

# Nice White Lady: A Mixed Methods Study of Race and Femininity in Librarianship

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the role of race and femininity in North American librarianship through the lens of the educational expectations of the discipline. As the master's degree in library and information science (LIS) is both the entry point to the profession as emphasized by the American Library Association (ALA), and the terminal degree, it is fair to suggest that this educational lens is an appropriate point of inquiry while working to understand the race and gender demographics of those within the profession itself. Librarianship has long been a white-dominated, female-intensive profession, a term coined by researcher Roma Harris (1992) and is the focal point of this study.

A mixed methods approach was taken with quantitative and qualitative data gathered through an anonymous survey seeking information on the role of gender or gender expression and race and ethnicity on the educational experiences and career trajectory of current librarians. Further information was gathered through interviews. The study was designed through the framework of Harris' adaptation of Career Development Theory.

The results of this study concluded that both race and gender have had significant impacts on the education and careers of librarians in the United States both directly, and through the indirect means of personal finances, social upheaval, and a dependence on heteronormative workplace and household structures. Using the information gathered here as well as an overview of the discipline's shifting history, it is fair to conclude that the system of librarianship was designed for white women.

# **ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS**

Education programs/schools; Continuing education; Critical librarianship; Political economy of the information society.

## **AUTHOR KEYWORDS**

Race in librarianship; Female-intensive; Career development.

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