

Changing Course: Collaborative Reflections of Teaching/Taking “Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Information Professions”

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This article is an attempt to reflect on the institutional and disciplinary context of a course on “Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Information Professions” from the perspective of instructors and students. It examines the effectiveness of a course like this as an intervention to the normative landscape of the Library and Information Science (LIS) field that often privileges White, male, middle-class, heterosexual, U.S.-based values and interests. In this article we provide a brief background for the re-establishment of this course, offer a literature review defining the normative landscape of LIS, and discuss the positive aspects and pitfalls of injecting this course into the curriculum as a “diversity” intervention. Finally, we offer recommendations for how to further make visible and shift the hegemonic landscape in LIS toward an inclusivity that actively deals with how race, gender, class, and sexuality deeply informs our profession.

Introduction

This paper is an exploration of a graduate Library and Information Science course “Race, Gender, and Sexuality in Information Professions” from the points of view of the two co-instructors and three students who took the course. This collaboration is an attempt to reflect on the experience of teaching/taking this course, the institutional and disciplinary context of the course, and the effectiveness of a course like this as an intervention to the normative landscape of the Library and Information Science (LIS), a field that often privileges White, male, middle-class, heterosexual, U.S.-based values and interests (Honma, 2006; Pawley, 2006). This paper

will offer a literature review defining the normative landscape of LIS, provide a brief background for the re-establishment of this course, and will discuss the positive aspects and pitfalls of injecting this course into the curriculum as a “diversity” intervention. Finally, it offers recommendations for how to further make visible and shift the landscape in LIS toward an inclusivity that actively deals with how race, gender, class, and sexuality deeply informs our profession.

LIS scholars (Honma, 2006; Pawley, 2006; Vaidhyanathan, 2006) have called for increasing interdisciplinarity, critical evaluation of how historical processes in the creation of specific fields within library and information science, and issues

related to diversity, are enacted within pedagogical practice. White and Gilliland create a strong case for reassessing the current state of archival education and interrogating the formation of that field (2010). These authors argue that the integration of multiple disciplines and theoretical perspectives is an important aspect of working to counter colonial impulses that shaped archival practice, and argue for a reflexive interrogation of the Eurocentric foundations of archiving as a means for developing a broader and more socially just practice. Calls to interdisciplinarity, which are coupled with a recommendation for creating more meaningful actions toward increasing diversity and representation within LIS, can be found in Bharat, Olson, and Ahmad (2011). These authors advocate for an institutional shift that is not based solely in course work. They propose actions that:

include looking at theory and practice together, proposing outcome-based impacts on local minority communities and individuals, developing diversity integration standards at the accreditation agencies, extending discourse at professional associations and formal and informal gatherings, addressing specific concerns of faculty and students, acknowledging organizational politics and institutional culture inertias, amongst others. (2011, p. 48)

Race, gender and sexuality stands as one branch of this needed intervention. The course we will discuss in the article drew heavily from a broad swath of critical, feminist, critical race and other disciplines to establish a context for understanding how these issues are elided within much of the LIS curriculum. It may be useful here to discuss the role of interdisciplinarity as it is regularly implemented within LIS education.

LIS and Myths of Interdisciplinarity

A question for any interdisciplinary field becomes “what are the acceptable pa-

rameters of interdisciplinarity?” Information Science as an interdisciplinary field is so closely tied to information technology as to be indistinguishable, while maintaining strong human and social dimensions (Saracevic, 1999, p. 1052). Library and Information Science also draws theory and method from as diverse traditions as computer science, history, sociology, political economy, media and communications, and cultural theory. An equally important question to consider may be “what are the common threads that everyone in the field should be conversant with in LIS?” Is there equal expectation, for instance, that colleagues be as conversant with critical theory, cultural studies, and work that critiques social structures like racism, sexism, heterosexism, and classism, as they are with database management, computer programming, and some of the more technical fields of LIS?

Inequity in prestige and resources between the technical and scientific work done in LIS and the work done around social elements of libraries and information institutions, or marginalized populations like children or prisoners, is a known issue in the field. This discrepancy is partially due to the fact that technical and scientific work has broader funding appeal from both governmental and private sources. However, the social construction of the value of scientific and technical knowledge simultaneously positions social and cultural studies, particularly ones involving social justice, as less valued and reduced in importance. Additionally, scholars who take up the mantle of social justice work are often members of marginalized social groups, drawing on their lived experience to challenge normative structures, paradigms, and scientific epistemology. These realities contribute to an unequal valuing of the disciplines that constitute what is “interdisciplinary” in LIS.

In our experience with the context of the course, “interdisciplinary” becomes a kind of value-neutral code word that actually obscures the privileging that it con-

tains. This can be compared to the way “diversity” or “multiculturalism” is used to mask issues of race or western hegemony (McCarthy, 1994; Pawley, 2006). This was evidenced by the fact that doctoral students whose LIS research draws from critical information studies, cultural studies, critical race and feminism were teaching the course, and underscored by the underrepresentation of faculty in the school who research in these areas. This knowledge deeply informed the resurrection and implementation of the course.

Background: the Institutional Context of this Course

“Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Information Professions” was resurrected in the Fall of 2011 after 9 years on the list of untaught courses. This course was reestablished in response to three intertwined changes within the school: (1) there was rising student interest in the course (primarily met with deterrence into courses in community informatics), (2) Doctoral students using critical theory in their own research had both the expertise and desire to teach the course, and (3) a series of town hall meetings that included students, faculty, and staff from the LIS school brought to light not only the Eurocentric, White, and often straight male-dominated “hidden curriculum” (McLauren, 2009) within classes, but also the existing grievances of students of color about the faculty lack of facility about topics related to race, gender, and sexuality. The course was imagined as a possible response to the town hall concerns and as an intervention within the school and in LIS more generally.

The course redesign was focused on de-centering straight, White, male privilege by creating shared, working definitions of race, gender, and sexuality that tie the histories of these identity-areas to library and information science. The course emphasized articles and articulations by individuals from subject positions that were not often included in general LIS coursework

(women of color, women writing on sexuality, etc.). To aid these objectives, scholarship from a wide variety of disciplines including critical theory, critical race theory, gender and women’s studies, education, and political economy were used. Students selected a topical area of interest in the syllabus that they would take ownership over and act as lead discussant on for a class session. Some of the topical areas included: defining the normative landscape; public and academic libraries; the PATRIOT Act; museums and archives; and data mining. All areas were supported by readings that linked the practical to the theoretical aspects of information provision, framed within local, national, and global contexts.

The instructors intended this course to support and validate the lived experience of what it means to be outside of the norm in a society that has institutional barriers to opportunity and quality of life predicated upon race, class, gender and sexual orientation, and to trace the historical processes that have led to inequalities in information access for and provision to individuals and communities. For many students and faculty, discussions about institutional and structural forms of oppression predicated upon economic systems, racial ideologies, sexual divisions of labor and heteronormativity were not conversations in which they were fluent, and often, they are unaware of or unable to articulate these distinctions as they impact the field of LIS. As a result of these experiences and gaps in shared vocabularies and frameworks, the instructors desired to provide a space for re-imagining library and information services that seek to intervene in and disrupt the current structures. In keeping with Cope’s discussion of a how critical information literacy can be used by students to develop “an ability to question common sense notions of society,” this course assists students in “seeking to understand how social subjects have been prevented from asking particular question in certain discourses” and position critical informa-

tion literacies “within a broader social context” (2010, p. 21).

The Normative Landscape

How can a course such as this function to create change in the library and information science field, locate interventions, and shift our professional and social environment? Graduate students had been vocal about the lack of social, cultural, critical and feminist LIS faculty after a wave of retirements and promotions to other universities. There were other questions to be asked: What was the cause of the class no longer being taught? How was demand met through tracking and advising into other non-specific diversity courses? Were there students who wanted it prior to the town hall meeting about racism, but were unable to take it because of its lack of existence? What does it mean when a class that is also an undergraduate course is considered to be on the same level as this course, since the class had previously been a combination course? During the course of teaching and taking this class, we examined some of these questions.

Pedagogical Foundations

Addressing the ways in which power and privilege function in and through LIS required the instructors to critically evaluate their own positions. They evaluated the lack of qualified teachers for this course in the School and how this was implicated in hiring decisions, but also questioned why the responsibility for such material could be left to doctoral students and how this was read by faculty who did not opt to teach this course. Did this mean that this was not important material central to the core of the school? One of the challenges in using theoretical models that critically examine race, gender, and sexuality is the implication for *who* can teach a course like this. The instructors were compelled to probe the subjectivities that they brought to the course, both as Black and White

women, as women deeply steeped in heteronormativity and as upwardly mobile working-class to middle-class professionals in the process of earning Ph.D.s. The position of the instructors as doctoral students may have allowed them to navigate the borders of the traditional power relationship between student and instructor in less traditional ways. They were still aware of the student experience, and sought to introduce transparent information about the functioning of the school and graduate program, especially as it was historically positioned in relation to race, gender, and sexuality. At the same time, they facilitated dialogue from a position of authority, preventing the class from stagnating or failing to engage the course materials with depth and rigor.

They turned often to previous research and scholarly literature to better inform the practice of teaching—from Friere, McCarthy and Tatum in Education to Pawley and Honma in LIS. Friere’s work (1970) was important for the examination of information, and literacy, and in structuring narratives that both socialize and construct identity for readers/users of information. This was a helpful background for the instructors when they imagined what it meant for Master’s level students in the library and information school to ground their learning against their own respective identities. It also reminded them to account for the diversity of class, race and gender/sexuality identities that were present in the classroom. Friere focuses on the process of learning, and the roles of both the teacher and the learner in teaching literacy, which they expanded to the realm of information literacy. There are important implications for looking at his work in the way they thought about establishing the classroom dynamic:

... it is the teacher who chooses the words and proposes them to the learner. Insofar as the primer [book or information] is the mediating object between the teacher and students, and the students are to be “filled”

with words the teachers have chosen, one can easily detect a first important dimension of the image of man that begins to emerge here. It is the profile of a man whose consciousness is “spatialized,” and must be “filled” or “fed” in order to know (Freire, 1970, p. 2).

This was not easy to do because to create an environment that is safer for discussions that are deeply personal, and often un- or under-examined on issues of race, gender, sexuality and power, all participants in the course are dependent upon one another to contribute thoughts and ideas to the three hour session. Many times the instructors felt that students expected to be “filled” with knowledge and there was a very clear expectation that they would “be taught something practical” that they could apply on the job, leaving theory by the wayside.

Freire is critical of the frameworks that see people who do not know yet (the illiterate) as needing to be “fed” or in need of digesting words and knowledge, and the instructors often tried to resist the symbiotic relationship that exists between wanting to generate a different kind of learning environment than what was expected, and even wanted, by some students. Freire discusses the way that narratives “establish a relationship between knowing how to read and getting good jobs that, in fact, cannot be borne out. This naiveté reveals, at least, a failure to perceive the structure not only of literacy, but of social phenomena in general” (1970, p. 4). He talks about the process of marginalization that happens through the text itself, and this is important when looking at what kind of materials are used in information literacy efforts. The instructors often felt that this was directly applicable to the learning environment of students in the course—the students felt that their direct acquisition of knowledge derived from readings on these topics could translate to the job market, rather than finding ways to situate the process of becoming educated within the

structural constraints that force them to relate to education as a commodity. This course was an opportunity to try and constantly interrogate the process by which instructors taught and students learned, while attempting to shift the conventional ways in which education is both delivered and consumed. It is through this process of delivery and consumption that the narratives of race, gender, multiculturalism and sexuality are also fed and digested.

Within library and information science, these narratives have been subjugated or muted by a constant call for neutrality. Neutrality is not only seen as the ideal, desired trait of the librarian or information science professional, but also is also invoked as an ideal both explicitly and implicitly at the institutional, practical, and technological levels. Much as Pacey (1985) and Winner (2000) argue that technological artifacts are embedded with cultural values and are intertwined in socio-political contexts, library and information institutions, practices, and technologies are also embedded in cultural and socio-political contexts. Ideas of neutrality are often supported by provisional inclusion of materials related to diversity that fall in line with multiculturalist narratives of effective pedagogy. These include the use of one specific week to focus on topics related to race, sexuality, class, colonialism, and other critical topics that have real world implications for the future of the profession. Addressing these topics as a “special event” that interrupts the flow of coursework continues to Other those who identify as the represented identity groups or who are engaged in critical research around LIS, and mirrors the process of institutionalized diversity that is designed to reaffirm the university in a liberal dialogue of diversity without effecting or supporting actual institutional change (a process discussed in Ahmed, 2012).

Mapping who is served and who gains in different LIS spheres, as well as who is overlooked or exploited, is a critical activity for situating LIS in the wider context

of American cultural values and socio-political structures and strategies. Learning practical skills divorced from these contexts have the effect of unconsciously reproducing systems of privilege and oppression, further masking how inequity is created and maintained in society. Elmborg (2006) similarly argues that conceptions of neutrality affect students as participants in academia, and have a specific impact on LIS students. He suggests that students need to “develop a critical consciousness about libraries” rather than be educated only about task-related library processes (2006, p.198). To effectively do a critical mapping of power in and around the LIS field, it is necessary to identify and name the dominant cultural values that are privileged in American society.

Framing the Course

McIntosh’s (1989) classic work, “Unpacking the Knapsack of White Privilege” was an essential starting point for discussing the lenses that students bring to the classroom, particularly in a course addressing issues of race, gender and sexuality. Many students with undergraduate exposure to gender and women’s studies were familiar with this manifesto. The instructors presented McIntosh’s work early in the course and pushed the class to unpack what was in the knapsack of the discipline of library and information science. This was helpful in engaging conversations about institutional elements of racism and classism and how these manifest in types of oppression that we may not be aware our peers are experiencing in the graduate program and more broadly across the profession.

The notion of seeing oneself as an oppressor was helpful (McIntosh, 1989, p. 96). The instructors did not lecture explicitly on this topic except to help students surface the ways in which privilege actually manifests in concrete, tangible decisions—decisions that they will be responsible for making in their personal and professional

lives. This allowed for students to distinguish themselves as human beings taking a series of actions throughout the course of their lives rather than compartmentalizing course materials to the realm of “professional development.” This set the groundwork for discussions to address what it means to be a responsible, accountable person in every area of life, and especially as an information professional.

Oppression is increasingly difficult for students to grasp, which the instructors attribute to the lack of language and practice most Americans have in discussions about various forms of oppression and power that are manifest in contemporary U.S. society. Getting to the point of questioning why things are the way they are and what policies and practices have led to these relations was important. An examination of legislation that limits the possibilities of social and political change, such as the PATRIOT Act, encouraged students to question the structures that influence information access and position those interested in these types of change as potentially treasonous and labeling them as “un-American.”

Leveraging the work of McIntosh, Pawley (2006) examines White privilege at an institutional level in the profession. She is particularly critical of the racist assumptions that favor Whites in LIS schools and the profession, which is part of the impetus that inspired the instructors’ effort to resurrect this course. She demonstrates in her research how the words “race”, “diversity” and “multiculturalism” obscure a helpful analysis of how oppressive practices are structured in LIS discourse. Though there had been few complaints voiced in the public community of our school about deliberate acts of racism, the pervasive privileging of Whiteness was under-discussed and was objected to through formal channels of administration. With this knowledge, the course was structured to offer an opportunity to examine Whiteness in the context of LIS rather than continuing to use the otherizing language of diversity

and multiculturalism to put focus on those who were not White as the focus of inquiry, debate, concern or problem-solving.

Students in the course benefited from a focus on how these behaviors are often manifest under the auspices of colorblind ideology. Pawley (2006) gives an excellent analysis of how colorblindness works as a mechanism to pretend racism (and sexism) away. She says:

Without a clear and intellectually rigorous understanding of race as perhaps the major component of multiculturalism, we fail in our teaching and research to go beyond what Peterson has decried as a “feel-good definition of difference” and will continue to trivialize a feature of American society that is deeply destructive (Pawley, 2006, p. 153).

This, then, was a defining feature of framing the course early in the semester such that students were engaging at the personal level of reflection and upon the professional aspects of library and information science that instantiate power differentials. To be neutral within a White dominant society is to go along with the power structures that privilege some (Whites) at the expense of others (non-Whites) (Jensen, 2005). The instructors thought it valuable to reanalyze what LIS is supposed to stand for within a society where neutrality and equality are not one in the same.

In this course, the instructors made a concerted effort to use scholars of color and women in LIS to draw attention to the ways that lack of representation in the field directly impacts what can be studied, and from whose vantage points and epistemologies. This was also a means to address the dominant narratives of neutrality in LIS curriculum by illustrating that many of the articles and resources considered to be authoritative were authored by individuals that fit into the categories of privilege that were being discussed. McCarthy (1994) describes informal and formal educational constructs and how these impact the learner:

By emphasizing the relationality of school knowledge, one also raises the question of the ideological representation of dominant and subordinate groups in education and in the popular culture. By “representation,” I refer not only to mimesis or the presence or absence of images of minorities and third-world people in textbooks; I refer also to the question of power that resides in the specific arrangement and deployment of subjectivity in the artifacts of the formal and informal culture (McCarthy, 1994).

It was interesting to watch students’ critiques of authors like Honma (2005), who are bringing a critical lens to the LIS profession, especially on issues of race juxtaposed to their tacit acceptance of Pawley or McIntosh. In other, similar courses, the instructors had witnessed Honma’s work criticized as “angry” or “full of rage” because it is not mainstream to hear scholars of color critique power and inequality in LIS. Further research with students might include looking at the dissonance between student expectations of the profession, themselves, and the critiques of the profession as being normatively White and heterosexual.

Taking the Class

Students were able to use their own identities and experiences to navigate the course material. Most of the students who took this course identify as a minority within one or multiple of the dominant themes (non-White, born and socialized as female, non-heterosexual, or non-U.S. citizen). This allowed for a coming together of various students who understood that there are issues that need to be addressed within LIS even if they may not know how to create effective change within the discipline.

For the students collaborating on this article, owning their own identities and experiences which brought them to be interested in this subject matter illustrates that objectivity and neutrality do not guide LIS theory or practice. This prevents them

from falling victim to the same system they are critiquing. An emphasis on racial, gender, and sexual issues is not neutral or objective, but we would argue that nothing is neutral (Pacey, 1985; Winner, 2000). It is important to allow others to see and understand biases (i.e. expertise) when dealing with minority issues in LIS.

While students self-selected to participate in this elective course, their interest in the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality within the LIS field does not guarantee that they all are coming into the conversation with the same foundational knowledge. In addition, this self-selection often leads to participants identifying intersectionally with one or more of the identities represented within the course. Dealing with issues surrounding identity is often an emotional work that cannot be taken lightly. Speaking from experience can lead to others to believe that there is a single experience within any of the corresponding bodies under the same or similar categories. We believe it is imperative that these moments of experiential knowledge be validated but also recognized as individual understandings. As Luke warns, "We cannot afford to privilege experience at the expense of theory, the local at the expense of the global" (1992, p. 49). There must simultaneously exist a space for individuals to conceptualize their own position within society, which takes these concepts off of a singular lived experience and places them within social hierarchies of privilege. The larger social structures pervade every aspect of life but affect every individual in a varying way that cannot be universalized.

Encountering works from a variety of fields presented a daunting task for students. The readings were rigorous and the discussions were difficult without a commonly shared vocabulary or understanding. Students often left the class feeling a little disheartened by the process of unpacking how privilege functions within LIS and society. It is within this entire struggle, however, that this course is un-

imaginably powerful. Despite the difficult and sometimes painful encounters with the subject matter, the fact that the conversation is taking place is critical to the creation of an awareness that challenges the current structures of LIS and provides the space to imagine new opportunities for the field. These feelings of discomfort, which are often described as negative, were, in the case of this course, generative. They were a part of the process of students internalizing and personally relating to the course information and were accompanied by intense reflection on the current state of LIS, LIS education, and the students' role as either complicit with or working against current normative practices within LIS. Students were also equipped with practical information about making change, and examined models of libraries that work toward social justice.

The course was structured in a way that discouraged students from simply doing the work in order to obtain a grade. Theories of race, racialization, gender, sex, and sexuality were incorporated into discussions about the practice of LIS. Furthermore, because LIS is a hugely diverse and interdisciplinary field of study, creating course content that speaks to the entire breadth of the field and provides the necessary background is difficult in a single course. Theories of race, gender, and sexuality can each easily have entire degree programs devoted to them (and do under the auspices of programs like African-American Studies, Chicano/Latino Studies, Native American Studies and Gender and Women's Studies) and bringing students up to speed on these theories while also relating them back to the incredibly diverse field of LIS is extremely difficult. This course is the starting point for a change that begins in the training field for LIS, and these newly educated LIS professionals are positioned to positively spark change and provide critical insight into all areas of library and information science. Students left the course aware of their own positions within the field, and viewed LIS

not as an established and unchangeable discipline but as a ground for negotiation and change. They were encouraged to take (and have taken) action in their future coursework by raising the issues discussed in this course, whether or not they were included (or included provisionally) within the established syllabus of these courses.

Reflection: What is the Effectiveness of this Course as an Intervention?

While this course was positioned as an intervention/interference within the current coursework offered at the school, there were limitations to the salience of its effect. As an elective course, it drew students who were already interested in critical issues, theoretically and/or due to their own subject positions and experiences of racialization, homophobia, and sexism within other classes at the graduate program and in the larger society. This meant that the course primarily attracted students who were potentially more inclined to take a critical stance on the issues addressed in the course. Other courses within the LIS curriculum do not always address how race, gender, and sexuality shape and are shaped by individuals in the library and information professions. Students who did not attend the course may have limited introductions to these topics, or may be positioned to draw from their own experiences or take individual initiative to challenge normative assumptions that are inherent in other LIS courses (such as the value of neutrality, discussed above). Historically, the demand by academics and other powerful groups for an "authentic" person's voice or culture to be heard has been received by disenfranchised people with a great deal of suspicion. Why must the "oppressed" speak? For whose benefit, do we/do they speak? How is the speaking received, interpreted, controlled, limited, disciplined and stylized by the speakers, the listeners, the historical moment, the context? What use is made of the "people's voice" after it is heard? (Orner, 1992, p. 76).

Tatum has argued that students in classes that openly address racism often experience anxiety and a reluctance to discuss the subject matter even in the safe space of the class devoted to the topic (1992). Asking those same students to take the knowledge gained in the course and use it to identify and speak out against hidden power relationships in other classes places a huge burden on them when they are just beginning to feel comfortable with the material. It asks them to challenge authority figures and to break through a culture of silence on these issues at the same time.

Additionally, the few minority identities (non-White, feminine/female, and non-heterosexual) given attention and critical analysis in this course make up the entirety of populations underserved by the current "neutral" library system. It is important, therefore, that we draw a line pointing to the lenses with which library and information science field was analyzed in this discussion and in the classroom. This is not meant to devalue other experiences that were not made focal in the course, or claim them as invalid in any way. Instead, the hope is that this article has established a call for further investigation to be done, not only within the framework of race, gender, sex, and sexuality, but also class, age, religion, political affiliation, and any other identity that marks a body as Other.

It is tempting to suggest that redesigning the entire curriculum to better address power issues would give all professors and students in the program a common vocabulary and knowledge base with which to address race, gender, sexuality, and power relations within LIS. While this may move the burden of identifying and speaking out against power imbalances from the small subset of students who take this course and place it on the entire library and information science community, this technical fix does not address the ways in which change occurs. Change within LIS must come from individuals who are willing to recognize and work against the current structures of power and privilege, as they relate

to race, gender, and sexuality (and to other identity positions) as Honma and Pawley called upon the LIS profession to do many years ago. This requires the commitment of professors, administrators, staff, institutions, and associations, and the individuals that comprise them, to work toward real and lasting social and political change, even at the expense of their own privilege. We believe that what is institutional is also deeply personal, and that a shift in LIS will take a concerted collective effort to recognize and act against historical and current structures of oppression.

Conclusion

This course is both absolutely necessary but also incomplete and, by virtue of being “the only one” at the graduate level, presents some challenges as an intervention. On one hand, students who do not feel that their identity is sufficiently represented within the general LIS courses are being provided a space to discuss these issues. Within the context of this specific course, students obtained or expanded a vocabulary with which to express criticisms they may have about the current silences surrounding the privileging of Whiteness, heterosexuality, and maleness at the center of the profession. Students who gained facility with these conversations have taken this knowledge into other classrooms and conversations with their peers and instructors, effecting a kind of diffusion of knowledge and continuing a possible process of institutional change.

On the other hand, this course can be pointed to by administrators, faculty and students as a sufficient response to the grievances expressed by some members of the Library & Information Science school. By creating this space, it allows for all of the responsibility of addressing these issues to fall upon the very people who are having issues with the atmosphere of the school in the first place. Inevitably, the course is thus considered imperative yet problematic. It both addresses a critical

issue facing the LIS profession while giving an option for the privileged to opt-out of the discussion yet again. In imagining a way to address this dilemma, we began to reconfigure what the topic of the course could be to shift the responsibility off of the shoulders of those who are afflicted. In the end both the instructors and the students developing this reflection keep coming back to a key question for future research in this area. We ask ourselves: What would it mean to rename the course “Whiteness, Heteronormativity, Patriarchy and Class Privilege in the Information Professions,” rather than its current title, “Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Information Professions.” Through the reconfiguration of the topic of the course the conversation becomes an opportunity to reconceptualize paradigms in LIS, rather than continue the struggle to explain the lived experiences of those that are racially, gendered to be, and sexually outside of positions of power.

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