour share that is distinct from a White experience (Perez, 2021). Although the term BIPOC explicitly references "colour" and for many will only include individuals with a "shade deeper than 'whiteness' in their skin," it includes individuals who have what might be considered White skin but are still part of a racial minority (e.g., White Indigenous or Latiné people) (Perez, 2021, p. 37).

In using this term, I had a feeling that it might lead to the exclusion of individuals who experience racialized marginalization and exclusion but with whom the terminology of "BIPOC" does not resonate. I ultimately chose to continue using this term not only for brevity's sake but also because I was concerned that, regardless of my decision, I would generalize people's identity in another way or, worse, leave out an entire group of people by accident. For instance, I am biracial and so I am sensitive to the ways that mixed-race people often have to fall under the

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category of "Other" or "Mixed Race" when choosing standardized descriptors of their racial identity. And so while recruiting and in writing I use the term BIPOC, with the intention of naming a unifying term to describe the shared experiences of Black people, Indigenous peoples, and people of colour within a White supremacist society. However, I cannot be certain of all the implications that using a generalized term such as BIPOC had on the themes that did or did not arise in my research and in further research would choose different modes of recruitment to ensure I incorporated the perspectives of Black and Indigenous participants.

1.3.3 Information Environments

My understanding of the MLIS and social media as information environments is important to framing the research. I am interested in framing these two spaces as information environments because I see the participants are engaging with information and knowledge in both environments in various ways that are important not only for their professional life, but for their personal, emotional, and social life. As one of my participants Connie stated, "information is applicable in every facet of life," and I felt that was true for this research. For some this may seem obvious: the MLIS and social media are both environments where one gains access to, shares, develops, communicates, transforms, and creates information. However, because "information environment" is a term used in LIS to describe a variety of things, it is important to specify how information environments have been defined and used in the literature. Given the variety of uses of the term, it is also important to understand what I mean when I deploy "information environment" in my research.

Much of the writing on information environments is concerned with understanding information-seeking behavior, particularly how users interact with library resources in person

and digitally (Detlor & Lewis, 2004; Detlore, 2004; Raju, 2021). The term is used often in computer sciences. For example, the National Institute of Standards and Technology defines the term as "the aggregate of individuals, organizations, and systems that collect, process, disseminate, or act on information" (Computer Security Resource Center, n.d.). Information architect Jorge Arango (2018) describes an information environment as simply "referring to the contexts we operate in when we interact with each other and organizations through information technologies such as the telegraph, the telephone, and… interactive digital media like the internet." Notably, many authors in LIS use the term information environment without defining it explicitly. Some, however, are more direct. Detlor & Lewis (2004) describe an information environment as "the overall framework for context in which an information system exists" (pg. 84). Detlor (2004) describes an information environment further as the "physical setting, information culture, information staff, and information politics" of an organization or institution (pg. 37). Some authors like Raju (2021) build on the term information environment to describe "digital information environments" as different from traditional ones. For Raju, such traditional environments include "traditional cataloging and classification/information organization" (pg. 367). By contrast, Raju (2021) describes a digital information environment as one that reconceptualizes the language of traditional information environments to include "metadata management, research data management, digital curation, data science, open scholarship, and so on" (pg. 367). Still, these definitions do not quite describe how I understand an information environment in the context of this research.

So, what do I mean by information environment? In this research, an information environment is defined as the site in which information is created, defined, shared, adapted, transformed, used, and understood by people. These environments have specific historical and

technological contexts that inform the ways in which information is created, disseminated, and understood, as well as what information is privileged. For the purpose of this research, social media is an information environment that of course has technological context (the infrastructure that enables its existence) in which information is created (by "media gatekeepers" and the public), defined, shared, adapted, transformed, used and understood (by users) (Kraft et. al. 2018). But it also has a specific historical context starting in the mid-1990s with blogging and social networking and rising to swift and widespread popularity by the early aughts, mostly created within the context of capitalistic American society (majority of popular social media sites are created in the United States and the majority of all sites on the Internet generally originate in the United States) (Cooper, 2024; Daniels, 2009). The MLIS is an information environment in that the discipline of LIS and the institution of postsecondary have specific historical contexts (I will expand on how these historical contexts are rooted in Whiteness and settler colonialism) and are sites where information is created through research, defined, shared and adapted through researchers and instructors and which is transformed, used and understood by students. But it also has a technological context that informs what information exists within it and how it is accessed, including the infrastructure that enables its existence (the buildings, the databases, etc. that students and staff must interact with) and the information technologies that are taught about in the programs (computers but also content management platforms, databases, programming languages, etc.). It might be interesting to some to think of the School of Information Studies or the MLIS as an information environment as information environments are often thought of as concepts that are explored and studied as opposed to sites of information themselves. I am positing that the MLIS and social media are information environments, they are socially constituted sites where specific types of information reside. And individuals are influenced by

these information environments, including the type of information available within them and the practices of individuals within them.

This research is not concerned with exploring what an information environment is as much as it is concerned with how it relates to my research question of how participants' experiences in the MLIS and social media are impacted by the respective information environments. I have offered a definition of "information environment" not to prescribe a single or fixed definition for all researchers but rather to explain how this term is useful for my own research. I will be exploring the themes that arise from participants' own understandings of their experiences within these two information environments and how the experiences of the participants are shaped by their environments.

Methods

The following section will review the research design, data collection and data analysis for this study.

2.1 Research Design

The purpose of this study is to address the following research questions:

- RQ1: How do BIPOC describe and understand their experiences of race and racialization in the MLIS?

- RQ2: How do BIPOC describe and understand their experiences of race and racialization on social media?

- RQ3: How are participants' experiences of race and racialization shaped and impacted by the information environments (of social media and MLIS programs) in which they are operating?

This study is qualitative, exploratory, and analyzed with an inductive approach. Qualitative in-depth interviews were determined to be the optimal choice for this research as they provided the best opportunity to explore the research questions fully. In LIS research, qualitative interviews are underused, with a 2023 scope review reporting that less than 11% of LIS research papers surveyed used interviews as a research method (Matysek, 2023). Qualitative interviews allowed for the data to be much richer (as the context permitted understanding body language and tone when answering questions) and I was able to establish rapport with participants in a way that would be lost using other methods. Choosing qualitative interviewing over other research methods was key as qualitative research makes the "researcher as much a part of the research process as the participants and the data they provide" (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, pg 4).

As I established earlier in my introduction, this research is in some ways personal so choosing a method that acknowledges the ways that the researcher is intertwined with the research is important. One could argue that qualitative methods do not allow for objectivity and therefore the trustworthiness of findings are called into question (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, pg 77). However, I believe that trustworthiness is maintained when the researcher is sensitive to the participants or, in other words, when the researcher maintains the "ability to carefully listen and respect both participants and the data they provide" (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, pg 77). I believe that this research has done so by prioritizing participant narratives and allowing findings to emerge from the research through inductive analysis. In addition, meeting with the participants allowed them to understand better both my research approach and my intentions with this research. I was able to gather consent in the research formally and as required by my ethics application, but I was also able to continuously confirm consent through body language (i.e. are the participants nervous, checking the time, closing themselves off to me when I ask a particular question, averting eye contact, etc.), tone of voice (i.e. did participants express contempt, appreciation, confusion, nervousness through their tone), and through how participants answered each question (i.e., whether or not they felt like elaborating on that question, whether they expressed discomfort with a question so as to provide grounds to stop and check in, etc.). Ensuring that consent was maintained and that participants felt that I was not only interested in but *caring for* their input was significant to me because a primary focus of my research is relationship building and understanding the lived experiences of BIPOC. This commitment is based in the Critical Race Theory tenets of listening and of prioritizing the experiences and knowledge of BIPOC (Leung & McKnight, 2021; Yosso, 2009). In summary, long form interviews were the ideal method for my research as they allowed me to build a rapport with my

participants and aided analysis by providing a better understanding of the context that the information was shared within.

Interviews were exploratory and in-depth, including the following:

- Broad semi-structured questions: Questions were split into three sections. The first involved questions related to experiences and thoughts about the MLIS; the second involved questions related to experiences and thoughts about social media; and the third concerned the term BIPOC and experiences with BIPOC communities.
- Demographic intake form: Prior to starting the interviews, participants were asked to fill out basic demographic information to understand how participants identified racially in their own words, among other basic identifiers

Research was originally designed as an anonymous survey, but I made the decision to conduct interviews as I felt the data would be richer. Again, the ability to connect with participants was important. Interview questions originated from a long list of survey questions split up into the three sections mentioned above: MLIS questions, social media questions, and BIPOC questions. Questions were structured from broad to specific, starting with broad questions to signal to the participants what the remaining questions in that section would be and to have the participants get comfortable with answering questions. To begin the first section of questions I asked about the structure of the program including technological requirements or ethics requirements in the program, as well as questions about experiences of racism, isolation, and censorship within the MLIS program. The second section was constructed in order to understand perspectives and experiences with racial identity and social media, as well as community and social media. The final section asked questions regarding perceptions of community related to racial identity. These questions were intended to provide me with an

understanding of what participants thought about the term BIPOC as a category for racial identity. Questions also were constructed to see if participants found connection to the term BIPOC or individuals considered part of this category, and allowed space for participants to provide me with feedback about the questions asked in the interview as well as the interview style.

2.2 Data collection

2.2.1 Interviews

I interviewed eleven participants between February 2023 and July 2023, either via Zoom or in person depending on geographic location and preference. Participants residing in the Edmonton region attended interviews in person, primarily on the University of Alberta campus but two were conducted in participant homes as this was their preference. Prior to the interview, interviewees were provided with a consent form to sign, Interview Schedule, and a link to a Google Form to complete the Demographic Intake Form (Appendix C, D, & E). Participants were required to provide written consent in the form of a signature on the Participant Information Letter and Consent Form. These were collected prior to the start of the interviews and in the few situations they were not, consent was verbally recorded at the beginning of the interview. I would also continuously check in with participants, letting them know that all questions were optional and that they were in no way required to continue participation if they ever felt they did not want to.

Interviews lasted from 45 minutes to 1 hour and 30 minutes. They were conducted only one time with a set of questions, although depending on the flow of the interview and the answers participants provided, some questions were omitted as they were already addressed or deemed irrelevant. Refer to Appendix F to see a full list of questions.

2.2.2 Recruitment

Participants were recruited through word of mouth and over email. Recruitment requests were sent to listservs (electronic mailing lists) for every Canadian institution with an MLIS program (see Appendix A for Call for Participants). Contacts for whom to send the Call for Participants were found online and included graduate program coordinators, alumni associations, MLIS student groups, and, at times, individual professors in programs at different universities. Word of mouth included individuals telling their friends about the recruitment or, alternatively, they were personal contacts that I had met through my library work. A few social media posts were made with the same recruitment script as the emails, but no participants responded through that avenue. I intended to recruit individuals with the particular characteristics that included (1) identifying as a BIPOC and (2) having attended an MLIS program at a Canadian institution. Initially, I intended to speak only to students actively attending an MLIS program but due to participant interest I expanded my scope to include individuals who had attended a Canadian program and were now early-career working professionals. Once participants reached out to express interest, an email was sent to invite the participants to interview (see Appendix B). All participants who reached out met the criteria for the research and were interviewed.

Eleven non-Black and non-Indigenous people of colour residing across the colonial territories of Canada and the United States participated in the research. Participants were either actively attending an MLIS program in Canada at the time of their interview or had attended an MLIS program in the last seven years. The majority of participants (eight) identified as women, but three identified as men. Participants identified racially in a variety of ways and the demographic intake form permitted participants to identify themselves in their own terms using

their own words. Interview responses were quite varied and complex, which contributed to the diverse ideas presented throughout the interviews. However, no Indigenous or Black students or early career professionals volunteered to participate in the study which is an important element to acknowledge early on. I chose to continue using the term BIPOC in my research as this was the terminology used in recruitment and in agreeing to participate in this research all participants identified with this term, although they were more specific when provided the opportunity to self-identify further. I discuss in my concluding chapter what the implications of this are on my research and what I would do differently to address this gap.

2.2.3 Participant Demographics

Two characteristics that were required among all participants were that they identify in some way as BIPOC and that they attended a Canadian institution for a MLIS program (currently or in the recent past). There are eight institutions in Canada that are American Library Association accredited MLIS programs: Master of Information at Dalhousie University, Master of Information Studies at the University of Ottawa, Master of Information at the University of Toronto, Master of Library and Information Science at Western University, Maitrise en sciences de l'information at the Université de Montréal, Master of Library and Information Studies at the University of British Columbia and Master of Library and Information Studies at the University of Alberta. Five out of the eight institutions were represented in this research, however for anonymity sake as required by the ethics board the names of the five institutions will be omitted.

As stated in the previous section, participants were asked to self identify racially/ethnically/culturally in the demographic form and so results were quite varied. This allowed for an enriching of the data as no two participants identified in the same terms. I am deliberately not sharing the ways that participants identified themselves racially/culturally as

many answers were so specific that they could lead to identification of the individual. However, there are moments in the analysis where parts of participant's racial and cultural identities beyond BIPOC arise as they are relevant to understanding their reflections. All participants self-identified as BIPOC at the time of recruitment and so there was no need to re-assert this in the demographic intake form, but how they felt about the term was discussed in the interview. Beyond racial, cultural and ethnic diversity, there was a great amount of diversity amongst other identifiers. For instance, the ages of participants varied from 23 years old to 52 years old. Three participants identified as men or male, the remainder identified as women or female, however one person also used the pronouns they/them. Three participants identified as 2SLGBTQIA+. Also represented were three individuals who identified as immigrants, two participants who identified as mature students, two who identified as international students, one who identified as a person with a disability, and one who identified as low income.

2.3 Data analysis

Interviews in person were recorded using an iPhone and were transcribed with the Transcribe application, an application that uses machine-based transcription and does not require any human intervention from the application. The application was deleted upon completion but the transcriptions were stored securely. Interviews conducted via Zoom were transcribed using the built-in Zoom transcription software. Transcripts were downloaded post-interview for revisions. Both methods of transcription required a great amount of work to clean and correct, using the recording of the interview for reference and clarification.

In order to analyze the data I conducted iterative, inductive, thematic analysis. Thematic analysis "involves the identification and reporting of patterns in a data set, which are then interpreted for their inherent meaning" and can be done by identifying keywords and codes

(short phrases or words significant to the "data's core message, significance, or theme") (Naeem et al., 2023, pg. 4). These keywords and codes are then organized into "meaningful groups" in that they are used to identify "patterned meanings" that relate to the research questions (Naeem et al., 2023, pg. 4). Inductive thematic analysis was the best approach for this research as it allowed for the themes to emerge from the data as opposed to applying theory to the data (Bingham, 2021). My research was designed to allow for participants to answer my research questions with their reflections without being too prescriptive.

I began my analysis by anonymizing and summarizing each participant's answers to each question. I anonymized each participant by changing their names to fictional character names that would not necessarily indicate their gender. I acknowledge that names do not indicate gender and gender was not the main focus of the research. However, I used gendered pronouns to be respectful of how participants self-identified and as gender is still important in contextualizing the participant's experiences. I also chose to remove any elements of the participants' answers that I thought could identify them specifically. While interviews were conducted mostly linearly (starting with my first question and ending with my last), participants did not answer questions linearly and so it was necessary to summarize participant responses to each question. Once summarized I was able to have a high-level understanding of each interview and compare answers to each question between participants. This is when some broad themes emerged. At this point I identified that Whiteness arose throughout the responses, that participants had very diverse feelings about the term BIPOC, and that participants felt there exists important distinctions among racism, discrimination, and microaggressions. Once summaries were complete, the iterative process began, where I read through each summary and each transcript multiple times, highlighting terms and quotes that emerged across participants' responses. I

began identifying themes with short phrases such as "invasion of privacy, is it worth it?" or "inaction to address problems in the classroom/program." After I had identified these thematic phrases (or codes) that emerged throughout different interviews, I read through the transcripts again to identify quotes in participant's own words to support each code and narrow down which codes seemed to be the most significant in the data. The codes that I found with the most significant presence in the research were:

- Faculty/administration/colleague inaction addressing issues in the classroom/program

- Lurking on social media

- Good intentions from members of the LIS community

- Lack of concern about surveillance

- Outsider/Isolated

- Skinfolk ain't kinfolk

- Scrolling (doom scrolling, scrolling loop, scrolling hole)

- Concerns about algorithms/AI

- Not making waves/taking a back seat

- Self censorship

I developed these thematic phrases/codes into findings through memoing. Memoing is writing out notes about "your ideas about your various coding categories and their interconnections" (Lofland et. al. 2006 pg. 209).

I then identified quotes to support each code. Once I felt I had a sufficient amount of quotes to support each code, I wrote memos about how I felt these codes were interconnected. These memos intended to elaborate on the codes, identified the "assumptions underlying them" and allowed for me to develop themes through identifying the patterns and relationships between

the codes (Lofland et. al. 2006 pg. 210). In this memoing process, I identified a division between codes that were related to the MLIS experience and codes related to social media experiences, but I found commonalities between codes in these two sections such as "not making waves" in the MLIS and "self censorship" on social media. From these memos, I was able to make sense of these thematic codes by connecting them to the theoretical assumptions I had prior to entering this research and to the literature. Memoing allowed me to build upon the codes, moving past simply understanding them as codes or keywords but as the meaning behind the data. In other words, the memoing allowed for me to identify what was important to expand upon in analysis in that it is where I began my writing about what these codes mean and why they are significant. In addition, these memos allowed for me to understand the quotes in context of the entirety of the reflections and in context of other participants' reflections. What I mean is that I was able to understand what was implied and not explicitly stated by participants by understanding these codes and quotes as not disconnected from the rest of their statements, experiences, ideas, but as embedded. This process revealed a major theme throughout the findings, the specter of Whiteness. I will discuss this concept at length in the first chapter. For now, it is important to note that this theme was identified through memoing and understanding these codes in context of the whole of the participants' reflection. This process also helped me to identify not only how participants described their experiences in the MLIS and on social media but also how they understood these experiences. Memoing allowed me to consider not simply what they told me but how they made sense of their experiences. I considered the participants' reflections individually and as a group, as well as in context of the literature regarding race, racism, and Whiteness in order to develop my analysis and findings.

2.4 Theoretical framework

Several theoretical assumptions informed the analysis and the writing about the findings. Critical Race Theory is defined as "a conceptual framework that considers the impact of historical laws and social structures on the present-day perpetuation of racial inequality: first used in legal analyses, and now applied in education, communication studies, and sociology" (Dictionary.com; n.d.). The assumptions of this research are based in Critical Race Theory and included the following tenets: 1) racism is normal; 2) BIPOC experiences must be prioritized, and; 3) dominant racial ideologies should be critiqued. By "racism is normal," I mean that in order to understand experiences of race and racialization one needs to understand that racism is "deeply ingrained in [North] American society through its systems and institutions" (Leung & McKnight 2021, pg. 13). As I started to identify how participants discussed race, racialization, and racism it was important to base these experiences in the CRT framework that racism is normal so that the analysis could move beyond the fact that participants experienced racism and end there. In fact, this Critical Race Theory provides insight into the ways that participants did or did not use the term "racism" to describe experiences of racial discrimination.

Another element important to this research was a critiquing of dominant ideologies, particularly "challenging dominant ideologies of color blindness, objectivity, neutrality and meritocracy" (Leung & McKnight 2021, pg. 14). Indeed, a central element of this research is critiquing the way that Whiteness impacts the experiences of BIPOC in the two information environments, MLIS programs and social media. As my research focuses particularly on BIPOC, the dominant ideology of colour blindness or neutrality were immediately challenged as they are associated with Whiteness.

And finally, and most importantly, prioritizing BIPOC experiences is paramount to this research, since that BIPOC "experiences and knowledge are necessary and crucial to moving us to eradicating multiple oppressions" (Leung & McKnight 2021, pg. 14). Part of my aim in focusing on the experiences and knowledge of BIPOC is allowing and encouraging spaces for complaint and expressions of frustration. Ahmed (2021) talks about how important complaint is in understanding the ways that institutions and power function, and the ways that the power is experienced by those it seeks to control. As this research is primarily focused and designed around BIPOC understandings and expressions of their experiences, focusing on BIPOC participants' experiences and allowing the space for complaint is paramount.

2.5 Positionality & weaknesses of research

As already established in this Introduction, much like the participants I am also BIPOC and a student enrolled in a MLIS program at a Canadian institution. I implied earlier when defining the term BIPOC that there were some unintended consequences in choosing this term in the research. When weighing the potential pros and cons of using the term, I understood that there was the potential that some individuals to whom I was interested in speaking may not identify with the term BIPOC. However, I decided to pursue using the term as I was concerned that, in the attempt to be more specific in my language, I would actually exclude people unknowingly. Also, I felt that, in the call for participants, were I to list every potential formulation of race that I could think of (while acknowledging that no such exhaustiveness could ever exist), this would not only be tiresome but it could also discourage participants from reading the email at all. In some ways, the choice to use the term was to maintain ease and brevity. But creating a long list also would be prescriptive in its own way, and so my research instead allowed for individuals to self-identify in their own terms when identifying their own demographic

information. Consequently, one weakness of this research was that I was only able to reach a group of people who self-identified with the term BIPOC and not individuals who do not self-identify with this language but might nevertheless be identified by others with it. Moreover, a limitation of my research is that no participants who identified as Indigenous or Black were among the participants. This is of course something that I felt was missing as I am myself a biracial Black woman.

Literature Review

As my topic is concerned with critical media studies in its focus on social media (a very broad field of study) and with Library and Information Studies and education (also a field with rich academic history), this literature review will focus primarily on where these two fields intersect with issues of race, racialization and Whiteness. In other words, I would like to narrow my focus on the literature that discusses the ways that race and racialization are understood in the context of social media and library and information studies. The following literature review will survey the literature on race, racism, and Whiteness in LIS, the MLIS and higher education; and the literature on race, racism and Whiteness online and on social media. I will conclude with defining the concept vicarious or secondhand racism as it operates both in-person and online.

3.1 Race, Racism and Whiteness in LIS, the MLIS, and Higher Education

As mentioned in my section on data analysis, a main tenet of CRT is "racism as ordinary," defined by Delgado and Stefancic as the idea that "racism is an ingrained feature of our landscape, it looks ordinary and natural to persons in the culture" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023, pg 8). CRT takes racism, as well as the process of racialization, seriously. I am informed by Omi and Winant's (2015) definition of the term racialization, describing "the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice, or group" (pg. 13). They define racialization simply as the "making up [of] people" (Omi & Winant, 2015, pg. 11). Racialization here means the process of forming and applying racial identity, which can include racism or racial profiling but is not used interchangeably. While this is not a CRT study, this research is still highly informed by many of the principles of CRT. Another principle that I have yet identified but that is nevertheless central to this research is "race is a social construct" (Leung & López-McKnight, 2021, pg 13). This means that race is not biologically-determined

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but rather a culturally-produced and historically-contingent formation that "carries significant, concrete meaning-shaping societal realities that have material, political, cultural and psychological consequences" (Leung & López-McKnight, 2021, pg 13). As a result, Whiteness changes in terms of inclusion (who is or is not included in the position of privilege) but also unchanging in that it maintains supremacy of Whiteness (Leung & López-McKnight, 2021). When conducting this research I expected to see descriptions of Whiteness, racism and racialization as that is my understood reality of being a BIPOC in this society. However, my experiences are also supported by evidence in scholarly literature written about Whiteness, what it is, and how it impacts us all. In this section, I review the scholarly literature on Whiteness and the impacts of racism and racialization for BIPOC that result from its stronghold on the institutions in which we participate.

To begin, I want to provide a brief definition of Whiteness. Whiteness can be defined succinctly as an "ideology based on beliefs, values, behaviors, habits and attitudes, which result in the unequal distribution of power and privilege" of those considered to be White people, further privileging those who are rich, heterosexual, male, able-bodied and cisgendered (University of Calgary, n.d., as cited in Galvan, 2015). However, Whiteness is a shifting category, and so this literature review will seek to pinpoint what Whiteness means in the context of LIS.

3.1.1 Whiteness in LIS and MLIS population demographics

White people are demographically over-represented in both the LIS profession and in the MLIS. In the 2017 American Library Association (ALA) demographic study update of the racial and gendered makeup of ALA members, they found that 86.7% of ALA members were White, 4.4% were Black or African American, 4% selected that they were "other", 3.6% were Asian,

1.2% were American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 0.2% were Hawaiian or Other Pacific

Islander (Rosa & Henke, 2017). Note this survey is outdated for statistical purposes as it is 7

years old and also does not include crucial racial categories like Latinx representation. This study

is also American. No corresponding Canadian study presently exists.

As for MLIS students, the 2020 Association for Library and Information Science

Education statistical report states that in 2018-2019, 60% of total ALA-accredited master's

degrees were awarded to White students, 18% to students of unknown race or ethnicity, 7% to

Hispanic students of any race, 5% to Black students, 5% to international students (who would be

of a variety of races), 3% to Asian students, 2% to students who identified with two or more

races, 0.3% were awarded to American Indian or Alaskan Native student and 0.1% to Native

Hawaiian or Pacific Islander students. Although Canadian institutions and Canadian

professionals are included in these statistics, when focusing on the statistics in Canada more

specifically, they are still skewed toward Whiteness. Chan (n.d.) reported that Statistics Canada

(2016) found "89% of the 9,570 librarians employed [in Canada] are White." This statistical

information is supported by additional qualitative evidence, in the responses from the

participants of this study and in the literature on Whiteness in LIS that I will discuss further.

3.1.2 Whiteness in practices and ideas about librarianship

The history of librarianship has been rooted in Whiteness since its very inception in

North America. Honma (2006) explores the origins of libraries as a part of the efforts to create

and maintain a "White American citizenry" that upheld the privileging of White people and their

ideas, "which in turn has contributed to the ongoing White racial privilege that continues to

haunt the field of LIS" (pg. 4). Honma's (2006) work establishes that libraries have presented

themselves as integral to democracy, as an institution "for the good of the general public" but in

fact has contradicted this by historically playing a part in producing a hegemonic racial formation in which Whiteness was defined, standardized, and platformed through institutional order and control (pg. 2). Honma (2006) notes that the first public library in the United States was created at a time of mass immigration to the United States particularly from Eastern and Southern Europe, and libraries explicitly saw their role as fostering "White ethnic assimilation and meritocratic advancement" for those who were not yet considered part of the "White racialized citizenry" (pg. 5). Similarly, in her article tracing the impact of the archetype of Lady Bountiful from the origins of LIS to the present, Schlesselman-Tarango (2016) writes about how White women in particular (the largest demographic in LIS historically and contemporarily) worked towards a "civilizing role…in the service of the colonial state" in education and in LIS (pg. 671).

Honma (2006) argues that the process of Americanization and assimilation was actually the beginning of a formation of a White American identity that incorporated European ethnic people into the club or membership of White racial identity. Honma's (2006) argument here is that the library's focus at its inception was on creating a homogenous American citizenry with a shared set of ideals that formed a "White racial socialization process" that inherently excluded non-White racialized people who could not shed the colour of their skin to undergo the socialization process necessary to be considered worthy citizens of American privilege (pg. 7). However, Honma argues that these discriminatory norms of citizenry were disguised in narratives about libraries being concerned with democracy, neutrality, and race blindness. He argues that these ideas actually conceal "the covert structural forms of racial exclusion that protect White racial interests" with the appearance of inclusion or upholding "democratic" or "neutral" values (pg. 8). Ultimately, Honma argues the contradiction between the ideas libraries

historically and contemporarily want to communicate about librarianship (i.e., that they are a democratizing, positive force in society) and the ways the library functions as an institution that reproduces and maintains Whiteness is demonstrated through various ideas and practices within LIS, including neutrality and, contradictorily, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) initiatives or what he refers to as multiculturalism initiatives. Honma argues that the development of multiculturalism initiatives in librarianship actually "reinscribed neo-conservative politics" by obscuring the complexity of racial oppression to opt for surface level celebration of cultural diversity that has no interest in being anti-racist (pg. 11). Honma (2006) argues that the positioning of a neutral and race-blind librarianship as a main element of democracy is how libraries as institutions make Whiteness invisible as much as it elevates and maintains Whiteness.

The argument that putative neutrality in the profession also reinforces Whiteness is shared by other scholars as well. Neutrality is a concept that has long been associated with librarianship but that has been debated and contested by many scholars and working professionals (Neal et. al, 2018). Neutrality and intellectual freedom (another related and hotly debated value of librarianship) in and of themselves are not central to my research, although they are remarked upon by participants. Nevertheless, I do want to briefly review some of the literature that discusses how these concepts are indicative of a privileging of Whiteness in the profession and in theories associated with the profession. Neutrality is defined as "the state of not supporting or helping either side in a conflict, disagreement, etc.; impartiality" or "absence of decided views, expression, or strong feeling" (Oxford Languages, n.d.). The second definition is quite close to how it is used in the context of librarianship. To define neutrality in the context of librarianship I will quote the ALA code of ethics that states: "We distinguish between our personal convictions and professional duties and do not allow our personal beliefs to interfere with fair representation

of the aims of our institutions or the provision of access to their information resources" (ALA, n.d.,b). Here, the ALA describe the profession's goal of providing unbiased access to information and unbiased services (Neal et. al, 2018; de jesus, 2014). However, Chiu et al. (2021) describe how neutrality (as well as the act of being unbiased or objective) and vocational awe (another concept important to LIS that I will discuss later) are expressions of Whiteness in the field of LIS. Chiu et al. (2021) argue that the framework for neutrality or objectivity "assumes that equity already exists in all social systems" and that this flawed perspective ends up ignoring how White people and ideas that serve White people are already privileged in society (pg. 66). In fact, seeking to maintain objectivity or to attempt neutrality actually perpetuates "harmful behavior" towards the most marginalized because those who are considered neutral or objective are White people themselves and, moreover, their subjective experiences are considered to be objective (Chiu et al., 2021, pg. 56). The authors argue that neutrality and vocational awe "create a culture in which White norms for recognizing racism are allowed to predominate; only egregious attacks or acts are recognized as 'racist,' and the underlying culture and systems that produced the egregious attacks go unchallenged" (Chiu et al. 2021, pg. 67).

Another important element of Whiteness in the profession is vocational awe. I would argue that this is of particular importance to this research as the participants of this research struggle with this notion, trying to balance their respect and desire to find a place for themselves in the profession while acknowledging the ways that they are marginalized within the profession. Ettarh (2018) describes vocational awe as "the set of ideas, values, and assumptions librarians have about themselves and the profession that result in notions that libraries as institutions are inherently good, sacred notions, and therefore beyond critique." Ettarh (2018) doesn't explicitly associate this practice with Whiteness but does associate the institution of librarianship with

maintaining and privileging the "status quo," which is in turn maintaining White supremacy. Vocational awe can be understood to maintain the status quo of Whiteness by refusing "to acknowledge the library as a flawed institution, [and] when people of color and other marginalized librarians speak out, their accounts are often discounted or erase[d]" (Ettarh, 2018). Chiu et al. (2021) are a bit more explicit about the relationship between vocational awe and Whiteness. Chiu et al. (2021) argue that vocational awe is a facet of White supremacist culture in LIS because it creates "a narrative of librarianship as inherently good and sacred work while delegitimizing all other narratives as undemocratic and blasphemous" (pg. 55). They further argue that vocational awe actually works towards reaffirming "White Supremacy culture" through the characteristic of "'worship of the written word', by valuing White documents and standards over the nuances and complexities of reality" (pg. 55). Understanding how vocational awe operates to reproduce Whiteness within LIS is important as it shapes the experiences of the participants in this study. In the following chapter, I will delve deeper into how participants ascribe good intentions onto those in the MLIS (e.g., faculty, administrators, colleagues) while also describing experiences of discrimination, isolation and othering. These good intentions are, I think, related in some manner to vocational awe. I would argue that participants read good intentions from their colleagues and educators in the MLIS and in working environments in LIS because of some influence of vocational awe in the field.

When measures are put in place to address racial imbalances in LIS, rhetoric and actions falling under the umbrella of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) seem to be the preferred approach. Honma (2005) follows his historical review of Whiteness in LIS with a critique of the emptiness of diversity and multiculturalism rhetoric, especially when it is the only form of discourse that exists to address race in the profession. EDI is widely critiqued for many reasons,

but firstly there is the critique that EDI measures simply do not work at increasing diversity in the field in impactful ways. Many academic institutions have implemented EDI committees and diversity officers with little to no institutional power or ability to make systemic change (Leung & Lopez-McKnight, 2021). While diversity-and multiculturalism-focused actions and discourse intend to address racial imbalances, they are in fact another critical element of Whiteness in the field. Hudson's (2017a) critique of diversity in academia posits that LIS diversity measures present racism as an individual flaw, as a "social sickness" that can be cured through more inclusion of "diverse" (read: non-White) individuals in the structures that oppress them (pg. 14). Against this assumption, Hudson (2017a) asserts that racism is in fact a structural issue and that White supremacy is a foundational element of our culture and, therefore, is foundational in LIS. Leung and Lopez-McKnight (2021) reassert this notion that the focus on racism and lack of representation as an individual issue relieves institutions of their responsibility to address systemic issues. Consequently, LIS's contemporary focus on diversity does not account for histories of racialization.

This contradictory and contested status of "diversity" within LIS programs and librarianship is important for my analysis because it suggests that BIPOC in LIS could be complicit in White supremacist structures even as they are also simultaneously oppressed by them. This is expressed in some ways by participants through a theme of "skinfolk ain't kinfolk," which identifies how people of colour can replicate White supremacist ideologies and practices in order to get ahead. Arguably, this forced complicity is also present in the ways that racialized people engage with social media. While social media has been criticized for its negative effects—including its replication of White supremacist and capitalist oppressions—people of colour can at times utilize these media in subversive ways (Tynes, Noble & Schuschke, 2016).

This is something I will discuss later in reviewing race and racialization on social media, as well as in Chapters 4 and 5.

This is the context in which the participants enter this field of study or continue their work. While others have talked about elements of Whiteness that can be found in LIS practices and theories, I have in this section reviewed what I believe to be a solid foundation for understanding the themes that will arise in my research. I turn now to what has been written about the effects of institutional Whiteness on BIPOC in LIS institutions.

3.1.3 Institutional Whiteness in higher education & the MLIS

It could be argued that the structuring function of Whiteness in the profession begins in the MLIS education process. However, I read that the literature indicates a reciprocal relationship between the MLIS program and the LIS professions. In other words, the history and principles of the profession influence the teachings and practices of the program and, in turn, the program reinforces and maintains the same dynamics in the profession. Crucially, there is a lack of racialized faculty in LIS education, and BIPOC students are very often instructed by White instructors who approach the curriculum with their own set of biases (Subramaniam & Jaeger, 2010). Regarding what the students are actually learning, Cooke has written extensively about the distinct lack of awareness, action, discussion, or curriculum related to "race, racism and related topics, not only in the literature but in the field at large and in the LIS classroom" (Cooke et al, 2017, p. 236; Cooke & Sweeney, 2017; Cooke, 2016; Cooke, 2017). In a 2010 study of MLIS students over 75% of the participants reported that they did not have the option to take a course related to diversity in their degree program and subsequently less than 25% of library students (including students of colour) felt prepared to work with diverse populations (Mestre

2010; Subramaniam and Jaeger 2010, 2011). Cooke et al. (2017) argue that library schools are missing a crucial lesson, which is teaching future librarians competencies that make them "culturally aware of their own social and cultural privileges" and lessons regarding the complex and nuanced realities and information needs of those they will be in community with (p. 247).

While the previous authors critique the structural issues within the LIS profession and MLIS education, there are experiences particular to students in these programs that I must address. Espinal, Sutherland, & Roh (2018) have discussed the disconnect between professional representation and graduate rates of people of colour in LIS, detailing the higher percentages of POC in LIS programs than working POC LIS professionals. They note that one-third of MLIS graduates are POC but the population of POC librarians is not one-third. This discrepancy could speak to issues with graduation, hiring, and retention in the field. LIS students have expressed dissatisfaction with the availability of content relating to race and ethnicity in their programs, experienced isolation, and discussed additional burdens applied to students of colour, among other experiences in their programs (Soni, 2020). In her interviews with MLIS students at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Karina Soni (2020) identifies how BIPOC students felt immediately conscious of their race and experienced "fear and anxiety" as they were regularly the only people of colour in the classroom (p. 18). Not only did BIPOC students struggle with feeling responsible for bringing up LIS issues related to BIPOC, they felt further isolated by the lack of empathy and support they received in response from their fellow students and faculty members (Soni, 2020). Iribe Ramirez and Tari (2020) identify the following themes of concern in their survey of MLIS students in Seattle, Washington: awareness of lack of diversity, role as a student of colour (tokenism), potentially discriminatory hiring practices, and lack of curriculum and faculty representation. Many of these themes are found in my research,

particularly the feeling of isolation and lack of diversity in faculty/fellow students and in curriculum.

It is also important to note that institutional Whiteness is an integral part of higher education more broadly. Some have discussed how Whiteness is demographically dominant in institutions, despite efforts to address the diversity issues in faculty and administrators in higher education there still remains an overrepresentation of White tenure-track and tenured faculty (Matias et. al., 2021). However, this institutional Whiteness goes beyond simply the demographics of the faculty and administrators. Many authors have discussed how Whiteness, "as a core component of both White supremacy and settler colonialism," is foundational to the creation and maintenance of higher education institutions across North America (Cabrera, 2024, pg 26.; Tuck & Yang, 2012). Diane Gusa (2010) establishes that Whiteness is embedded in institutions through her theory of White Institutional Presence. She argues that there are four dominant attributes of White Institutional Presence. First she discusses White ascendancy or "a sense of superiority, a sense of entitlement, domination over racial discourse, and White victimization" (Diane Gusa 2010, pg. 472). The second attribute is monoculturalism, where White people set the "expectation that all individuals conform to one 'scholarly' worldview" and the belief in the "superiority and normalcy of White culture" (Diane Gusa 2010, pg. 474-75). The third attribute she describes is White blindness, which she describes akin to colourblindness. In institutions White blindness "positions equality in an ideology wherein the race of a person is and ought to be immaterial to any decision-making process" (Diane Gusa 2010, pg. 477). The final attribute she describes is White estrangement, or the "distancing of Whites physically and socially from people of color," which occurs for both faculty and students in institutions (Diane Gusa 2010, pg. 478).

This Whiteness is experienced in multiple ways, institutionally and interpersonally. Authors have identified the following ways that Whiteness is experienced by BIPOC through racism in higher education: "(1) overt discrimination, (2) assumption of intellectual inferiority, (3) assumption of criminality, (4) invalidation or denial of prejudice, (5) treatment as second-class citizens, and (6) the myth of meritocracy (i.e., achieving higher social status based on one's own merits, regardless of current social status, is likely unattainable in a capitalist society despite the opposite being widely believed)" (Canel-Çınarbaş & Yohani, 2019; Senay, 2020; Sue. et. al, 2008). Other ways that BIPOC students have reported the results of the Whiteness inherent in post-secondary education are through feeling isolated, feeling segregated in shared spaces, feeling exoticized, and feeling their communication and culture pathologized by others (Bailey, 2014; Harwood et. al, 2012, Sue et. al, 2007). These are important to establish because these themes translate to what has been written about Whiteness in the MLIS as I have discussed.

3.1.4 Invisibility of and epistemic supremacy of Whiteness

An important element of this research is how Whiteness emerges when attempting to understand the experiences of BIPOC. For this reason, I review here how Whiteness is treated as a baseline, that is, as a natural state where all other forms of being are deviant. This, I argue, is an effect of the invisibility of Whiteness and the ways that Whiteness goes unmarked—and, indeed, unmarks itself. I see this phenomenon as linked to the epistemic dominance of Whiteness. I thus begin with a discussion of how Whiteness is considered neutral or standard—and, more specifically, how it goes unmarked or how it is invisible—before turning to consider the epistemological implications of Whiteness as it relates to LIS.

A major element of Whiteness is its unmarkedness, its invisibility. This is a central tenet to my research that highlights some of the ways that Whiteness impacts BIPOC in the LIS and on social media. Many authors have described the phenomenon of unmarkedness or invisibility of Whiteness, particularly to White people themselves. Ahmed (2007) makes this point explicit: "Whiteness is only invisible for those who inhabit it. For those who don't, it is hard not to see Whiteness. It is everywhere. Seeing Whiteness is about living its effects . . . making Whiteness visible only makes sense from the point of view of those for whom it is invisible" (pg. 157). And yet, Whiteness is of course a shifting racial category, responding and reacting to what is necessary to uphold dominance for a White supremacist culture that encapsulates many other elements of oppression based on identity (Pickering, 2020). This is key to understanding Whiteness as not a thing but as a process. At root, the invisibility of Whiteness is most easily observable in its pretense of neutrality or, in other words, the ways in which it assumes its own "normativity" (Frankenberg, 2001, pg. 77). As Morales & Williams (2021) identify, White people "do not see themselves as having a race, but as being, simply, human." Furthermore, White people do not believe that their viewpoints come from a specific White experience but that they actually come "from a universally said one—'the truth'—that everyone knows" (pg. 76). Morales & Williams (2021) argue that this assumption that the White experience is a universal standard creates and maintains "epistemic supremacy (ES), which historically bred and continues to breed pain, destruction, and disequilibrium in our society" (pg. 74). In what follows, I will further explore this epistemological supremacy of Whiteness and why it is important for both LIS and this research.

The topic of White ideas or White thinking arises in this research. I argue that epistemic Whiteness privileges the knowledges and ways of knowing that support the comfort, privileges,

and supremacy of White people over other ways of being and knowing. Toole (2021) interrogates how White supremacy is not only a social system with political and material consequences but also an "epistemological system" with far-reaching impacts on what society accepts as valid knowledge (pg. 76). The way that Whiteness influences our epistemological system in North American society is by enabling White normativity; it validates "certain beliefs and eliminate[s] from consideration beliefs that are unsupported by or inconsistent with other beliefs in the system" including ideas that are anti-racist (or anti-White supremacist) (pg. 80). White supremacy is a resilient epistemological systems in that it asserts overtly and covertly the belief that people of colour are naturally inferior while rendering invisible the systemic structures that have denied them access to humanity and dignity. White supremacy is also predictive in that it primes people "to see and in turn believe" that people of colour are responsible for their own oppression. Lastly, White supremacy is attendant in that people are primed to attend to people of colours failures and wrongdoings (Toole, 2021, pg. 83). Whiteness is in turn embedded in our thinking: it is the "filter through which we see, the starting point from which we believe, the frame through which we understand, interpret, and interact with our world" (Toole, 2021, pg. 92). This is supported by Morales & Williams (2021) who identify that in libraries White epistemologies are "expressed across our staff, services, and collections" and it "uphold[s] the White ruling class and White Supremacy as status quo" (pg. 87). I refer to this in my final chapter, arguing that certain information environments can be understood as epistemically homogenizing in that they maintain and reassert a White dominant status quo. A reason that this type of epistemic supremacy is able to be upheld is because of its imperceptibility—its invisibility—as I have identified above.

This section has identified the ways that Whiteness has been discussed in literature as it relates to LIS generally, to the institution of higher education and MLIS, and how this Whiteness impacts thinking. The next section will review how Whiteness, racism, and racialization is discussed in the online environment and on social media.

3.2 Race, Racism and Whiteness online and on Social Media

The study of formations of race and racism on social media is another foundational element of this project. Scholarship on how race is conceptualized and experienced in the online sphere is thus integral to my research. Chapter 5 will cover how participants describe understandings of race and racialization on social media. To better understand participants' reflections on their experiences online, here I review theories concerning the specificity of cyber-racism, how Whiteness is experienced online, and BIPOC uses of social media. In addition, I will touch upon some of the literature that relates to themes discussed by the participants, like digital surveillance and privacy. Finally, building on the themes of isolation discussed earlier, I will discuss scholarly conceptualizations of connection and isolation online.

3.2.1 Cyber racism and racialization online

To begin, I want to review how scholars have discussed the foundational role of racism and racialization within online environments and on social media more specifically. As Daniels (2009) states, one of the long-standing myths about the Internet is that it promised and provided, at least initially, a somewhat unregulated and cheap tool to build community and that this promise also included the promise of a way of relating as humans with anonymity and without being subject to the many "isms" (e.g. racism, classism, sexism, ageism etc.) that influence us in our day-to-day lives. While Kang (2000) argues that race and racism were already present in the virtual world in the early aughts, their cyber-race theory explicitly states that racial anonymity

enabled by digital technologies might enable us to forgo the kind of racial mapping that happens

with our physical bodies in society, that can empower individuals who believe that the best way

to counter racism is to "get beyond race." And yet, rather than ushering in a "post-racial" future,

the Internet arguably re-entrenched existing racial distinction and racialized distributions of

power. Highly critical of this utopic vision of the online sphere, Nakamura (2002) has discussed

the potential of "identity tourism" or the idea that one might be able to occupy different genders

or races online if they so choose. Daniels (2009) shares that while this transcendence of race and

gender identity may have been true to some degree at the time of a largely text-based Internet,

this was soon debunked with the popularization of the commercial Internet and the development

of its visual cultures. Indeed, the development of online technologies from their very inception

established and reified hierarchies and inequalities, in some situations even magnifying many of

the societal issues that the Internet was marketed to overcome. As such, racism and racialization

are as integrated into the online sphere as they are into every other element of culture.

Internet scholars like Les Back (2002) have long discussed how White supremacists and

White supremacists groups have been using online networking and digital technologies to

connect with one another and spread White supremacist material throughout the online sphere

since the mid-eighties. Back (2002) coined the term "cyber-racism" to describe a particular broad

group of White supremacists in North America and Europe who used digital technologies in

order to spread, encourage, and uphold notions "racial supremacy, superiority and separation" in

the digital sphere and in person (pg. 632). While Back specifically talks about the ways that

Internet technologies have enabled White supremacists to do what they already did, Daniels

(2009) takes this term a step further to describe both individual acts of racism as well as social

movements that inspire acts of racism and how they could only be enacted online. Daniels (2009)

highlights examples of individuals committing these acts who are *not* associated with White supremacist organizations but were influenced by White supremacist culture. Her analysis thus identifies how White supremacy influences so many facets of online culture that it is in some ways inescapable when engaging with the Internet. Jakubowicz et al. (2017) applies the concept of cyber-racism to the social media sphere. Taken together, these scholars identify racism's inescapability on social media—how it is almost impossible to engage with any social media application without "tripping over an image, meme, video, Instagram post, Facebook page or Tweet that uses racialised difference to demean or intimidate somebody or some group" (Daniels, 2009, pg. 3). Jakubowicz et al. (2017) reviews what attracts racists to using the Internet and social media (i.e. opportunities to express their views and impact their targets directly) and how individuals resist the cyber-racism integral to these structures (i.e. through community-building). Jakubowicz et al. (2017) outlines five categories of communities online that support resistance to racism or support victims of racism: Civil society organizations affiliated with a targeted group; unaffiliated civil society groups; government agencies; grassroots organizations; and academics. He argues that these groups of individuals resist cyber-racism by: calling out racism; working to have racist material removed; promoting "counter speech to racist narratives"; promoting "multiculturalism"; sharing cultural information; highlighting how harmful racism is individually and societally; highlighting bias; and normalizing "positive intergroup relations" (Jakubowicz et al., 2017, pg. 225). Understanding how scholars have written about cyber racism is fundamental to this research as participants in this study echo much of what has been written about the centrality of racism to online technologies in general and social media in particular.

Daniels (2013) conducted a thorough review of the ways race and racism have been written about in Internet studies. According to Daniels' review, race and racism persist online in ways that are "both new and unique to the Internet" since race is implicated in Internet structure and design, as well as individual and group experiences online (pg. 696). Daniels (2013) reviews how scholars have discussed the inability to escape the embedding of race in Internet design, citing Nakamura's (2002) discussion of "drop-down menus and clickable boxes that are used to categorically define 'race' online" and Everett's (2002) identification of the "Master Disk" and "Slave Disk" and of programming languages' codification of racial hierarchies in the command line. Benjamin (2019) further argues that technology actually deepens discrimination while appearing "neutral or benevolent" particularly in its "discriminatory designs" that "amplify hierarchies" (pg. 4).

Regarding social media, Daniels (2013) outlines that Whiteness online is assumed as normal or normative and this becomes more apparent when challenged by infrastructure that "ruptures…that sameness" such as African-American themed and focused browsers like *Blackbird* or, I would argue, social media networking sites like *Black Planet* (pg. 696). Daniels (2013) reviews how, at the beginning of their burgeoning popularity, even discourse about social media sites demonstrated the intertwining of race with social media. Daniels (2013) cites Watkins (2009) and boyd (2012), who identified the "White flight" that occurred from MySpace, which was popularly associated with "uneducated, trashy, ghetto" people, to Facebook, which was by contrast associated with "clean, educated, and trustworthy" people (pg. 702). Daniels also notes, following scholars such as Grasmuch et. al (2009) and Tynes and Markoe (2010), that social media enables individuals to express "racial themes associated with injustice" in order to "convey a sense of group belonging" while also being exposed to racism through social media

networking sites too (pg. 702). Although Daniels does not review this, there are additional elements of social media that explicitly lend themselves to encouraging racism. For example, Nakayama (2017) observes that anonymity can encourage hate speech and racism by affording individuals a lack of accountability for what they say online and, somewhat contradictorily, the potential opportunity for fame can encourage individuals to act in an "exaggerated manner" through racist or untoward ways to garner attention (pg. 70).

Daniels (2013) concludes her review by stating that Internet studies needs to develop a theoretical framework that "acknowledges the persistence of racism online while simultaneously recognizing the deep roots of racial inequality in existing social structures that shape technoculture". This critical call is incredibly important to this research and, in fact, my research partially responds to Daniels' call. Specifically, I heed Daniels' reminder that, when focusing on race and racialization in Internet studies, Whiteness has sometimes been reasserted as normative and the standard by ignoring that "White people, too, have race" (Daniels, 2013, pg. 708). Benjamin (2019) also discusses how the invisibility of Whiteness "offers immunity" to White people in that they can escape responsibility for their role "in an unjust system" (pg. 2). She continues by remarking that this immunity is something about which White people are actually aware. For example, she cites the hashtag "#CrimingWhileWhite" that documents White people commenting on the "armor" that Whiteness affords them when they are dealing with police (Benjamin, 2019, pg. 2). I have discussed how unmarkedness and hypervisibility/invisibility of Whiteness reinforces itself, but it is essential to identify early on that this is a complication of studying racialized people's understandings of race online.

It is important to emphasize how prolific right-wing extremism and racism are online in a Canadian context. Canadian Race Relations Foundation 2021 report of online hate and racism

established how prevalent race-based hate and racism are for marginalized Canadians. They report that "42% [of respondents] have seen or experienced comments or content that incites violence online" which is particularly alarming as it does not cover the less aggressive forms of racism that might be witnessed or experienced like harassment or microaggressions. They also report that racialized Canadians are three times more likely to face "racist, sexist or homophobic comments or content" on social media than White Canadians. In addition right-wing extremist content is statistically particularly prevalent on social media in Canada. Canada has the third highest population of right-wing extremist users behind the US and the UK, with the most dominant platforms hosting right wing extremist content and users being Facebook and Twitter. These statistics are important to establish when discussing how racism prevails on social media in the Canadian context.

Scholars of Critical Race Theory have long documented the many ways that disconnection and isolation are main tenets of White supremacy (Maynard, 2017). White supremacy and heteronormativity rely on a lack of connection or responsibility to the Land on which and with which we live. It is easier to reinforce hierarchies of power, to extract resources recklessly for profit, and to keep individuals from uniting against oppressive structures when we feel isolated from one another and when we do not feel a responsibility to care for one another and the Land. Isolation is an issue within academia at large, with 40% of academics reporting that isolation greatly affects their mental health (Sibai, Figueiredo & Ferreira, 2019). For racialized academics, isolation is intensified by a lack of support systems and representation within many fields (Soni, 2020).

Yet while isolation and disconnection are intrinsic to White supremacist structures, marginalized people nevertheless find ways to connect, to build, support, share, critique, and

communicate with one another. Indigenous peoples resist White supremacist ways of understanding and world-building through enacting relationality and holding one another accountable to our various relations (Littletree, Belarde-Lewis, & Duarte, 2020). Black people resist White supremacist modes of relating through community building both online and offline (Brock, 2020; Maynard, 2019; Reagon Johnson; 1981).

One way that BIPOC overcome isolation and barriers to communication is through social media. Media scholars have well documented the fact that people of colour use networking sites differently than non-racialized people. This is indicated in the works of Internet scholars like André Brock, who studies the particular communication patterns of Black Twitter (Brock, 2020). BIPOC are able to find spaces of connection using a wide variety of platforms, including visual forms like Instagram and textual forms like Twitter and Reddit. Yet while those in the field of LIS (specifically librarians) have long been interested in digital technologies for patrons, there is virtually no research that seeks to understand social media use by individuals in LIS, and MLIS students in particular (Murphy & Newport, 2021).

The aforementioned scholarship on BIPOC digital communities like Black Twitter is important because it reminds us that the digital sphere is not only one that upholds White supremacy with no challenge. Scholars have discuss the many ways that the Internet has been used to take collective action against White supremacy, patriarchy, and other structures of domination and exploitation through activist movements like Black Lives Matter, the NoDAPL (Dakota Access Pipeline protest), and #MeToo, among many other social movements. Rozelle (2024) discusses how the #MeToo movement started by Tarana Burke on MySpace spread throughout social media to document sexual abuse in various industries and led not only to collective identity and solidarity but great change in the Hollywood industry in particular. Tynes

et al. (2016) discuss how the #BlackLivesMatter movement online provided a textual representation for work that organizers do, amplifying their voices, providing a voice for those who might not feel they have one, and demonstrating that social media sites can be ones of power that can be subverted by activists to spread their messages and their actions. Hunt and Gruszczynski (2021) discuss how integral social media was in gathering public attention to the NoDAPL movement and Privott (2019) discusses how social media was integral in women water protectors sharing information, their stories and garnering support amongst each other and others within and outside of the movement. Steele (2016) identifies how Black women's blogs can be a signifier of resistance discourse, as they talk back to dominant narratives about them. These are just a few examples of social media activist movements that have made a mark.

However, these efforts to fight White supremacy, racism and racialization online are also stifled by the infrastructure of social media as well. Shadow banning is a common occurrence on social media, meaning that "those who are outspoken about White supremacy and racism have found their content removed or taken down for violating community guidelines" (Gassam Asare, 2021). No White Saviours, a popular Instagram page, wrote they have experienced shadow banning: "Instagram seems to do better to protect White supremacists and Nazi pages than those of us working to hold anti-Blackness and White supremacy accountable" (Gassam Asare, 2021). And so, it is important to establish that there is a tension between how racialized people use social media technologies and the barriers that they face both by other users and the infrastructure of the social media applications themselves.

This section has briefly reviewed Internet studies scholarship concerning how race and racialization are enacted online, from technical infrastructure and design to individual experiences. Providing this foundation is important for contextualizing this research, as it

demonstrates that some of the themes of this project have been explored by other researchers and that this research is building upon this pre-existing work.

3.2.2 Surveillance and Privacy for BIPOC

A key element to understanding the discourse of race and racialization online, particularly on social media, is understanding issues relating to surveillance and privacy online. Surveillance is related to cyber-racism as it is an example of a racist digital practice. What I mean here is that social media have enabled easier surveillance generally but of marginalized communities more specifically. This point was not only commented upon by the participants in my study but also is integral to understanding their perspectives on being surveilled. I bring together issues of surveillance and breaches of privacy here into one category as I see them as inextricably linked: surveillance is a breach of privacy, and breaches of personal privacy are a facet of surveillance. And so, I will briefly review how Black and Brown people (and BIPOC more generally) are affected by surveillance and breaches of privacy online in unique ways and how this is particularly enabled through social media technologies.

In Chapter 5 I will discuss how participants discussed themes around surveillance and breaches of privacy, particularly how they noted that they were key issues that should be of concern. While participants expressed they were personally unconcerned with these issues, they did describe some of the reasons they should be of concern from the perspective of information professionals. Particularly, participants discussed how surveillance was an inherent part of social media technologies whether it was conducted by the government or by technology companies, but I believe it is important to review what scholars have written about how surveillance is a particularly acute issue for BIPOC. I want to briefly review this literature not because surveillance and privacy are necessarily integral to understanding the research but, rather,

because participants' feelings about surveillance and privacy— that is, the feelings of BIPOC who are also information professionals— are confirmed by the existing scholarly literature.

With the development of digital technologies embedded in daily life more and more, individuals' feeling that they are being surveilled is supported by literature. For example, artificial intelligence, biometric technology and machine learning extend the historical biometric marking and tracking of Black and Brown bodies (rooted in the history of enslavement of Black people and the branding of Black flesh). These technologies have been used by border patrol in tracking and controlling the movement of BIPOC bodies, and have been used for hyper-surveilling BIPOC and to "'predict' who will be more likely to commit a crime," thereby contributing to high representation of BIPOC in mass incarceration statistics (Dubb 2018, Browne 2015, Browne 2009, Daniels 2013, Leung & Lopez-McKnight 2021, pg. 6.). These examples demonstrate that digital surveillance has real life implications for Black and Brown people as digital technologies are used for discriminatory policing and institutional control. The link between policing and social media surveillance is indeed well-established.

The literature on surveillance for racialized people online also indicated that social movements are monitored and policed digitally. In particular, Black people are hyper-surveilled online and so are their political or social organizing. There are examples of police using social media in order to surveil "Black individuals, organizations and politicians not suspected of any crimes." There are also many example of policing using social media to over-represent Black criminality, leading to the cultivation of "perceptions of Black criminality and recruit[ing] users as third-party enforcers to the disproportionate number of cases posted about Black suspects" (Cheng 2022, Ryan-Mosley & Richards 2022). Suleiman (2024) describes how members of the Black Lives Matter movement on Twitter were concerned that their "information would be used

in order to arrest participants or quell protests via social media surveillance." This brings into question how surveillance can defy the rights entitled to privacy for protestors through the Fourth Amendment of the Constitution in the United States. Surveillance can be used to gather data for facial recognition, which is known to misidentify Black and Brown faces, and can lead to dangerous consequences when used to identify culprits of crime (All Things Considered, 2020).

Briefly reviewing what has been written about how surveillance through digital technologies is important, as it provides a basis of understanding of how BIPOC are particularly affected by the potential dangerous implications of such unconsenting surveillance and control of personal information. While participants may not have explicitly shared that they felt particularly surveilled because of their BIPOC identity, they did imply that it is well known to them that digital technologies enable hyper surveillance and that this is an issue that should be of concern to our society and to BIPOC in particular.

3.3 Vicarious or Secondhand Racism

A term that arises in this research in the context of experiences of racialization is "secondhand racism", a term I use to describe the experience of witnessing and being impacted by racism occurring to someone else. This is a phenomenon that I argue has occurred to the participants of my study, although it is not written about much. I argue that secondhand racism is an underestimated form of racism as it is indirect yet still impactful; it is a form of racism that is actually hard to name and identify. So, I want to review how this term has been defined, how it is discussed in literature, and what distinguishes between its operations in an online environment and in person. Much of the literature uses the term "vicarious racism" and, as such, I will use that term synonymously with "secondhand racism" throughout this research.

Most authors discussing vicarious racism cite Harrell (2000) as one of the first researchers to identify it as a distinct form of racism (one of six forms of racism identified in her study). In her study of racism-related stress for people of colour, Harrell (2000) asserts that racism can be defined and distinguished from racial stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination insofar as racism is the context as opposed to the act. She defines racism as "rooted in a historical continuity of injustice and disparity that is linked to contemporary circumstances and systematically influences the conditions and experiences of large groups of people." Racism, for Harrell, reinforces and maintains stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination. However, according to Harrell, there are many different kinds of racism based on the environment in which it occurs. What is important to establish for this research is that there is a distinction between the ways that racism is understood and experienced in the in person and the ways that it is experienced on online, while acknowledging that of course they are rooted in the same historical context that created the conditions for White supremacy to thrive in both environments. Vicarious racism can be simply defined as "a person's indirect experiences with racism, resulting from racism targeted directly at one or more other persons in their environment." Vicarious racism can lead to "anxiety, a heightened sense of danger/vulnerability, anger, and sadness, among other emotional and psychological reactions" (Truong et. al, 2015; Harrell, 2000). Significantly, what might be most significant about vicarious racism is how prevalent it is. In a study of 254 Asian American undergraduate students, Alvarez & Liang (2006) found that 99% of respondents had experienced vicarious racism. In addition to its predominance, it has the effect of normalizing racism to people of colour through consistent exposure to it (Truong et. al., 2015).

The concept of vicarious or secondhand racism and its various impacts on people of colour have been discussed in a variety of contexts. Many authors have written about how

vicarious racism affects the emotional and psychological state of people of colour. Others have written about how vicarious racism impacts families, particularly how hyper-awareness of children's safety and high levels of stress as parents can be induced by vicarious racism; how vicarious racism transmits trauma to children from caregivers; and how vicarious racism can be passed down through cultural values in marginalized communities (Brantley, 2023; Heard-Garris et. al 2018; Martin Romero & Stein, 2023). Other scholars have written about how healthcare workers are particularly vulnerable to vicarious racism due to the public and intimate nature of their work (Hennein et. al., 2023a; Hennein et. al. 2023b).

However, my research is concerned with post-secondary students and relatively recent graduates so I will focus on the literature written about this population. Regarding students in post-secondary education, Giordano et al. (2021) researched how even controlled and limited exposure to vicarious racism through media "had a statistically significant effect on the emotional state of students of color." Truong et al. (2015) share that when individuals experience secondhand racism, they "come to the realization that they are also vulnerable to the racism that they have vicariously experienced, and they can encounter harmful emotional, psychological, or physiological consequences as a result of these experiences." They establish that there is very little empirical research about vicarious racism and its impacts, noting that as such "this phenomenon is not well understood in general" (Truong et al., 2015). Their study most closely focused on a sample group similar to mine, in that the focus of their research was how vicarious racism specifically affects students of colour in post-secondary education programs. This study found that secondhand racism greatly impacted doctoral students of colour in their programs in the following ways: it was a mental stressor; it served as a catalyst for participants to develop a "more sophisticated understandings of the systemic nature of racism"; it can lead to creating

communities of shared experiences that in one way help by providing connection but can also increase exposure to secondhand racism; and ultimately it serves as a confirmation of the pervasiveness of racism in higher education including in experiences of "intellectual isolation" and lack of "mentorship and funding" (Truong et al., 2015). These authors identify how vicarious racism specifically affects students of colour, however what is missing from much of the literature on vicarious racism is the unique way that it exists online.

There has been little written about exactly how vicarious racism functions differently online and in the real world. Some have written about the impacts of vicarious racism through social media in light of the Black Lives Matter movement particularly following the murder of George Floyd in 2020, noting that people of colour were greatly impacted by witnessing racist police violence occurring on their social media feeds, trying to enjoy digital technologies while being confronted by "traumatizing material" (Heard-Garris, 2021; LaMotte, 2020; Yohannes, 2021).The implication of this is that due to our continuing engagement with social media as an environment for a variety of things (from information gathering to fun and relaxation), vicarious racism is particularly an issue because it can strike when one is very unprepared and actually seeking to simply relax or engage with jovial things. Cohen et. al. (2021) describe how social media is an extremely important part of adolescents' lives and their exposure to vicarious racism through these applications led to "unique emotional changes." Chae et. al (2021) describe how social media, particularly through the pandemic, became a tool to spread vicarious racism more widely and more consistently as in person interactions became limited. Chae et. al (2021) state that Black and Asian Americans described being more vigilant about protecting themselves from being the target of racial discrimination because of the vicarious racism they experienced particularly through social media. This is extremely significant to my research as it identifies a

pattern of exposure to racism through vicarious racism and the impact on controlling one's behavior and visibility online. In their study on how exposure to online racism affects people of colour, Keum & Choi (2023) found that Asian and Black participants reported high exposure to vicarious racism particularly through social media as there is a "societal normalization of publicly expressed racial abuse, discrimination, essentialism, and ignorance online and offline against these groups." These researchers established that one of the most important elements differentiating vicarious racism and other forms of racism is that vicarious racism is in our technological age, experienced extremely frequently and can impact the emotional well being of people of colour subtly through tools used for many different uses.

My research adds to this literature by discussing how the concept of vicarious racism impacts the behaviour of BIPOC online. In particular, my participants described observing racism and how it proliferates online and they then described the ways in which they controlled their own behaviour online in anticipation of this racism. Reviewing how vicarious racism is discussed in literature is important to this research as I will later describe how participants of this study share a lack of concern about their personal individual experiences of racism but identify their awareness of and the ultimately impact of witnessing other instances of racism occurring to others.

Experiences in the MLIS

This research is concerned with how BIPOC in LIS understand their experiences with race and racialization online and in LIS, particularly in MLIS programs across Canada. This chapter will focus on participants' experiences in relation to LIS and will focus on their understanding of their experiences of and position within the MLIS program, particularly. I mean understanding not in the sense of objectual understanding (i.e. understanding a body of information or subject matter) as this would imply that I am only focusing on the language that the participants use to describe their experiences within and opinions of the MLIS. What I mean by understanding is what I can infer about what is more holistically understood, a kind of embodied understanding, based not only on what the participants shared but also the context that they shared it within.

The experiences of the participants were shared generously with a lot of trust and so some of the details shared were quite sensitive and required a lot of care when writing about them. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge early that this analysis is seeking to identify narrative themes found within the research from my perspective as a peer to those I was researching with. The patterns I will be exploring in this research are conceptual, in that they focus on the ideas that participants shared about. Not only will I be focusing on what the participants said about their experiences in the MLIS, but also about themes arising throughout the examples shared and what these ideas might mean. As I established in my research method, I am interested in what patterns I believe were identified in participants' experiences, even if participants didn't explicitly state them. In other words, I will highlight what I perceive are themes in their reflections that grew from codes I identified in analysis. Participants may not describe their experiences in the exact terms I use, however their reflections as a whole and in context of one another are driving the findings of this research. This chapter will begin to delve

into what I perceive as a larger theme spanning the entirety of my research which is Whiteness in LIS and Whiteness in social media as two distinct but related information environments. In this chapter I will specifically focus on Whiteness in the MLIS through the lens of a term I call "the specter of Whiteness," a term used to describe how Whiteness has the uncanny ability to impact the experiences of BIPOC without being easily detectable. The specter of Whiteness is a term with unknown origins but has been used as a metaphor to "capture the ways that Whiteness continued to haunt" individuals who are both White and racialized (Madden, 2016, pg. 643). It will be used in my analysis to describe the ways that Whiteness haunts the individuals of this study. In other words, how Whiteness manifests in many elements of the MLIS experience at times undetectably.

This chapter will begin by contextualizing the experiences of the participants in LIS settings, reviewing how they came to the library profession and/or MLIS education, and what they thought of it once they became part of what they perceived to be the LIS community. The first section focuses on how the lack of racial diversity in the program and the field more generally lead to some experiences of isolation and othering for BIPOC in the MLIS. This will help establish a theme I recognize as underlying many of my findings, a theme about how Whiteness embeds itself in many aspects of the field whether it is seen or not seen. The Whiteness apparent in the lack of demographic diversity is the start, but Whiteness impacts many of the very ideas and experiences that are described throughout the participants' responses. The chapter will focus on unpacking participants' beliefs about the MLIS and the LIS community, particularly the belief that individuals in the field have good intentions even if the good intentions did not translate to remedying the othering or lack of support individuals felt, or meaningfully engaging with diverse ideas and experiences. Reviewing this will help to

understand how the participants framed experiences related to support or lack of support in the MLIS program and their difficulty with using the term "racism" directly. This demonstrates how Whiteness even shapes the ways that we talk about its manifestations, impeding BIPOC from using direct language to describe our experiences of discrimination, isolation, and othering. I will then describe participant practices that resulted from experiences of lack of support, particularly how participants withdrew themselves or became silenced. This is another expression of the specter of Whiteness, how the specter can consume BIPOC into its shadow and silence them. Finally, this chapter will conclude with a deeper discussion about the specter of Whiteness in the MLIS and how it seeps into our definitions of safe spaces, interpersonal relationships, and even how we are forced to think about our racialized identities as BIPOC in LIS.

4.1 Being BIPOC in LIS: Why participants chose the MLIS program and how do they feel about it generally

It is important to establish how the participants came to the MLIS program in order to better understand what perspectives they had of the library community before and how those perspectives changed once they entered the program. Generally, I found that participants chose to pursue a career in LIS because of formative childhood experiences in libraries and a belief that the profession can have a positive impact on the communities in which they live. In addition, participants chose to pursue a career in libraries because they saw it as a helping profession similar to others like law or education. However, when they entered the program some felt like outsiders or "isolated" because of their racial identity. Participants noted that LIS is demographically predominantly White and indicated that this lack of racial diversity can create a lack of diverse ideas in the community, which led some participants to be more cautious and conscious about sharing their opinions with others in their programs. Participants often referred to sitting out of conversations or having to do a "vibe check" to see if they could safely share

their opinions or not. That being said, participants still indicated that they felt individuals in the field had good intentions and therefore were at least trying to address their issues, however ineffective that was. In this section, I will review what participants shared were their motivations in entering the MLIS, what their perceptions of the LIS community are, and begin to identify how these perceptions of the LIS community impacted the behaviors and experiences of the participants.

4.1.1 Why did the participants choose to pursue a career in libraries?

It is important to understand what participants shared were the reasons they entered the MLIS and what they perceived the LIS community to be as it establishes what might be considered a divide between the perceptions of the LIS community at large and those within the MLIS program. In other words, understanding the participant's first experiences in libraries, archives, and/or in the MLIS sheds light on the fact that participants felt a pull towards LIS as they were fond of their previous experiences with their community libraries. Once they entered the MLIS program they experienced forms of othering that challenged the views they had of the LIS community. Othering is defined as "the act of treating someone as though they are not part of a group and are different in some way" and here means being considered as not fitting within the norms of the dominant group (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). Reviewing how participants came to the field allowed them to share a bit about how these assumptions were supported or contradicted by their experiences in the MLIS program. Many participants shared that they came to the MLIS program because they had childhood or lifelong formative positive experiences in the library and with library workers. Another reason participants decided to enter the profession is because they were considering another profession that they saw as having professional segues into library and information studies, like education or law. Those other commonly considered

choices indicated to me that participants were interested in pursuing a profession with a strong ethical framework or a position that was in some way justice minded. While these at first seem like two very different motivations to enter the program, I believe that they are connected as they both indicate an investment in the work of libraries and professions related to libraries, a type of passion for it. The professions that the participants shared as other options they considered before landing on LIS demonstrated a commitment to learning, to curiosity, to an ethical framework and in some way public work. To me, this establishes that the participants felt as though the MLIS was an opportunity to enter a career that they could be passionate about and have a positive impact in. While participants may still believe that the field of librarianship has this potential, participants shared varied opinions on the MLIS programs they were in and were at times critical of the limited potential they saw within the MLIS program.

As previously stated, a common thread throughout the reflections was that participants had nostalgia for libraries. Those who didn't describe childhood memories described a lifelong pull to the field in some way. Some participants described how they felt it was only natural that they pursue librarianship because they felt it central to their personalities, like Bismuth who describes:

> "So when I finally decided to enroll, most people were surprised because they just assumed I already was or had, because I've always been the bookish person in my circle and have always loved books and always loved libraries."

Even though he didn't necessarily choose this professional path immediately, librarianship felt like the most obvious choice for Bismuth.

Some participants expand on this lifelong love of libraries that Bismuth introduces. For instance, Pearl describes how important the library was in supporting her as a child with not a lot of other resources to support her when she wasn't in school:

"I went to the public library every single week. While other kids were going skiing during their holidays, I had the library to go to and it was always like that one thing I kind of always looked forward to...I just love[d] that environment."

Pearl reveals a bit about the reason for following her passion into LIS, how the library served as an accessible and supportive place to her as a kid with not a lot of additional resources.

Other participants, like Amethyst, shared similar stories of their desire to pursue librarianship being almost natural because of their experiences in the library:

"I also have just been around libraries my whole life, especially after my teenage years and young adulthood I was volunteering a lot. I worked at…the library at [the] university, and it's kind of circular…I was like, this makes a lot of sense for me."

Here Amethyst shares how she felt she was naturally pulled towards the library because of these experiences throughout her life. Opal puts it quite plainly when he describes what he sees as the trait linking all of the library community: "[People in LIS all share] a nostalgia or fondness towards a concept of libraries that was created in their formative and developmental years." Opal's statement rings true to me, as I share this in common with the participants, a strong desire to pursue a career in a place that was formative to me as a child. Similar to these examples, libraries have always functioned as a place of accessibility and support for me and so I always understood the potential they had to be supportive spaces. It was important for me when entering this career that I could pursue replicating for others, the support I felt I had received.

While it is important to acknowledge that these examples are unique to public libraries, I would argue that the participants describe a fondness for the library community or at the very least a generally positive view on the field of librarianship. Participants used terms like "kind", "community oriented", "value driven", "fascinating" and "good people" when prompted to define the LIS community. These terms and their general descriptions indicated that the participants felt that the LIS community was composed of interesting individuals invested in the well being of their community, even if they had their flaws. This same feeling is not unique to the participants in this study, it is shared amongst other MLIS students. Rothbauer and Harrington (2022) share that they found that MLIS students are drawn to the work that they wish to do because of three factors: "a love of books and reading, a love of the place of libraries, and a desire to work with and help others" (pg. 2). Participants also shared their love of reading at times, but the love of the place of libraries and the desire to help others was most apparent.

If taken at face value, this could indicate that participants had only positive descriptors of the LIS community, but their experiences in the MLIS program seemed to at times be the opposite. Participants shared that they did not feel as positively about their experiences in their MLIS programs as they did interacting with the broader LIS community. Participants shared that they both understood that there were many positive attributes to the LIS community and the field of LIS, but in their MLIS programs, their position as racial minorities in the field was very apparent and felt. In other words, participants shared that at times they felt othered or isolated in their MLIS programs because of their racial identities.

4.1.2 Participants' experiences of Whiteness in the MLIS program

When participants were asked to define the LIS community, many answered that they noticed or knew the community to be predominantly White. As established in my literature

review, LIS is not only primarily demographically White but has historical roots in creating and maintaining a "White American citizenry" and that White women in particular have served toward a "civilizing role…in the service of the colonial state" in education and in LIS (Honma, 2006, pg. 5; Schlesselman-Tarango, 2016, pg. 671). As for in the MLIS, researchers like Cooke (2016, 2017) have acknowledged that there is a distinct lack of diversity in faculty in the MLIS but also in awareness, action, discussion, or curriculum related to "race, racism and related topics, not only in the literature but in the field at large and in the LIS classroom" (p. 236). Steven makes a link between how the demographic of the MLIS and professionals in LIS affects the teachings in the MLIS: "[W]e all kind of know that MLIS is very White in the demographic, and talking about like BIPOC and stuff like that is kind of new." Steven establishes that it is common knowledge that the MLIS is White demographically and that the idea of engaging with BIPOC in a meaningful way is a new phenomenon in the field. I want to establish this because it is significant that my participants called the Whiteness out so early on in their reflections.

4.1.2.1 Demographic Whiteness

The demographic Whiteness of LIS and MLIS programs in particular was so prevalent in the answers by different participants that it led to understanding that their status as racial minorities made the Whiteness all the more obvious to them. Accordingly, participants shared how this Whiteness was noticed and interpreted when they entered the MLIS program, like Pearl who shares:

> "I don't know why, but I was kinda nervous to say this out loud. When I first enrolled in my first two courses last semester, the first thing I noticed was wow, this is an overwhelmingly very White program. Yeah. And, I know I shouldn't be scared or nervous to say that out loud, but it's just you know, I feel as a person of colour that's always

something that you kind of think, you know you kind of always are aware of. So yeah, when I saw that I was like oh okay, and then once we got into smaller discussion groups and stuff, I immediately just knew and felt, okay, I'm kind of an outsider, I had no prior experience working in this field. And then throughout the course, and there was the small group discussions, I realized that maybe my perspective on certain things don't align with theirs. "

Pearl here explains her discomfort with calling something like Whiteness out even though it is incredibly obvious to her. Pearl shares how she felt "nervous" to even call out the Whiteness in our interview potentially because I was a stranger to her and she was unsure of how I would react, or potentially due to her own discomfort with being confronted with how White she noticed the environment to be. She goes on to explain how she felt isolated and like an outsider, elaborating that she felt her perspectives differed from her colleagues, presumably because of their racial identities and how their racial identities inform their perspectives. I believe that this statement, and within the context of her previous statements on why she decided to pursue librarianship, illustrates a tension between Pearl's understanding of the potential for libraries to be safe spaces for people like her and the opposite phenomenon in the MLIS where she shares feeling isolated and unwelcome. Pearl's fondness towards the LIS community was challenged by her feeling of isolation and being made an outsider in the MLIS. While I am not arguing that anyone is purposefully making Pearl feel as though she is an outsider, I believe that Whiteness (here demographically but I will argue further also through positionality) is what is doing the "making" here. Pearl notes how she felt quite immediately that her perspectives differed from those of her peers and she goes on to explain how those differences in perspectives caused "friction" and made her become "on guard" when it came to interacting with others in the

program. She implies that because of their racial identities, their viewpoints are inherently different, particularly in that the perspectives of her White peers aligned with the dominant perspectives in the MLIS that focused on privileging Whiteness. This is confirmed by Pearl when she tries to collaborate with her teammates on topics that had to do with racial bias. In her request to focus on a topic like racial biases, her teammates responded that they didn't feel comfortable with doing so:

> "when we were choosing topics for a group project, and I suggest that oh, can we do AI and racial biases, or cultural biases? And they're like this concept is just too big, too overwhelming, too confusing. And I was like oh, this is a great time to delve into the topic and learn about it, and they're like oh, no we don't want to do that. It's, too, I heard the word controversial, or it might cause friction"

This reluctance and hesitancy is something that indicates to Pearl that her peers in the MLIS were not interested in exploring different perspectives beyond the dominant one. It also provides an interesting example of what Hudson (2017b) calls the "Whiteness of practicality." In other words, her peers focus on limiting their scope to what they believe is most practical and sensible, and in doing so mark theories related to racialization and race as impractical and not worth the time to delve into.

Lapis shares a similar feeling of being a minority, sharing quite explicitly: "I felt isolated in the program just because I didn't know very many people. I had a very small group of friends and they were all White." Lapis identifies that she did not have many options to access a diverse network of people in LIS for support, and partially because she was so young when entering the program but also because she was a racial minority in the program, she became isolated. While Lapis shares very explicitly that her experience as a racial minority in the program led to her

feeling isolated, even participants who were not so explicit about feeling isolated noted that the prevalence of and focus on Whiteness in LIS made them more conscious of their racial identity simply by virtue of being different from the majority.

Bismuth shares that his racial identity was not brought to the forefront as much in the past because he had previously worked in industries that were not predominantly White, and so it was not something that he had reflected on as much:

> "And my race actually becomes a thing that it hasn't been before. Because working in IT? Duh, you're Asian no problem…I don't know that me being a person of colour is going to be an impact on me getting a job or trying to enter the profession, but then that is also where male privilege is I think [will] rear its ugly head."

Bismuth articulates a very interesting point about intersectionality in this statement and throughout his reflections. He points to how context matters when talking about race. Bismuth describes how he is aware that while in other contexts his racial identity did not impact him negatively as much, it may be one of the only elements of his identity that would put him at a disadvantage in the profession of LIS. While Bismuth doesn't share that he feels isolated because of his racial identity, entering the MLIS made him much more aware of his racialized identity because of the fact that he was so obviously a minority in this way. In other words, Bismuth became othered in a way he did not anticipate and had little previous experience with professionally.

Bismuth also implies that he understands that the privilege of being a man can in some situations supersede his limitations as a person of colour. He explicitly points out in another example that his racial identity is in many ways the only part of his identity that isn't privileged in society by stating: "I'm a visible minority, but in almost every other way the system works for

me." Although he is a minority, as a man in the field he understands that men are privileged in most arenas of society and also in this field. This male privilege can be seen in a myriad of ways, but a simple statistic can illustrate the imbalance: approximately 19% of all ALA members identified as male while they also represented approximately 39% of all library directors, illustrating a large gender imbalance in leadership (ALA, 2007 & 2017). Bismuth illustrating an intersectional approach here identifies how being a minority (as in simply in the minority statistically) is not the issue here as his maleness makes him a minority but not one of disadvantage. It is the key element of being a person of colour in a profession dominated by Whiteness that results in othering and isolation.

4.1.2.2 Whiteness in the ideologies and pedagogies in the MLIS

I don't believe that it is simply the dominance of the demographic Whiteness that impacts the experiences of the participants in this study, but the Whiteness inherent in the structure of LIS, including the ideologies and the pedagogies. This is significant as I have stated previously that I believe that the foundational theories, practices, knowledges, and experiences from the MLIS have implications for how these issues show up in libraries and other LIS professions. Hathcock (2015) describes how Whiteness does not only refer to the "racial and ethnic categorizations" of White and not White, but also "as a marker for the privilege and power that acts to reinforce itself through hegemonic cultural practice that excludes all who are different." Most participants did not explicitly share that they felt Whiteness was predominant in LIS beyond demographic statistics, but they expressed this in other ways. Some participants expressed how the predominance of Whiteness could lead to a lack of diverse ideas or ways of thinking, which then led to participants having to be more conscious of how they expressed themselves and what they felt comfortable sharing. But I will explain later in this chapter the

other ways that Whiteness could be felt even if it was not explicitly named. The Whiteness of the MLIS was not simply a thing witnessed in seeing many White faces, it was felt in the experiences and interactions with the White people in MLIS. In other words, participants encountered Whiteness not simply through noticing a dominance of White faces but through their interactions with these White faces in context of understanding the way Whiteness influences the ideas and perspectives of the program.

Some participants described what I argue is a link between lack of demographic diversity and a lack of diverse ideas, like Steven and Pearl shared in the examples previously reviewed. Blue Diamond states this a bit more explicitly when discussing how her professor's Whiteness influenced how well they were able to engage with ideas outside of a Eurocentric framework. She shares that:

> "All my instructors were, if they were not Canadians, they were native English speakers, or they were in the Western, and White people setting. So I came from a different culture, and I posed an opinion and they welcomed it. But because of the limitation of their own experience or their own limitation of cultural knowledge, they couldn't really provide any more feedback. I could say that way I don't really feel I was really supported, you know, in that context because they were, they were polite, they were like oh, that's interesting."

Here Blue Diamond does not blame her professors for being unable to engage in a meaningful way with the specific diverse ideas that she introduces or with her as a racialized person. She understands this limitation as a facet of their identities. While they "welcomed" her sharing, they were unable to go beyond just receiving her opinions and the limitation of their own experience could be ascribed to their Western White identities.

Rose Quartz takes it a step further to discuss how Whiteness became evident in the

teachings she was engaging with in her courses:

"[Regarding teachings on social responsibility] we're grappling with this theoretical

concept that has a lot of policy and tangible implications that impact the workers and the

patrons and all this stuff. And that's where the Whiteness was very stark, because it was

not objective things. So much of it is subjective to the author or the instructor sort of

viewpoints and I would have a totally different opinion or see total holes and problems

and things in that content that was presented as if it were facts. So that's where it was

very stark to me, when we were getting into anything related to sort of power and

neutrality. And the way things have always been and people just not really at all

recognizing that there could be a different way of thinking about it. Or that the way that

they're thinking about it, could potentially [be] or is harmful."

Rose Quartz states clearly that she perceives the demographic Whiteness of LIS bleeding into the

very ideas that are shared in LIS. In other words these perspectives are shaped by Whiteness,

then are taught as though they are "fact". This relates to the invisibility of Whiteness, particularly

how Whiteness is treated as the baseline and anything other than Whiteness is a deviation. As

established in the literature review, Whiteness goes unmarked and in its unmarkedness allows

White people to forget that they "too, have race" (Daniels, 2013, pg. 708). Rose Quartz

specifically mentions "neutrality" as a topic that represents an unmarked and unchallenged

representation of a White idea. This is supported in the literature as reviewed in the literature

review, Chiu et. al. (2021) establish how neutrality ignores the ways that White people and ideas

that serve White people's privilege are already privileged in society and how others are not. Chiu

et. al. (2021) argue that the concept of neutrality "assumes that equity already exists in all social

systems" when it of course does not (pg. 66). Honma (2006) describes that "framing of the

library within the terms of "democracy" and "neutrality" conceals the covert structural forms of

racial exclusion that protect White racial interests" that are rooted in the historical establishment

of libraries and continues to work in assimilating and "civilizing" the masses (pg. 8). Rose

Quartz' comment on the difficulty of challenging ideas associated with Whiteness like neutrality

demonstrates how she is aware of the ways Whiteness is threaded into the MLIS education.

 Finally, participants expressed how they felt that they had to evaluate whether or not the

White people they were engaging with were going to be receptive or not to their perspectives and

whether or not they felt particularly safe to share about themselves authentically. Rose Quartz

describes how this lack of diversity impacted just how open she felt she could be:

> "I'm more sort of willing to trust people when I sort of see or hear them do things in my
>
> perspective that I can respect, right?..I think if there were more people of colour
>
> available, I would be more likely to sort of open up and have those, you know, sort of
>
> more personal conversations, or frustrations and stuff there… if not for [one professor] I
>
> probably would not have really been as honest or asked as many sort of personal
>
> questions or you know? I just would've kept it to myself."

Here Rose Quartz is expressing how really one professor (who it is important to note is White)

impacted her experience by making themselves known as someone who could be trusted and

respected. She shared that because she felt that this professor was not only open to her ideas as a

racialized person, but was committed to ensuring they were respected and platformed, she could

open up more. However, Rose shares that if she were able to interact with more people of colour,

then she would have automatically felt the ability to open up more. Rose later shares that she

would never sign up for anything without knowing more about the people's opinions in the group

because she would "wanna vibe check on everyone." This idea, that you need to evaluate

whether or not someone can be trusted as a person of colour is shared by other participants.

Steven uses the same term "vibe check" to describe when he feels comfortable sharing

his opinions and when he doesn't:

> "I tend to check out the vibe of the people, I try to get a feel for if these people are open
>
> to this kind of conversation or if in the class the professor seems open to that, or if it
>
> seems relevant."

Pearl doesn't use the exact same terminology but she describes a similar action:

> "So i'm not saying that there aren't people who are supportive. But I always feel like
>
> whenever i'm placed in a new group, I have to slowly test the water to see how they
>
> would respond."

One might say that participants' tendencies to evaluate if there is shared ground between yourself

and new people is one that is not unique to racialized people navigating White space. While this

could be the case, I argue that in context of what participants shared about Whiteness in LIS, this

"vibe checking" is very much rooted in their understanding of themselves as racial minorities in

the White environments that they are entering. It is a necessary action to navigate a

predominantly White space and to understand who is or is not aware of how White privilege

affects their attitudes, behaviors, and biases. In other words, participants are determining which

White people are or are not safe to be more forthcoming or vulnerable with.

Understanding how participants described the Whiteness of the LIS community,

specifically the MLIS community both demographically and ideologically is important to

establish as I continue to unpack how BIPOC in LIS understand their experiences of race and

racialization in the MLIS. But there are other ways that participants indicated the link between a

lack of racial diversity and a lack of diverse ideas. Lapis shares that she understands the LIS community to be "very White" but expands on what the implications of that are:

> "[LIS is] very White. Very White, very, uh, middle class. I would say liberal leaning, but I think ultimately conservative. Um, so I think it's a community where they're not really willing to grapple with, like, historical wrongs, or to do that work, to really repair broken relationships."

This definition of the LIS community both acknowledges that Lapis views it as "very White" but she begins to hint at the fact that Whiteness moves beyond simply demographic statistics and influences different facets of the community. Here, Lapis is acknowledging the history of LIS while also connecting this history to how the LIS community functions today. She draws a distinction between the way that individuals in LIS perceive themselves (liberal) and the impact they have (ultimately conservative). She is indicating that this issue of Whiteness goes beyond her own personal experiences and has to do with the way that relationships are formed and maintained between those within LIS and those who they serve.

Like Lapis' description of "liberal leaning but… ultimately conservative", many participants defined the LIS community as being well intentioned individuals, however they followed this description with examples of how these good intentions did not necessarily translate into actionable support or meaningful inclusion of BIPOC individuals in the field. In this one quote, Lapis reveals different elements of a larger pattern that I argue influences many of the participant's perspectives on the MLIS program. I believe it reflects that there is a discrepancy between the intentions of those in the MLIS program and the impact that those good intentions have on the participants in terms of ensuring accountability is taken and support is provided when instances of racism, isolation, discrimination and othering occur to BIPOC. I will

discuss how participants perceive classmates and instructors in the MLIS as having good intentions but that those good intentions often do not translate to actually helping those they meant to help. When good intentions are not followed by impactful actions that address inequality, this is an expression of Whiteness. Authors like Castagno (2014) have discussed how efforts to address inequity in education are uncritically embraced no matter their efficacy and this does nothing to challenge Whiteness and in fact reinforces it. In fact, authors like Mehra (2021) have argued that libraries engage in "performative antiracist acts" to "advance a false public image within neoliberal agendas" that does not make any serious attempts at addressing historical and contemporary racism and upholds White fragility (pg. 138). This mirrors what some call the diversity issue in librarianship, where it is argued that efforts to address lack of diversity in librarianship do not effectively impact issues of inequity no matter how well intentioned they are (Hathcock, 2015). Participant's experiences reflect this inefficacy in a way, as they share how well intentioned they believe their peers, instructors and others in the LIS to be, they simultaneously share that the impact of these good intentions do not necessarily translate to meaningful inclusion or positive experiences. While these examples have provided a foundation for understanding how the participants came to the LIS community and how they viewed the MLIS, the next section will focus on how participants discussed the good intentions of the LIS community while also describing the ways that these good intentions did not mitigate experiences of racism, microaggressions and ableism.

4.2 Beliefs in the MLIS: Participants understandings of good intentions

Thus far, I have introduced that participants have complex feelings about the MLIS and the LIS community. Participants shared how they have a fondness for libraries, but at times experienced othering and isolation in the MLIS because of their racial identities. Participants also

shared that they generally have a positive view of the community at large, while acknowledging that a major problem in MLIS is that the lack of racial diversity and lack of diverse ideas is limiting and othering for racial minorities. This section will focus on understanding how the participants described good intentions and efforts in the MLIS program and how participants sometimes described an inability to see how these good intentions mitigate their own and other BIPOC students' experiences of racism, microaggressions and ableism. I will look at how participants established a perception of good intentions from professors to support students and incorporate topics addressing inequality and marginalization but also how participants felt at times that professors didn't provide adequate support to marginalized students, weren't able to facilitate more than the basic level of discussion of important issues like diversity or accessibility, and furthermore didn't seem concerned with pushing conversations about equity beyond surface level conversations into a space of action addressing these issues. I will expand on how, despite the criticisms of the efficacy of good intentions, there is still a pattern amongst participants of hesitancy to use explicit terms like racism and discrimination. And finally, I argue that the passion and respect of the profession that the participants shared at times led them to give their colleagues and others in the MLIS program the benefit of the doubt when it comes to matters of race.

4.2.1 The gap between "good intentions" and participants' experiences

One of the common descriptors of the MLIS program was that people generally had good intentions or that they, at the very least, made efforts towards inclusion, accessibility, and embracing diversity. There is a pattern amongst the interviews, where even if the participants were quite critical of the MLIS program or LIS in general, there was the tendency to acknowledge that there were good intentions often at the root of choices made by those in the

community. While it was clear that they felt that professors, co-workers, administrators and colleagues of privilege were doing their best, or at the very least simply trying, at times it was unclear exactly why they felt that way. Furthermore, participants shared many of the ways that they felt these good intentions primarily translated into facilitating discussion of topics related to marginalization but only surface level discussion that they felt was still quite restrained or unprovoking, or they did not feel supported by their professors when they experienced conflict in the program.

One of the potential sources for viewing those in MLIS programs as having good intentions may be because of what I have referred to earlier, the perception that LIS work is service work or at least work that contributes to the public good. For instance, Connie shares how she feels individuals in LIS are as a group:

"It seems like people in this field are really driven to accomplish or serve, like librarians are some of the most passionate people I've met about their work. So value driven, I guess would be another adjective that you could use."

Connie uses terms like "serve," "passionate," and "value driven" to highlight the positive characteristics of individuals in the field, a position that was expressed by many others in their reflections. Some participants like Rose Quartz, explicitly stated that the people in LIS more broadly are "well-intentioned, good people". However, when turning to how good intentions and value driven attitudes translated to positive impact regarding values like diversity, accessibility and meaningful inclusion, she states that this is a bit harder to identify. I will dig into Rose Quartz's perspective a bit more later, but this was also expressed by other participants about their MLIS experiences more specifically. Participants particularly discussed how they felt that professors made efforts to engage with more diverse ways of thinking and materials in MLIS, to

ensure practices towards accessibility are enacted, and to make the MLIS and other LIS spaces practically safer for marginalized people.

Connie shares that she feels students acknowledge their professors' attempts to appropriately facilitate "frequent discussions of race, gender, sexuality and disability within their classrooms":

> "I think more students would say that the professors are at least trying. The extent to which they're succeeding, like that's a different question. But I definitely feel that the professors consider those things and make an effort to hear students out when they say things like this is a diversity problem or something needs to change here. The professors are open to hearing that information."

Connie indicates that her and her cohort of students feel that their professors make an effort to understand their perspectives, indicating that they have good intentions in hearing different perspectives and feedback regarding diversity and accessibility. However, it is important to note that Connie's statement stops at indicating that her professors are "open to hearing" feedback and she does not mention that the professors actually incorporate that feedback. It might be that they do and Connie simply does not mention that, but other participants shared that they felt unable to determine whether the efforts made by professors to elicit positive diversity outcomes were successful. Amethyst shares that she believes: "there have been efforts made, but not necessarily successful efforts."

Connie builds on what she perceives to be the missing link between the efforts made and the impact they have when she discusses how topics like diversity and accessibility are discussed in class:

"And the Professor seemed to present these topics without a deep understanding, and it was just kind of like students were asked to read the resources and provide their responses to it, reactions to it, and thoughts about how they could make accessible resources. But it was really obvious that the teacher couldn't offer a lot more than what's published…online."

On one hand Connie is acknowledging that it was good that their professor was making the effort to include topics related to accessibility in their course, but on the other hand it fell upon the students to figure out what they were going to get out of the teaching. She felt like there was something "missing" and that there needed to be a clearer "consideration" for the topic. Although her example speaks to the topic of accessibility in learning, it does touch on something that many other participants also mentioned both within the teaching and practices of the MLIS - the effort might be there but the impact of that effort leaves those it intends to help with very little actual support.

A number of participants describe that there is a disconnect between the intentions of what is desired to be delivered and what is actually delivered. For instance, Lapis remarks on her experiences in a course specifically focused on working with diverse populations:

"And one of my problems with that class was that, you know, we're talking about diverse populations and why would you assign like a $300 textbook for a class about that when you can have readings curated from like a curated list of readings from diverse populations instead of one textbook from one person... I almost failed that class and I never found out why, because my paper was never returned to me... And my understanding was the other BIPOC students who also took that class also, we all did pretty poorly."

Lapis shares that the intention of the course was to provoke students to think inclusively, to consider working with diverse populations in libraries as integral to the profession. One could infer that the very presence of this course is well-intentioned, why would anyone want to teach an optional course on a topic that they did not view as having value? And yet, the course was not only inaccessible in narrowing its focus too much on one text, that required text was also inaccessible in price. Furthermore, Lapis is implying that her criticism of the text and its inaccessibility is one of the elements that led to her receiving a poor grade. In addition, she implies that the professor may have been discriminating against all the BIPOC students as they all did poorly in the class, which she further explains was unusual as they were used to receiving quite good grades in their other classes. I use this example to illustrate a gap Lapis perceived between the intention of their course and the impact it had on the marginalized students. The intention of the course was to be thoughtful of diverse populations, although the BIPOC students ended up negatively academically impacted by it.

Opal critiques the way that ideas are presented and engaged with in LIS but takes it beyond just the responsibility of professors. He makes it very clear how he views this divide between intention and impact in the MLIS:

"And so a significant amount of the program, even so-called progressive elements, I feel like engaged with these matters of socialization and marginalization and identity, in the exact same ways that businesses do through EDI initiatives, through very committee based hierarchical, quantifiable outcomes based engagement, where a discussion is essentially a box to be checked to make sure that we all have engaged with these questions in a curricularly recognized manner. Without going, engaging with any of the things in depth at all, or providing any agency or possibility for change that education

alone, and not even education, that discussion alone, surface level discussion is enough of

an engagement on the topic.

This rich quote serves as a sharp criticism of the MLIS program, particularly how the MLIS

program might intend to address the issues of marginalization and inclusivity, but that the

outcome of that intention is limited because there is not the desire to push these discussions

beyond a surface level assessment. Here Opal builds on Connie's critique, by stating that not

only are some professors unequipped to take engagement with these ideas beyond surface level

theoretical discussion, but that it seems that some professors believe that this type of addressing

of the issues is sufficient enough to make an impact. This comment from Opal actually

contradicts some of the assertions I have been making that the participants read good intentions

onto the community. Opal doesn't call these practices well intentioned, although he uses

terminology like "so-called progressive" to indicate that there is at least the self-perception of

progressiveness.

Amethyst shares a similar sentiment when she brings up what she perceives as a

disconnect between the way issues of marginalization, racism, and accessibility are discussed

and they way they are addressed through action:

"are you producing students that can think about them, but not apply them? That has

troubling implications for, like the students, that this program is producing. Is this all

theory like you're fine with them, just knowing that these issues exist, but not actually

doing anything to address them or engaging with them on a surface level, because they're

removed from it, because their positionality is protected from it."

Amethyst reasserts Opal's points that there is a disconnect between the theory being presented to

the students and its translation into action. I believe that all these participants are commenting

that the desire by MLIS instructors to foster positive change is ineffective because it has no desire to push discussion forward into a space of action. Ahmed (2006) comments on this ineffectiveness in her work on non-performative speech acts, or when "speech acts do not do what they say: they do not, as it were, commit a person, organization, or state to an action" (pg. 104). Much like how Opal is commenting on the disconnect between theory and action, Ahmed (2006) is commenting on how speech acts made by the university that state that they are interested in equality are performative in that they have no intention to bring "about the effects that they name" (pg. 105). In this context, I view the type of discussion that participants share about as non-performative as well, in that they do not commit to the action of inclusivity or working against marginalization even while they claim to be addressing those issues. I think that these examples illustrate that participants perceive that there is an effort with good intentions by MLIS instructors to introduce ideas that approach discussions of marginalization, perhaps with the hope that this discussion will instigate change for the better for those most marginalized. But participants also note that these efforts seem to stop at discussion, with no push of the discussion into an area of meaningful change.

4.2.2 Racism: "It can be very hard to use that term"

I have reviewed how the participants felt that professors in the MLIS program and at times individuals in LIS more generally had good intentions and at least attempted to approach topics addressing issues of marginalization. I have also provided a foundation to understand how they described a disconnect between instructor efforts to address topics of diversity, inequality, and accessibility and participant beliefs that these issues were not adequately addressed. I want to now turn to how these perspectives influenced how participants described a lack of support, particularly how they simultaneously recognized that discrimination and inequality were

pervasive, but that they did not feel comfortable using explicit terms such as "racism" or "discrimination" to describe these experiences. I think this is important to understand as this hesitancy indicates something interesting about how participants understand the individuals in LIS and their desire to find their place in this field. It particularly indicates how Whiteness can impact what language we feel comfortable using to describe the field. What I mean is, while participants were still critical of the efficacy of efforts made by professors to address diversity in the classroom, they still couched this criticism in the lens of good intentions. Similarly, when discussing using the terms racism or discrimination to describe experiences or attitudes of those in the MLIS, participants were hesitant to use direct terminology criticizing people in the MLIS with those direct terms.

So far participants shared where they found these good intentions ineffective in outcome, but I want to narrow in on how the intentions did not simply have ineffective outcomes, but were, in some ways, harmful. An interesting element of many of the reflections is that participants would not explicitly use the term racism. There is a particular value associated with the term "racism" that many of the participants were concerned about using, in the sense that the term was implied to be almost too harsh to describe the incidents that they were sharing with me. A pattern emerged where participants felt uncomfortable with using the term "racism" even while describing personally experiencing racism or witnessing instances of racism. Even when participants would eventually use the term, they came to it later in their reflection, needing time to digest their own retelling of their experiences before coming to that conclusion. When asked whether or not they felt that they had experienced discrimination in their programs, most participants said that they had not. Terms like "discrimination" or "microaggression" were used occasionally, but even then participants rarely used those terms to describe their experiences in

the MLIS program with few exceptions. A microaggression can be defined as "a comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group (such as a racial minority)" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, n.d). For instance Rose Quartz shares her feelings about experiencing discrimination in the program:

> "I wouldn't say explicit discrimination...I'm not afraid people are gonna hate crime me at school. But I'm always, do not want to end up somewhere where I'm gonna feel like I want to fight people all the time because they're like bigot, like they're a transphobe or, um, you know? So I'm very just kind of protective of my own emotions and the work that I'm gonna have to do in particular spaces….it's very White. It's very White. And not in a way that's maybe super discrimination, but in a way that's kind of cringey, that I don't wanna, you know, I hate being the voice in the corner like excuse me, what about the non-White people?"

Here Rose uses the term "explicit discrimination" to differentiate between forms of discrimination with different levels of severity. I can infer from her tone that she states "I'm not afraid people are gonna hate crime me at school" in a joking manner to describe something she would consider a severe form of discrimination. Here Rose acknowledges that discrimination is present and happens, that it very much exists within her program and in the LIS spaces she is part of now. But there is also the implication that using a term like racism or even simply discrimination is too extreme of a word to describe this. Rose acknowledges that there are people she would describe as "bigot[s]" that she avoids so that she doesn't have to experience conflict with them, but she does not bring up the word racist or racism. Even when acknowledging that

there are individuals who would discriminate against marginalized people, she does not feel comfortable using that exact terminology.

Steven reveals why it might be difficult for the participants of this study to use the term racism:

"I didn't use that term, and I think it can be very hard to use that term. There's also so much internalized racism in people and so it's like I don't know, can I say it's racist, because it's not like oh, I don't like those people of colour it's like it's so underneath it. And you know there's still our classmates, they are still our cohorts right? So it's like, I don't really want to call it that I don't know, but I never thought about this. It was very uncomfortable for me to use that phrase. Except for, like the case where it's like someone's very overtly so, because in these cases it had to do with kind of like school work, and school stuff, and it could be entangled."

Steven unpacks a tension at the root of this: that the difficulty that the participants felt in using these explicit terms could be attributed to the context of how they feel about individuals in the MLIS. The concern of feeling as though he is condemning the individuals in his cohort to the fate of being labeled "racists" prevents him from using the term when it can be inferred that he might feel that it is appropriate at times. I would make the argument that this is related to the perspective that the individuals in the cohort have good intentions and so their actions should be judged with this in mind. And so, since they have good intentions it would be harsh to describe their behavior with such direct terms as racism. Like Rose, Steven discusses how a case would need to be "overt" in order for him to feel like he could use that term. He raises the concept of internalized racism, which is interesting to note as I will discuss later how the participants felt at times that other people of colour were just as capable of repeating similar types of harm, that

they were also capable of privileging Whiteness in their interactions with other BIPOC so that they could get ahead. And so, Steven's quote illustrates the ways that the perception of the MLIS community's intentions can affect the way that participants describe their own experiences and the experiences of others. In other words, participants' reluctance to describe certain experiences explicitly as racist or discriminatory is influenced by their hopeful perception of the community and of the desire to locate themselves within it regardless of its flaws.

Although I have focused on how participants feel and talk about using terms like racism and discrimination, it is important to contextualize this with how participants did describe personal experiences of racism and discrimination. Some participants spoke more candidly about issues they perceived in the program and did use terms such as "microaggressions" to describe their experiences, like Garnet who makes a distinction between the professors of the program and the students:

> "I definitely had a harder time with other students than I did with the program or with the professors. Because, like the professors, at the worst, it was microaggressions, you know. Yeah, at the worst. But other students, man."

Similar to the examples above, Garnet also creates a hierarchy of severity, with microaggressions rated lower than other forms of racism. Garnet goes on to describe the barriers that professors and administrators raised in response when she tried to get assistance with discriminatory experiences of colleagues' microaggressions. She later goes on to describe incidents as "microaggressions" where she felt her teammates in a group project treated her poorly because of her race and socio-economic status. Of course, one might argue that microaggressions are a form of racism and so the term does not need to be used explicitly to express that idea. While I believe this is true, I also think that participants like Garnet are using a term that could be understood at

face value as perhaps less aggressive than a term like "racist" to describe a similar experience. However, Garnet indicates a type of scale here by using phrasing like "at the worst" the professors exhibited microaggressions, indicating that there is something worse, perhaps direct racism. While Garnet describes incidents with students in student housing as racist, she shies away from it when applied to those in the MLIS program. Garnet's hesitancy to use the term racism to describe the professors and peers in the program directly indicates that she categorizes different forms of discrimination on a scale. To me, it also indicates a cautiousness in retelling her own experiences.

Like Garnet, Pearl also starts out hesitant to describe her interaction with a peer as "racist" although she does eventually come to that conclusion. Describing how her peers asked her not to make things about race, didn't immediately strike Pearl as racist, although I would argue she understood it as that even before she became comfortable describing it that way. She describes an instance where students in her class asked her to "not make things about race?":

> "It might not be explicit racism, but in my mind it's just you're not taking the time to learn other narratives or other people's perspective and stuff shows that, you don't want to change. You don't want to step out of your comfort zone, and it's in my mind I think it is lowkey kind of racist because you want to stay comfortable. Yeah and just being told stop talking about race, stop bringing it up, to me that is racist."

She is quick to dismiss the possibility that this experience was "explicit racism" but with a little more space to digest, she begins to describe the experience in these terms. Here Pearl complicates my assertion that most participants felt they did not want to use the term racism to describe experiences of racism. While she may have started with that inclination, she develops her idea while sharing her personal experience. This is interesting because I would argue that

Pearl reflects on her own reluctance in real time, coming to the realization that perhaps refraining from using the term racist does not actually help her in understanding her experience but is a barrier to describing it accurately. I would argue that this is a significant development, because in sharing her story, Pearl was able to come to terms with the implications of this experience and in some ways was able to process it.

These efforts to minimize their experiences of racism indicate an interesting hesitancy to address criticism of Whiteness head on. I don't think this means that the participants don't understand the harms of Whiteness, or the effects of discrimination and racism, I think it is very clearly embodied and experienced in what and how they share their stories, what details are shared, and the context that they are shared in. The harms of Whiteness are felt in the ambiguity and vagueness of the choices made to retell the stories. There could be a variety of reasons why the participants did not want to describe their experiences in those terms or the concern about the repercussions of the study or a lack of confidentiality. It could also be the impact of vocational awe, a term used to describe the "assumptions librarians have about themselves and the profession that result in notions that libraries as institutions are inherently good, sacred notions, and therefore beyond critique" (Ettarh, 2018). It could be simply that the participants were unsure if they could really trust me as a stranger to understand their bluntness if they chose to be more straightforward.

I would argue that this hesitation might also reveal something about how the participants view the MLIS program and themselves within it. I believe that it reveals that the participants wanted to give the benefit of the doubt to their colleagues and their professors of the program because of a desire to find a space in this profession that they are passionate about and that they respect. One participant even described this profession as "the epicenter of a lot of the basic

shifts in what's happening in the world." This could be described as vocational awe, but I think that it is more complicated than that. Participants do not express that they feel that libraries and those who work in LIS are beyond critique, they express their criticism in their reflections. But I believe the way they feel capable of sharing their critiques actually demonstrates an understanding of how vocational awe affects the profession, understanding that they have to be more careful about how critique is expressed as individuals who are already at risk of having their perspectives downplayed or erased (Ettarh, 2018).

Furthermore, as many of the participants discussed the library as a formative space for them and an intentional profession that they felt compelled to pursue, they want to carve out a space of recognition in a place where they genuinely feel that there is the capacity for a positive impact. I don't believe this is excusing bad behavior, but it is acknowledging that Whiteness is in the fabric of the institution. As Rose shares she believes that:

> "[I]t can be hard to navigate the goodness of the community with some of the things that we could do better at, or that I think we could change for the better. But overall I think it's well-intentioned, good people that want to do good work or at least I like to think so."

She acknowledges that it is difficult to find the goodness in the community because she views that many are stuck in their ways and don't feel compelled to change their practices to become more inclusive and less discriminatory. But at the same time, she feels that this is a group of people who might have the capacity for change and that compels her to view them with a more positive lens. And so she is able to hold these two truths together, where it does matter to her that they have good intentions, but only if this means that we believe they can have the capacity for change.

4.3 Participant practices in the MLIS: Not making waves and the consequence of silence

As I have established, there is a perceived disconnect in the MLIS between the good intentions of members of the LIS community and the impact that professors and White peers have on those who are racial minorities in the field. I have reviewed how this impacts how participants do not feel comfortable directly calling out racism and I would like to build on this point further. I think it is important to highlight some of the experiences shared by participants of a distinct lack of support, including examples described as racist incidents, and what outcomes these events had. While I have reviewed the ways that "racism" as a term has or has not been used to describe participant's experiences in the program, I want to use this section to outline and understand how the participants described experiences with a lack of support in more detail and the outcome that these experiences had on their practices in the MLIS, particularly how these experiences led to participants to choose to be silent or not participate in White spaces in the MLIS. I will review a pattern that I have identified where, as a result of negative experiences in the program, many participants described the decision to "bow out" of participating in parts of the MLIS program or to "sit back" instead of speaking up in instances where they saw injustices happening. While the previous section reviewed the participant's beliefs about the MLIS and those within it, this section turns to the practices of the participants. I want to review how the participants perceived support in the program, how this affected the way that they participated in the program, and how they felt about their experiences and practices. I argue that students' decision to sit back or be quiet is a repercussion of the prevalence of Whiteness in the field, particularly in that racialized people's voices are suppressed because of experiences of racism and/or the expectation that they will experience racism. While the participants acknowledged that it wasn't their fault that they felt the need to withdraw themselves from participation, they

expressed uncertainty about their choices as they felt a responsibility to other BIPOC to speak up.

4.3.1 Passive engagement and silence as a consequence of experiences of discrimination and racism or the expectation of discrimination and racism

A pattern that arose in the research are descriptions of negative experiences in the MLIS program and the consequences that these negative experiences have on participants. In particular, participants described feeling silenced or pushed to disengage from participation because of experiences of racism or witnessing/hearing discriminatory statements shared. Participants were asked to reflect on how they felt supported or unsupported by their professors, administration and colleagues in the MLIS program, providing a wide variety of perspectives. A few participants described feeling very supported by their cohort, in opposition to the professors and administration, even explicitly stating that they felt the students were more inclusive of marginalized people. For example Connie states: "the bias within the program amongst the students is to be considerate of accessibility and diversity." However, many participants described incidents of antagonism and inaction to address discrimination or racism in conflict. Participants described experiences of antagonism from their peers, followed by inaction from their professors to assist them in addressing the behavior. They also describe professors making statements to them that could be interpreted as derogatory in some way, or at the very least culturally insensitive, and would not make efforts to change that behavior. Participants mentioned incidents that directly and drastically affected their involvement in the program and had lasting effects on their progress in the program.

A main theme was the professor's inaction to address problematic statements or behaviors in the classroom and the program more broadly. Garnet describes how she had some great

experiences with professors who "seemed intentional about trying to connect with the BIPOC students" and always appreciated the efforts that some professors made to be more inclusive. But she shares her experiences with a professor who did not make this effort and was in fact offensive in their choices:

> "There was one especially that like would say things, and I would just be like, oh, no wrong thing to say like that is, of all the examples you could have gone to? You went for one that's like maybe not in your face, but it's definitely not right. It's like you should know better. But apparently that wasn't the case, you know so, and that kind of already kind of turns you off to that person when you hear someone make those kind of comments, and they don't do anything to like, even if somebody in the classroom points it out, and they don't do anything to remedy that. Then just that connection with that person like that's where it stops. There's no more building from it."

Although Garnet did not feel like sharing the details about what exactly this professor said, she shares that she knew that when a professor would not only say things that were "not right," implying that the statements might not have been what she would deem as outwardly racist but were discriminatory or microaggressions. She goes on to say that it was even more of an issue as the professor would not even attempt to correct themselves or others when they said problematic things. Because of this she knew she could not go to them for support or connection.

She shares an experience in another course with a different professor where she felt as though she was not supported in a similar way. She describes a situation with teammates in a semester-long group project where she was experiencing conflict with a White group project mate:

"They would say things that were definitely microaggressions. They would make

mistakes and blame it on the people of colour in the group, despite their being like this

other White person in the group. There was one point where they were just yelling at us

over something and then they realized their own mistake, and didn't say anything about

it."

She goes on to share how this teammate would get "mad" at Garnet for showing up to meetings

without a laptop, even though she explained at the time that she did not have access to one

because of financial barriers. The teammate was making it very difficult for Garnet to participate

in the group work and she did not feel comfortable continuing working with someone who she

felt was discriminatory.

Garnet attempted to go to the professor to get assistance in solving this conflict and was

given no support:

"I tried to leave the group, but the professor wouldn't let me. They just said that, you

know, sometimes you have to work with people you don't like, and I'm like this is. This is

not just people. I don't like this person clearly dismissing everything. It got to the point

where I just started to bow out from the group like I did my part of the work and I had no

other communication with them. But it was incredibly frustrating, and I'm talking over a

lot of like the little things that happened along the way."

She shares that even though she could clearly identify the ways that her teammate was actively

antagonistic to her and other people of colour in her group, the professor reduced her concerns to

normal conflict in teamwork. Relating to what has already been discussed, even here Garnet is

hesitant to use the term "racism" to describe her interactions with either the professor or her

teammate, although she noticed that the teammate was targeting the people of colour in the group

with his bad behaviour and it is not reasonable to assume that yelling at people is a normal part of working with people you don't like. This is an example of a professor reducing experiences of racial discrimination to an expected part of working with others, setting a dangerous precedent for what is or is not acceptable in a working environment.

Many other participants reported negative experiences with their colleagues being met with a lack of support from professors and administration as greatly impacting their ability to fully engage in their program. And here is where we can see the consequences of this inaction or lack of support. When the participants of this study felt a lack of support or a perceived lack of unity, their best course of action was to "bow out" as Garnet states. Garnet was not able to get as much out of this group work because she was being antagonized by a racist teammate and when she searched for support she was denied it. This is an experience shared by many other participants, almost all participants who reported instances of racism or discrimination in their program, also described choosing to or feeling forced to remove themselves or minimize their engagement in the class or program to preserve their emotional well-being.

Some participants described how professors were antagonistic, not only offering no support but engaging in problematic behavior themselves such as making racist or discriminatory statements or critiquing BIPOC students. Participants also described how this impacted their academic work. Blue Diamond describes an experience, where, in trying to connect with a professor about growing up in Shanghai, the professor responded with a discriminatory opinion that belittled Chinese people and offended Blue Diamond. She shares how she felt about it in more detail:

> "But I do kind of feel when that person talk to me I feel kind of superior tone to me. I
>
> don't know, they probably are not conscious about it. And there's a superiority, or a little

bit of condescending. Because personally, I wasn't having a lot of interactions with them, so they didn't really know me well. The only thing they know about me is my accent, my appearance and then they probably didn't even know my name, cause they have so many students and assignments, so they didn't really recognize my name, either. But then they were condescending. And I am like where did this come from?"

She follows this reflection by sharing that this made her feel as though she couldn't come forward in class anymore, stating: "I wouldn't even want to contribute my opinions there." She shares how she began to notice the instructor's biases in his instruction and the way he talked about people from non-Western cultures. When he would say something discriminatory about another group of people, she would know that he was wrong, but was not comfortable correcting him or speaking out. This is significant because not only is Blue Diamond simply uncomfortable with engaging with this professor one on one, but her academic performance is impeded by his behavior. She is unable to engage in critical classroom conversations because she knows her opinions would be devalued by someone with these discriminatory perspectives.

Blue Diamond expands these experiences to make a statement about international students more generally. She shares how being "minorities" can impact whether or not people feel comfortable speaking up in dominant White spaces:

"This is my own feeling, there are international students. They were just coming to this world with a BIPOC background, then they are just so many White people there and are racist. And then why would I bother to argue with someone, or especially if they are in a higher position than us, or they are the majority in the classroom setting. Yeah, because we are the minority, and that majority, they have a louder voice than the minorities."

Blue Diamond brings up something I would argue is prevalent throughout the different reflections shared by participants, whether they were international students or not. What she is implying here is that when BIPOC enter a space that is predominantly White, there is always the assumption that racism could occur, and furthermore that when that White majority is so dominant and racism arises it feels pointless, as a minority, to challenge it. She is making the suggestion that for many BIPOC students the path of least resistance is one of silence. This is in many ways a manifestation of the isolation and othering that I previously identified. I would argue that this thinking is supported by many of the experiences shared by participants. Garnet shares that she experienced racism from a team mate and a complete lack of support from her professor when she sought it out, leading her to "bow out" and step back from sharing her opinions and thoughts any further. Blue Diamond shares that in trying to connect with a professor, he dismissed her experiences with condescension and discrimination, making her feel unsafe in sharing her perspectives or challenging him any further in the classroom. These are examples of racialized people's voices being suppressed because of their experiences of racism in the MLIS classroom. Blue Diamond then expands this, to include how she views BIPOC individuals choosing to disengage or to not confront others in their program because of the expectation that they will experience racism and/or that their opinion will simply be devalued because they are minorities.

4.3.2 Complicated feelings about staying silent or choosing to take a back seat due to experiences of discrimination or the expectation of discrimination

In the examples above I have reviewed how participants describe a lack of support resulting in them withdrawing themselves from participation or choosing to stay silent, but I want to turn here to how the participants felt about their choices. From the way that participants

described their feelings about sitting back or choosing to disengage from debate or conflict, it can be inferred that they felt complicated about these choices. On one hand, they understood that they had limited options to preserve their peace of mind around people they know to have harmful opinions and ways of interacting with them. On the other hand, a certain amount of regret in some of their choices to stay quiet can be sensed. I quote before that Pearl had difficulty describing her experiences with her colleagues as racist even though this was something that she sensed was motivating their engagement with her. She goes on to describe how she responded to that experience and how she felt about it:

> "And I didn't know how to respond in that moment. So I just left it, and my mark kind of tank, because part of our participation mark was to respond to people's response to our post, and I knew the Professor was looking through everything, because that's how she's keeping track, marking. And I felt I hope she sees this, and I hope maybe she can pick up on it. Looking back, should I have raised my concerns? Should I have shared how I felt, what I said offended my classmate. But I don't know I just I already I was already feeling, in that one course I was the only person of colour, so I just didn't want to ruffle any more feathers than I already had so I just felt…In mind I was hoping maybe my professor would reach out and check in."

Pearl shares that she felt that she should not "ruffle any more feathers" than she already had, opting to sit back until it affected her academic performance in the class. She notes that she hoped the professor would intervene, but as she saw they did not, she felt even more isolated as the "only person of colour" in her class. And yet, she also reflects on her responsibility in her choices, asking "should I have raised my concerns?" This indicates that she feels a bit of regret

not pushing the topic more or confronting the Whiteness of the peer who refuses to engage with the importance of acknowledging race.

In a similar vein Lapis doesn't cite one specific incident that led to her staying quiet in her program, but she does discuss that she chose to sit back because of being so young in the program, being intimidated by the overwhelming Whiteness of the program and feeling isolated from any form of solidarity and community with other BIPOC. She shares:

"So there was definitely, you know, times where I thought, like, what do I say? What do I do? Do I just sit back or do I speak up? And I can pretty confidently say that I chose to sit back. Part of that I think was being so young and just being really intimidated by people around me. And the other part is that there were three other BIPOC people and we were all kind of like, scattered around. We didn't really have any sort of community in our class? So yeah, I think it was a very interesting experience, in that, yeah, I didn't have like a BIPOC community in library school. I had to look elsewhere for that and even then, I didn't know where to look."

Lapis clearly identifies the reasons outside her control that pushed her to "sit back" in her program, one being her inexperience and another her feeling isolated from a supportive community that understood her. From the context of the interview, it can be inferred that Lapis regrets this, that she wishes she was able to make another choice. I believe that these regrets indicate a deeper reflection by the participants, where they feel this way not because they are overly self critical but because they feel it is partially their responsibility to push back.

I believe there is an underlying motivation from participants who pushed through their feeling of silencing to be responsible to other BIPOC, to stand up for themselves as a proxy for

others that might have to deal with these same people. For instance, Pearl reflects on her experience with her classmates:

> "I did gain more courage to share these certain things in our class discussion, and I had classmates still kind of tell me you need to relax on this or oh, we don't feel comfortable exploring the concept of racial bias for one of the week's topics right, and despite them all saying that I felt like you know, I should still keep going. I wish my prof had stepped in, but she never did. And because of that experience, I am still kind of nervous, and that nervousness carries throughout my other courses as well."

Pearl in some small ways pushes through her feeling of being silenced to continue to bring up matters relating to race and it can be inferred she does this precisely because she understands that she is a minority and will be the only one to do this. Of course this is a profound pressure to have on you as a BIPOC, particularly as it is unfair that BIPOC so often have to be our own advocates, and Pearl still expressed uncertainty and "nervousness". However, she states that she "should still keep going" with perhaps the hope that it will have a positive impact maybe for BIPOC in the future. I would argue that these self-reflections demonstrate a form of solidarity amongst the participants as BIPOC. It could be my reading of solidarity onto interactions between BIPOC, but I believe BIPOC as part of an ecosystem like that of a pond, where BIPOC are lily pads, at times seemingly disconnected floating isolated but underneath they are connected by a complex rooting system. It reflects on how the participant's perceive themselves, they understand the barriers that they face as BIPOC in this program and the limited options they may have, yet they still reserve room for self-reflection. In addition, they were able to push against the barriers and overcome them in some ways.

Garnet does not necessarily share that she felt regret over her choices to bow out of her participation because of her interactions with her colleagues and professors, but she does share how she looked for support with others in other places. Garnet was led to seek other spaces for connection and support:

"It was something that helped connect a lot of the BIPOC students together, actually talking about these kinds of things that were happening, connecting over the things that happened with them in their class, like with this other individual. And it was one of the reasons why I started focusing a lot on BIPOC spaces, not just for *we here*. But there was a Facebook group that started just for BIPOC students in this particular program as well as I got involved in a campus group that dealt with bigotry issues."

Garnet here at least had an opportunity that Lapis did not feel she did, she was able to identify a community of BIPOC outside of her class and even outside of her program to help her dredge through the Whiteness of her program and institution. Although Garnet felt shut down and shut out by those in the formal educational structure, she was able to push through and find forms of connection with other BIPOC students because of these shared experiences. She explored opportunities to resist the oppressive structures both within her program and the broader university campus with the help of others who had similar experiences and passions. These experiences of being silenced in the program also pushed her to look for community online, in spaces like *wehere,* where she could connect with BIPOC in LIS from all over North America. And so there is this dueling element, where on one hand the participants shared the ways that they were silenced and made invisible through the dominance of Whiteness in their programs, but at the same time they were able to channel that energy into other ways of support.

4.4 What's Underneath it all: The Specter of Whiteness in LIS

I want to expand on how I see Whiteness as an undercurrent to the patterns that have emerged in this research. In other words, the overarching theme throughout this research is the predominance of Whiteness that shapes the experiences of the participants and how they describe their experiences and understandings of themselves in the LIS world. As I have established, Whiteness "works as an invisible and elusive structure of privilege, one that allows for constant reinvention and rearticulation to protect the interests of a White racial ruling class" (Honma, 2006, pg. 6). I view Whiteness as less of an undercurrent and more all encompassing, in LIS it is "not the shark but the water" (Chiu, Ettarh & Ferretti, 2021, pg. 49). When you are surrounded by the water it is harder to find where it starts and ends, to identify a distinctness of its shape and its form. It is more than what the participants initially describe as demographic dominance in the profession, it is a worldview. I describe this with another metaphor, the specter of Whiteness. But what does this phrase actually mean? What I mean by the specter of Whiteness is the idea that Whiteness has an effect on the larger structural elements of the MLIS down to the interpersonal experiences that the individuals in this study felt but could not name. I alluded to this inability to name a bit with the participants' difficulty in using the term "racism" even when implying that they have noticed its prevalence in their field and have even described experiences of racism. Contrarily, participants did not have any difficulty naming "Whiteness" as predominant in the field. However, participants did not explicitly link their experiences or understandings of racism, othering, isolation or discrimination to Whiteness as a source. And yet, Whiteness affected the participants and their experiences. It immediately makes those outside of Whiteness into "others" which can result in feeling isolated for those who have been othered. It can present itself as well meaning and well intentioned, yet not be dedicated to realizing the positive impact of those good

intentions. It can make those already marginalized even more marginalized by pushing them to withdraw even more as they see few paths to feeling supported or respected enough to be authentic. But this might not be so apparent at first, which is why I had to dig to find these patterns present amongst the participants. I believe this is because the specter of Whiteness is subtle even while being all encompassing. It can easily go undetected even though it has power.

Using the term specter might be considered odd, but I use it as a descriptor of an intangibility, to describe how Whiteness is felt, embodied, perceived sometimes but not consistently clearly for what it is. Scholars have used it before to describe how Whiteness is presented as a kind of normal state in which race is "made meaningful" when analyzing how Whiteness is presented as a normalcy state in television narratives, how "the traces of Whiteness [are] ephemeral" in "urban Aboriginal education", and how the specter of Whiteness in the context of racial grammar is embedded within liberal political thinking that it affects even grammar used to describe liberal politics (Pascale, 2008, pg. 168; Madden, 2016, pg. 643; Pinder, 2010; Bonilla-Silva, 2010). In this research and in discussing the MLIS and LIS more generally I want to discuss the specter of Whiteness a bit differently. Particularly, I discuss how Whiteness can materialize and be seen but it also can go unnoticed while the feeling that it instigates is still there and its source is unclear. For example it can be seen in the predominance of White faces, but go unnoticed in the way that Whiteness impacts how people think, what they value and how they behave towards one another. I have reviewed how in becoming silenced or pushed into the background, participants have been turned into a kind of specter themselves, shadowed by the dominance of Whiteness in their experiences in the field. The specter of Whiteness actually is part of all elements of what has already been described: it influences how seriously we take the disconnect between intentions and results; it prevents us from comfortably

calling things what they plainly are when it comes to matters of race; and it makes specters out of us, blending us into the background or muting us. In this section I want to continue building on how I perceive Whiteness as part of MLIS both demographically and embedded in the fabric of the program. More importantly, I want to discuss how it influences how we define what is considered a safe space or not, how it affects our interpersonal relationships, and how BIPOC define ourselves in opposition to Whiteness.

4.4.1 Who is safe? Questions about BIPOC solidarity

While I have reviewed how Whiteness impacts the experiences with others in the program described by the participants, I believe it is significant to review how the specter of Whiteness even affects the interpersonal relationships of BIPOC. While many of the participants shared stories of solidarity with other BIPOC, there were also other complicated opinions about the presumption of solidarity because of racial identity. Some participants simply shared that they didn't feel they needed connection with BIPOC within their program at all of course, as they found community with people based on other shared factors like Bismuth: "I actually found my people, I actually found where I fit and belong… Like, we are just a bunch of weirdos but somehow weirdos that have this common thread."

Bismuth doesn't state anywhere in his interview that he doesn't think connection because of racial identity is irrelevant to him or unnecessary more generally, but that there are other ways that he would define diversity beyond his racial identity. I don't believe this to be an expression of Whiteness, but maybe perhaps an element of challenging the assertions my research is making that there is inherently solidarity amongst BIPOC. Other participants share this same idea, that solidarity based on racial identity is more complicated than it seems at first, but in different ways. I would argue that the participants who describe how BIPOC explicitly forgo solidarity for

their own individual gain are describing an expression of Whiteness through a term that I summarize as "skinfolk ain't kinfolk."

The term "skinfolk ain't kinfolk" is used to describe when an individual who has the same racial identity is not thought of as kin or related to you because of their allegiance to another entity, often Whiteness. It is often attributed to the filmmaker, anthropologist and writer Zora Neale Hurston and is popularized by African American people (Louis Gates Jr, 1985). This term has entered the discourse of other racialized people and it has great implications for understanding how my participants perceived solidarity with other BIPOC, particularly it is a phenomenon that illustrates how tricky navigating solidarity through racial identity is when the specter of Whiteness can be so all consuming. In other words, the specter has the ability to dismantle any kind of solidarity between racialized people because they aspire to gain power in the game of Whiteness. Garnet shares an example of how she has seen this in action:

> "There's a saying "skin folk ain't always kinfolk", because there's certain people that I've met that are also Latina, but they view their career under different lenses. They want to climb up and so there are certain waves they will not make, but the detriment of that is that they will also talk down to you when you bring certain things up or they will put you in a negative light… talk about feelings of betrayal or how could you do this to like your own when you also experience the same shit and like it doesn't make that go away. So [for safe spaces] it's also knowing that there's other BIPOC present, but also knowing what kind of gauge you have for knowing that you can speak and be okay is also really important online and in person."

Garnet alludes here to how Whiteness is inherent in the career ladder structure, specifically how quickly getting ahead in your career as a librarian may influence people of colour to betray their

solidarity to other people of colour. This is an example of how the specter of Whiteness impacts individual interpersonal relationships, making us question who we can even trust. It speaks to the unknowability of safety as a person of colour, not only in the physical sense because of the looming threat of physical harm from racist people, but in the way we interact with one another when we are trying to determine if a person or a space is safe for us. I am arguing that this phrase and phenomenon are exemplary of how Whiteness affects every element of our experiences, down to how we even treat or mistreat one another as BIPOC.

One could argue that with any new interaction even White people are cautious about what they reveal or how much they trust another person, but it is important to acknowledge that White people are not disadvantaged due to their racial identity in spaces that are predominantly White like the ones the participants are describing in the MLIS. BIPOC in these White spaces must determine who is and where is safe when it is not guaranteed. And so when discovering that other BIPOC are willing to trade solidarity with their fellow BIPOC for power and assimilation into Whiteness, it is an acute "betrayal" as Garnet puts it. Amethyst also uses a similar term to describe her uncertainty on whether or not solidarity with other BIPOC is guaranteed:

> "I wouldn't say that spaces that are only [for] BIPOC people are inherently safe spaces…skinship is not kinship…So basically the idea that you can't necessarily assume that BIPOC folks are allies to you. So I think, even though I tend to gravitate mostly towards spaces with BIPOC folks I also know that that's not necessarily a safe space. It takes some time to sort of get to know a space and try to see whether it is safe."

Although Amethyst uses the phrase "skinship is not kinship" she is describing the same phenomenon as "skinfolk ain't kinfolk" to express the factors you have to take into account when trying to determine whether or not a space is safe to be authentic as a BIPOC person. It is

significant that she calls out the extra labor required by racialized people to determine safety for themselves, but I want to focus on how she expands from talking about interpersonal relationships between BIPOC to what makes a safe space. I am not arguing that those are two distinctly different things, in fact when looking at how participants defined space spaces for BIPOC in LIS, few said anything about the physical space. All participants were focused on the people in the space, how they acted and what boundaries were constructed to ensure their safety was accounted for. Accordingly, the ways that the participants defined safe spaces revealed much about the specter of Whiteness as well, not only in the ways that Whiteness is platformed when defining oneself in opposition to it but also in the way that Whiteness was unintentionally platformed in this research in much the same way.

4.4.2 What is safe? Questions about safe spaces and our racial identities

As I have established how the specter of Whiteness reveals itself in defining trustworthy relationships, I will now turn to look at how this further affects the ways that safe spaces are defined for BIPOC. The assumption entering this research is that BIPOC individuals might find connection to one another naturally due to the broad racial category we fall under, but the findings were not this cut and dry. While many participants did share that they felt self-segregated spaces or at least BIPOC focused spaces were ideal, there was indication that having to define safe spaces for BIPOC in opposition to spaces made by and for Whiteness was at the very least annoying. In identifying the attributes of a safe space for BIPOC, the participants illustrated all the ways that White spaces failed to support them, unfortunately still spotlighting Whiteness in its own way. This reveals something at the heart of this research, that even when trying to turn the focus away from Whiteness onto racialized people, Whiteness still is in the spotlight.

Multiple participants expressed that a self-segregated space, a BIPOC only space, would be the closest to a safe space that they could define. Even those who did not say it had to be exclusive to BIPOC, mentioned that it would be ideal for it to be primarily composed of BIPOC or at the very least BIPOC-led. As many mentioned exclusivity, I would like to narrow in on that a bit more. Rose Quartz shares her complicated feelings about this:

> "I think a true…quote unquote safe space is, and it's not foolproof safe, but I think an exclusive space is the space I would be most comfortable kind of being myself in terms of discussing stuff to do with race in particular my workplace where, you know, you don't want people, the wrong people to hear you say some of the things you might not say in front of people who might not understand or might misinterpret what you've said."

Here Rose is sharing the fact that she believes she would be most comfortable being authentic if the space were exclusive, implying that it would be exclusive to BIPOC. This is contextualized when she describes how in non-exclusive spaces that still cater specifically to BIPOC "there will be White people saying shitty things" which she does not find occurring on the BIPOC only space she engages with. Even when describing safe spaces for BIPOC, Whiteness is looming in the background as the potential threat.

> Opal also brings up Whiteness in his reflection on a safe space for BIPOC:
>
> "I think unfortunately at this point in time, segregated, BIPOC only space would be the safest and most comfortable. Not even because of like the easily readable expressions of Whiteness or racism within the discipline, but like, just the oxygen that gets used up by like, corporate style or White guilt style, like basic level discourse of like fundamental things…I think like, it's one of those like unquantifiable things, unfortunately, where it's like, so much of it is based on relationship and like a shared understanding of those basics

that you don't have to like go into the basics again. Like there's just certain fundamental

parts of reality that are already understood and acknowledged and that you can get to the

thing of either just like complaining about, but also like working towards either a deeper

discourse or actual like practice and things like that within the discipline…I do think that

a segregated POC only space is like one of the easiest and biggest steps you can take to

just like initially establishing a group and like other complex characteristics of the space

can be figured out afterwards. But like that one alone kind of goes a long way towards

this setting like a basic context and shared understanding."

Opal shares the complexity in these two ideas, that a BIPOC only space is a benefit but that it

comes at a cost. He states that "unfortunately" a "segregated, BIPOC only space would be the

safest and most comfortable" space for him. This statement is significant to this research because

it clearly outlines the "but" inherent within. On the surface the statement clearly indicates that

self-segregation for BIPOC individuals away from White individuals would be ideal for safety,

and yet the use of "unfortunately" indicates that Opal wishes it weren't that way. He believes that

if White people in the field could take the initiative to ensure that they are building spaces where

BIPOC feel safe, they would be able to engage with understanding what he calls "fundamentals

things" of how White guilt and White supremacy works more broadly and specifically in the

field. Another interpretation of the use of "unfortunately" by Opal here is that he could be

indicating that it is unfortunate that we often have to define ourselves as BIPOC in opposition to

Whiteness because of its prevalence. This is a safe assumption in some ways as prior to this

reflection, Opal shares his personal discomfort with the term BIPOC as stemming from "a long

history of colonial racism and a resentment that we have to define ourselves in opposition to

Whiteness at all" and so it can be argued that when considering what is a safe space for BIPOC,

Opal is also establishing that having to have a space for BIPOC defined in opposition to White spaces or Whiteness in general is at the very least irritating. But it is an example of how the specter of Whiteness even impacts how we define safe spaces for places where it should be absent. In the same way that we would hope Whiteness would be absent from our interpersonal relationships as BIPOC, it still arises and affects us, sowing seeds of distrust and instigating betrayal, like the phrase "skinfolk ain't kinfolk" describes. Rose shares a feeling of unknowability in trying to find a space for ourselves in a field that is so affected by Whiteness that it is a part of its fabric, so a part of its fabric that alternatives are rarely available. She states: "I don't know what a safe space looks like to be honest, how do you know when it's like, [it] doesn't exist?"

While discussing the ways that the specter of Whiteness impacts interpersonal relationships between BIPOC and our definitions of safe spaces, a complicated aspect of my research is revealed. My research intended to identify how BIPOC as a broad term might be able to provide the participants with a larger community to identify with, finding the links between our individual experiences confronting White supremacy and dealing with its repercussions, creating a tapestry of support. But in doing so I have learned that in some ways the label of BIPOC that I asked the participants to grapple with also encouraged them to have to grapple with their identities in opposition to Whiteness, privileging it just as much as I wanted to critique it. As much as I have foregrounded the ways Whiteness presents itself as inescapable, I don't believe this means that the participants are trapped within it with nowhere to go. I believe that the participants do share the ways that they circumvent these limitations through finding solidarity with other BIPOC and building new spaces for us to explore our relationships outside

of the gaze of Whiteness. I have already touched on some examples of this, like Garnet sharing her experiences organizing with other BIPOC on campus.

I am not sure it is a finding akin to Lorde's (1984) idea that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" because the purpose of this research was not to interview people who were self-proclaimed to be working toward collective liberation (pg. 106). In other words, the main focus of this research was not necessarily to understand how BIPOC actively fought back against their own marginalization, but more so to see if subtle forms of resistance can be identified. I don't seek to make any claims about the efficacy of these efforts by the participants, but note that even in our subtle forms of resistance somehow we always come back to the root of the problem: Whiteness. Whiteness is so central that it even impacts our self-reflection or how we think about our own identity as non-White people. I think this is particularly striking for me because I chose to pursue this research as I am a person of colour and could see the groundwork of solidarity amongst BIPOC in LIS working to resist the manifestations of Whiteness in our field. And so, I felt the need to hear more about the experiences of BIPOC. And yet, that effort in some ways still platforms Whiteness, because it indicates that I myself am so conscious of my racial identity as a minority in this field I had to investigate how others felt about their own racial identities in opposition to the Whiteness of the field. Some participants felt as though they were confronted by their racial identity when they entered the program and realized just how prevalent Whiteness was like Bismuth: "it's been fascinating in terms of how my identity...has been much more foregrounded than it has in any other job or industry I've been in." He shares how his racial identity came to the forefront for him because of how central Whiteness was in the MLIS and LIS, as he was confronted with the feeling of being a minority. Although I had entered the research with a strong understanding of the centrality of Whiteness in the MLIS, as I myself

experienced it firsthand, I did not anticipate that it would be just as central in the research I was

conducting. There is a lot to be said about my choices to use the term BIPOC as a descriptor, as

grouping all those who are simply "not-White" into a category can be understood as making us

dichotomous to Whiteness. But it was not something I felt conscious of during the interviewing

process, as I was connecting with and understanding BIPOC in LIS similar to myself. I saw our

relationship as one not in opposition to something else, but simply as a connection because of

our similarity to one another. But through analysis I have discovered that this paradigm of

Whiteness impacts all of us, our experiences in the MLIS, the ways we describe ourselves and

the way we perceive our relationships to one another. I don't think this is a flaw in the research, I

think it reveals another connection between myself and the participants I engaged with in this

research. How the specter of Whiteness is not only revealed in the experiences and opinions that

the participants shared about their MLIS with me, but also in the fabric of my research focused

on a group of people as defined in opposition to Whiteness.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has narrowed in on how Whiteness is felt and known by BIPOC in the

MLIS, particularly how the specter of Whiteness has impacted the ways that participants

understood their experiences and position in the LIS community. While at the beginning of this

chapter I identified the ways in which participants discussed Whiteness in LIS, they did not

explicitly link Whiteness to many of their experiences in the MLIS. And yet, when describing

feelings of isolation or othering, the root of that issue being Whiteness became very apparent to

me. It was clear how that overwhelming Whiteness was not simply a demographic majority that

othered or isolated BIPOC in MLIS, but that it was an epistemological issue that affected the

ideas engaged with and the experiences they had with others in the MLIS. This is similar to

descriptions of the good intentions participants perceived that others had in the MLIS. Participants did not attribute Whiteness to the facade of good intentions or the impact that these supposed good intentions had on marginalized people, even though Whiteness was the root of that negative impact on BIPOC. Even when looking at hesitancy to use the term racism explicitly, participants shied away from using explicit terms partially because of the concern that using such a term might be considered too harsh or not appropriate to describe the manifestations of Whiteness that they experienced through discrimination. When discussing negative experiences they had with peers, administrators and professors, participants described feeling the need to remove themselves from participation or stay silent, demonstrating how the specter of Whiteness had the ability to make participants into specters themselves, to camouflage them into the background. While participants shared experiences of othering, isolation, and discrimination, they did not explicitly describe Whiteness as the source of these negative experiences. And yet, I found that Whiteness nevertheless affected many of the participants and their experiences. Not only in all the ways already described, but also in the ways participants described relationships amongst one another as BIPOC and spaces that would or would not be safe for BIPOC. The specter of Whiteness haunts every individual aspect of the participants' experiences in the MLIS and rarely is called out, even though it is very much felt. And yet, it is not simply unique to the experiences in the MLIS. While this chapter provided an overview of the ways in which BIPOC in LIS understand their experiences of race and racialization in the MLIS, the next will move towards understanding how they understand their experiences in the online sphere. While some of the participants interviewed were online students, they still made a distinction between the MLIS and their online experiences (on social media). I will build on the findings of this chapter

to further look at how social media, like the MLIS, is an epistemic project rooted in Whiteness

that shapes participants' experiences of race and racialization.

Experiences on Social Media

As outlined in the previous chapter, this research has two areas of focus: one is the MLIS and the other is social media. In the first chapter I have reviewed how the participants have described and understood their experiences as BIPOC in the MLIS and LIS communities. This chapter turns to look at how these participants describe and understand their experiences as BIPOC on social media. When I say understandings of their social media experiences, I am referring to what might not be explicitly stated by the participants but what is felt by them, which can be inferred from their responses and the context they provide. Much like in the first chapter, I am interested in what is sometimes not explicitly stated by the participants but can be understood from their statements in context with their entire reflections and in context of the other participants' reflections. My approach in this chapter will slightly differ from the first chapter as participants were in some ways more comfortable with explicitly critiquing social media in a way they were not when addressing the MLIS and LIS more generally. Participants seemed to feel more comfortable directly criticizing social media as an environment that can foster and lead to extremism, racism, misinformation, amongst other things. However I was still required to interpret what was not explicitly said to identify the themes arising throughout. A main theme I found arising within the first chapter, that Whiteness is felt and known by BIPOC in the MLIS, is also a main theme in this chapter. The participants understand how Whiteness impacts and shapes social media and their experiences on social media, and react according to this knowledge, even when they do not seem to be doing so directly. In both chapters, participants may seem to be saying one thing but when looking at their descriptions in context with the entirety of their reflections more is revealed. This chapter will connect the following threads: how participants contextualized and differentiated between their social media experiences and in

person experiences; how participants describe their social media participation using passive terms even when demonstrating the ways that they are incredibly active and careful with their social media use; how participants at once describe a lack of concern with privacy and surveillance on social media while articulating in great detail the many complexities and implications of these issues; and how Whiteness influences these practices and beliefs that the participants describe, particularly affecting how much of themselves they allow to be invested in or visible on social media.

This chapter will begin by contextualizing the experiences of the participants online, particularly how while participants may have been able to access more diverse communities and information in online spaces they also noted that much like in the MLIS, online spaces carried risks of racism and racialization. This will help create a link between the previous chapter and the current one in that participants understand the two spaces as distinct and they also understand how Whiteness, and by extension racialization, are felt and understood in similar ways both online and offline. While there seem to be more opportunities to connect with other BIPOC in online spaces, it is important to note how difficult the risks of racialization are to avoid. This will lead to a discussion about the ways that participants describe their practices online in passive and disengaged terms. This is important as the understanding of the risks of racialization online can prevent participants from being more active participants. However, while participants describe their online practices through disengaged terms like scrolling or lurking, they also demonstrate how they navigate online spaces with a great self-awareness through detailed description of their actions.

This chapter will also look at how participants described privacy and surveillance online, particularly how participants expressed that they were unconcerned about their personal privacy

online because they limited their online engagement. As individual users, participants described their presence online as insignificant or controlled, so they have minimal concerns over how their data is used or the possibility of being surveilled in a significant way. And yet, as information professionals, these participants use descriptive language to describe the different elements of privacy and surveillance on social media applications that they believe should be of concern to users. They specifically describe the unknowability of algorithms, the predominance of increasingly targeted advertising, and the related discourse about surveillance and privacy as issues of concern. I will argue that even if they don't explicitly state they feel impacted by it, participants understand the potential harms that come with surveillance and privacy online, and they make informed decisions about their choices online so that they can still benefit from the positive elements of social media (information access, communication, and community building).

Finally this chapter will conclude with a discussion of how participants share what at first seems to be another contradiction: that they at once do not feel personally impacted by online racism but are aware of the ways that racism and racialization are prevalent on social media, particularly through the witnessing of racism occuring to others, which I describe as second hand racism. The conclusion of this chapter will detail how the specter of Whiteness impacts social media as well. Specifically, participants of this study are so aware of how Whiteness is part of social media that they self-surveil and self-control. This self surveillance and self censorship in some ways leads them to describe their online participation in passive terms. Part of their passive descriptions focus on how they are not particularly concerned about surveillance or privacy all while describing how acutely aware of how easily their perception of safety online could change with more active participation and visibility as BIPOC.

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5.1 Participants' use of social media

To begin, I want to establish how participants described using social media more generally. Participants described various uses of social media. Some described a heavier reliance on social media applications for communication, connection and information than others but all participants said they used social media frequently. Most participants stated that they use social media multiple times a day. Most participants also stated that they used social media for entertainment purposes, but they often described additional uses including communicating with their friends, reading the news, and for professional purposes like maintaining professional networks and gaining ideas for professional development. Participants listed a wide variety of social media applications that they used, however the common applications brought up throughout the reflections were Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok and Discord. Multiple participants shared that they used Discord to connect and share information with their classmates online, but it was not often considered as social media in the same way as the other platforms. In other words, traditional social media applications like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and TikTok were generally what participants were referring to when they talked about social media more broadly.

Participants also shared that they viewed different platforms differently. While many participants shared that they still had a Facebook account and used it, many commented, like Amethyst, that they felt Facebook is "really just for old people." Yet, participants articulated that it still had some value because of the opportunities available to them online particularly professionally (such as pages for library programming and librarian networking groups). Multiple participants referred to Twitter in negative terms, like Steven describes Twitter as "a hell site" that exposes people to "all these instances of sexism and racism." While I will discuss

this quote in more detail later in my analysis, it provides an interesting insight into what I will be discussing in this chapter. Specifically, the participants had interesting and thorough critiques of social media platforms and companies, as well as the discourse surrounding social media, even if they described feeling impacted by these issues online to varying degrees. Steven is one of the participants who reported using social media the least, and yet he still had insightful comments to make about social media and its relationship to race amongst other things. Interestingly, the amount of social media use did not necessarily equate to how deeply participants felt about the issues of social media. In fact the participants who didn't use social media very much still had strong opinions about it. This is interesting because the first chapter reviews how participants found it quite difficult at times to be explicitly critical of the MLIS because they are interested in finding their place in the field as BIPOC. Participants did not share this hesitation with social media and were more forthcoming with their critique, perhaps because they felt less compelled to find their place within social media as it is such an accessible and diverse information environment. This provides a basis for a theme I will expand upon in my analysis, that participants understood racialization to be simply a part of social media and understood that this in some way affected them as people of colour using social media, even if they did not always describe experiencing racialization directly.

5.2 (Virtual)Reality: Contextualizing social media experiences

It is important to establish how the participants distinguished between the MLIS and social media in their interviews as my research is positioning these two as separate spheres and distinct information environments. This implies that there is also a distinction between the communities and information that would be accessed between these two. This is particularly important as some participants attended online MLIS programs and thus the distinction between

the virtual and the in person was not as clear at first. However, most participants actually demonstrated that they thought about the two spaces as distinct even if they were online students. They did so by describing experiences with online communities as outside of the structure of the MLIS. In fact, participants distinguished between the two by describing how they were able to access more diverse communities in online spaces, even while recognizing that both the MLIS and online spaces confronted them with the risk of racism or racialization. Participants described being able to cope with racism and racialization a little more readily by connecting with other BIPOC online that they would not necessarily be able to access in person. This section will discuss how participants described the type of communities they were able to access online, outside of their MLIS programs, and begin to look at how they understand the complexities inherent in social media regarding race and racialization.

Although participants didn't always explicitly say that they felt they were able to access more diverse communities and information online, they shared examples of communities unique to online spaces that were diverse and provided them with diverse information and opportunities for connection. Garnet shares how she was able to find support through virtual communities when she was having a tough time in the MLIS:

"BIPOC students clearly the best support that you can have. It was to, you know, just like talking about the things that were happening together. And then, you know, you realized as more students join that conversation. A lot of us were having those kind of experiences, just like, you know all over the place and at different levels. So I don't know it was during my time there specifically that the Facebook group for BIPOC students in that program began. I don't know if the person who created the group took initiative because they were hearing all these issues start to come up, and i'm no longer part of that

group anymore, like I stayed with it like maybe a year after the program ended. But then I like started doing more stuff with *we here*, and that's kind of where I switch my focus to, but also having *we here* during that time there were times where I needed an anonymous post asking some questions and for support and advice. It's not the same as having in person but it definitely helps you feel like, oh, this is you know you're not alone in these experiences or in these feelings, and there are other people that understand [and] that care."

Garnet shares how these communities helped her feel less alone, addressing the isolation that I identified as being prevalent for participants in their MLIS programs in the first chapter. She explains how the ability to post anonymously helped her navigate being vulnerable and asking for advice and support. Although the Facebook group she talks about was related to her program, it operated outside of it by being facilitated through social media. She makes a distinction between the MLIS and social media in this way and even comments that it isn't the "same as having in person" communities. This implies that in some ways it would be preferable if Garnet had this type of community accessible in person, but then follows with her appreciation that it even exists whatsoever. Through social media, she was able to access other BIPOC students' support while in the program and then once she left she could connect with other BIPOC professionals for "support and advice" when entering the working profession since it lacks diversity as well. Garnet's quote introduces what others described about their experiences with certain communities online, that being able to connect with these communities online made her feel less alone as a BIPOC in a predominantly White institution.

Lapis also shares how she is able to access more diverse communities online but introduces how this accessibility also comes with risks that might not be as apparent in the "real world":

"[I]t's a double edged sword. Because I can connect to communities and learn more, but also that algorithm is so terrifying. Because you don't know how it works. Now you can kind of curate your own communities on social media. And that is as we know, a good thing or a bad thing. Because it leads to extremism. But it is also a great tool to connect with people from around the world, right?"

Lapis establishes a caveat, that accessing these diverse communities comes with some drawbacks. She establishes that there are unique elements of social media that have their own risks, which she implies in the unknowability of algorithms. I will later build on how the concern with the unknowability or lack of control over algorithms is central to many of the participants' critiques about privacy and surveillance on social media, but here it serves as a reminder that the medium of social media carries the risk for many things including "extremism" as Lapis states.This idea of extremism might refer to many different things but in the context of Lapis' interview it can be understood as referring to White supremacist extremism, as Lapis shares being concerned with how Whiteness impacts her experiences as a person of colour. This is interesting because it demonstrates this compromise that the participants understand is part of using social media: on one hand, there is access to more diverse information, more communities to connect with; and on the other hand, there are risks of being exposed to racialization and extremism online. Lapis really articulates the contradiction inherent within social media itself, how it at once is an opportunity to "connect to communities and learn more" but in another sense is mysterious and potentially harmful, in that we don't know exactly what processes enable this

connection and we don't fully understand all the implications of the harmful elements at the root of it. This in some ways mirrors what was discussed in the first chapter: even though participants established that the communities they had access to online were different and more diverse than those in person, particularly in the MLIS, they still had the potential to be exposed to racism and racialization in the same way that they did in the MLIS. I will discuss later exactly how these experiences of racialization manifest, but for now it is important to establish that participants understood how social media replicates the ways that racism and racialization manifest in real life. Lapis and other participants acknowledged that these are part of the concern with using social media, but participants also provided examples of how they addressed these issues of racism and racialization (both online and in the real world) through their online communities.

Garnet established in the example above how she was able to respond to experiences of racialization and racism in person with her online communities providing support. I argue that this is a way that participants practice subtle forms of refusal online. I mean that participants refuse to be further divided by or further isolated by Whiteness and by being racialized, in fact they work against that by fostering community. They understand that they are at risk of racialization online and yet find small ways to respond to this by connecting with diverse communities for support. A good example of this is Pearl, who shares a significant experience when her online volunteering community come together in the wake of the 2023 Monterey Park shooting in California:

> "Most of the team are all identified as women. I find a lot of support in them, we're all students, we're all working, and after a hard day we just come together over zoom, and just talk about what's been happening. how we've been feeling. After that recent shooting in the US, during Lunar New Year, we all just came together online because we're all this,

all the volunteers, we're all spread across Canada, we all just came online. We just talked

about our feelings, and what we can do to make each other feel safe, because after that

event there was a lot of racist remarks online, and we want to make sure our comments

were free from any racism, because the wound was still pretty fresh at that time, so that

that's where I find most of my online support, through my team [online]."

Here Pearl shares an experience unique to social media, an example of her connecting with a

community of individuals from different backgrounds from all over Canada to find community

and a sense of safety in response to hostile events in person and online. The virtual and the

in-person are blending a bit here, where Pearl is addressing how a racist event in real life bled

into her virtual world. And yet, the community she sought in trying to cope with that in person

event was her online community. This example is significant because it illustrates both the

similarities and the differences between the perceptions of the online and the in-person.

I have established how racism manifests in the MLIS and I will go on to explain how it

manifests through social media. While the manifestations of racism are similar in many ways,

and at times have similar responses from the participants, different types of exposure to racism

and racialization and different modes of engagement from the participants are available on social

media. Pearl shares here that she was exposed to racism by witnessing it in various forms

indirectly, a phenomena I will detail further later called second-hand racism. The racism she was

exposed to was two-fold, occuring in an extreme manner in the real world and then continuing

online in response to this incident through racism remarks and comments online. However, she

was also able to cope with these two forms of racism by finding support online. Participants

shared that the communities they connected with on social media allowed them to cope with and

to respond to an understood threat of racism and racialization both in their in person experiences

and their online experiences, but in using social media they risked being exposed to unique forms of racism and racialization in the process.

Unlike the examples above where the participants very clearly differentiate between the online and in person, some participants describe the distinction between the virtual (social media) world and that of the MLIS as unimportant like Bismuth who shares: "a lot of [my online communities] are merely digital extensions of things I'm doing…in the real world." However, Bismuth later shares that he does understand the capabilities of each are different. While participants had varying feelings about the distinction between social media and the MLIS, they did not conflate social media with their online MLIS experiences and therefore I will respect this division for my analysis. I want to establish the distinction here as from this point on I will use the term "online" to describe social media experiences of the participants, not the experiences they described in their MLIS unless I explicitly state otherwise. I have established the ways participants described their experiences online and in person as distinct, while also discussing the ways that racism and racialization impact both experiences in similar and different ways. Establishing a bit about how the participants describe the distinctions between the online and in person, and in particular the ways that racism and racialization manifest online, provides a foundation for the remainder of this chapter as I will turn now to discuss the practices and beliefs about social media that the participants share.

5.3 Practices Online: From Scrolling to Lurking

First I want to turn to how participants often described their social media use in disengaged terms, or in other words described themselves as passive users. While most participants reported using social media applications frequently, only a few described their participation as one that was extremely active. What I mean by active here is that even though

participants felt that they accessed diverse communities and information, as I have established above, many used terms like "kill time," "bored," something they would look at on their "work break," and "addictive" to describe how they engaged with social media. I will narrow in on two specific forms of participation online that I noticed emerging in various interviews: the actions of scrolling and of lurking. While these are two different actions, the link between them is that they both describe what could be perceived as a generally passive way of engaging because they do not involve actively posting, commenting, creating content, etc. on social media applications. I also see that the participants feel similarly about these two modes of engagement in their answers, that they think of scrolling as a passive and thoughtless action and that lurking is one where you do not actively engage with a community but instead observe from the sidelines. However, these tactics *also* indicate that the participants are far more active than they explicitly admit. In their descriptions of these two acts, participants demonstrated a nuanced reflection of the negative and positive elements of the practices of scrolling and lurking and thus indicated a deep self-awareness about these benefits and drawbacks, suggesting that these practices are actually self-consciously chosen ones. In my analysis I will develop how it is key to understand these experiences as complex and active even if participants might not use those direct terms, as participants reveal that they are self conscious about their presence and engagement online due to the presence of racism and potential of racialization online.

5.3.1 Scrolling: An expression of boredom or more?

Starting with understanding the ways that participants described their practice of scrolling can shed some light on how they framed it as a passive action, and also how they contradicted this passive framing with further explanation. Some participants described the act of "scrolling" as only for passive entertainment. Participants described scrolling through their feeds to pass the

time on a long commute or on a work break like Blue Diamond who shares that she accesses

social media "during work on your break and just scroll to look at something interesting to just

kill a few minutes". Others felt more strongly about their scrolling, adding that they felt

negatively about the act like Connie:

"When it comes to entertainment, I think that's really the part of social media that maybe

i'd like to cut down on, because i'll just be there scrolling. And I'm like this isn't actually

that fun. I'm just doing it because I'm used to it. So I've been trying to be conscious of

that, and just doing different hobbies instead."

Here Connie is explicitly stating that she has a negative view on the act of scrolling, a feeling

that is shared by a few other participants. Connie describes that she is "used to" scrolling, that it

is a habit formed through social media use. Opal uses those exact terms to describe scrolling on

social media. He describes it as a "habit forming tendenc[y]." It can be inferred that scrolling is

thought of as an action that requires no thought or is not a "good" action because terms and

phrases used by other participants like "bored," "threshold for engagement…is so low," "kill a

few minutes," "addictive," and like Connie states, that it "isn't actually that fun". These

descriptions can paint the act of scrolling as part of the participants' passivity on social media,

their mindless non-engagement.

However, these perspectives can be a catalyst for changing behavior online, turning to

other types of engagement presumably not online, like Connie states she attempts to do. The

mindlessness of the action actually instigates an action, activating the participants. Even further,

some participants describe scrolling as leading to a disengagement with social media all together,

like Steven, who shares this relationship between scrolling and decreased social media use:

"I remember when I was on Twitter, I would scroll and see lots of…posts and stuff and I

realized oh, I don't really care about all these things. I deactivated Facebook because your

high school classmates will post whatever they want and I did not want to see it."

Connie and Opal are both commenting specifically on how their scrolling was not only a passive

engagement online, but also was one that they were not happy with. While others, such as the

quote above also mentioned this same feeling of discontent with what they viewed as a bad habit.

These examples are important to note because they provide an understanding for how the

participants described their social media use as passive and their response to that passivity was to

disengage even further.

However, not all participants responded with further disengagement. While most

participants described the act of scrolling as passive, they didn't necessarily feel that it was

something that they felt negatively about. In fact some saw some merit in the action of scrolling

as a tool for discovering new information, like Lapis:

"I catch myself like in a scrolling, like I'm just like scrolling through reels or whatever?

Yes. That happens, but then I stop and I think, okay, like what is a contrasting opinion.

And then sometimes, well I actively try to follow groups or organizations or accounts that

will provide a more thought out, more thought out content."

Lapis begins by describing the process of scrolling with a potentially negative tone, something

that she catches herself doing without much thought. But she follows with what this scrolling can

sometimes trigger for her, the desire to explore new information and new accounts. This is an

opinion shared by other participants who describe their scrolling as something that has the

potential for influencing how they situate themselves online. Lapis considers the action of

scrolling as a very direct link to discovery, an opportunity to think about bias of information in

social media. Others share how they turn to scrolling on social media at times with the intention of discovering spaces that they don't have much experience with, like Amethyst who shares: "I wouldn't have as diverse of a group of people to interact with, if not for social media and not like, yeah, gaining exposure to like all of these different spaces." Even if it isn't specifically to explore new ideas and find new information, the general ease of use can be framed as a positive action. Opal shares that he believes social media companies have made the applications "very easy to use" as a result they can have the benefit of providing a "low threshold of casual, pleasant conversation." These examples indicate that the participants in many ways understand there to be benefits to this practice of scrolling. The descriptions of the potential positive outcomes of scrolling (the ability to discover new information, the accessibility, the ease of basic engagement) in tandem with the negative attributes (the addictive nature, the thoughtlessness) demonstrates that participants actually reflect on their practice much more than they initially indicate.

5.3.2 Lurking: Simply passive observation or an active choice?

The other practice commonly described by participants, lurking, reveals another element in the discussion of active and passive engagement. Lurking as a practice reveals how the participants conceptualize the potential outcomes of being more publicly involved online. In their descriptions of lurking participants reveal how they recognize the potential harms of engaging more visibly online and preempt that by controlling their engagement. Lurking is defined as the action to "observe a setting but not contribute in any noticeable way" (Dennen, 2008, p. 1624). In their survey analysis on why individuals choose to lurk, Preece et al. (2004) describe lurking as a term that "casts a pejorative shadow on people who do not actively post in an online community" (pg. 203). Preece et al. (2004) identify five reasons for lurking in their

research: feeling no need to post; still learning about the group; feeling they have nothing to contribute; technical difficulties; not feeling a good fit or commitment to the community. I would argue that since that study, the explosion of social media use has changed the understanding of lurking and the colloquial use of the term. Adjin-Tettey & Garman (2022) argue that while lurking may be a form of non-participation, it is actually a listening activity and so it is in fact not passive. They state that "non-participation does not mean inactivity, as lurkers tend to read posts by others and possibly react to them in other ways, instead of commenting or providing direct feedback or responses online… if lurking is considered a listening activity, it means that lurkers have a reason to listen in and consequently benefit from lurking" (Adjin-Tettey & Garman, 2022, pg.14). This definition is more in line with how I view the evolution of lurking and what I observed the participants describing. Although, as with scrolling, participants described lurking as a type of non-engagement, I argue that it is more active, a tactic that they use to control their experiences online and prevent the potential for exposure to harm.

Not all participants used the term "lurk" explicitly, many refer to the act of lurking by describing their behaviors online. One participant refers to themselves as an "observer", while others merely describe the practice of lurking, observing the goings on online while choosing not to contribute. Their understanding often is that they do not participate due to being lurkers, which is an interesting reflection, as it indicates that these participants only view participation in terms of their personal contribution and not the ways that they gain information and access to various communities through their observations.

Participants do not describe being lurkers with a negative connotation; on the contrary, it can be inferred that some participants viewed this type of participation as better for their personal interests. In responding to whether or not she feels she is part of any online communities,

Amethyst says that "As a lurker, yes". She continues: "I have my accounts but I'm more of a lurker on social media" and describes an experience of being added to a group chat on social media of different librarians of colour after meeting at a conference:

> "So a bunch of like librarians of colour, who most of them I haven't met. They just talk there. I don't participate, but it's nice to be in there. Yeah, people were just adding people who were at the conference also. And now they're just mostly exchanging memes, as I think group chats tend to be."

Amethyst explicitly describes that she feels she is part of this online community and goes on to describe the same for other communities in the role of a "lurker." Amethyst is here expressing that even though she has not met many of the individuals in this group and does not participate by contributing her own opinions or content, she appreciates taking on this role in this online community. Her lurking here is indicative of a passive engagement, but one that she feels is beneficial to her in some way. She still feels embedded in the community even though she does not feel like she participates in the same ways as others.

Additionally, participants like Amethyst describe how important having the ability to communicate via social media is more generally. Even in context of her descriptions of lurking, Amethyst shares that she uses social media as her primary mode of communication still, personally and professionally:

> "that's how I communicate with a lot of people, especially I'm like fully remote. And these days I talk more to people outside of my city than I do with people in it, so social media tends to be the medium that I used to communicate with like friends."

Amethyst describes both actively communicating with people personally and professionally, but also in some ways taking the form of a lurker in other spaces, asserting that both of these types of

connection are "pretty important" to her. This is significant as I believe she is quite conscious of when she is occupying which role, lurker or active participant, in that she is conscious of how participating more visibly might impact what she is exposed to or how she is perceived online. In other words, through her description it can be inferred that Amethyst is an active participant even when she is a lurker and describing her activities in passive terms.

Some participants explicitly interrogate what the role of the lurker is. Opal questions whether or not someone is capable of calling themselves a member of a community if they are not participating in a traditional sense of contributing to the conversation or ideas. He asks:

"I guess that goes into what's the definition of a community member? Is it someone who just listens all the time? Are you a lurker or are you a member of a community? If you're a lurker um, versus someone who's actually like speaking back and contributing."

Opal wonders if his role of a lurker negates his role of community member, with a self conscious reflection on what it means to be in community. Opal is asking a question about the root of this practice, whether or not you can really claim community if you are not "contributing." I think this is interesting because this questions whether or not witnessing and listening is an actual action, whether or not it is an important contribution. Some participants don't view the act of lurking as being part of a community, and even if they do view themselves as part of a community they view the act of observation as not a contribution.

And yet, participants still view their access to community, as a lurker or otherwise, as a benefit to them in some way, most clearly seen with Amethyst describing her passive involvement in a community above. I would argue that lurking demonstrates an act of control, participants are aware of themselves in these spaces and practice this self awareness through

controlling their perceived contribution. So in this way, it is active. Opal states this clearly in his follow up to the above reflection:

> "...I'm bad at online community in general is that like I lurk a lot on the spaces I read and I'm present for a lot of those things, but I don't contribute much at this point in time. Partially because in my masc presentation performance, I want to be careful when I speak…"

Opal considers how his identity makes him more considerate about how much space he takes up and how much he contributes. He may be an anomaly in this sense, because few other participants described themselves explicitly in this way, but I argue that this illuminates an interesting element that may be underlying some of the reflections. That the participants' personal identities influence their understanding of themselves online and how their identities can influence their behavior. In describing himself as a lurker, Opal is establishing himself as a passive member of community, almost not even a member of community at all, but then explicitly states how active of a decision this is. He is deeply reflective of the space that he takes up and his desire to not impact these spaces negatively or have them negatively impact him is apparent. When he states that he is "bad at online community" he follows this with descriptions of how he is considerate of online communities in many ways. This leads us to a discussion of how participants in some ways contradict their assertion that they are passive or disengaged participants of online communities, and how they are in many ways very active and intentional participants.

Although it is possible that it is coincidence that many of the participants highlighted these passive non-engagement actions like scrolling and lurking so prevalently in their reflections, I would argue that it is indicative of more than a passive positionality online. In other

words, while participants may describe themselves with passive or non-engaged terms, their reflections reveal that they understand that social media is inherently a space that can impact BIPOC in unique (often negative) ways, and that they are aware of the ways they could be impacted negatively and prevent themselves from engaging more visibly because of this. I will build on this further when I discuss the concept of second hand racism to this research, but for now it is significant to note that while the participants used passive disengaged language to describe their practices that on the surface do seem disengaged and passive, they also are very descriptive and reflective, indicating that they are more active than they would initially admit. This is similar to another theme that I identified in the participants' reflections on social media use, their descriptions of the themes of privacy and surveillance online. While participants at times shared that they are not deeply concerned about personal privacy and surveillance online, and this can be inferred by their use of passive terms to describe their practices, they actually reveal a deeply complex understanding of the issues of privacy and surveillance that are part of social media and how these issues are especially acute for marginalized individuals. That being said, participants call back to their lurking and controlled limited engagement online as a reason for them to be personally unconcerned about issues of surveillance. Participants are not worried about experiencing racism or being victim to surveillance online because they are not publicly visible online. However, I will argue that these choices to limit and control participation in specific ways is another example of informed active decision making by participants.

5.4 Beliefs Online: From Surveillance to Self-Censorship

It is no surprise that participants shared that they were concerned at least theoretically with increasing surveillance and lack of privacy online. I have discussed in my literature review how these topics are of particular importance to racialized people who are greatly affected by

them. It is also of importance to information professionals who are concerned with the way that people access and understand information. However, participants did not share that they were personally concerned by these issues because they felt that they had at least some control over their information and identity online. First I want to turn to what participants describe as issues related to surveillance and privacy that plague social media, particularly the following themes that arose amongst various participants' reflections: the unknowability of algorithms, the predominance of increasingly targeted advertising, and the related discourse about surveillance and privacy. I will then look at the ways that participants shared that they were not particularly personally concerned about these issues while simultaneously sharing the ways they should be of concern. While it may at first seem as though these are contradictory beliefs, they actually reveal how participants both understand the potential harms that come with surveillance and privacy online and they make informed decisions about their choices online so they are able to benefit from some of the positive online elements including information access and community building. Participants do not explicitly state their personal concern with these issues and yet they identify the intersection between privacy, surveillance, and racialization online. In other words, in their discussions of privacy and surveillance, they identified the many unique ways these issues affect racialized people or are at the very least informed by a culture that is inherently hostile or negligent of racialized people.

5.4.1 Narratives about social media, surveillance and safety:

Participants shared many different elements of social media that they thought were of concern to them as information professionals, but there was one that was a personal concern. While most participants shared that they were not personally concerned with many issues of surveillance and privacy, multiple participants shared that they were concerned with targeted

advertisements and by extension the unknowability of algorithms. Lapis shared in a previous example that this was of concern: "[the] algorithm is so terrifying. Because you don't know how it works". She shares the fact that we don't know for sure how algorithms on social media function is of concern, but other participants expand on these concerns.

Participants expressed concerns about companies using personal information for advertising purposes. Blue Diamond reflects on her first experience with targeted advertising:

"The first time I got scared here, surprisingly not in China, but here, I was talking about a place and mentioning a place talking with my friend, and I couldn't remember a few days later or the same day, I opened my Google or some software that has like a mapping software and then it just showed up that location. It showed like "hey we have this and this, come buy this product." and I was like hey! I didn't know this place before that time I was getting into a conversation with my friend. And that was a couple years ago, that was the time I realized that okay they're actually listening, even the phone was in pocket, I wasn't looking at it at all, the screen was off. But somehow it knows. Even just sometimes I am not speaking, I am just looking at things, I don't believe it's a coincidence, I am just looking at things in a store and then somehow later on it come up on my phone? Yeah, it's very weird. And I never had such an experience when I was in China, only when I came here."

Blue Diamond shares her concern about surveillance in this way because she understands her phone to be like a listening device for companies to assess what she is talking about in her personal life and how they can sell these things to her based on that. Here she is articulating a fear of the potential implications of such surveillance, even though she is not able to articulate exactly what potentially sinister outcomes this surveilling could result in beyond purchase

suggestions. She also notices the difference in surveillance depending on her location (i.e. North America and China), however it is significant to note she understands surveillance as inherent in the device itself regardless of where it is located and who is doing the surveilling. It is interesting to note that even though Blue Diamond states that she is concerned with surveillance, she really specifies that it is in the context of capitalistic power. In other words, she is not concerned about her personal privacy or being surveilled online because of her actions online or her online presence, she is more concerned with the fact that she could be advertised to based on her in-person interactions. I think this is interesting as this is one of the only reflections where a participant actually articulated any type of individual concern with privacy beyond expressing how we ought to as a society be concerned with such things. And yet, she is simply stating that surveillance is a fact of the matter and that she is more concerned about who is doing the surveilling, she is not critiquing the surveilling itself. I think this introduces what I believe to be a central tension to the participants' responses, where they understand what the issues with surveillance and privacy on social media are and yet they do not feel that they are as individuals concerned about them.

Blue Diamond was not the only participant to mention surveillance and advertising. Amethyst also discusses her concerns about targeted ads:

"like the ads I get for things that I mentioned in day to day which apparently has been disproven. It's just like algorithms, but i'm not altogether convinced."

Amethyst introduces a distinction between targeted advertisements (something she thinks should be of concern) and algorithms (something she speaks of more innocuously). Algorithms were frequently referenced by other participants in more critical terms however, like Lapis who I quoted above.

Other participants talked about how they were exposed to or sought out literature about

algorithmic racism in the MLIS studies, one of the few examples the participants shared where

they discussed social media in their programs in any manner beyond how to utilize it as a

marketing tool for the library. Peridot explains how the topic of algorithms was discussed in her

MLIS:

> "how the algorithm is set up is oriented by White people, like center their expression,
>
> their words, vocabulary, face recognition as well. We just like bring up the topic
>
> probably, just mention it for five minutes."

This quote is significant to note because there were few examples in the interviews where the

participants discussed how their MLIS formally encouraged them to engage with critically

thinking about social media as an information environment, particularly one that is influenced by

our cultural values and by Whiteness. However Peridot states that this was only briefly discussed

in her situation, demonstrating it wasn't of great importance.

Blue Diamond provides an even more specific example to explain how the topic of bias

in algorithms was addressed in her program:

> "Instructors would sometimes mention about how social media is biased or the algorithm
>
> could further bias our opinions. Like you use a search engine and search for example
>
> "Chinese woman" and it comes up with a lot of Chinese women, come to the Western
>
> world, and get married to a Western person and cheat money or something. So everytime
>
> I think we talk about the algorithm, we mentioned that part."

While Peridot described how she learned that algorithms were centered around White

experiences, Blue Diamond extends that to discuss how that results in racism embedded in said

algorithms. While there are many reasons for concern regarding algorithms, this seems to be one

that was of concern to many participants. I believe that Blue Diamond as a Chinese woman herself understands the implications of algorithmic bias against Chinese women even if she is not stating that she feels directly impacted by that. I think this argument extends to the other ways that participants described what should be of concern regarding privacy, surveillance and safety on social media. Simply put, although participants may not explicitly state that they are affected by these issues, they do express that they are affected in inadvertent ways. These examples also bring into discussion that same specter of Whiteness that was discussed in the previous chapter, particularly how Whiteness influences the behaviors and content of social media and therefore influences how non-White people experience social media. I will build on how participants understand Whiteness and racism to be a major factor of influence on social media later, but for now these serve as examples of how participants understand this even if they don't share that belief explicitly.

When discussing their concerns with privacy, many of the participants brought up dominant discourses around security and privacy. Participants were interested in the ways that security and privacy online were discussed more broadly, beyond their personal social media use. There were multiple stories that participants shared about how they felt about discourse about privacy and surveillance as it pertains to specific social media companies, like Blue Diamond who criticizes the difference in narratives of surveillance in the West and China:

> "in China it's the government… watching but here it makes me feel more insecure because its a private company watching. Then the government can do nothing with these private companies. Look at those debates between Mark Zuckerberg and the States. They could do nothing! Why would I trust a private person more than a government that has to,

at least they have the obligation to hold the country together. What does a private

company have to hold? They only have to hold their money, their business."

Blue Diamond's questioning here isn't about whether or not surveillance is happening, it is about

who we can trust more in surveilling us. She implies that there is a perception of safety in the

West because we are told that in a democratic society the government wouldn't surveil us in the

same way that they might in China for example. And yet, Blue Diamond doesn't find this

comforting, in fact she is concerned that private companies have less responsibility to citizen

safety because they are driven by money. It can be inferred that this opinion is influenced by

Blue Diamond's experience living in China, comparing it to living in North America.

Blue Diamond is not alone in this critique of the way that safety and privacy is presented

to us in North America. Connie also comments on the discourse:

" It's not something that I personally worry about whenever you know in the US, right

like they're talking to Tiktok, and they're questioning them about, you know, surveilling

Americans or whatever. And my reaction really was like this feels pointed because it's

China and they're worried about China. Meanwhile, they're not saying that Facebook and

Twitter and all of the rest, they do the exact same thing. So I think there is the phobia

there, there's a racial component to that."

Connie builds on the structural critique that Blue Diamond identifies, particularly the ways that

racism, more specifically sinophobia, affects all aspects of the social media sphere up to a

general understanding of what is or is not safe. There is something to be said about their noticing

the racial elements of the critiques of TikTok as a Chinese company as BIPOC and social media

users. That the critique of even the companies that control these social media apps are influenced

by larger narratives about race. The participants identify that sinophobia affects the ways we

perceive safety on different platforms and furthermore our relationship with social media, particularly that safety from surveillance online is never guaranteed but that for racialized people it is even less guaranteed. What I mean is, there are two elements here that participants have to grapple with as racialized people: one is the inevitability of surveillance online, understanding that racialized people are more surveilled generally and especially online as established in my literature review; and two that even in the ways that we talk about who is or is not safe to be the surveillant is layered with the stigma of racism. Interestingly, even with these structural critiques, both Blue Diamond and Connie discuss how they are not particularly concerned about their own personal privacy online beyond what has been shared. I believe that this is due to the fact that they believe that they have some control over how they are affected by these issues in that they can be more or less affected by them depending on their visibility online and their active engagement.

Participants describe their experiences as self controlled (meaning they do not participate, calling back to the theme of lurking and inactive participation) or so insignificant they don't need to be concerned about feeling the effects of breaches of privacy or surveillance. Pearl follows a general critique of privacy on social media with a personal reflection of her lack of concern about privacy:

> "I guess, in social media there is that running joke, oh, if you have TikTok China already knows what you're doing, right? When it comes to privacy, I feel weird kind of saying this, that I don't have concerns. I feel I'm not such a prominent figure. I have no goals or aspirations to be a politician or whatever, but not to say that I can say whatever I want or do whatever I want on social media. I think in general I am a private person, all my social media is private. You'd have to send a request, so I'm not too concerned."

This personalization indicates something very interesting about the way that the participants conceptualize their place in the broader discussion of social media. What is interesting is that the participants have considered the very real potential repercussions of being surveilled or having their privacy online compromised and yet when they apply that to a personal reflection, they are less concerned. This contradicts what I would assume about how these participants, as racialized information professionals, would think about privacy and surveillance in social media. Part of the issue I see here is that the participants view themselves as actually doing something about protecting their privacy by not actively engaging, as Pearl shares in the above example. What I mean is, Pearl is sharing that she is not concerned because her social media is private and so she has enough control over her online presence to not be concerned about issues like surveillance and privacy.

The sentiment that there is a relationship between your active engagement online and vulnerability to surveillance is shared by other participants. Amethyst shares the feeling that there is an escapability to the breaches of privacy and surveillance but also that she is not worried about them because she doesn't engage very much online:

> "I feel like it's so ubiquitous you don't really think about it. And especially as for someone who doesn't like to actively engage, I don't really post anything, I don't feel like there's much for me to expose. I can't imagine anyone doing anything with my social media stuff. So I don't have many concerns."

Connie builds on Amethysts lack of concern and applies it to the context of aggregated big data:

> "...regarding the data that all of the apps collect. I don't personally worry about it because my impression is that they're using this big data right to gain aggregate information. I really don't think that anybody cares about what i'm doing. They're gonna try and send

me ads. I'm not one to click on ads. I find them annoying. So in general. No, I don't feel worried about how my data is being used for like surveillance quote unquote purposes." These examples are fascinating because at once participants understand how the issues of privacy and surveillance function online, with descriptions of data aggregation, algorithms, targeted advertisement, etc., but then are steadfast in stating that they don't see themselves as significant enough online to be negatively impacted. I believe that they as information professionals understand theoretically that these are issues that should be of concern and even the particulars of why, but there is a divide between that understanding and how they understand themselves online. Particularly, since participants understand themselves as inactive online they perceive themselves as not affected by these issues but I would argue that it is not that simple. I would argue that they actually are affected by these issues and that is a part of the reason why they have a controlled and restrained presence online. In other words, participants understand that these issues are particularly acute for people with visible and more engaged presence in the online world and so they respond accordingly by repressing their participation.

Now this is not the case for all the participants, some participants do still participate online in more engaged ways and they do discuss the compromise that they are forced to make in doing so, like Peridot for instance who says "the benefits are like I can communicate with people easily but at the same time i'm kind of vulnerable about my privacy." Peridot understands that there are benefits of using social media and is one of the participants who does question whether or not the invasion of privacy is worth it. Interestingly, Peridot is also one of the participants who described one of the most visible online presences of any of the participants as a person heavily engaged with online communities with a well followed public profile. Other participants also

questioned if the invasion of privacy actually was worth it and for the most part it seemed as though it was. Take for example Garnet's reflection:

> "I just don't know if, like the payoff of having your privacy invaded and having your information collected and sold is worth it. Is it worth being able to connect with people, though? That's also really really important."

Garnet is directly contrasting the potential harms of social media with the potential benefits. Garnet brings up something shared in other reflections, the way that information and connection are the foundation for use of social media by the participants. This encourages them to consider whether or not the barriers that they understand as inherent in the applications are worth it. I would argue that there is a lot of evidence in the participants' responses to support that they do view this trade off as worth it. And in doing so many reveal a lot about how they view social media as important to understanding their own identities. Therefore, I believe that it is not simply naivete regarding their safety online but that the participants have considered that the benefits outweigh the harms in certain situations.

Reviewing the way that participants described their concerns or lack of concerns about privacy and surveillance online revealed a divide between their professional identities and their personal identities. As LIS professionals, we are able to explain and conceptualize that privacy and surveillance are issues of concern regarding social media and social media companies. We can explain all the ways that it is worrisome that social media can be potentially unsafe, and yet the participants did not translate those understandings to their personal reflections about their own conduct online. I believe that this is because as BIPOC, we understand the ways that race and racialization impact not only how we experience social media but also how we are impacted by the way that privacy and surveillance on social media are even discussed. Participants'

response to this understanding is to control and restrain their participation, in order to pre-empt exposure to these issues of concern. However, I believe that the participants understand they are still affected by these issues. I will move on to discuss how participants are impacted by second hand racism, a term I am using here to describe the exposure to and witnessing of racism occurring to someone else online. This exposure influences how participants restrain their engagement on social media and thus how they apply their understandings of privacy and surveillance online to their own behavior.

5.5 What's Underneath It All: Second Hand Racism and Reflections from the Personal to the Structural

Participants share that they are not particularly concerned about personal privacy or surveillance all while clearly articulating the ways that those issues should be of concern and in some ways do actually affect them. In the same way participants shared that they did not feel particularly impacted by racism online and yet articulated the variety of ways that they witnessed and recognized racism as part of online culture. This is similar to some of what I discussed in the previous chapter, particularly that many of the participants did not often describe their experiences with racism as racist, and yet they were able to understand racism (specifically Whiteness) as embedded in their program through their experiences. Participants describe experiences of racism occuring to others and articulate how racism (specifically Whiteness) is embedded in social media, even while saying they do not feel deeply affected by it. I argue that they are affected by this racism, even the racism not directed at them, in the sense that they understand how it functions online and adjust their engagement in anticipation of it. Specifically, I argue that the same specter of Whiteness that is apparent in the descriptions of the MLIS is also present in the online sphere of social media, although its shape might be a bit more explicit. I

argue that this specter reveals itself in a phenomenon that I draw on called second hand racism, a phrase I use to describe witnessing racism occuring to someone else. This second hand racism is a component of the specter of Whiteness in that it describes the shadow that racism can cast, far reaching to affect those it didn't necessarily intend to affect, and serve as a reminder that Whiteness is present and comfortable in these spaces online and by extension that racialized people ought to be careful lest they be haunted by it here too.

5.5.1 Second hand racism online

First I want to establish what second hand racism is as a theme I found arising in many participant reflections. Second hand racism describes the experience of witnessing racism, whether that be through observation or through hearing about it occurring to someone else. Often this phenomenon is described with the terminology of "vicarious racism" but I use the term second hand here to convey a kind of inadvertent quality of the racism. What I mean is that this form of racism seems particularly insidious as its impacts are far reaching and not necessarily clearly targeted as one might think, much like second hand cigarette smoke. Vicarious racism can be defined as "a person's indirect experiences with racism, resulting from racism targeted directly at one or more other persons in their environment" (Truong et al., 2015, pg. 225). Research about second hand racism, often called vicarious racism, has demonstrated how it can be harmful for many reasons including declining mental health and increasing substance abuse amongst various demographics of BIPOC (Hennein et al. 2023, Giordano et al. 2020). In my literature review I established how secondhand racism affected higher education students of colour as it impacted their mental health, it led to a greater understanding of systemic racism and most interestingly it can create communities of connection who in turn may replicate exposure to secondhand racism by sharing stories (Truong et al., 2015). My research demonstrates another

serious consequence that is not discussed at length in literature, the effect on behavior

pre-empting this exposure to racism, particularly in the virtual environment. I have established

how the participants in this research describe a control or restraint of their use of social media

and how they paint their social media use as inactive/passive, but that I believe there is more

underlying these descriptions. I believe that the participants actually are active in their restraint,

that they understand the potential harms of visibility and observable engagement online as

BIPOC and pre-empt that by controlling their behavior. This is a complicated element of this

research, as most participants are not explicitly sharing the link between their restrained

engagement and the understanding/witnessing of racism online. I argue that participant's

understanding of the link between self control online and experiences of secondhand racism can

be observed in the ways they describe their experiences witnessing racism online. I argue that

this is yet another facet of the specter of Whiteness, that the specter influences us enough to keep

ourselves private and unobservable as much as possible, and yet we still feel its chilling touch by

witnessing racism.

While most participants stated that they hadn't experienced racism online directly, some

participants did describe experiences of racial discrimination even if they did not use terms as

explicit as "racism" to describe those experiences. As previously shared, participants often had

difficulty describing their experiences of discrimination in the MLIS with explicit terms like

"racism". This is also true for describing experiences on social media, but the difference here is

that multiple participants shared that they had witnessed racism occuring and that they

understood it to be part of social media. This is a significant point as participants have

demonstrated throughout this chapter that they are able to critique social media far more

comfortably than they were able to with their MLIS program and the individuals in the LIS

community. And yet, participants still said they are not personally affected by racism online while describing in detail witnessing racist comments and ideas shared online and describing how this made them feel.

Similar to in the previous chapter, participants shared how they were unsure about using the terminology of racism. For example, Garnet responded to whether or not she had experienced racism on social media by questioning whether or not her experience was a microaggression or racism outright:

"I guess it depends on the definition of whether you classified as racism or a microaggression. Speaking of some of the library groups that I used to be a part of, because I just followed a bunch of them right like I was in a programming group, I was in a community based group that focused on community issues and librarianship and things like that. And when you decide to disagree with someone and you mention things like your race, it definitely has the specific kind of interplay that happens very specifically. I remember one group where someone made a post and they were talking about Harry Potter and they were talking about how excited they were to do this display and blah blah blah and you know I made a comment that I was like, hey you know, this individual, the author has been in the news for some pretty heinous things. And this was like at the height of when they were saying a bunch of crap on Twitter…There were specifically a lot of White women that did not like that, because they have very fond memories attached to this thing. And I lightly suggested that their own experiences is colouring the experiences felt by other people. It basically devolved into just a bunch of people saying crap. And I was like, okay, this isn't a group that I want to be a part of."

Garnet goes on to describe how she felt she had to leave this group because of the dogpiling occurring where people were not only arguing with her but harassing her online. Clearly Garnet is describing a situation of not only racial discrimination but also an experience of queerphobia. And yet, Garnet still described that she didn't feel certain that she had experienced racism online, opting instead to label this a microaggression. Furthermore, when she described how her race impacted her experiences online, she focused on the fact that she is most conscious of how White passing she is and is careful of the space that she takes up as a White passing person. This could be the reason why Garnet describes being very careful of her online presence, but I would argue that she actually articulates very clearly an experience of racism online and how this impacted how she perceived online spaces. Garnet connected this to other instances where she began to question her own contributions, if she was in the wrong for bringing it up at all. In this story, it is clear that Garnet feels she was discriminated against but she does not ever fully state that. She understands that her queerness and her racial identity informed how others reacted to her suggestions, but doesn't feel comfortable outrightly stating it. Instead, she mentioned that she often feels she is expected to "make a lot of space for Whiteness" and that she wishes that White people felt the same need for self reflection that people of colour do. It is important to highlight this particular experience as Garnet is sharing the ways that social media, and in this case Facebook, enable racism and in particular the type of dog piling that can happen to people of colour when they even bring up issues of marginalization.

Like Garnet, some participants described that they hadn't experienced racism so explicitly and yet they provided some reasons as to why that might be. Participants described either witnessing racism directly occuring to others or understanding racism as part of online culture, even if they stated that they didn't feel like this translated to them experiencing racism

directly. Connie describes how her identity as an Asian woman online and in society in general are understood online:

"As an Asian woman I've been really conscious of the objectification of Asian women and the infantilization of Asian women because of how men have spoken to me in real life mostly, but online, like, you know that that's even amplified. I mean, I don't want to be inappropriate here, but even the fact that Japanese is a porn category like that freaks me out about being an Asian person online. So I am careful about that. And for example, I just don't post a lot of myself, and if I do it's for very small audiences, like I restrict my audience online a lot."

She follows this statement with:

"I've definitely witnessed it [racism]. For me personally? No, and I think that's because, like I said, I keep my audience really constricted so it's really people who know me in real life. And if I find out that somebody is a bigot or an asshole or something, i'm just going to not let them see my content anymore. But you know, I follow a lot of other people of colour online, and it's really disgusting, like seeing in their comments, and it's just normal, they're just posting normal stuff. And then, if they have any sort of large following, there's people making gross comments about their race."

Here Connie explains how she feels she has not experienced direct racism, but that she has witnessed it. She explains a connection between societal racism by explaining that the objectification she has experienced in real life can be seen "amplified" online and that there is a presence of bigoted and racist content that follows "people of colour online," particularly those with public profiles. Connie acknowledges that racism online is a structural problem, but when she discusses how it affects her she feels that she is not affected by it because she has a private

profile. I would argue that there is a relationship between her knowledge of the prevalence of racism against Asian women online and her choice to remain private, even if she does not explain this link explicitly. I would argue that Connie is affected by the racism she witnesses online, the second hand racism, not because that racism is directed at her, but because it indicates to her an existing narrative about how she would be viewed if she were to engage more openly with others online.

Pearl describes a similar perspective, in that she shares that she does not feel directly affected by racism and yet she seems to contradict this by describing how she engages with racist content online through her volunteering work that is more public:

"I feel like when i'm online I don't really engage in terms of commenting or messaging the person who put out the content. So because of that, I've never really experienced explicit racism? But there are times when [in volunteering] I will respond to comments sometimes from my own personal account, and that's mainly where I've experienced a few racist experiences when responding to people's comments there but generally, I feel other than sharing content or viewing content, I don't really jump in and comment and engage. So yeah, that's why I don't feel like I don't… I don't have a lot of racist experiences to me because I don't engage. Yeah, so."

Like Connie, Pearl views herself as exempt from experiencing explicit racism online because she doesn't "really engage" in a public way. But she does discuss how she experiences racism when she engages with a public profile of an organization that she volunteers for. This contradiction reveals to me a divide between herself and her online work identity. Through her volunteer work she engages with racism online, but as she is part of a collective in that organization, she does not consider those experiences as explicit racism directed toward her. And yet, I would argue she

is clearly affected by having to engage with and sometimes moderate racist comments and posts through her volunteering work. Like Connie, she also mentions that she experiences secondhand racism online through "clickbaity" pages like 6ixbuzz, a page that is notably controversial for its large following of what Pearl refers to as "bigots". She reports how she sees his content often and that the content, as well as the comments, are "very racist." This leads her to become frustrated as he has a "huge following" and indicates to her that there are a lot of hateful people online. I would argue that when Pearl is experiencing these types of troll accounts she is experiencing second hand racism, witnessing and understanding how racism hugely influences online culture. This indicates to her that it is potentially unsafe for her to engage more visibly, lest she experience the racism more directly targeted at her. I don't think that Pearl and Connie are naive for sharing that they don't feel impacted by this racism they know is online, in fact I think that these descriptions acknowledge the intricacies involved in reflecting and reporting on one's experiences as a person of colour online.

These examples indicate that the participants viewed experiences of racism as inherent in the social media sphere, particularly for individuals creating content available to the public. In other words, direct racism occurs to those who are accessible online and "put themselves out there". Participants describe themselves as different from these individuals; they are passive, private and not particularly concerned about personal privacy or surveillance because they feel their online presence is generally insignificant. And yet they are still affected by witnessing this racism occuring to others. Participants internalize this racism, noticing that it happens to others and viewing it as significant enough to comment upon in this interview. I argue that this understanding of the way that racism functions online is revealed through their descriptions to be one of the motivating factors behind the participants carefully selecting what is publicly

available about them online. They are revealing a tension between how they feel racism does not affect them directly online and all the ways that it is demonstrated to affect them.

I have discussed how the specter of Whiteness influences the themes discussed in chapter one, specifically that it threads together the experiences of isolation, othering, silencing, and the inability to name racism explicitly that the participants experienced. In this chapter, the specter of Whiteness has revealed itself as well. It is revealed in how participants understand algorithms and discourse about safety and privacy online, particularly in that algorithms are often coded to replicate racial prejudice and that Western ideals of surveillance are discussed as safe even though they are not inherently so. And most importantly, I have discussed how it reveals itself particularly through the influence of second hand racism. What I mean is that the specter of Whiteness impacts how we as BIPOC even perceive safety online, and how we manage our presence online in anticipation of its threat. This is evident in that through the experience of witnessing racism online, participants articulated how they understand Whiteness and by extension racism to impact them even while not saying so directly. And while they didn't explicitly state that they felt they had experienced racism, they stated the ways that they witnessed it and how that felt. I would argue they managed their presence online in anticipation of understanding that the Whiteness and racism is ever present online even if it isn't explicitly directed at you. I want to further elaborate on how participants expressed that they understood this Whiteness and racism to be embedded in social media applications and by extension online culture.

5.5.2 The specter of Whiteness Online

As I have reviewed in the literature review, cyber racism is a well researched phenomenon that encompasses all the ways that racism reveals itself online (Kang, 2000;

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Daniels, 2009). While participants did not call on this phenomenon directly, they did express the ways that they understood it to be part of online culture and how it was enabled by specific platforms. As discussed previously, participants were able to draw the connections between the ways that racism affects how social media is talked about, and in this section thus far I have discussed how experiences of second hand racism have impacted the ways that participants talk about race and social media. To dig a bit deeper, I want to talk about how these connect to the specter of Whiteness, in particular how second hand racism is actually exemplary of the specter of Whiteness online. Participants expressed how they understood Whiteness and its worst manifestations (racism, extremism, White supremacy) to be an important part of social media, embedded into it. Steven introduces this with his discussion about Twitter in particular stating:

> "Twitter is kind of a hell site that talks about a lot of issues and loves to bring up the worst part and all the horrible news, and all these like instances of sexism and racism. So yeah, on Twitter I do think about it. I think that's probably why I stopped trying to use it, cutting it down because Twitter loves to talk about all the worst things happening socially."

Steven shares that he views the negative attributes of the application as part of the application itself, not necessarily simply bad faith actors. This establishes that some of the participants viewed these negative attributes as inherent to social media itself. Steven ascribes his limited use of social media to what he has witnessed on that platform, which is important to bring up in the discussion of second hand racism. Steven views these manifestations of Whiteness as inherent to this platform and thus his reaction is to minimize his engagement and public visibility.

It is important to note that this interview occurred after the acquisition of Twitter by Elon Musk. Opal even explicitly states that he deleted his Twitter "simultaneous to Musk buying it"

indicating that he noticed a negative shift in the effects of the platform. There has been a lot written about the effects of the Musk purchase of Twitter, with multiple outlets using terms like "ruined," "damaged," and "destroy" to describe his impact (Brandon, 2022; Conger & Isaac, 2022; Peritz, 2023). Amethyst however describes Twitter as a very popular tool for librarians, one where they are quite active and that you can "see them talk a little more frankly about things". She describes how a "loose community" has been formed on Twitter for librarians. That being said, she understands that there are issues with the platform and names that she has witnessed racism occuring on the platform too. This is a good example of how participants understood the complexities of using these social media platforms.

Another site mentioned frequently was Facebook, where most participants indicated that it was one of their very first forays into social media use. That being said, most participants described its importance as waning in their lives. There was a general expression that Facebook is a platform that is filled with racist content as an older application with the ability to encourage information silos and extremism online. Connie shares how she sees racism occuring online, particularly on Facebook:

> "The only racism that I've seen within private audiences, so like people who aren't influencers, just regular folks, would just be like random people on Facebook who will post just the randomest, stupidest, derogatory stuff."

Connie had previously made the distinction between those with public profiles and those with private profiles, sharing the belief that she was not personally impacted by racism online because she had a great deal of control over her personal engagement and visible information online. This led to the discussion of how she still shared being impacted by second hand racism and this is mirrored in the statement above. She does not share that she feels directly attacked by these

"random people on Facebook" but she is clearly impacted by their bigotry in some sense. She understands that some platforms may enable this type of exposure perhaps more than others and understands that it can permeate from the public to the private. It is no coincidence that Connie references Facebook as a particular platform for this type of exposure to "derogatory stuff" as Facebook is known to be a platform ripe with White supremacist and racist communities and content (Davey et al. 2020). While Facebook banned White nationalist and White supremacist organizing in March of 2019, the platform still enables right wing extremist mobilization however not explicitly (Davey et al. 2020). There is both the data to support that social media applications enable a racist culture in tandem with the reflections of the participants.

The examples I have reviewed have not only illustrated how participants simultaneously state that they don't feel they have experienced racism and then describe instances of racism online, but how they also understand racism and other forms of discrimination to be inherent to online spaces. I argue that, perhaps subconsciously for some, the participants internalize the racism that they witness online and make the decision to be more cautious about what they are posting or what is accessible about their thoughts and opinions. To connect this to what has been discussed already, the experience of second hand racism on social media combined with the understanding of racism as inherent to the structure of social media, impacts both the beliefs and the practices of the participants. The passive engagement they describe, the lurking or scrolling, as well as the beliefs about privacy and surveillance online, are all influenced by how the participants view racism to be woven into the fabric of social media, as they control their online engagement and presence with the understanding that not doing so poses the risk of potential exposure to direct racism.

There could be a variety of other factors that impact participants and their use of social media: general lack of desire, permanence of digital footprint, overstimulation, wasting of time. However, in analyzing the responses from participants, I feel that it is apparent that there is a connection between choices made to not engage and second hand racism experiences. Opal approaches the topic when he is asked to reflect on whether or not he feels his race is relevant to how he engages online:

> "Ooh, man. That's a big question. I think it makes me particularly sensitive to the way that Sinophobia is like just a pretty common element of Canadian and American online culture of almost any kind. Has that made me less, more likely to be a lurker and less likely to present my own thoughts online? That is something I'd have to think about, maybe talk to my therapist about. That would be the two most immediate thoughts that come to mind. For how it directly affects my experience online. Hmm. Yeah. That would be the most directly relevant and immediate way that I can think of that race specifically shapes my experience and participation online. Um, yeah."

Opal's powerful reflection makes it much clearer what is a bit muddier in some of the other reflections. In being provoked to think about his race online more explicitly, he begins to think about how he feels sinophobia affects North American online culture more broadly and how this could be one of the factors impacting his perceived lack of engagement online. He really crystallizes what is the main theme throughout many of the responses: that the understanding of how racism and racialization are embedded in North American online culture very directly impact how BIPOC engage with or do not engage with online spaces freely and vulnerably.

I believe this is the underlying theme across this research, that the prevalence of racism, and furthermore of Whiteness, molds and transforms both the virtual and the real and in this

research those are distinguished as the MLIS and social media. However, Whiteness can blur the line between the two, to make racialized people cautious and careful about our own experiences of things virtually, in person, or in the spaces in between. Whiteness is foundational to the creation of the institutions we are a part of, particularly the institutions of knowledge and information, whether that be formal ones like the MLIS program at a university or the informal ones like that of a social media application. And for racialized people this means that it is even more difficult to share our experiences and understandings of Whiteness, as well as our response to it with connection and communication to other BIPOC, because Whiteness is at times not so clearly directly affecting us. There is an interesting point to be made here about how counter-storytelling from the participants isn't quite "counter" only, but is actually an amalgamation of different things, a combination of resistance, submission to, quiet reflection and loud opposition to narratives about us.

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reviewed how participants shared that they were aware that racism and racialization are prevalent in social media spaces, while they expressed they did not feel personally impacted by this. I have argued that the experiences of second hand racism in tandem with understanding how racism is embedded in social media impacts the participants by leading them to control their online presence due to an expectation that if they participated otherwise they would be exposed to the same direct racism that they witness others experience. This I have argued is related to the specter of Whiteness that also affects the behaviors and beliefs participants have in the MLIS program. BIPOC in LIS are so consistently aware of how White supremacy can be actualized into racism and harm that they self-surveil and self-control. And on

social media, that same self consciousness and self control can be seen, with the same driving force of Whiteness behind it.

While I already viewed the MLIS and social media as two information environments, one formal and one informal, I view them here joined together by their foregrounding of Whiteness. While it might not be unique to these fields (we are discussing these in the context of a colonial society founded on White supremacist principles) it is significant to discuss how influential these two fields are to the participants I interviewed. One, the MLIS, is the foundational education that will shape their understanding and the understanding of their peers of the field well into their professional career, The other sphere, social media, is a major information sharing, communication, and community building and breaking tool that is instrumental to the lives of the majority of individuals in our communities. The beliefs and the practices that participants shared illustrate an underlying issue affecting BIPOC online - understanding and witnessing racism on social media can impact how one views their own perception of safety or ability online and can shape how comfortable BIPOC feel participating visibly or actively. But participants also negotiate these issues, by finding room for connection and information sharing and gathering despite the barriers and potential concerns. Participants hold multiple things to be true, that social media applications at their very base are not places welcoming for people of colour, and this may affect how we feel we can share things about ourselves, *but* that there is always space to move through that and find genuine connection and support. In my concluding chapter, I will review how participants discussed carving out spaces for genuine connection and support despite these barriers.

Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study has been to highlight and understand the experiences of race and racialization among BIPOC in two information environments: the MLIS and social media. My research has been interested in understanding those experiences individually (within each environment) and in understanding those experiences comparatively. Consequently, this study has sought to address the following research questions:

- RQ1: How do BIPOC describe and understand their experiences of race and racialization in the MLIS?

- RQ2: How do BIPOC describe and understand their experiences of race and racialization on social media?

- RQ3: How are participants' experiences of race and racialization shaped and impacted by the information environments (of social media and MLIS programs) in which they are operating?

In this concluding chapter I will summarize the findings from Chapters 4 and 5. Findings from Chapter 4 address the first research question regarding participants' descriptions and understandings of race and racialization in the MLIS. Findings from Chapter 5 address the second research questions regarding participants' descriptions and understandings of race and racialization on social media. I will then turn to my final research question: How are participants' experiences of race and racialization shaped and impacted by the information environments (of social media and MLIS programs) in which they are operating? To address this question I will survey where these two contexts converge and diverge, and compare how the participants' experiences were impacted by the two respective information environments. I argue that online information environments may be perceived as providing more opportunities for connection and

community and, by extension, potentially access to more diverse information and opportunity to build diverse knowledges. Nevertheless, both environments are still haunted by the specter of Whiteness. Both the MLIS and social media are invested in the maintenance and promotion of western epistemologies and concerned with maintaining White hegemony. I will conclude by offering final thoughts and study implications such as the unintended centering of Whiteness in this research and the ways that participants described resistance against Whiteness, study limitations, and the avenues of inquiry that this line of research opens up for possible future study.

6.1 RQ1 - How do BIPOC MLIS students describe and understand their experiences of race and racialization in their MLIS programs?

In the first chapter, I identified how Whiteness was felt and known by BIPOC in the MLIS, specifically understanding how the specter of Whiteness influences how the participants understood their experiences and position in the LIS community. Participants may have not described Whiteness as a huge influence on their experiences. Yet when they began describing feelings of isolation and othering in their programs, the influence became clear. This was the first instance of the specter of Whiteness that I identified. Not only did participants feel the demographic majority of Whiteness in their programs was a factor in their experiences of othering, Whiteness also affected what ideas were engaged and how they were engaged. This in turn impacted experiences participants had with the faculty and their colleagues in their programs. Participants attributed good intentions to those in the MLIS, but also described instances of inefficacy in addressing issues with BIPOC underrepresentation, discrimination, and support, which I argued was a manifestation of Whiteness although it was not described as such by participants explicitly. In fact, when discussing negative experiences with peers,

administrators, and professors, participants were hesitant to use the term racism explicitly as they considered it too harsh or inappropriate in describing this manifestation of Whiteness. Participants described feeling the need to remove themselves from participation, or take a back seat in their programs, demonstrating that the specter of Whiteness had the ability to make participants into specters themselves—forcing them to camouflage themselves into the background. I found that this specter of Whiteness was effective in that it was not explicitly called out but its impact could be traced in participants' descriptions of experiences. Not only was it apparent in the ways that participants described experiences of discrimination, isolation, othering, and lack of support. It was also noticeable in the ways that participants described relationships among one another, determining who is or isn't trustworthy, and what spaces are or are not safe. The first chapter thus outlined what participants' experiences of race and racialization were in the MLIS, with a focus on how Whiteness impacted those experiences in various ways.

6.2 RQ2 - How do BIPOC MLIS students describe and understand their experiences of race and racialization on social media?

In chapter 5, I reviewed how participants described and understood their experiences of race and racialization in social media spaces. Participants described using social media frequently, however they used passive and somewhat disengaged terms to describe their activity online. Nonetheless, I argue that their understanding of the ways that racism and racialization function online actually make clear that this seeming passivity is in fact an active choice. What was interesting here were the ways that participants described how issues were important to recognize on social media, while also stating that they were not personally concerned with these issues. For example, participants noted surveillance and breaches of privacy online as issues of

importance, while simultaneously stating that they did not feel personally impacted by this because of their limited and passive online engagement. In addition, they described how racism and racialization are prevalent in social media spaces while simultaneously describing how they did not feel personally impacted by racism and racialization online. I argued that experiences of secondhand racism (witnessing, observing, and understanding how racism functions online) impacted participants by leading them to control their online presence in anticipation of exposure to racism and racialization. Much like in the MLIS, although participants did not explicitly express it, they were aware of how Whiteness and White supremacy can be actualized into racism that they control their behavior to limit exposure. The second chapter reviews how race and racialization are experienced and understood by participants on social media, still maintaining the impact that Whiteness has on these experiences.

6.3 RQ3 - How are participants' experiences of race and racialization shaped and impacted by the information environments (of social media and MLIS programs) in which they are operating?

I will now address my third question: *How are participants' experiences of race and racialization shaped and impacted by the information environments (of social media and MLIS programs) in which they are operating?* I examine this final research question by 1) exploring how MLIS programs and social media are similar and how they are different; and 2) suggesting that both environments reproduce Whiteness even if they do so in different ways. I will briefly speculate why I believe that the participants' reflections have indicated that social media and the MLIS are inherently information environments steeped in Whiteness and therefore involved in maintaining a White hegemony of thought.

6.3.1 Convergences and divergences between social media and the MLIS

While I want to develop a bit about what the similarities of social media and the MLIS means, I first outline the ways diverge, particularly when looking at them as information environments. As I reviewed in my introduction, an information environment is a specific social, cultural, and sometimes physical site and context where information is created, defined, shared, adapted, transformed, used and understood by people. These environments have specific historical and technological contexts that inform the ways that information is created, disseminated, and understood, as well as what information is privileged. The MLIS and social media are information environments as they are sites of information creation (by institutions of postsecondary and media respectively), where the information is further defined, shared and adapted by the institutions and by others. And so I would like to focus on what the behaviors that participants described tell us about the impact of these environments on them.

The behaviors described in the two preceding chapters are examples of both formal and informal manifestations of the same specter of Whiteness that impacts the information actions of the participants, one in the professional space of the MLIS and one in the casual space of social media. One could argue that the opportunity to engage with the information environment of social media is more readily available as there is a low barrier to entry. However, when looking more closely at the ways that these two environments differ in this research in particular, I believe that these distinctions are less important. I would suggest that based on my analysis, social media diverges from the MLIS as an information environment is one crucial way: participants describe more easily accessing opportunities for connection and community with other BIPOC through social media applications than they do in the MLIS. This is important as it could have a great impact on the professional outcomes for BIPOC in LIS, specifically in their

ability to continue in an LIS profession. Although this research was not investigating what the process was transitioning from the MLIS to an LIS-related occupation, one could speculate that there could be a lack of opportunities professionally for BIPOC who were unable to make strong connections through their MLIS program. To apply Granovetter's (1973) language to this, participants may have been able to access many weak ties through social media that could in turn allow them to make connections and spread information quicker, but in the strong ties lies the ability to reassert connection and a durability that needs time, emotional intensity and intimacy to build.

As I established in my Introduction, I view the MLIS and social media as information environments that in their own ways are instrumental to the experiences of the participants with whom I researched. Not surprisingly, the participants had complex experiences within these two information environments and, in sharing about their experiences, they were able to articulate what I speculate is a link between these two information environments in the context of this research. Specifically, the specter of Whiteness links these two environments, even if it shows itself in different ways. The specter of Whiteness is so dominant in both information environments that it limits self-expression in similar ways. Because BIPOC are consistently aware of how quickly this White gaze from the specter can translate into racism, they self-surveil and control their own behaviors despite their desire to engage more actively. I want to speculate on what it might mean to further explore how Whiteness functions in these two information environments. For one, it indicates that Whiteness is pervasive in both environments, however the implications of its pervasiveness are felt differently. One suggestion I might make is that the specter of Whiteness is intrinsic to both of these environments because they are both deeply embedded, historically and contemporarily, in the promotion of western epistemologies and by

extension White supremacy (Honma, 2006; Toole, 2021; McLeod, 2024). And thus, it is no surprise that those interviewed described having to navigate experiences of isolation, othering, racialization, and secondhand racism in both environments. But I would argue that beyond simply barriers for meaningful inclusion and equity for BIPOC in these two environments, the implications of the centrality of Whiteness—of the ever-haunting presence of specter of Whiteness—is that these two information environments are primarily concerned with asserting and reasserting White hegemony. In other words, I believe that both the MLIS in the context of North American education and American-based social media applications are not particularly concerned with epistemological diversification and are in many ways homogenizing infrastructures. That isn't to say that individuals do not subvert these structures in order to use them for potentially empowering, diversifying, or even radical movements, but that the existing conditions for these environments are influenced by and influence the continuation of Whiteness.

6.3.2 How are social media and the MLIS epistemically homogenizing?

I have made reference to the homogenizing nature of the MLIS in the literature review, particularly how Whiteness shows up in more than simply the demographics of librarianship and the MLIS. More specifically, I argued that Whiteness is an "epistemological tradition" that asserts "White Eurocentric knowledge…as the legitimate form of knowledge" (Honma, 2006, pg. 15). Here, I am building on this understanding to suggest that the experiences of Whiteness that my participants have shared serve as a type of evidence of this epistemological hegemony. As I introduced in my literature review, epistemic Whiteness is the privileging of knowledges and perspectives that cater to the comfort and privilege of White people and practices that maintain their supremacy to other ways of being and knowing. Some authors like Ettarh (2018) argue that librarianship and the MLIS are institutions, and similar to other institutions, they

create and sustain "hegemonic values" that contribute to "White supremacy culture." In referencing the findings of this research, I would argue that the experiences of othering, and isolation to withdraw oneself from participation that the participants describe lend themselves to questions about whether or not the very institution of LIS is homogenizing as an information environment. What I mean by homogenizing is a White ideological status quo. As established in the literature review, post secondary institutions and social media are sites that reproduce Whiteness. As Gusa (2010) stated, White Institutional Presence is maintained through the ways that institutions establish "one scholarly worldview" through the structures that determine whether or not information shared and produced would be considered sufficiently scholarly (pg. 474). Gusa (2010) identifies how "policy initiatives, course content, research practices, research methods, and teaching pedagogy" are filtered through a White lens in institutions and ultimately privilege Eurocentric views on scholarship (pg. 475). In other words, what is or is not considered to be logical policy, what is or is not considered to be rigorous or ethical scholarship, who is or is not considered trustworthy sources, are all influenced by the historical context in which postsecondary institutions were created and the ways that they continue to operate. Although it is harder to determine the historical precedent for establishing and maintaining White hegemonic thought on social media, many authors have identified that social media in some ways reproduces the same structures that exist in dominant society. In fact, there is plenty of evidence to support the fact that social media algorithms uphold Whiteness, particularly that they amplify and enable White supremacy (Back, 2002; Daniels, 2009; Daniels, 2013; Jakubowicz, 2017). Whiteness is flexible and "its dynamic nature is part of how it maintains its strategic position" and presence in our society, and so it adapts to digital environments to maintain its dominance (Nakayama, 2017, pg. 72). Authors have argued that White supremacy is not only available

online, it is influential in what information is presented and what information is censored, including the shadowbanning or removal of anti-racist accounts and the maintenance of White supremacist or White nationalist accounts (Daniels, 2009; Gassam Asare, 2021; Jakubowicz, 2017).

Building on this scholarship concerning how these institutions reproduce Whiteness, I would argue that the behaviors described by the participants of this study support the understanding of this hegemonic representation in both environments. In the context of this study, the ways that participants withdraw and censor themselves is an example of how this reproduction of Whiteness is reproduced, maintained, and continued in these spaces. Although I cannot make the claim that these practices are indicative of how all BIPOC are influenced to maintain Whiteness in these spaces given the small sample size and the nature of the questions, the insights of these participants' experiences do support and enrich the existing literature.

One could argue that these environments privilege Whiteness simply because Whiteness is the status quo, and I would agree. But I also believe that focusing on the experiences of BIPOC students in these environments can further expand on what this means practically. The experiences shared by the participants clarify what the real-life implications of centring Whiteness are. What I mean is that there are behaviours and beliefs that I have discussed in my research that exemplify the practical implications of this homogenizing impact of the MLIS and social media. For example, I established in Chapter 1 that there is an epistemic tradition in LIS that upholds Whiteness as the default. Put differently, there is a relationship between a lack of diversity and a lack of diverse ideas in the profession. While this relationship in LIS is supported by literature, some participants indicated this point by discussing how they felt that colleagues and professors in their program shared views that represented a narrow worldview and that they

could not or did not want to understand their perspectives as BIPOC. In Chapter 1, I also discussed how the participants chose to sit back in their program when they encountered these experiences of isolation, discrimination or othering, which were direct consequences of experiencing the specter of Whiteness. One could argue that the MLIS not only creates hegemony in the ideas that are available for students to engage with thoughtfully and critically, but also influences the ways that people are capable of behaving without complete exclusion. Simply put, the alternative to the status quo is not readily obvious, and so BIPOC withdraw their participation and choose not to make waves because they understand that the consequences of not doing so could lead to further othering and isolation.

When looking at social media, it is a little more difficult to locate how this information environment functions as a homogenizing force as social media platforms *seem* to provide a wide variety of connections and information. However, it has been established that they do in fact privilege Whiteness even if the participants did not state this explicitly. They did however share that they understood different social media sites to be inherently problematic, and they understood that racism occurred often on social media even if they didn't explicitly attribute this to Whiteness. Participants shared that they frequented more sites than others. (Instagram was understood as generally less harmful than, say, Twitter [now X].) And I would argue that even if it is harder to demonstrate that social media is an epistemically homogenizing information environment based on the participants' reflections, the same behaviours were described by participants in both environments. Whiteness permeates both, attempting to create hegemony, and it results in BIPOC limiting self-expression both in the MLIS and on social media. These behaviours became an example of the flattening or homogenizing impact of elements of the MLIS and social media. However, as I will discuss later in this conclusion, the participants did

describe finding more diverse communities online and I would argue that this is actually a subversion of the homogenizing nature of the information environment.

6.4 Implications of this study

6.4.1 Whiteness as an unintended center of my research

So far, I have discussed the specter of Whiteness as a through-line of this research but now I would like to reflect on how this is significant in the context of studying the experiences of BIPOC. While developing this research, my intention was not to focus on the shortcomings of MLIS institutions and to focus on the ways that participants utilized tools like social media applications to cope with the barriers they experienced as minorities in their field. I have found evidence to support that the participants did use social media in these ways, which I will discuss later in this chapter. However, an unintended result of this research has been centering Whiteness once again. In the same ways it seems inescapable for my participants to experience the specter of Whiteness, I am very much implicated in this specter: it has woven its importance into my research. As Frankenberg (1997) writes "why talk about Whiteness, given the risk that by undertaking intellectual work on Whiteness one might contribute to the processes of recentering rather than decentering it, as well as reifying the term, and its 'inhabitants", and this sentiment certainly rings true for my own research (pg.1). And so, I intended not to study Whiteness, to center BIPOC experiences and voices in an attempt to decenter Whiteness. Yet, it still arose and I believe that I expected it to do so even unconsciously. This leads to my frustration with many elements of this research. I am frustrated that I was not able to focus on the interrelationships between BIPOC, the community that can be fostered amongst BIPOC with all our great differences. I am frustrated by having to identify how central White supremacy is to my experiences and those of the people in community with me, mostly because we tirelessly do this

work to call it out. However, Sara Ahmed (2021) calls frustration a "feminist record" and I believe that to be true here as well (pg. 7).

While my participants did not all share explicit and consistent frustration, the specter of Whiteness arose as a theme in this research, I believe, because of complaint—however subtle. Participants shared expressions of frustration with elements of the institution of the MLIS and with elements of social media throughout my research and this was significant, as our collective frustration revealed much about how these institutions functioned. As Ahmed states, "ask those who complain about their experiences of complaint, you will learn so much about institutions and about power" (2021, pg 7). And this is what I believe I have done. By asking my participants about their experiences (not necessarily of complaint but more broadly) I have permitted them a space for complaint, however, indirectly they have chosen to take that and have revealed much about the implications of the specter of Whiteness. Particularly, the participants reveal the unfairness of how much space Whiteness takes up in the lives of non-White people, how much we are forced to engage with Whiteness, how much we are forced to take notice of it, and how often we then shape ourselves in order to cope with its presence. Living in a White supremacist society, the inescapability of Whiteness sometimes can be suffocating and can often feel redundant to have to prove its power through story and through research. Whiteness was going to be central to my work regardless of the choices I made as I am also haunted by the specter of Whiteness.

6.4.2 Resistance against the specter of Whiteness

And yet, the ever-ominous presence of Whiteness is not all-defining for the participants: there are many ways that its influence is subverted. I would suggest that some of the ways that the participants take on roles in the background on social media can be understood as a subtle

form of resistance. I will also call on the ways that participants described finding community and spaces where they felt less influenced by the specter of Whiteness which I believe is a small form of resistance against Whiteness. In particular, I would argue that participants, in their attempts to avoid being highly visible online, resist the ways that BIPOC and other marginalized groups are often made hypervisible. Moreover, I would argue that participants also subvert the power of the specter of Whiteness by making community with other BIPOC in BIPOC-centered or BIPOC-exclusive spaces.

6.4.3 Refusal to be hypervisible as a small act of resistance

While I established in my literature review the many ways that BIPOC in the MLIS are not visible, particularly in that their experiences are understudied and their demographic representation is limited, there are many ways that marginalized people in their minority status are also hypervisible. In other words, there is simultaneously an unwanted hypervisibility when one is a minority in a group, one that can lead to othering and isolation as exemplified by the participants of this research. The simultaneous hypervisibility and invisibility that marginalized people often experience has been remarked upon, but has mostly been discussed in the offline context (Stegeman, Are & Poell, 2024). Lorde (1984) states that "Black women have on one hand always been highly visible, and so, on the other hand, have been rendered invisible through the depersonalization of racism" (pg. 37). While I have discussed how Whiteness is marked as invisible and neutral, the hypervisibility and invisibility of people of colour differs, where the invisibility works not to neutralize the presence and existence of marginalized people but in fact to ignore them. In addition, hypervisibility comes into play when marginalized groups are fetishized, stereotyped and tokenized. One of the consequences of hypervisibility for people of colour under the White gaze is that it amplifies experiences of marginalization and

discrimination. Marginalized people "are hypervisible not in their own right but in their stereotyped form" (Johnson, 2019, pg. 208). Primary discussion regarding visibility/invisibility narratives for people of colour online have come from content creators online themselves. For instance, TikTok user @kahlilgreene (also known as the Gen Z Historian) created an entire series on how many elements of Gen Z online culture are an appropriation of Black culture. This appropriation simultaneously makes Black content creators highly visible through consuming their content and invisibilizes them by turning their culture into the culture of the internet (Greene, n.d.). This is significant to establish because in the same way that I argued participants chose to limit their visibility online because of their anticipation of secondhand racism or direct racism, I would argue that this choice could be interpreted as a subversive one. That is to say, the choice to remove oneself from hypervisibility is potentially a subversive one as it operates outside of the subjection to hypervisibility/invisibility; it announces an active choice to observe and not be seen. In other words, a refusal[1] occurs when participants choose to lurk, when they choose to not be the objects of racism.

While it is difficult to argue that the choice to take a back seat or withdraw participation from the MLIS was a subversive choice in the same way I am arguing it is online, I would be inclined to investigate this further. I believe that with further research there might be the ability to read a subversion in the type of non-engagement described by the participants.

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[1] I do not want to ascribe to the participants a type of radical resistance that they do not mean, however there has been much written about the radical resistance of opting out. In her work Sidelines and Separate Places (2010), Deanna Blackwell argues that even in "anti-racist" classrooms BIPOC students are relegated to the role of the cultural expert, the teacher's aide or the witness. As such, from a Black feminist perspective "understanding the margins as a place of refusal and resistance can be powerful and radical" (Blackwell, 2010, pg. 488). In other words, Blackwell argues that with the way that students of color are used in the White classroom, understanding the margins as a place of refusal and resistance can be powerful and radical. She continues to make an argument for the importance of safe segregated spaces for people of colour. While I am not ascribing this radical type of refusal to my participants, this is how it has been written about by other authors.

6.4.4 Carving out a space for BIPOC in the MLIS program and on social media

Even though my research has shown how Whiteness has revealed itself as central to this research, Whiteness does not completely define the experiences the participants shared. Participants described spaces where they found community and connection with other BIPOC online, whether they were in the LIS field or not. While the participants recognized that there are always barriers when engaging with online communities due to the Whiteness inherent in the structure of social media and thus the potential possibilities of experiencing racism or secondhand racism, they also described that some spaces have the right criteria and people to allow for pockets of self-expression and connection with others. I believe this is important to recognize and would be a stronger focus of my research in the future.

I reviewed in the first chapter how the participants described exclusive spaces for BIPOC in the MLIS and the complicated feelings that came along with that. I also noted that these complicated feelings helped shed light on how the specter of Whiteness functions even when we as BIPOC describe safe spaces. That is, the presence of Whiteness can even be felt when we think of what is or is not a safe space. At the same time, I do want to mention how participants shared finding spaces with other BIPOC that were meaningful to them and how these could be interpreted as a small act of resistance against the specter of Whiteness. Put differently, I want to take a moment toward the conclusion of this project to decenter Whiteness and talk about BIPOC in community with others.

As discussed in Chapter 4, many of the participants felt that a segregated space, exclusive to BIPOC only, would be ideal in constructing a safe space. A couple of participants did share the Joint Council of Librarians of Color conference as a space where they experienced a BIPOC-exclusive space, but a majority of the spaces shared were online spaces. Many

participants noted the social media spaces that they found beneficial to them and that they felt were safe spaces in some sense were BIPOC only spaces, like *wehere*. Some indicated the fact that these spaces only existed on certain applications like Facebook was a reason they felt they could not leave the app despite their issues with it. Garnet reflects on the importance of a few of her online BIPOC exclusive groups and why they were so important to her:

> "Talking about whether we can talk about certain issues and knowing that we're not going to be judged for it pretty much like all the spaces I've been in like *we here*, or like the SLIS BIPOC group there's sections where you could see people detail the rules and agreements that were all like under. So, being able to talk about things like Whiteness in librarianship, and how that affects us on a personal or system level and knowing that that isn't something that's going to be getting out and hurting my feelings. Those are kind of just little measures that I like to look for. Like are there other BIPOC folks involved? If they're not, I'm probably gonna be censoring myself, because experience has taught me that I can't be as honest as I would like to be in certain spaces."

As Garnet had shared an experience of feeling as though she had experienced racism and discrimination in another Facebook group, it is significant to her to engage in a space with clear expectations that also acknowledge the real lived experiences of BIPOC people. She makes a great point that these kinds of spaces are able to acknowledge both "personal or system level" issues and the implications of both. These are spaces where she feels most comfortable sharing about herself, whereas in other spaces she notes that she would not feel comfortable being "as honest" as she is. By being involved in an exclusive community, Garnet has the ability to be more authentic and vulnerable as she operates outside of the White gaze.

I do not want to discredit the theme of "skinfolk ain't kinfolk" that was explored in Chapter 4. Nevertheless, it is also important to underscore how certain spaces provided potential for emotional safety for the participants. Participants mentioned spaces that they felt they could engage with more were pages that were catered to POC. Another space that was mentioned by multiple participants was Subtle Asian Traits. Although it is not exclusive to BIPOC, these Twitter and Facebook pages are centered specifically on the experiences and stories of Asian people. Rose Quartz shares that pages like Subtle Asian Traits are not only fun to engage with, filled with memes and humorous content, but they also validate people's relationships with themselves and their communities:

> "So I think a space like that and then even on Twitter where the space is not exclusive but conversations are and people that you follow are often curated. It's kind of a cool, a lot of it is a cool sense of myself and my upbringing and my family that I didn't realize other people had too."

Rose Quartz follows this by sharing that she feels "you don't really know the value of an exclusive space until you're in it." And once she is in it, Rose Quartz is able to operate even just slightly, outside of the dominance of the specter of Whiteness to find connection to a broader community and to her understanding of herself. Lapis shares a similar sentiment, with an experience she had on the page where she was able to share with others the intersection of her work experiences and her lived experiences as an Asian woman. In sharing how as a racialized librarian she was able to connect with a community of people who don't see themselves represented in librarianship in the venue of Subtle Asian Traits, she was able to create a connection to her feelings of her personal identity and her relationship to her broader community.

This impacted her perception of her own ability to reach others, hopefully inspire them and connect with them through an online venue.

I highlight these experiences as examples of the potential that social media communities can have. They are examples of spaces that were exclusive to, or at the very least catered in some way to, BIPOC people. They suggest important challenges to some of what I asserted previously about the ways in which participants thought about their positions online. When they perceived a sense of safety or at the very least belonging, some participants actually felt they were able to be more open and to be vulnerable in ways that they didn't in other places. I think what is important about highlighting these contradictory experiences that the participants had is to showcase that although Whiteness and racism are so pervasive in the MLIS and social media, there are also always formations of resistance both big and small. Some participants discussed how they used social media to actually organize and do activist work that actively engages with dismantling systemic oppression, but even in the act of simply connecting with other BIPOC online in a space that is potentially more open to emotional vulnerability and care is a form of resistance in and of itself. I wanted to outline how even though these systems shape and influence how we engage with each other and how we understand ourselves in relation to different institutions, there are still opportunities that we build for ourselves beyond that. There are still opportunities beyond our limitations, because we create them and use them to make them accessible for one another.

6.5 Study Limitations & Opportunities for Future Research

I reviewed in the methods section some of the limitations of this research including the use of the term BIPOC in recruitment. I identified that there was a distinct lack of Indigenous or Black participants in this study. The lack of Indigenous or Black students or early career

professionals could be due to there being a small percentage of Indigenous or Black students

currently enrolled in or recently graduated from MLIS programs at Canadian institutions.

Statistics Canada reported that in 2021 there were approximately 260 total MLIS degree holders

who identified as Black and 300 total MLIS degree holders who identified as Indigenous in

Canada, however that includes individuals in all stages of their careers and is not indicative of

the percentage of individuals working in libraries. Regardless, this lack of representation impacts

my research as I indicated earlier that the intention of the term BIPOC was to identify that the

experiences of Indigenous and Black peoples were unique from other non-Black non-Indigenous

POC. Without their presence in this research I was not able to highlight the ways that Indigenous

and Black people in the MLIS experience the specter of Whiteness in the MLIS and on social

media uniquely from other POC. Further research could be done to ensure that this research

involves Black and Indigenous students and early career professionals as they are

underrepresented in this research. This could be done through specific recruitment and

relationship building first and foremost, as these are principles that are important to me as a

researcher but were diminished because of time constraints. Further research could also include

exploring further the unique experiences of Asian students and early-career professionals, as they

were the most represented in this research.

I want to also take a moment to reflect on another element of this research that could be

understood as a limitation and that could be related to the lack of representation from Black and

Indigenous participants. An unexpected element of this research was the dissonance between my

expectation of how explicitly critical participants would be and how much more complex their

feelings and experiences about social media and the MLIS actually were. What I mean here is

that I entered the research with the assumption that because of their racialized identities, the

participants would be much more explicitly aware of and critical of Whiteness. In other words, I had the expectation the participants would have specific perspectives or politics because of their positionality. In fact, I anticipated that their politics would match my own as a fellow BIPOC, but my findings were that their feelings and experiences indicated something much greyer. I position myself as someone explicitly concerned with anti-racism and highly critical of institutional racism because of my positionality as a Black biracial woman. As can be determined by my findings, participants occupied a space where they were not often explicitly critical of the institutions we discussed but of course they were not completely uncritical. To draw on an element of Critical Race Theory, counter-storytelling did not feel like the appropriate lens to frame the findings as I felt that many of the findings were not explicitly "counter" to dominant narratives. I touched on this briefly in Chapter 5, reviewing that participant's experiences weren't necessarily counter but actually an amalgamation of resistance, submission to, quiet reflection and loud opposition to dominant narratives. And while this was unexpected I believe that these findings were incredibly valuable in that they challenged my assumptions about sameness under the shared racial identity of BIPOC.

Reflecting further, I feel that I learned a lot through this challenge of my expectations. Because of this research, I understand what Stuart Hall refers to as the difference between identity and identification. While the participants and I in some ways share a specific broad *identity*, that did not mean that we *identified* with one another politically. Hall (1996) outlines that identities "are more the product of the marking of difference and exclusion" and while they are not fixed they are conditional (pg. 4). Identification is more like a practice or "a process of articulation" in which there is "recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal" that establishes "solidarity or allegiance" (pg. 2-3).

And so while the participants and myself objectively occupy a shared racial identity as BIPOC, based on difference and exclusion from Whiteness, we did not necessarily always identify. For myself as a Black researcher conducting research with non-Black non-Indigenous people of colour, I would speculate that the uniqueness of Black and Indigenous experiences in tandem with the lack of representation in the MLIS and LIS professional spaces, would have resulted in different findings if Black and Indigenous participants had been included. This is perhaps another assumption that might be challenged with further research. One could say that in finding that participants were not as critical as I expected them to be, I was disappointed in the lack of identification. However, I actually was grateful to be reminded of how diverse the individuals included in the racial category of BIPOC can be. I am reminded of Angelica Ross' words that: "shared identity does not equal community…The price for community is accountability. Cherish and nurture the bonds you create with people who are willing to reciprocate accountability in their relationship with you" (Ross, 2024). And while participants had much more diverse and complicated feelings and experiences than I expected, that doesn't necessarily mean that we weren't able to be in community with one another. This isn't to say that our shared identity is not the only defining factor of connection, but that our responsibility to one another through community is.

As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, another direction that this research could build upon is to investigate acts of subversion further. For instance, further researching the decision against hyper-visibility amongst BIPOC would be extremely interesting to further platform the ways in which BIPOC resist Whiteness. In addition, as this study inadvertently focused on the ways that Whiteness is embedded in North American society, expanding this research to include

individuals who attended MLIS programs from American institutions would be important in order to gather a consensus on many of the themes explored.

6.6 Conclusion

This study initially hoped to focus on BIPOC use of digital technologies and spaces of online connection to analyze how students navigate institutional exclusions in LIS graduate programs. As it developed, questions allowed for more space to understand how participants expressed their understandings of race and racialization in the MLIS and on social media more generally. In Chapter four, I reviewed how the participants described being shut down through the specter of Whiteness in the MLIS. They participate less when they experience its presence in the MLIS. That being said, they mostly still desire to be part of the LIS community because they understand librarianship to be well intended and socially-just for the most part. However, the specter of Whiteness was still prevalent in the ways that participants described themselves as BIPOC and potential opportunities for safe spaces in LIS, as Whiteness was still platformed when BIPOC defined themselves in opposition to it. In Chapter five, participants shared that perceptions or experiences of racism and racialization on social media led to control of and sometimes withdrawal of participation online. The specter of Whiteness is more visible online as racist and discriminatory content is clearly seen and identified, particularly through the experience of second hand racism. These two chapters have a clear through thread, the specter of Whiteness haunts these two information environments, shaping the experiences of BIPOC throughout both.

In the final Chapter, I addressed my third research question which was concerned with how the two information environments of the MLIS and social media impacted the participants' experiences of racism and racialization. I did so by comparing the two environments, identifying

how social media allowed for more opportunities for connection and community than the MLIS, while both were greatly influenced by and one could argue embedded in the reproduction of Whiteness. I speculate that one could understand both environments as reproducing hegemony through Whiteness and that the participants' behavior of withdrawal and self-censorship is one example of how this is known and understood by BIPOC. I also review the implications of this research, including how Whiteness became an unintended but necessary subject of this research. While I felt uncomfortable with this focus, ultimately I felt that explicitly calling out Whiteness was also in some ways subverting it. Calling out Whiteness makes it more material, less invisible, and thus less powerful in some sense. I also identified the ways that participants subverted or subtly resisted Whiteness, whether through the lens of refusal to be hyper-visible or through community building and connection with BIPOC. My conclusion here ends with a review of what could be investigated further.

Ultimately, as much as my research resulted in illuminating the ways that Whiteness affected my participants, that same specter of Whiteness felt at times as though it was consuming myself as the researcher and my research entirely. I felt as though my research and in turn my own time was focused so much on the very thing I felt at times subjugated by. However, when reviewing the experience of undertaking this research and the result in this writing, I found a different lens. For one, I was able to name the issue of Whiteness more clearly, putting into words and finding support for something that I felt to be true. I was able to encourage, bear witness to, and understand the complexities and nuances of different stories shared with me from some incredible individuals. Making connections with and learning from these participants, who are in many ways my peers, was such a privilege and the process of this research got to the heart of what inspired it in the first place. I was able to build a bit more of an understanding of

something that I have always been interested in. I understand a little bit more about what it means to be a person of colour in this society and feel that I can see a bit more of the ways that institutions might not foster the ability to explore diverse forms of information, knowledge and community building, but that people do.

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Appendix A: Call for Participants

Dear [University name] Administrator or Graduate Coordinator,

I am contacting you with the request to distribute to the students in your MLIS (Master of Library and Information Science) program the invitation to participate in an interview on BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and/or People of Colour) MLIS students and their experiences within their program and with social media titled *Where's Our Space? BIPOC MLIS students and their social media communities*. This research consists of a short demographic intake form and an interview either in person or online. Identifying information will be anonymized, including institution information. This research seeks to understand more about the very diverse experiences of a diverse group of students that fall under the categories of BIPOC, and thus I am looking to speak with students from as many of the Canadian MLIS programs as possible.

Please consider sharing the following blurb about the project, as well as my contact information, with your MLIS students. I would be so appreciative if you could confirm if you will or will not be circulating this call to students so that I know how to proceed with my study. Please let me know if you require any further information or have any questions.

Kind regards,
Luthfia Friskie

"Hello [University name] LIS students and recent graduates,

My name is Luthfia Friskie and I am pursuing my Master of Library and Information Studies and Master of Arts in Digital Humanities degrees at the University of Alberta. As part of my program, I am conducting research on the engagement of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and/or People of Colour) MLIS students with social media. I am seeking participants to complete a virtual or in-person interview (depending on geographical location) in order to gather information about the intersection between BIPOC experience in MLIS programs and social media technologies and communities. Interviews will be preceded by a short demographic intake form, gathering relevant demographic information but your identity (including the identity of the institution you attend) will be anonymized. Interviews would be in person if you are located in the Edmonton/Calgary region or online via Zoom or Google Meets. Unfortunately, due to my own limitations, interviews will have to be conducted in English. Recording of the interview audio will be applicable. If you identify as BIPOC (or as a racialized person) and would be interested in participating, please contact me directly at friskie@ualberta.ca

If you are interested please get in touch by **Friday February 7, 2023.**
The University of Alberta Research Ethics Board has approved this research study, ID Pro00124016.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Luthfia Friskie

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Appendix B: Invitation to Interview

Hello [individual name],

Thank you for agreeing to participate in an interview for my research project *Where's Our Space? BIPOC MLIS students and their social media communities*. I (Luthfia) will be conducting the interview on my own, over a secure video conferencing platform (Zoom or Google Meets). If you prefer and are geographically able to, we can also meet in person in a secure room on the University of Alberta campus. The interview should take approximately 45-60 minutes to complete. As mentioned in my call for participants, you will be asked to complete a short demographic intake form in order to gather a better understanding of the demographics of interviewees.

I will ask you a variety of questions regarding your experiences in your MLIS program, your relationship with social media, and the concept of BIPOC and a BIPOC community. I hope this interview allows you to have a space to share your experiences in a way that they will be respected and valued.

Please note, at any time you may change your mind and refuse to participate in the interview. The interview will be recorded for audio transcription. Once the interview is complete, you will receive a transcript from the interview and will have one week to review, revise, add, or withdraw your information from the analysis if you wish. You will have one week to do so before I begin my analysis and your answers will be included in the analysis.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board and the Ethics ID number is Pro00124016. I have attached a copy of the information and consent form, as well as the interview schedule. Once you have reviewed this information and consent to proceeding, please respond to this email so that we can establish a date and time to meet in the next two weeks.

Thank you and I look forward to connecting with you further.

Take care,
Luthfia Friskie

Link to Information & Consent Form & Interview Schedule

Study Title: Where's Our Space? Black, Indigenous, or People of Colour (BIPOC) Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS) students and their social media communities

Research Investigator: Luthfia Friskie
MA/MLIS Candidate, University of Alberta
Email: friskie@ualberta.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Danielle Allard
Professor, Library and Information Studies
Email: allard@ualberta.ca
Supervisor: Dr. Michael Litwack
Professor, English & Film Studies
Email: litwack@ualberta.ca

Background

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are currently or have been in the past academic year (2021-2022) a Masters of Library and Information Science (MLIS) student at a Canadian university and identifies as Black, Indigenous or as a Person of Colour (BIPOC).

The results of this study will be used in support of my (Luthfia Friskie's) thesis.

Before you make a decision about whether to participate in this research, please review the following information. Please feel free to contact me at friskie@ualberta.ca if you have any questions or require clarification.

Purpose & Position

The purpose of this research is to identify the complex and unique experiences of Black, Indigenous or as a Person of Colour (BIPOC) in Library and Information Studies (LIS) education with a focus on our relationship to social media technologies.

I am a biracial Black Masters of Library and Information Studies (MLIS) student and this research is personal to me. I am a settler on Treaty 6 territory in what is colonially known as Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Being a non-white settler has shaped my experiences and my perspectives in LIS, and I am interested in knowing if it is the same for you. This project highlights the perspectives and voices of BIPOC in LIS and our relationship to social media as we are minorities in a field that I would argue is quite significant in the social fabric of our society. This interview will include questions in five parts: an introduction reviewing the Demographic Form, questions regarding the LIS program, questions related to social media, questions related to BIPOC online communities and a conclusion reviewing all the questions.

I will do my best to put aside my biases, but I acknowledge that research cannot be bias free. I am an individual with a set of opinions and perspectives shaped by my experiences and I see the

world through a particular lens. That being said, it will always be my priority to ensure that what you provide is represented as you intended in this research.

Study Procedures

I (Luthfia) will be conducting the interview on my own, over a secure video conferencing platform (Zoom or Google Meets). If you prefer and are geographically able to, we can also meet in person in a secure room on the University of Alberta campus. The interview should take approximately 45 minutes to complete. I will be interviewing 5-10 participants from various institutions.

Prior to the interview you will be asked to complete a short demographic intake form via Google Forms. This will be used to gather general demographic information for the research overall, so that I may better understand the demographic makeup of what I believe to be a very diverse group of individuals. We will review the answers to this form before we commence the interview and you will be able to ask me clarifying or follow up questions about the form.

I will be recording the interview audio in order to create a transcript for analysis. I will also take notes while we are speaking that will be incorporated into the analysis as well. You will receive a copy of your transcript over email and will have one week to review the transcript and request to withdraw any information. All of your responses will be anonymized after this point.

Risks and benefits

You will be asked to reflect on instances of racism or other forms of bigotry that you may have experienced as a student in an LIS program and in the library world more generally. This may be distressing and is a risk that should be considered prior to engaging with this research. If at any point during the research you feel uncomfortable, please feel free to cease participation. If you experience any stress to your mental health and would like extra support please contact Wellness Together Canada at 1-866-585-0445 to speak one on one with a mental health professional.

Additionally, as much as Google may have privacy features in place to keep data private it must be acknowledged that it is a private company and that I as an individual do not have enough power to ensure that your data is completely private on their servers.

While there may not be any material benefit to this study for you, the opportunity to share more about your experiences in this field may be cathartic in some way. Ideally, I would like the impact of this study to contribute to the improvement of MLIS programs for BIPOC, through understanding our unique experiences and needs, but cannot guarantee this.

Voluntary Participation

You are under no obligation to participate in this study. The participation is completely voluntary, and you do not have to answer any specific questions or participate in any specific discussions.

Cost of Participation
Participating in this study will cost your time, as outlined in the study procedures above. You will also need technology to participate, including an Internet connection and an email address where I can send you the analysis to approve.

Confidentiality & Anonymity

For the demographic intake form, you are welcome to use a fake email address in order to further remove any identifiable features you wish to keep anonymous from the data. Your identity will not be anonymous to me in interviewing, but I will maintain confidentiality by obscuring personal identifying information and anonymizing the data in the writing process. This anonymizing process will include removing identifying information of the institution you are attending.

I will use this research in my thesis, research articles, and presentations. You will not be personally identified in any of these cases or any other case of sharing this research. I will refer to you by a pseudonym and leave out any identifying information.

Data will be kept confidential. Google Meet states that they encrypt all meeting data, including saved recordings, and does not sell user data. You can [read more about their security and privacy here](). Zoom also practices encryption of video, audio and screen sharing. You can [read more about that here](). All recordings will not be saved on a cloud but will be downloaded directly to a private server and University of Alberta encrypted device.

Myself and the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board will have access to the data. It will be kept on a password-protected laptop and on Google Drive's encrypted cloud storage. Study data, including personal information about you, will be securely stored for a minimum of 5 years after the study is over. After 5 years, your personal information and the audio/video recordings will be destroyed.

You will receive a copy of the research findings, as detailed in the Study Procedures section above.

Contact Information

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact Luthfia Friskie: [friskie@ualberta.ca]().

The plan for this study has been reviewed by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta (Pro00124016). If you have questions about your rights or how research should be conducted, you can call (780) 492-2615. This office is independent of the researchers.

Consent Statement
I have read this form and the research study has been explained to me. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. If I have additional questions, I have been told whom to contact. I agree to participate in the research study described

above and will receive a copy of this consent form. I will receive a copy of this consent form after I sign it.

_____   _____

Participant's Name (printed) and Signature   Date

In the absence of a signature, you must provide oral consent and oral agreement to confidentiality, both of which I will record in transcription or in the recording of a Google Meet or Zoom call. You will still receive a copy of this consent form.

Updated December 21, 2022   Pro00124016

Appendix D: Interview Schedule

Introduction

Part One: Demographic Intake Form
In this section, I would like to review some of the answers that you have submitted in your pre-completed demographic intake questionnaire. I would like to provide the opportunity for you to elaborate on some of the responses.

Part Two: LIS Program
This section asks you about your feelings regarding the MLIS program that you are in. You will be asked about the structure of the program including technological requirements or ethics requirements in your program, as well as questions about your experiences of racism, isolation, censorship within the MLIS program.

Part Three: Social Media
This section will ask you questions about your social media use. You will be asked questions regarding your perspectives and experiences with racial identity and social media, as well as community and social media.

Part Four: BIPOC Online Communities
This section will ask you questions regarding your perception of community related to racial identity. It will provide me with an understanding of what you think about the term BIPOC as a category for identity, if you find connection to that term or individuals considered part of this category, and will allow space for you to provide me with feedback about the questions asked in this interview as well as interview style.

Part Five: Conclusion

Thank you for participating in this interview. From here, I will be creating a transcript of our interview based on the recordings and will do the same with the other interviews. Once the transcription is complete, I will send you a copy of your interview transcript over email for your review and you will have one week to review it and let me know if you would like to withdraw anything. Your answers will be anonymized. From there, I will be reviewing each individual interview as well as all the interviews together, to identify the similarities and differences in experiences. I will be using it in the writing of my thesis and my thesis may be used for presentations or publications in the future.

Appendix E: Demographic Intake Form

Demographic Intake Form

B *I* U 🔗 ✕

These questions are to gather basic information about different elements of your identity, general geographic location and to learn at a little about your general educational and professional life

How do you identify racially/ethnically/culturally? Please include as much or as little information you would like here (short answer)

Long answer text

What gender do you identify as (if any)?

Short answer text

Do you identify as any of the following:

☐ 2SLGBTQIA+

☐ a person with a disability

☐ immigrant

☐ refugee

☐ mature student

☐ low income

☐ an international student

What is your age?

Short answer text

Where are you located geographically (province or state)?

1. Alberta

2. British Columbia

3. Saskatchewan

4. Manitoba

5. Ontario

6. Quebec

7. New Brunswick

8. Prince Edward Island

9. Nova Scotia

10. Newfoundland & Labrador

11. Nunavut

12. Northwest Territories

13. Yukon

14. United States of America

15. Outside of North America

Which school do you attend?

1. Dalhousie University

2. McGill University

3. Université de Montréal

4. University of Alberta

5. University of British Columbia

6. University of Ottawa

7. University of Toronto

8. University of Western Ontario

Are you enrolled in an on-campus or online program?

◯ Online

◯ Campus

◯ Hybrid

What year of your MLIS program are you in?

◯ First

◯ Second

◯ Third

◯ Fourth or later

◯ Graduated/Alumni

If you have graduated, what year did you graduate?

Short answer text

Do you currently work in an information institution of any kind (library, archive, museum etc.)?

◯ Yes

◯ No

If yes, what is your role?

Short answer text

Introduction

        Thank you for agreeing to participate in the interview portion of this research project. I am interested in this research because I am invested in understanding and amplifying the experiences of BIPOC students in the Masters of Library and Information Science (MLIS) education system. I think that we face a unique set of challenges in the MLIS program and since I have begun the program I have been interested in what those challenges are and if/how they are shared in similar ways amongst other BIPOC in MLIS. In addition, I personally see social media as a potential tool for working within and against structural barriers and I have met and built relationships with others in the MLIS or working in libraries through social media. I would like to better understand the ways that social media has or has not supported you both within and outside of your MLIS program and as an MLIS student myself I am curious what your perspectives on the functions of social media are. An important part of this research is the idea of identity. I am approaching this research with curiosity about our connections both similar and dissimilar within the set category of BIPOC. I am interested in understanding what the concept of identity means to you.

        As I have stated in my review of the information and consent form, I will be taking notes throughout the process and the audio will be recorded, this will be my primary data set. Also, you are under no obligation to participate in this study. The participation is completely voluntary, and you do not have to answer any specific questions or participate in any specific discussions.

Part One: Demographic Intake Form

In this section, I would like to review some of the answers that you have submitted in your pre-completed demographic intake questionnaire. I would like to provide the opportunity for you to elaborate on some of the responses. [I will read aloud the responses to some of the demographic questions and encourage the participant to elaborate if responses are brief]

    1. Are there any other aspects of your identity that you think are important to share?

Part Two: LIS Program

This section asks you about your feelings regarding the MLIS program that you are in. You will be asked about the structure of the program including technological requirements or ethics requirements in your program, as well as questions about your experiences of racism, isolation, censorship within the MLIS program.

    1. Tell me about how you became interested in librarianship
        a. What made you decide to enroll in the MLIS program? What interested you about the degree?
    2. How do you feel your program is going so far?
        a. Prompt: Was the program what you expected it to be? What surprised you? What is going well? What is challenging?
    3. How would you define the LIS community?
    4. How do you feel that you are supported in your MLIS program or within LIS environments? Where do you feel you are lacking support in the program?

    a. How do you feel supported or unsupported by your instructors or in classroom settings?
        i. The 2020 University of Toronto Report on Diversity and Inclusion Experiences of students at the Information School reported that "0.8% of respondents felt confident that there was appropriate facilitation and/or frequent discussions of race, gender, sexuality, and disability within their classrooms." Are you surprised by this statistic? How so?
    b. Do you feel supported or unsupported by our peers? How so?
        i. How comfortable do you think your peers are with engaging in conversations about inequalities and injustices?
    c. The 2020 University of Toronto Report on Diversity and Inclusion Experiences stated that "Participants responded that there is a strong adherence to white-centered material throughout curricula at the Faculty of Information." How do you feel about this statement?
        i. In what ways do you find materials assigned relevant or irrelevant to your experiences or interests?
    d. What kind of support exists for BIPOC students in your program? What do you feel is lacking?
        i. Prompt: Do you know of any recruitment strategies used by your program administrators or faculty?
        ii. Prompt: Do you feel grants/funding are accessible?
5. Do you feel comfortable speaking freely and/or sharing information about yourself and your perspectives in your program? In what ways?
    a. Do you ever feel uncomfortable expressing your true thoughts on a subject in class or in an extra-curricular LIS related situation? How so?
6. Do you feel that you have experienced discrimination in your program? If yes, in what ways?
    a. Do you feel you have experienced racism in the MLIS program? With as much or as little detail as you feel comfortable with, please describe your experience(s).
    b. Did you address this discrimination or racism formally? Did you take any formal or informal approaches to addressing the situation?
7. Is there anything else that you want to tell me about your experience in your MLIS program?

Part Three: Social Media

This section will ask you questions about your social media use. You will be asked questions regarding your perspectives and experiences with racial identity and social media, as well as community and social media.

1. When did you join social media? What was the first platform you ever used?
2. What social media platforms do you use?

     a. Prompt: Facebook? Instagram? Twitter? Snapchat? YouTube? Discord? TikTok? Pinterest? Reddit? Signal? Slack? Whatsapp? LinkedIn?

     b. Do you use social media multiple times a day, once a day, once a week, once a month or less than that?

3. What do you use social media for?

     a. Do you have a finsta?

     b. Do you feel you are part of any social media communities?

4. Is social media an important mode of communication for you?

     a. If yes, why do you think it is important to you?

     b. If not, is there a particular reason why you don't feel it is important to engage with?

5. Outside of the context of this interview, do you think about how you use social media? Do you reflect on social media's relevance to your life?

     a. Prompt: Do you feel that you are too reliant or not reliant enough on social media?

6. Do you feel that your race has any relevance to how you engage with others online?

     a. Have you experienced racism online? Please share more about this experience if you feel comfortable. Did you feel this experience/these experiences were different from experiences of racism in person?

     b. How have you experienced support from others through social media?

7. Do you use social media in your MLIS education? How so?

8. What is required for the technological component in your program? If there isn't any, is it something you wish was included?

9. Do you feel you are asked to engage with topics about social media, technology or technological ethics in your program?

     a. What are you prompted to think about or discuss? Is this kind of discussion important to you?

     b. Have you ever encountered readings or teachings about race and social media in your program? If so, what was the reading or teaching? How did it contribute to your learning (if at all)?

10. What are your concerns (if any) with the privacy of social media if any?

     a. Do you have any additional concerns about surveillance and social media? If yes, what are they?

Part Four: BIPOC Online Communities

This section will ask you questions regarding your perception of community related to racial identity. It will provide me with an understanding of what you think about the term BIPOC as a category for identity, if you find connection to that term or individuals considered part of this category, and will allow space for you to provide me with feedback about the questions asked in this interview as well as interview style.

1. How do you generally feel about the term BIPOC?

   a. Do you feel differently about the term BIPOC as it relates to LIS?

 2. How do you engage online with other BIPOC students and LIS community members, if at all?

   a. Do you have an online BIPOC student or library community?

   b. Do you have a BIPOC student or library community in person?

 3. Do you follow any specific people or pages/accounts online for their critical LIS or general LIS content?

   a. If yes, please share why you follow these people or this page/account?

   b. Do you create or share content related to LIS? Tell me about it.

     i. Do you feel you have a following?

 4. Have you attended or arranged an event on a topic related to BIPOC issues in LIS?

   a. If yes, tell me more about this experience.

 5. How would you define a safe space for BIPOC in LIS?

   a. How would this definition change if applied to online spaces? How about in person?

Part Five: Conclusion

 1. Have your online communities supported you where the MLIS program has not?

   a. If so, how?

   b. Have your in person communities supported you where your online communities and your MLIS program have not?

     i. If so, how?

   c. Has your MLIS program supported you in ways that your online communities or your other in person communities haven't or couldn't?

     i. If so, how?

 2. Are there any social media spaces or spaces online that you think are important to know regarding this research?

 3. Is there anything else you would like to share with me? Is there anything you felt was missing from the research that is important to highlight?

Thank you for participating in this interview. From here, I will be creating a transcript of our interview based on the recordings and will do the same with the other interviews. Once the transcription is complete, I will send you a copy of your interview transcript over email for your review and you will have one week to review it and let me know if you would like to withdraw anything. Your answers will be anonymized. From there, I will be reviewing each individual interview as well as all the interviews together, to identify the similarities and differences in experiences. I will be using it in the writing of my thesis and my thesis may be used for presentations or publications in the future.