

“Begging to be heard”: The Professional Exclusion and Marginalization of
Neurodivergent Librarians

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A dissertation
submitted in partial fulfillment of
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

University of Washington

2025

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Program Authorized to Offer Degree:

The Information School

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Abstract

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While libraries are increasingly implementing practices and services designed to serve neurodivergent patrons, such efforts have not yet extended to neurodivergent library employees. Libraries consistently claim access and equity as foundational professional values, as outlined in the American Library Association’s Core Values of Librarianship, but these values also need to be upheld through actions within library workplaces instead of solely through resources and services provided for patrons (American Library Association, 2006b). Librarianship may be a profession that is appealing to neurodivergent workers, potentially due to an alignment between the strengths of neurodivergence and the goals and needs of librarianship (Attar,

2021). Yet the lived experiences and workplace needs of neurodivergent librarians remain under-researched and there are no guidelines or established practices in libraries for fostering neuroinclusive workplaces. Not only have the experiences of neurodivergent librarians been overlooked, but library literature has predominantly adopted a pathologized approach to neurodiversity that reinforces harmful, ableist narratives about neurodiversity and neurodivergent people. My work addresses that gap by investigating the employment experience of neurodivergent librarians in public and academic libraries and identifying barriers to and enablers of access, inclusion, and empowerment. To do so, I have highlighted the voices of neurodivergent librarians and their journey of negotiating identity and deploying embodied knowledge to navigate the barriers and enablers they encounter in their workplace and in the library profession.

Historically, research has been conducted on neurodivergent people from a medicalized perspective, focusing on the diagnosis and characteristics of individuals, and often proposing some kind of intervention for the individual person to change them or their behavior in some manner. This study intentionally works in opposition to that perspective, adopting a neurodiversity and critical disability theory approach to conducting research with and by neurodivergent people themselves, and in alignment with their priorities. Critical disability theory, also referred to as critical disability studies (CDS), and its sub-field neurodiversity studies, serves as the critical lens through which this study examines neurodiversity employment in libraries. Critical disability theory draws attention to the societal norms,

assumptions, structures, and practices that presume a normate bodymind to the exclusion of other ways of being.

To conduct an in-depth examination of neurodiversity employment in the profession of librarianship, I employed a single embedded case study design to investigate the phenomenon of neurodiversity employment in librarianship. To explore the depth and breadth of the experiences of neurodivergent librarians, neurodivergent supervisors, and their colleagues, and to investigate the context of librarianship, this study used a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis, employing content analysis of interview data and document analysis of library standards and competencies. This study makes use of multiple sources of evidence, including interviews with neurodivergent librarians, neurodivergent supervisors, and neurotypical librarians, along with a document analysis of professional standards and competencies. Evidence was obtained from multiple sources not solely for the purpose of data triangulation, but primarily to gain insight into multiple perspectives within the library workplace.

Through interviews with neurodivergent librarians and supervisors, interviews with neurotypical librarians and supervisors, and document analysis of guiding professional documents, my analysis found that neurodivergent librarians encounter a variety of barriers in their library workplaces, from the physical environment to the lack of transparent communication. Yet this study also revealed that neurodivergent librarians employ their own learned expertise in navigating such challenges to improve their workplace experience, while neurodivergent supervisors are actively enacting that knowledge in ways that facilitate

organizational change. Yet findings from this study also indicate that the labor and effort taken up by neurodivergent librarians to respond to their lack of workplace access comes with a cost that is added to the burden associated with the strong service-orientation of library work. In other words, the work of making library workplaces accessible and inclusive often falls to the individual because library work environments are designed and maintained in ways that exclude neurodivergent librarians.

My work, then, expands library and neurodiversity employment literature by drawing attention to the multi-dimensional aspects of neurodivergent people's identities and by analyzing the impact of professional norms and expectations on the workplace experiences of neurodivergent librarians. Through the development of my approach to 'centering neurodivergence,' I also contribute a new research paradigm for future research on neurodiversity that upends normative assumptions and practices to honor neurodivergent ways of being researchers and doing research. Furthermore, this dissertation highlights the need to create library organizations that aren't only serving patrons but are also enacting critical access and collective care within the workplace, thus honoring the core values of librarianship and increasing the capacity of libraries to recruit, onboard, retain, and advance neurodivergent librarians. As library workers are increasingly asked to defend the existence of libraries and the work of librarianship, addressing care injustice is vital so library work remains sustainable without further cost to neurodivergent librarians, and to everyone else in this field.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I am deeply grateful to the neurodivergent librarians who participated in this study and trusted me with their stories. We talked, laughed, and cried together, and I will not forget that experience of shared understanding. Thank you.

Second, I'm not sure I have the words to adequately express my thanks to my advisor, mentor, and co-conspirator, Dr. Hala Annabi. (Maybe I should just send chocolate?) What I can express, however, is my appreciation for your guidance, support, and trust in me and in this work. I will always remember our first conversation and how I became emotional because I didn't expect you to be so ready and willing to do this work with me. You continually made it possible for me to keep going, even when I wasn't sure how I was going to get through another week. But week after week, you have been there for me and with me, so I'll see you next week, right? This is only the beginning, and we have much more to do together!

I also extend special thanks to my committee, Dr. Marika Cifor, Helene Williams, and Dr. Stephanie Kerschbaum. The times we have all been able to gather to talk about my work have been a true privilege. Thank you to all of you for encouraging me and pushing me to embrace my work, my perspectives, and my voice. All three of you were always willing to take time from your busy schedules to talk through something with me and make suggestions, and I know my work is better for that. And thank you especially to Dr. Stephanie Kerschbaum, whose efforts and support extended well beyond the typical GSR role.

Although dissertations are filed under the name of an individual person, this work did not happen without assistance from others, so I also want to thank those who provided

different forms of support along the way, including Dr. Joanne Woiak, Dr. Heather Evans, Lex Van Horn, and my cohort in the Disability Studies Graduate Certificate Program.

Undertaking a PhD is no easy task, and beginning one at the start of a global pandemic proved especially challenging. Over the years, I've had to hold onto the things that are special to me to sustain myself through the difficult times. Thanks, coffee and chocolate! But also thank you to the team at Bioware, whose Mass Effect and Dragon Age games provided entertainment and a welcome respite through characters and stories that helped remind me of my own strength and that I am a writer of stories, too.

Hopefully the music isn't playing me out just yet, because I also want to thank Alanna Matty, my music mentor, for helping me find joy in music again, even when it was hard to muster the energy for anything other than this research. Thank you for helping me make time for restorative moments in my life, too.

I could not have made this journey without the person who is my best friend, partner, *colleague*, and co-conspirator, or without the snuggles and company of our cats. Thank you for being my home filled with love.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF WOLFI MOELLER, WHO HELD ON LONG ENOUGH TO MAKE SURE I SURVIVED THE FIRST YEAR
OF MY PHD PROGRAM. I MADE IT, WOLFI! LOVE YOU AND MISS YOU SO MUCH.

This work was made possible through funding from the Institute for Museum and Library Services.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In the United States, libraries serve as “cornerstones” of their communities by providing free access to “books, ideas, resources, and information” that is “imperative for education, employment, enjoyment, and self-government” (American Library Association, 2006a). Library workers develop, lead, and maintain services and programs that support the needs of their communities, such as fostering early literacy and digital literacy, developing diverse collections, debunking disinformation, providing internet access, and during the pandemic even connecting their communities with access to vaccinations (American Library Association, 2022).

With the goal of serving their communities, libraries have begun to practice neuroinclusion for patrons but have yet to do so for neurodivergent library workers. Librarianship may be a profession that is appealing to neurodivergent workers, potentially due to an alignment between the strengths of neurodivergence and the goals and needs of librarianship (Attar, 2021). Yet the lived experiences and workplace needs of neurodivergent librarians remain under-researched and there are no guidelines or established practices in libraries for fostering neuroinclusive workplaces. Accommodations may provide some individual support for employees who are willing and able to request them, but are inadequate for creating inclusive workplaces, and in some cases may lead to further stigmatization, co-worker hostility, and unauthorized disclosure of disabilities (Pionke, 2019; Schomberg, 2018). Libraries consistently claim diversity and equity as foundational professional values, as outlined in the American Library Association’s Core Values of Librarianship, but these values also need to be

upheld through actions within library workplaces instead of solely through resources and services provided for patrons (American Library Association, 2006b).

Not only have the experiences of neurodivergent librarians been overlooked, but library literature has predominantly adopted a pathologized approach to neurodiversity that reinforces harmful, ableist narratives about neurodiversity and neurodivergent people. The prevalence of these harmful narratives signals to neurodivergent library workers that libraries may not be safe spaces for their authentic selves. Furthermore, the literature on neurodiversity in libraries includes few neurodivergent voices or authors, resulting in a lack of representation and misconceptions about neurodiversity and the experiences and strengths of neurodivergent people. The lack of neuroinclusive practices in librarianship inhibits the hiring, retention, and advancement of neurodivergent librarians, whose perspective is desperately needed to improve representation and libraries' ability to meet the needs of their neurodiverse community.

Defining Neurodiversity and Neurodivergence

Neurodiversity is a term that remains contested and may refer to a biological fact, an ideology, or a movement (Ne'eman & Pellicano, 2022). The term neurodiversity emerged in an online autistic community in the 1980s as a new category of intersectionality, and originates from attempts to name the idea that some minds and ways of being are assumed to be 'normal' while others are not (Kapp, 2020). By definition, the "concept of a norm, unlike that of an ideal, implies that the majority of the population must or should somehow be part of the norm" and therefore "with the concept of the norm comes the concept of deviations of extremes" (Davis,

2013, p. 3). Neurodiversity has come to refer to “both neurodivergent people (those with a condition that renders their neurocognitive functioning significantly different from a “normal” range) and neurotypical people (those within that socially acceptable range)” (Kapp, 2020, p. 2). Neurodivergence includes numerous forms of neurological differences, such as autism, ADHD, dyspraxia, dyslexia, although who should be included is still a subject of debate (Botha & Gillespie-Lynch, 2022; Kapp, 2020). Neurodivergence can also refer to an identity and to the complex embodiment (Siebers, 2019) of a disability. For the purposes of my research, neurodiversity refers to the full range of neurological *differences* that are an expected part of human variation. I intentionally refer to differences here in resistance to pathologizing language, such as condition, deficit, or impairment, in alignment with the neurodiversity movement, which complicates and resists constructions of a normative neurotype, particularly as pathologized through the medical model of disability.

Language Matters

Language is “constructive of social life” and thus serves to “make a case, take a particular stance, and produce identities” (Bottema-Beutel et al., 2020, p. 3). How things are named reflects power structures, ideologies, and dominant social norms (Fairclough, 2013). Language can also shift over time and will continue to shift after this dissertation has been published. Words like ‘disabled’ or ‘disability’ have historically been used to exclude and other (Davis, 2013), but such words have also been reclaimed to serve as an important aspect of identity (for example, the term *queer*). As Pickens (2019) astutely observes, “no language regarding disability

is neutral” (8). Person-first language (as in person with a disability) was adopted in the 1970s in resistance to the stigma of disability, and to place emphasis on the importance of the person and all of the various facets of their identity instead of focusing solely on their disability (Vivanti, 2020). This language was also meant to signal that disabled people had rights like all other people. Although person-first language is still favored by some, disability scholars (e.g. Titchkosky, 2001) and advocates (e.g. Sinclair, 1999) have critiqued this language, suggesting for example that the construction of ‘person *with* a disability’ implies that the person could and would exist in a normative state without that disability (Titchkosky, 2001). Similarly, this construction suggests that it may be *necessary* for a disabled person to re-assert their humanity because disability is viewed as inconsistent with being a human being (Sinclair, 1999). Additionally, person-first language potentially upholds disability stigma, because positive characteristics used to describe people “are appropriately stated as adjectives,” as in ‘creative person’ or ‘athletic person’ (Sinclair, 1999). Thus person first language “belongs to the pathology paradigm” and situates disability or neurodiversity as a problem, or something that is wrong with someone (Botha et al., 2023).

Identity-first language (e.g., disabled person, autistic person) flips the person-first language construction to emphasize disability as a positive aspect of a person’s identity. This language is meant to “recognize, affirm, and validate an individual's identity,” (L. X. Z. Brown, 2011) and also aligns with the neurodiversity movement which treats neurological diversity as an aspect of human biodiversity, and not as a problem or disorder in need of cure or treatment (Botha et al., 2023). Yet language around disability and neurodiversity remains contested and

preferences can vary greatly from one person to another. For example, one person may contend that they are not disabled and may refer to themselves as “on the spectrum” while another might identify as disabled and prefer to be called “autistic.” These language preferences matter and will be respected to the best of my ability when discussing research participants. As a neurodivergent researcher myself, I have carefully chosen language throughout this dissertation that aligns with the general preferences of neurodivergent people and best practices for neuroinclusive research, such as those outlined by AASPIRE (Nicolaidis et al., 2019). In keeping with such practices, this dissertation will employ identity-first language instead of person-first language. This language choice also reflects my own preference, as a disabled and neurodivergent researcher, because I believe that disabilities should not require a person to reassert their humanity, nor are they something we can set aside when we choose.

This work brings together research from multiple fields which often have different words for similar concepts. Tension also exists between fields on the usage of words and terms. For example, the word “neuroinclusion” when used in neurodiversity employment research refers to changes made to the workplace environment, and not the individual. In alignment with the social model of disability, this term is used to represent the idea that neurodiversity is not only “included” but is normalized and anticipated within the workplace. Yet critical theory scholars might ask what it means to be “included” in an exploitative capitalist system and whether that should be the goal of neuroinclusion, suggesting instead alternative terms such as “access” or “critical access” (Crooks, 2019a; Hamraie, 2017). This dissertation does not seek to resolve the tensions among these areas of scholarship, but instead brings these research areas into

generative conversation to build on and strengthen existing work. Unless otherwise specified, I will use language that is appropriate to each area of scholarship under discussion.

Key Terms Defined

Access

Libraries emphasize the need for access to information, but in this study, access refers to the “way people have of relating to the ways they are embodied as beings in the particular places where they find themselves” (Titchkosky, 2011, p. 3). Access, then, involves how people engage with the space and environment around them, including the physical and sensory space but also other aspects of the environment, such as which bodyminds are anticipated and which are not.

Bodymind

Bodymind refers to the ways that ‘body’ and ‘mind’ are not separate but are intertwined, while also acknowledging that conceptions of body and mind are simultaneously informed and impacted by other aspects of identity, such as race, ethnicity, class, and gender. Bodymind is thus “a sociopolitically constituted and material entity that emerges through both structural (power- and violence-laden) contexts and also individual (specific) experience” (M. Price, 2015, p. 271).

Disability

Disability is often defined as an individual limitation or deficit, but this study resists such framing of disability and instead situates disability as a positive identity (*e.g.*, ‘disabled’) and way of knowing and interacting with the world. Therefore, disability is intentionally broadly defined to accommodate a wide variety of bodyminds, with the recognition that disability is not situated within an individual but in the interactions that lead to a bodymind “misfitting,” which occurs when there is an “incongruent relationship between two things, a square peg in a round hole” (Garland-Thomson, 2011, p. 592).

Disability models

Disability models represent the various ways that people and society conceive of disabilities and disabled people. These models vary greatly, as models of disability have evolved along with human understanding of and response to disability. Disability models do not represent theory, then, but instead are different assumptions made about what it means to be disabled.

Neurodivergent

Neurodivergent people are those whose bodyminds and ways of being do not align with dominant social norms. This language also continues to change and evolve, with some people now preferring terms like neurodistinct or neurospicy. Although this study focuses specifically on Autistic, ADHD, and AuDHD librarians, I use the word ‘neurodivergent’ throughout to reflect

the co-occurring forms of neurodivergence reported by participants, such as depression, dyslexia, and dyscalculia.

Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity does not reflect a specific diagnosis but includes a multitude of different bodyminds, including both those who are neurotypical and those who are neurodivergent. I use this term to acknowledge that some bodyminds regularly experience misfitting (as detailed above under 'Disability').

Neuroinclusion

Neuroinclusion refers to the creation of policies, practices, and environments that are designed to support and sustain neurodivergent people. In neurodiversity employment research, this term describes changes to the work environment, including aspects of the workplace such as organizational culture, that contribute to the success of neurodivergent employees.

Neurotypical

Neurotypical people are those whose bodyminds and ways of being align with dominant social norms, and thus they are considered 'typical.' I use this term to acknowledge that some bodyminds do not regularly experience misfitting (as detailed above under 'Disability').

Background

As an academic librarian, I witnessed first-hand the ways that libraries focus on access and inclusion for their disabled patrons but fail to consider how that might apply to library workplaces. Currently, library practices and library literature predominantly examine neurological differences, or neurodiversity, as a service issue addressed by considering the needs of patrons and suggesting methods for meeting those needs (Cho, 2018; Layden et al., 2021; Small et al., 2019). Projects such as Targeting Autism, Project PALS, Project ENABLE, and Project A+ have sought to increase library worker knowledge about disability and neurodiversity, but all with the goal of improving services and programs for library patrons (A. Anderson & Everhart, 2015; Small et al., 2014). Such projects overlook the existence and experiences of disabled library workers, including neurodivergent librarians. Library practices and literature reflect an unstated assumption that library workers themselves are not disabled, rather they are situated as the privileged service provider who must work to meet the needs of others without having needs of their own, which reflects the feminized nature of the profession (Ettarh, 2018; Schlesselman-Tarango, 2016).

Not only does library literature barely acknowledge invisible disabilities like chronic illness, mental illness, and neurological differences, but it also approaches all disabilities through the medical or deficit model of disability (A. Gibson et al., 2021a). In other words, disability is predominantly framed as an individual deficit in need of a solution, and the social and political aspects of disability are largely disregarded (A. Gibson et al., 2021a; Kumbier & Starkey, 2016). The limited literature that has begun to examine the experiences of disabled

library workers suggests the need for a paradigmatic shift in how libraries and library workers conceive of disabilities and disabled library workers (A. Gibson et al., 2021a; Oud, 2019b; Schomberg, 2018). This literature also demonstrates a need for attention to invisible disabilities like neurological differences, which are largely overlooked (Lawrence, 2013; Tumlin, 2019). Additionally, library literature fails to address the complexities of neurodiversity and instead reproduces stereotypes of neurodivergence, overlooking structural issues like organizational culture and library employee attitudes (Pionke, 2020).

The occupational culture of librarianship also influences the workplace experiences of neurodivergent librarians. Research into the occupational culture of librarianship has explored a number of significant factors, including perceptions of professionalism (J. Brown & Leung, 2018; Drabinski, 2016; Hicks, 2014; Moeller, 2019; Seminelli, 2016), the service model (Arellano Douglas & Gadsby, 2020; Foster, 2007), the feminization of the profession (Emmelhainz et al., 2017; S. Evans et al., 2018; S. Higgins, 2017; Lapp, 2022; Sloniowski, 2016), and the other norms of the profession, especially whiteness and heteronormativity (Chou & Pho, 2018; Galvan, 2015; Hathcock, 2015; Hudson, 2017; Leung & López-McKnight, 2021; Schlesselman-Tarango, 2017). Yet research has not examined the impact of these factors on neurodivergent library workers. Currently, literature on the experiences of neurodivergent librarians is limited to a few publications (Alexander, 2021; A. Anderson, 2021; A. M. Anderson, 2020; Eng, 2017; Lawrence, 2013; Nalepinski, 2021; Tumlin, 2019). These publications are limited in scope and thus provide limited insight into the experiences of neurodivergent librarians, particularly regarding the impact of the professional norms and expectations of librarianship.

Study Objectives and Research Questions

Given that neurodivergent people face numerous barriers to workplace inclusion (S. Bruyère, 2019; Krzeminska et al., 2019), and that the experiences of neurodivergent library workers are under-researched, my work addressed this gap in the literature. The goal of this study was to address workplace barriers and foster neurodiversity-inclusive work environments in libraries. To achieve this goal, I focused on identifying workplace barriers and developing specific methods and practices for improving employment experiences for neurodivergent library workers. The intended result was to improve inclusion, retention, and promotion of neurodivergent librarians. To do so, this research examined four questions:

1. What barriers and enablers to workplace inclusion and empowerment do neurodivergent librarians experience?
2. How do neurodivergent librarians navigate workplaces that may not be designed for them?
3. How do the norms and expectations of librarianship and library organizations impact the inclusion, exclusion, and marginalization of neurodivergent librarians?
4. How might neurotypical supervisors and employees adjust or alter their workplace environment and/or practices to increase libraries' capacity to recruit, onboard, retain, and advance neurodivergent librarians?

Of particular interest were the ways that workplace barriers to inclusion impact the lives and profession of neurodivergent librarians, and the interplay between the individual's lived experiences and the professional culture.

Theoretical Framework

My research followed a general feminist and critical disability studies approach, placing emphasis on privileging marginalized voices, challenging assumptions about who is capable of producing knowledge, and acknowledging identity as multi-dimensional. Critical disability studies served as a theoretical lens for this work, particularly scholarship on models of disability and the societal assumptions and beliefs about disabilities (Kafer, 2013; Oliver, 2013; Siebers, 2019). Disability justice and DisCrit literature build on these models by calling for attention to intersectionality, which holds that systems of power overlap and interact to create distinct impacts and experiences of multiple forms of oppression. For example, a white autistic man who is impacted by ableism will not experience the same manner of discrimination as a black autistic woman who is impacted by ableism, racism, and sexism (Annamma et al., 2016; Crenshaw, 1990; Mehrotra, 2010). Put in simpler terms, "we are all many things and they all impact us" (Sins Invalid, 2019). DisCrit and disability justice also argue for collective access, which acknowledges that we all have different needs that may vary according to the context, environment, and our own state of being (Mingus, 2010).

Additional disability studies literature draws attention to the ongoing presence and impact of ableism (Annamma et al., 2016; Bogart & Dunn, 2019; Lewis, 2022; Sins Invalid, 2019).

This research privileges the voices of neurodivergent librarians and expands the limited literature on the experiences of neurodivergent librarians in the field. To carry out this research, I used the Organizational Interventions Mitigating Individual Barriers Framework (OIMIB) as the conceptual framework to guide and organize my inquiry (Annabi & Locke, 2019). The OIMIB framework is relevant to neurodiversity employment in libraries because it examines the role of ableist perspectives and practices while also addressing the interplay between each individual's background and the organizational context. My research builds on OIMIB and strengthens it from the lens of critical disability theory.

Methodology

This research is an instrumental multiple embedded case study that follows an interpretive approach. The case study examines the phenomenon of neurodiversity employment in librarianship, with the profession of librarianship as the context for the two cases of public libraries and academic libraries. This study focused on two specific forms of neurodivergence, autism and ADHD, to allow for a diverse range of representation across other forms of identity, such as racial or sexual identity. I used feminist and disability studies interviewing techniques to elicit the stories and experiences of neurodivergent librarians, along with the experiences of their supervisors and co-workers (DeVault & Gross, 2014; S. Hesse-Biber, 2007; M. Price & Kerschbaum, 2016). I also conducted a document analysis of important library documents such as the American Library Association (ALA) Standards for Accreditation of Master's Programs in Library and Information Studies, the ALA Core Competencies for

Librarianship, and others in order to investigate the professional norms and expectations of librarianship. This document analysis then informed further analysis of the interview transcripts to examine how these norms and expectations surfaced in the workplace experiences of the librarian participants.

These methodological choices aligned with conceptions of critical disability studies as a “methodology” that examines social norms and societal conditions and “seeks to radically disrupt the multiple sociopolitical ideologies that assign more value to some bodies and minds than to others” (Minich, 2016). My research examined such norms, particularly within the professional culture of librarianship and its influence on library workplaces. So, too, did my research aim to surface knowledge and practices that will disrupt and transform existing social norms and expectations in support of justice for neurodivergent people (Minich, 2016; M. Price, 2012; Walker & Raymaker, 2021). Another key aspect of critical disability studies as a methodology is prioritizing the accessibility of the research process and research outcomes (Kerschbaum & Price, 2017; Lester & Nusbaum, 2021). Yet traditional research methods and practices often assume a ‘normative’ body and mind, so I also drew on work by disability studies and neurodiversity studies scholars to develop an approach to ‘centering neurodivergence,’ rooted in Price and Kerschbaum’s conception of “centering disability,” as an integral part of my research practices (Kerschbaum & Price, 2017; M. Price & Kerschbaum, 2016).

Impact/Significance of work

This study offers multiple contributions that are theoretical, methodological, and practical in nature. These contributions are relevant to LIS scholarship, neurodiversity employment research, and critical disability theory, while also adding to the knowledge and practices of library organizations. This work expands library literature and neurodiversity employment literature, situated in fields such as psychology, organizational management, and vocational rehabilitation, by drawing attention to the multi-dimensional aspects of neurodivergent people's identities and by identifying the barriers and enablers to inclusion that neurodivergent librarians encounter in the workplace. The emphasis throughout this work of a critical disability theory perspective further extends existing library and neurodiversity employment literature, as does the attention to the experiences of neurodivergent supervisors, which is minimally mentioned in the literature. Through the development of my approach to 'centering neurodivergence,' I also contribute a new research paradigm for future research on neurodiversity. This study also makes practical contributions to neurodiversity employment in library organizations, including identifying key barriers and success enablers for access and inclusion for neurodivergent librarians in library workplaces, and enumerating embodied knowledge practices and strategies that neurodivergent library workers can enact in the workplace to support their distinct needs and improve their success.

Study Limitations

Each decision made regarding the scope of this study creates potential limitations because as the study includes some populations, so it also excludes others. For example, this study focused specifically on autism and ADHD, leaving other forms of neurodivergence such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, intellectual disabilities, and many others for future research. Thus, this research may not accurately reflect the experiences of all neurodivergent librarians, although significant overlaps and similarities are anticipated. Similarly, because this study involved a limited number of neurodivergent librarians in the interview process, their perspectives may not fully align with the experiences of all neurodivergent library workers in public or academic libraries, especially given the wide variety of roles and job descriptions across the field. Neurotypical employees proved more difficult to recruit for this study than neurodivergent librarians. Given that many of the neurodivergent librarians reported that they did not feel safe disclosing to co-workers and supervisors, many library managers and administrators may not know that they have neurodivergent employees. Additionally, those I was able to recruit self-selected into the study, which likely resulted in a more positive attitude toward neurodiversity across this group, and a desire to improve their workplace practices.

Finally, the study focused on academic and public libraries, leaving out other forms of librarianship with different contexts, such as school librarians or special librarians. The research focused on the context of public and academic libraries so that it can be adapted for use in more specialized settings. Additionally, to address these limitations, this study deployed sampling that is “diverse enough to encourage broader applicability when relevant” (Miles et

al., 2020). This study can then serve as a foundation for additional research that addresses additional forms of neurodivergence and includes broader participation from neurodivergent librarians or other library workers. It is also important to observe that the methods for this study, namely the interviews, may have excluded any autistic or ADHD librarians with intellectual disabilities or those who felt unable to participate in an extended conversation. Because librarian positions often require an MLIS degree (or its equivalent) from an ALA-accredited institution, this may credential serve as a barrier for many people, including those with intellectual disabilities, and prevent them from entering the profession in the first place, or prevent them from obtaining librarian positions. Yet this is not the only pathway to librarianship, and further research in this area is needed, particularly to address the needs of library workers with intellectual disabilities.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter synthesizes the bodies of literature that are relevant to this research. The goals of this chapter are to ground the study in existing research from multiple fields, detail what is known and not yet explored in neurodiversity employment in libraries, and identify factors that impact neurodiversity employment relevant to the library context.

This study draws on literature from critical disability theory, library and information science, and research on neurodiversity employment to ground this work in critical theory and explore methods for creating a more just society for neurodivergent people. Critical disability theory, also referred to as critical disability studies (CDS), and its sub-field neurodiversity studies, serves as the critical lens through which this study examines neurodiversity employment in libraries. Critical disability studies literature on models of disability serves to interrogate how people conceptualize disability and the assumptions they make about disabilities and disabled people. Literature on disability justice and DisCrit contributes to understanding identity as multi-dimensional, and to investigating the role of intersectionality in neurodiversity employment. Library and information science literature provides essential context for the experiences of neurodivergent librarians and highlights significant factors in public and academic library employment (e.g. library workers' service orientation, the prevalence of vocational awe and low morale, whiteness, and the feminization of the

profession) that are distinct to the library profession. Neurodiversity employment literature examines the workplace context, the role of supervisors and co-workers in the workplace environment, and the supports and systems that improve the workplace experiences of neurodivergent employees.

*As someone whose autism and ADHD was identified later in life, I have spent most of my life trying to blend in, and then judging my efforts based on the reactions of other people. If people gave me strange looks, I knew I wasn't being all that successful. Across many decades of gauging my own behavior, words, and attitudes in this manner, I had come to value the voices and perspectives of others much more than my own. Beyond that, I had learned that whatever I was thinking was probably wrong, and I stopped trusting my own perspective. In the first draft of this chapter, I fully elevated the voices of the scholars whose work I was drawing on, while carefully leaving out my own voice. I told myself that I was speaking to my perspective by including these authors, these quotations, these perspectives in a manner of my own choosing. Why would anyone want to know what I thought, especially when these experienced scholars who clearly have more knowledge and experience than I do, could speak my thoughts for me? Sometimes I still struggle to answer that question, but on better days, I know that this dissertation needs to be **my** work, in **my** way, and in **my** words. I acknowledge that this effort remains a work in progress, but I will continue to push myself to speak my truth, take up space, and make myself visible so that I may better elevate the voices and perspectives of the participants in this research.*

Ableism and Societal Norms: Disability as a Marginalized Difference

Human beings exhibit a wide variety of differences, yet social norms privilege some bodies and minds while marginalizing others. Disability as a category has been used to marginalize people with disabilities but has also been *applied* to people, such as women, immigrants, and Black people, as a justification for inequitable treatment (Baynton, 2013; Davis, 2013; Lamp & Cleigh, 2011; Stubblefield, 2007). Social norms make such inequities appear

natural despite their social construction and reproduction. The marginalization and oppression of disabled people is referred to as ableism, which is “a system of assigning value to people’s bodies and minds based on societally constructed ideas of normalcy, productivity, desirability, intelligence, excellence, and fitness” (Lewis, 2022). This form of systemic oppression is “deeply rooted in eugenics, anti-Blackness, misogyny, colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism” (Lewis, 2022). Ableism impacts all people, including non-disabled people, because “ableist discourses circulate widely, and are not only in sites marked explicitly as about disability” (Kafer, 2013, p. 9). Ableism is deeply infused into our society, our organizations and workplaces, and our relationships with one another.

Ableism is apparent in narratives of ‘overcoming’ disability and in phrases like “differently abled” that seek the elimination of disability rhetorically or otherwise. Narratives of overcoming disability situate disability “as an internal condition that can only be mourned or celebrated, depending on a person’s effort and capacity to realign themselves with normative standards of fitness, productivity, and desirability” (Smilges, 2022, p. 15). Ableism may also appear to be well-intended, a form of ableism known as benevolent ableism that can “manifest as pity, paternalistic protection, and unprovoked praise for everyday activities” (Nario-Redmond et al., 2019, p. 729). The prevalence of ableism can also lead to internalized ableism, which is the “adoption by disabled people of ableist norms” (F. Campbell, 2009, p. 25). Across its numerous forms and sites, ableism “renders disability as abject, invisible, disposable, less than human, while able-bodiedness is represented as at once ideal, normal, and the mean or default” (Dolmage, 2017, p. 7). In other words, ableism demands abled bodies and minds,

sometimes forcefully, especially when caught up with other forms of oppression such as racism and colonialism that define who 'counts' and who is considered wrong, deviant, or dangerous (Sins Invalid, 2019). As Lydia X.Z. Brown (2016) contends, "Ableism is not some arbitrary list of 'bad words,' as much as language is a tool of oppression. Ableism is violence, and it kills" (n.p.). Attempts to minimize or eliminate ableism have been taken up by activists and scholars, with significant interaction and overlap between the two.

Early Activist and Academic Responses to Ableism

Disability Activism and the Development of the Social Model of Disability

Building on the work of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, disability activists sought to oppose the medicalization of disability and secure legal rights for disabled people (Francis & Silvers, 2000). The medical view, also known as the medical model of disability, defines an individual's degree of impairment and seeks to remedy those impairments through medical or other forms of intervention (N. J. Evans, 2017). This deficit approach positions disabled people as broken or unwell, and as problems in need of fixing (Clare, 2017; Dolmage, 2017). In response to the medical model, disability activists developed the social model of disability in the 1980s, which treats disability as a social phenomenon separate from impairment and distinct from the medical model, and frames disabled people as an oppressed group (J. Campbell & Oliver, 1998; Shakespeare, 2006). This model has been successful in creating an agenda for change, for identifying social barriers to disability inclusion, and in improving the perception disabled people have of themselves (Oliver, 2004; Shakespeare,

2006). Thus the social model has in many ways filled its purpose, as originally conceived by Mike Oliver and others, to serve as a tool for improving the lives of disabled people (Oliver, 2013). Because the social model draws a simple and memorable distinction from the medical model, it has proven to be an effective tool for shifting the burden of an inclusive society away from disabled people and onto societal norms, practices, and environments (Oliver, 2013; Shakespeare, 2006).

In the ensuing years, however, the social model has met with much discussion and critique. As one of the originators of the social model, Mike Oliver (2013), emphasizes that the social model was never intended to become the only framework for explaining disability, yet that seems to have become the intent for many. In Shakespeare's (2006) seminal chapter on the social model of disability, he concedes that the social model is an effective tool but contends that this model also has weaknesses, including its neglect of impairment as part of disabled people's lives (*e.g.*, chronic pain and other invisible conditions), although Oliver himself responds to this critique by observing that "the social model is not about the personal experience of impairment" but instead is about "the collective experience of disablement" (Oliver, 2004, p. 8). Yet this collective experience that Oliver imagines is not shared by all disabled people, because the social model fails to account for intersectionality and individual differences due to its origins in a group of predominantly heterosexual, white men with physical disabilities. Shakespeare also questions the social model's unsuccessful attempt to delineate medical impairment from social disability, which in reality are difficult to distinguish. As Shakespeare points out, "it is the interaction of individual bodies and social environments which

produces disability” and this complexity is an integral part of the lived experience of disabled people that remains unaccounted for in the social model (218). However, the social model overlooks this complexity and situates disabled people as oppressed, and in doing so fails to acknowledge the agency and knowledge of disabled people (Siebers, 2008, 2019; S. J. Williams, 1999). Additionally, in striving for a barrier-free world, the social model assumes that such a world is possible, despite the ways in which access needs may conflict with one another or may be difficult to accommodate even under the best of circumstances (Kafer, 2013; Piepzn-Samarasinha, 2018; Shakespeare, 2006). While the social model has proven invaluable in providing an alternative to the medical model, more complex approaches and models are necessary to capture the complexity of the lived experiences of disabled people (Kafer, 2013; Oliver, 2013; Schalk, 2022; Shakespeare, 2006; Siebers, 2008).

The Independent Living Movement: Moving from Rights to Autonomy

Where early disability activism focused primarily on securing legal rights, the move toward deinstitutionalization led to a movement focused on autonomy and the right to live independently. In the 1960s, state-run institutions for disabled people, especially people with intellectual disabilities, were coming under increased scrutiny for inhumane conditions and the cost of caring for an ever-growing population (Trent, 2017). Changes in Medicare funding combined with social pressure and numerous additional factors, such as the availability of new prescription medications, led to deinstitutionalization, which is the movement of people from state-run institutions into community-based care programs such as “family-care homes, child

and adult foster-care homes, group homes, supervised apartment living programs, and nursing homes” (Trent, 2017, p. 249). At the same time, disability activists were collaborating to create a movement that resisted medical approaches centering the expertise of medical professionals and instead “offered an alternative approach to the delivery of services based on the principles of consumer sovereignty, self-reliance, and the need to ensure the political and economic rights of people with disabilities” (Carey, 2009, p. 137). In 1972 on the University of Berkeley campus, a group of disabled students known as the Rolling Quads established the Center for Independent Living under the leadership of Ed Roberts, where “people with disabilities offered advocacy, resources, training, and peer-counseling services to other disabled individuals to promote independent living” (Carey, 2009, p. 137). By the late 1980s, there were over 300 such centers across the United States (Carey, 2009). The independent living movement emphasized the idea that “people with disabilities are the best experts on their own needs, having crucial and valuable perspective to contribute and deserving of equal opportunity to decide how to live, work, and take part in their communities, particularly in reference to services that powerfully affect their day-to-day lives and access to independence” (National Council on Independent Living, 2012). In this manner, the movement focused on both rights and autonomy for disabled people, led by disabled people themselves.

The Emergence of Disability Studies Scholarship

The field of disability studies began to emerge in the mid-1970s and expanded further following the work of disability activists during the 1980s and 1990s (Meekosha & Shuttleworth,

2009). Originating in the social sciences and the humanities, disability studies has now been integrated into the work of other disciplines, such as fields like engineering and medicine (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009). Disability studies developed in response to the medicalization of disability, particularly physical disabilities. Instead of viewing disabled people as broken or victims of a tragedy, disability studies instead focused on society's responsibility for the so-called 'problem' of disability (Goodley, 2013). Early disability studies scholarship often focused on legal rights and political inclusion for disabled people, deploying the language of civil and human rights (Hall, 2019). Linton (1998) described disability studies as "a remedial endeavor, redressing the sins of omission and commission in the cannon" that also moved beyond that to "study disability as a social, political and cultural phenomenon" (525, 527). Therefore, much of the early disability studies scholarship was in keeping with the social model of disability.

Critical Models of Disability

Critical Disability Theory

As the field of disability studies expanded, scholarship increasingly incorporated critical theory, such as feminist theory, to surface and examine "the subsumed or hidden origins of social and political culture, discourses, and institutions," especially the way that disability is "produced" and maintained through social, political, and relational structures (Hall, 2019). Some call this work critical disability studies (CDS), yet CDS is not a "subject-oriented area of study" but is regularly considered a methodology and thus may also be referred to as critical

disability theory (Goodley, 2013; Schalk, 2017). Critical disability theory “is significantly aimed toward exposing and analyzing ableism” as a system that “interacts with other power structures that stigmatize to produce race, gender, sex, and disability (Hall, 2019, p. 6). Critical disability theory critiques medicalized and problem-solving approaches to instead focus on the social, political, and economic factors that define disability and create barriers to equality (Dolmage, 2017). In critical disability studies, it is not the individual who needs remedies or fixes. Instead, change is required in our societal structures and attitudes. Thus critical disability theory moves beyond the social model out of recognition that “the struggle for social justice and diversity continues but on another plane of development — one that is not simply social, economic and political, but also psychological, cultural, discursive and carnal” (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009, p. 50).

To address the critiques and shortcomings of the social model, disability scholars like Tobin Siebers (2019) have extended the social model, as Siebers does with his conception of complex embodiment. In an attempt to rebuild the social model in a way that acknowledges disabled bodies and allows for agency, Siebers argues that the social model “cannot exist without active subjects who are defined by their ability to produce and share knowledge” (Siebers, 2019, p. 42). This knowledge is called complex embodiment, which is the knowledge and experience that disabled people obtain and develop “as longtime inhabitants of nondisabled society” (2019, p. 47). Thus Siebers contends that disability is not a diagnosis or deficit but rather that “disability is a body of knowledge,” and that knowledge allows disabled people to be recognized not through diagnosis but “by the use of knowledge acquired by embodiment”

(2019, p. 42). As an example of this knowledge, Siebers draws on the plays of William Shakespeare, and specifically the character of Falstaff who experiences gout and therefore “calculates walking distances relative to an awareness of the ground: ‘Eight yards of uneven ground is threescore-and-ten miles afoot with me’” (Siebers, 2019, p. 44). Siebers contends that this is a form of complex embodiment that demonstrates that “disability is both affected by environments and changed by the diversity of bodies, resulting in specific knowledge about the ways that environment and bodies mutually transform one another” (Siebers, 2019, p. 44). When Prince Hal and Poins steal Falstaff’s horse, Falstaff knows that he will experience this loss in a way that is specific to his gout, leading him to grow tired quickly and experience a short distance as though it were a long journey, and this is both disability knowledge and also how we recognize Falstaff as disabled (Siebers, 2019). Siebers intentionally moves away from ‘diagnosing’ a disability by focusing instead on the knowledge and experiences of disabled people. Disability is recognized through that knowledge, instead of through medical criteria. Piepzna-Samarasinha (2018) echoes this recognition of disability knowledge, stating that “disability is a set of innovative, virtuosic skills” (126). Siebers also highlights passing (as non-disabled) as an example of complex embodiment, explaining that “those who pass treat social situations that others consider natural and normal as calculated, artificial, and subject to manipulation, thereby demonstrating their knowledge about the relation of human difference to social organization and human perception” (Siebers, 2008, p. 44).

Instead of viewing disability through the lens of the medical or social model, Kafer (2013) proposes that disability is both political and relational. This framing positions disability as

practices and ideologies that can be both critiqued and remade. Additionally, this framing allows for disability to be analyzed in the same manner as other categories of difference, such as race, gender, sexuality, and class. Kafer intentionally leaves categories of disability undefined to acknowledge the complexity of disability and the lived experiences of disabled people, while opening space for the desire to both seek medical treatment and to identify as disabled. As Kafer explains, “the problem of disability no longer resides in the minds or bodies of individuals but in built environments and social patterns that exclude or stigmatize particular kinds of bodies, minds, and ways of being” (Kafer, 2013, p. 6). The relational aspect of Kafer’s model also acknowledges that “disability is experienced in and through relationships; it does not occur in isolation” (p. 8). To create a future, then, where disability is understood as “political, as valuable, as integral” requires systemic change (Kafer, 2013, p. 3). Imagining a better future also requires engaging with gender, sexuality, race, and class because these factors are also part of the history of how disability has been constructed and used to include and exclude, such as the use of disability by the eugenics movement to exclude ‘fallen women,’ people deemed ‘sexually deviant,’ immigrants, and black people (Baynton, 2011, 2013; Davis, 2013; Kline, 2001; Lamp & Cleigh, 2011; Stubblefield, 2007).

Because the disability rights movement was predominantly white and focused on disability as a single, unifying category, disability studies as a field has historically treated disability in a similar manner, without careful attention to intersectionality. The field of disability studies has primarily centered the voices and experiences of white people and “often excludes or alienates Black disabled people” (Schalk, 2022, p. 6). By continually centering whiteness,

disability studies has failed to adequately engage with racialized identities in recognition that “one cannot have race without disability, nor disability without race” (Pickens, 2019, p. 11). Additionally, disability studies has failed to consistently address issues of class and has given “little attention to the types of disability most common in poor and racialized communities” (Schalk, 2022, p. 9). As a result, then, the field of disability studies has not adequately reflected the experiences of all disabled people. As Sami Schalk observes, “...disability, as an identity, an experience, and a political category, has been conceptualized and approached differently by Black activists and intellectuals than by white activists and intellectuals, thereby requiring changes in scholarly and activist methods and frameworks” (Schalk, 2022, p. 5). Kafer similarly argues that new frameworks and methods may be necessary because “if disability studies is going to take seriously the criticism that we have focused on physical disabilities to the exclusion of all else, then we need to start experimenting with different ways of talking about and conceptualizing our projects” (Kafer, 2013, p. 16). As Pickens (2019) asks, “What sacred cows or shibboleths do we need to leave behind methodologically, theoretically, aesthetically?”(3). Existing theoretical models, like the social model, are inadequate for addressing the ways that Black culture, queer culture, indigenous cultures, or other groups might conceive of and experience disability.

DisCrit

Recognizing that existing models in disability studies were inadequate, DisCrit was developed in the academic discipline of education to “analyze the lives and educational

experiences of disabled students of color from working-class backgrounds placed in special education” (Acevedo et al., 2023, p. 4). DisCrit, as the name suggests, is a combination of critical race theory (CRT) and disability studies to deeply examine the ways that “race and dis/ability are co-constructed” and to create a bridge between disability studies and CRT, which had previously remained largely separate (Annamma et al., 2016, p. 14). Thus DisCrit focuses “on the ways race and dis/ability have been used in tandem to marginalize particular groups in society,” and acknowledges that neither DS or CRT alone are adequate for explaining this marginalization (Annamma et al., 2016, p. 19). So too does DisCrit resist the flattening, essentializing, or binarization of identity, and of disability, seeking to instead trouble “singular notions of identity such as race or dis/ability or class or gender or sexuality” (Annamma et al., 2016, p. 19). Perhaps more significantly, DisCrit posits that “a non-intersectional approach to research, one that attempts to side-step particularized contexts and the dynamic forces of culture manifest within them, provide limited –even misleading—conclusions that do not necessarily serve the people being studied” (Annamma et al., 2016, p. 31). Thus, analysis that overlooks the whole person and instead focuses on a singular aspect of identity is not only incomplete but also potentially inaccurate. Although the DisCrit framework was designed for education research, the authors contend that this framework can and should be used in a variety of fields as part of “the quest for a more just society” (Annamma et al., 2016, p. 32).

Disability Justice

Disability justice is an anti-oppressive, activism-oriented approach to engaging with disability as entangled with other aspects of identity. Disability justice was created by queer disabled people and black, indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC) with disabilities who were working in performing arts and disability activism. They recognized that the disability rights movement was predominantly white and largely treated disability as a single issue, “focusing exclusively on disability at the expense of other intersections of race, gender, sexuality, age, immigration status, religion, etc.” (Sins Invalid, 2019, p. 13). Sins Invalid, in their guide to disability justice, assert that “able-bodied supremacy has been formed in relation to other systems of domination and exploitation” and the “histories of white supremacy and ableism are inextricably entwined, created in the context of colonial conquest and capitalist domination” (2019, p. 18). Working against these oppressive logics requires “being attentive to the ways that power plays out in our labors with and for one another” lest we reproduce the very oppression we seek to end (Sins Invalid, 2019, p. 67). The key tenets of disability justice include intersectionality, leadership of those most impacted (*i.e.*, those who are multiply marginalized), anti-capitalist politics, cross-movement solidarity, interdependence, and collective access. Intersectionality holds that systems of power overlap and interact to create distinct impacts and experiences of multiple forms of oppression, or put more simply, “we are all many things and they all impact us” (Sins Invalid, 2019, p. 23). Interdependence is the idea “that all people have needs, that none of us can get through the world solely on our own, and that having needs [is] not weak or bad or shameful” (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2022, p. 76).

Interdependency and supporting each other's needs can lead to collective access, a form of creating "access in ways that also build community, care," solidarity with other disabled people, solidarity with "non-disabled comrades" and is led by disabled people (Mingus, 2010). Disability justice also acknowledges that "the root of disability oppression is ableism and we must work to understand it, combat it, and create alternative practices rooted in justice" (Sins Invalid, 2019, p. 15). Thus disability justice "names ableism as a constructed, violent ordering of bodily difference" and seeks to contest it, "combat it, and create alternative practices rooted in justice" (Sins Invalid, 2019, p. 15). At its core, then, disability justice is also anti-colonial and anti-capitalist, because "we can only truly understand ableism by tracing its connections to heteropatriarchy, white supremacy, colonialism, and capitalism" (Sins Invalid, 2019, p. 19).

Speaking to the anti-capitalist politics of disability justice, the authors note:

"Capitalism depends on wealth accumulation for some (the white ruling class), at the expense of others, and encourages competition as a means of survival. The nature of our disabled bodyminds means that we resist conforming to 'normative' levels of productivity in a capitalist culture, and our labor is often invisible to a system that defines labor by able-bodied, white supremacist, gender normative standards. Our worth is not dependent on what and how much we can produce" (Sins Invalid, 2019, pp. 23–24).

While I will take up the questioning of and resistance to normative constructions of productivity, and although I do situate myself as an activist scholar, I cannot claim to be doing the work of disability justice within the systems of higher education and libraries which are

influenced by capitalist logic. Instead, this research draws inspiration from the key tenets of disability justice as discussed above.

Situating the 'Problem' in Social Norms

According to the medical model, the 'problem' of disability lies in the individual, while according to the social model, the problem is situated in the social environment. In recognition of the limits of these models, critical disability theory engages with the complexity of disability as fluid and changing, recognizes and values the knowledge and lived experiences of disabled people, and strives for social justice (Clare, 2017; N. J. Evans, 2017; Kafer, 2013; Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009; Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2022). Critical models of disability, such as DisCrit and Disability Justice, suggest that while anti-ableism is necessary, disability's entanglement with other forms of marginalization requires intersectional frameworks that address those other forms, such as race and ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and class. Attempts to ignore the full context of disability not only result in an incomplete picture, but also, as DisCrit contends, potentially mislead and misrepresent the complexity of disability and lived disability experiences. Attempts to solve the problem of disability, whether located in the social environment or the individual, flatten this complexity and fail to address the root of the issue. I contend that the social construction and reinforcement of social norms, which themselves posit a 'normate' existence, are the issue and it is only through significant shifts in how our society conceives of what is 'normal' that we can begin to achieve a more just society. For that reason, then, this research is

focused on activist interventions that uproot ableism and enable different ways of being in the world through paradigmatic shifts in norms, expectations, and practices.

Critical Disability Theory in Libraries

Although library practitioners and library researchers have drawn their attention to issues of access and accessibility for library patrons, minimal library literature draws on the extensive body of scholarship from disability studies when considering disability and disability inclusion in libraries, resulting in limited discussion of ableism. One outstanding and oft-cited example is an article by Kumbier and Starkey (2016) that advocates for library workers to learn from disability studies and disability justice movements in order to shift from an individualized conception of disability to an understanding of disability that recognizes the ways that structures and society are built to exclude. Kumbier and Starkey note that the voices of disabled people have largely been excluded from the library literature, while their needs are often represented as individual concerns that can be addressed with a "tick-box" problem-solving approach. Kumbier and Starkey suggest that instead, libraries should draw on existing disability justice frameworks, such as the collective access framework as articulated by Mia Mingus and others (Mingus, 2010). They offer library-specific suggestions for using this approach, such as developing community-informed library access, hiring and supporting disabled library workers, seeking input from disabled people throughout any decision-making or planning process, publishing the perspectives of those with disabilities in library literature, and working to dismantle ableism. Other LIS research also makes use of critical disability theory to examine a

variety of disability-related issues such as disability erasure in archives (Brilmyer, 2022) and the use of universal design practices within libraries to create more equitable and accessible environments for all (Pionke, 2017; S. Rosen, 2017).

In the past five years, LIS scholars have increasingly turned their attention to the experiences of librarians with disabilities, and this work is often grounded in critical disability theory. Schomberg (2018), for example, draws on critical disability theory in their critique of library workplaces as “built with the assumption that only abled people will be present” and excluding or demanding additional labor from librarians with disabilities (p. 120). Brown and Sheidlower (2019) also ground their work in disability studies literature, focusing particularly on ableism and the social model of disability in their research study on disabled librarians. My previous work was similarly grounded in critical disability theory to examine the precarity of disabled academic librarians (Moeller, 2019). Cook and Clement (2019) refer to the social model of disability as the foundation for their suggestions on accommodations for librarians with invisible disabilities, as does Litwak (2022) in his discussion of ableism in library workplaces. In an autoethnography detailing experiences of passing, Hollich (2020) roots her work in the social model of disability and critical disability theory in order to explore marginalization and claiming disability as an identity. Schomberg and Higby (2020) dedicate the first chapter of their book on creating inclusive workplaces for disabled librarians to an in-depth examination and history of various models of disability. They observe that “the way we think about disability influences the way we talk about disability” and impacts the decisions that librarians make regarding library services as well as workplace practices and policies (Schomberg & Highby, 2020, p. 26). Yet the

use of critical disability theory by these authors remains uncharacteristic of the majority of library literature.

The Predominance of the Medical Model in Library Literature

Most library literature on the topic of disability aligns with the medical model of disabilities, which is apparent in definitions of disabilities (or neurodivergence specifically) that rely upon medical diagnostic criteria, lists of characteristics or deficits associated with these criteria, and suggestions for librarians to accommodate these specific characteristics. The medical model is also apparent throughout the library literature in the attempt to address accessibility as a problem to be solved, or “as a matter of finding the right solutions to problems faced by patrons with disabilities who navigate our systems and access our materials” (Kumbier & Starkey, 2016, p. 477). In Heather Hill’s (2013) content analysis of library literature on disabilities and accessibility, she found that “much of the literature is focused on describing difficulties and recommending solutions” (140). Kumbier and Starkey (2016) note similarly that “the literature does not attend to the larger structural, systemic, or social transformations that could enable access for all users; in other words, this literature treats access as a matter of many minor adjustments and fixes rather than a sustained commitment to evaluating what access means for all users” (478). Small adjustments are appealing because they may make a difference, but structural problems like ableist policies and practices require structural change. The literature also reflects a failure to engage with other aspects of disabled people’s identities,

thus seemingly ignoring the existence and lived experiences of disabled BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ people.

Unfortunately, the current literature demonstrates that little progress has been made on incorporating disability studies or the social model of disability into library research, services, programs, and workplaces. In their recent examination of library literature, Gibson, Bowen, and Hanson (2021b) observed that “most works do not engage with critical disability frameworks in any meaningful way” and instead “take a strictly medical approach” (para. 30). Critical disability frameworks that are often used in disabilities studies, such as critical disability theory and disability justice, “have offered disability rights advocates and scholars a means to construct more authentic representations of disability, physical embodiment, social power structures, and intersecting identities” and similarly could offer much to current approaches to neurodiversity inclusion in libraries (A. Gibson et al., 2021b, para. 4). Attempting to address ableism in libraries will take significant effort, but scholarship from critical disability theory and disability justice activism can provide a foundation on which to build this work. Kumbier and Starkey (2016) argue that libraries “can learn from and build on the work that disability scholars and activists are doing, and do so in productive ways that will benefit many of our users” (471). To move away from the medical model understanding of disability, libraries must also address issues of power, intersectionality, and other inequities such as income and access to health care and education. This will require a paradigmatic shift from current understandings and approaches to disability, but a failure to do so will only continue to limit the effectiveness of any efforts to address disability in libraries.

Defining Neurodiversity and Neurodivergence

The terms neurodiversity and neurodivergence hold multiple meanings and can be used to mean different things in different contexts, including in neurodiversity research, so it worth exploring the history of this language in order to understand its meaning and significance today.

The Eugenic Roots of Defining 'Normal' and Pathologizing the 'Abnormal'

Neurodiversity is a term that remains contested and may refer to a biological fact, an ideology, or a movement (Ne'eman & Pellicano, 2022). Neurodiversity originates from attempts to name the idea that some minds and ways of being are assumed to be 'normal' while others are not. By definition, the "concept of a norm, unlike that of an ideal, implies that the majority of the population must or should somehow be part of the norm" and therefore "with the concept of the norm comes the concept of deviations of extremes" (Davis, 2013, p. 3). Davis (2013) explores the history of the word "normal" as related to humanity, which emerged in the mid-1800s. Davis begins by looking back to Quetelet's work on "L'Homme Moyen" and the use of statistical averages to define normal humans. Early eugenicists like Francis Galton, who were also statisticians, picked up this idea and combined it with their hope to eliminate deviations from what they believed was normal (a certain kind of whiteness). Galton took Quetelet's error curve and divided it four quartiles, with the top quartile as the most desirable and the lowest quartile as a problem in need of a solution, calling this new graph the 'normal' distribution (Davis, 2013). By defining 'normal' humanity, eugenicists like Galton were able to then group

together disparate categories, such as disability, poverty, criminality, immorality, into a "defective class" with undesirable traits who posed a threat to the white race.

With Galton's conception of human attributes following a normal distribution came the idea that some attributes or qualities were less desirable, and that people possessing fewer desirable attributes were a financial and social burden. Eugenists argued that without intervention, "the burden would continue to increase and to exacerbate other social problems" (Trent, 2017, p. 73). As the so-called 'feeble-minded' were increasingly institutionalized, medical methods were developed to classify patients and the "hereditary traits identified in the feeble-minded people themselves" (Trent, 2017, p. 29). This pathologizing of feeble-mindedness led to its conception as an individual medical condition that could be categorized and studied in order to minimize its perceived burden on society.

The eugenic focus on "feeble-mindedness" equated social "misfitting" (Garland-Thomson, 2011) with a deficient mental state, while intelligence tests served to identify and categorize minds that were outside of the norm as a "menace" to society, one that must be segregated or eliminated. While the eugenics era is assumed to be long over, these same ideologies remain apparent to this day. The remnants of such conceptions of neurodiversity are visible in well-funded research that seeks a cure for autism or the elimination of ADHD, in articles that warn of an "autism tsunami" that will diminish the coffers of many a nation,¹ in conceptions of who belongs in a workplace or in a school, in the stereotype of an autistic or ADHD person as white and male, and in a variety of other ways too numerous to list here. Given

¹ This article, which was recently retracted three years after its publication, is intentionally not cited here as an act of citational resistance.

this long and harmful othering of neurodivergence, how might we proceed forward in a different manner? Neurodiversity activists have proposed ways of conceiving of neurodiversity as a difference rather than a deficit.

The Multiple Meanings of the Term 'Neurodiversity'

Today's neurodiversity movement complicates and resists constructions of a normative neurotype, particularly as pathologized through the medical model of disability. The term 'neurodiversity' emerged from collective discussion in an online autistic community in the 1980s and referred to the idea that neurological differences are one aspect of human variation (Dekker, 2020, 2023; Kapp, 2020). Neurodiversity was devised as a new category of intersectionality, and has come to refer to "both neurodivergent people (those with a condition that renders their neurocognitive functioning significantly different from a 'normal' range) and neurotypical people (those within that socially acceptable range)" (Kapp, 2020, p. 2). Neurodivergence has also come to include numerous forms of neurological differences, such as autism, ADHD, dyspraxia, dyslexia, and many more, although who should be included is still a subject of debate. Kassiane Asasumasu, who coined the term 'neurodivergent,' insists that neurodivergent "means a brain that diverges" (from the typical) and "is specifically a tool of inclusion" (Asasumasu, n.d.). Yet biological connections to neurodiversity are an additional subject of debate (Botha & Gillespie-Lynch, 2022). Ne'eman and Pellicano (2022) observe that "the use of the word neurodiversity, without further qualifiers, has a long history of being used in autistic activist communities to describe biology and ideology, with some believing the term

refers only to one of these options and others applying it to both” (p. 3). Is neurodivergence solely a neurological difference that one is born with, or can it be acquired, as in the case of traumatic brain injury? Defining the boundaries of neurodivergence remains challenging even when attempting to ground it in biology. In an effort to address this difficulty, Botha and Gillespie-Lynch (2022) contend that neurodivergence “can both be an identity, and an embodied disability with aspects of impairment” (p. 94).

The Neurodiversity Movement and the Neurodiversity Paradigm

Another point of potential confusion is the use of neurodiversity to refer to the neurodiversity movement, which is a social movement “that supports the rights of people with neurological and cognitive differences” (Ellis, 2023, p. 1). The neurodiversity movement “advocates for the rights of neurodivergent people” such as “inclusion and autonomy” (Kapp, 2020, p. 2). Ne’eman and Pellicano (2022) note that scholars and activists have adopted a number of different “approaches” to neurodiversity. For example, Nick Walker (Walker & Raymaker, 2021) refers to the “neurodiversity paradigm” in which neurodiversity is “an axis of human diversity, like ethnic diversity or diversity of gender and sexual orientation, and is subject to the same sorts of social dynamics as those other forms of diversity—including the dynamics of social power inequalities, privilege, and oppression” (p. 6). This approach is in keeping with the original formulation of the term neurodiversity as a facet of intersectionality, while extending it to examine the social systems and practices that create barriers to equality and equity for neurodivergent people. Walker also makes a distinction between *neurodiversity* and

the *neurodiversity paradigm*. For Walker, neurodiversity is “a biological fact” regarding the “the infinite variation in neurocognitive functioning within our species” (Walker, 2021). The neurodiversity paradigm, however, is “a specific perspective on neurodiversity” based on three principles: 1) neurological differences are a form of human biodiversity, 2) what is considered ‘normal’ is socially constructed so therefore there is no ‘normal’ or ‘right’ mind or neurocognition (similar to race and gender), and 3) “the social dynamics that manifest in regard to neurodiversity are similar to the social dynamics that manifest in regard to other forms of human diversity” (Walker, 2021). The neurodiversity paradigm “takes a much wider range of ways of functioning to be legitimate, normal, and healthy” (Chapman, 2019). The neurodiversity paradigm is also “intertwined with the social model of disability, whereby the disablement (or harm, distress, or suffering) of minority ways of functioning stems from centrally from social norms and structures” (Chapman, 2019, p. 375). The neurodiversity movement, then, is a social movement informed by the neurodiversity paradigm. Although Walker clearly outlines these distinctions, this is not the only perspective on neurodiversity and the neurodiversity movement. Additionally, Ne’eman and Pellicano (2022) raise the concern that “efforts to draw a finely grained distinction between ‘neurodiversity’ and the ‘neurodiversity paradigm’ are also likely too subtle for most activist and advocacy contexts, particularly given the imperative for autistic and other disabled activists to keep their language accessible to a broad audience” (p. 3). Who is this language for, then, and what does this terminology enable? Clearly the term neurodiversity has multiple meanings, so who is using it and to what end? Increasingly, neurodiversity activists raise concerns about the term being appropriated and used as socially

acceptable alternatives to diagnostic language while still maintaining a medical approach to diagnoses.

Responses to Appropriation of the Term ‘Neurodiversity’

As the term neurodiversity has become increasingly popular its usage has also changed. As Walker observes, “the growing popularity of the term neurodiversity has led to its widespread appropriation as a buzzword by a lot of individuals and organizations who don’t understand its implications and are still very much thinking and operating within the pathology paradigm,” also known as the medical model of disability (Walker & Raymaker, 2021, p. 7). In such cases, the use of the term neurodiversity may not reflect any of the meanings discussed here but may instead reflect a diagnostic or pathologized view of neurological differences that is rooted in stereotypes. For example, Broderick and Roscigno (2021) examine the commodification of autism specifically and the related co-opting of the neurodiversity movement, which Mallett and Runswick-Cole (2016) compare to the ways that major brands have co-opted signifiers such as ‘fair trade’ to render their products more consumer-friendly and thus consumable.

In resistance to harmful norms and stereotypes, neurodivergent scholars like Nick Walker and Remi Yergeau have drawn on queer theory to frame neurodivergence as ‘neuroqueer.’ Neuroqueer is a “relatively new and web-based invention, at least in its current iteration, having evolved through the collaborative work of autistic bloggers” (Yergeau, 2018, p. 27). The term neuroqueer is similar to queer theory and gender theory, in that it refers to

“actively subverting, disrupting, and divesting from the performance” of norms, or more specifically, the “embodied performance of being neurocognitively ‘normal’” (Walker & Raymaker, 2021, p. 9). Neuroqueer is an expansion of McRuer’s (2006) crip theory that intentionally attends to neurodivergence, which is rarely given full attention in disability studies and disability activism (Yergeau, 2018).

Like Kafer’s (2013) crip future in which disability is accepted and considered an ordinary part of society and humanity, neuroqueer futures imagine a future in which neurodiversity is commonplace, and there is “no such thing as neurotypicality, no such thing as a ‘normal mind’” (Walker & Raymaker, 2021, p. 9). Walker posits that someday categories such as autism or ADHD, which are socially constructed, might someday be viewed as archaic, but also notes that the only way we can find out is “if we keep doing what we can to move the discourse in that direction”(Walker & Raymaker, 2021, p. 9). In other words, through disrupting and resisting harmful norms that other neurodivergence, we can construct a different vision and ideology of neurodivergence, one that is not rooted in eugenic ideologies, stigma, and harmful stereotypes, but is instead accepting of neurological differences as an anticipated and accepted aspect of human variation and of our society.

Defining Neurodiversity and Neurodivergence for this research

This study does not strive to reconcile these different definitions of and perspectives on neurodiversity, but rather to be transparent in the use of language that is contested. Although the term neuroqueer offers the possibility of a “crip future” that is appealing, its relatively

recent emergence and its limited use mean that it remains unfamiliar to many and may not be appropriate for use with the general public. Therefore, this study continues to use the terms neurodiversity and neurodivergence, even as their meaning is contested. For the purposes of this research, however, neurodiversity refers to the full range of neurological *differences* that are an expected part of human variation. I intentionally refer to differences here in resistance to pathologizing language, such as condition, deficit, or impairment. Neurodiversity includes those whose minds do not align with dominant social norms and expectations, and are considered neurodivergent, as well as those whose minds are considered 'typical' (also known as neurotypical). In keeping with the description provided by Botha and Gillespie-Lynch (2022) discussed above, I similarly recognize that neurodivergence can refer to an identity and to the complex embodiment (Siebers, 2019) of a disability.

Eight Principles for Centering Neurodivergence in Research

Research on neurodiversity, especially that which is related to certain forms of neurodiversity like autism and supported through extensive U.S. government funding, has typically been conducted by neurotypical researchers on neurodivergent participants. Such research has treated forms of neurodivergence, like autism and ADHD, as problems in need of an intervention or cure (Bertilsson Rosqvist et al., 2023; Botha, 2022; Botha & Cage, 2022). Recent research has begun to alter this ableist history by using participatory research and other methods of including neurodivergent participants and their perspectives in the research process rather than solely extracting data from them. Some researchers have outlined methods for

including neurodivergent people in research, and others have made recommendations about ethical issues (Cascio et al., 2020; Pellicano & Stears, 2011), inclusive language (Bottema-Beutel et al., 2020), and other key considerations for conducting research with neurodivergent participants (Cascio et al., 2021; Nicolaidis et al., 2019, 2020). Yet the number of openly neurodivergent researchers remains small, and the literature has made few attempts to consider research methodologies that include both neurodivergent researchers *and* participants. This research draws on scholarship from disability studies, and critical autism and neurodiversity studies (there is yet no ADHD equivalent to critical autism studies) to propose a framework for centering neurodivergence in research. Centering neurodivergence, like centering disability, rejects ableism and is an ongoing process of anticipating the participation of neurodivergent participants *and* researchers, and planning and responding accordingly, creating an environment where neurodivergence is expected and fully accepted.

When I first wrote about my conception of centering neurodivergence, I said (as I wrote above) that this was about both the researcher and the participants, but I hadn't deeply considered what this would mean for me as a neurodivergent researcher. I was primarily concerned with ensuring that interview participants felt welcomed, seen by me, and maybe even able to unmask to some degree. I certainly hadn't thought about applying this conception to writing my dissertation, either. All I wanted for myself was the bare minimum – a tiny space for me to safely acknowledge my own neurodivergence. What I have gained from this process, however, turned out to be so much more than that, as you will continue to hear throughout this dissertation. By being in community with my participants, in an environment that intentionally centered neurodivergence, I also learned to let my own mask slip a little and embrace more of my own neurodivergence, in order to do better for my participants and for myself.

Academic Ableism and the Unexpected Researcher

In academia, the cultural expectation is that academics such as researchers, PhD students such as myself, and faculty have orderly minds and bodies that are hyperable, in other words, able to work long hours, produce scholarship regularly and often, attend and present at conferences, network and promote themselves and their work, and participate in service to the academic community through committee work or other forms of acceptable service to the institution or discipline. Disability studies scholar Jay Dolmage observes that “academia powerfully mandates able-bodiness and able-mindedness, as well as other forms of social and communicative hyperability” (Dolmage, 2017, p. 7). Institutions of higher education in the United States have long studied disabilities while also being deeply rooted in ableist logics. As previously discussed, ableism is “a system of assigning value to people's bodies and minds based on societally constructed ideas of normalcy, productivity, desirability, intelligence, excellence, and fitness.” (Lewis, 2022). In academia this ableism is present in physical and sensory spaces, policies, attitudes, and all the unwritten expectations around who is worthy of participation. Dolmage concludes that “academic ableism leads us to believe that in fact there are some specific bodies and minds that do not at all have a right to the university” and thus “the university has been constructed as a place for the very abled” (Dolmage, 2017, p. 44). Summarizing Dolmage’s argument, Aimée Morrison notes that “the university as an educational institution, postindustrial workplace, site of cultural reproduction, and exemplar of intellectual achievement is fundamentally, intrinsically ableist not as a side effect of how it is conceived or

organized, but as a core value” (Morrison, 2019, p. 698). Dolmage further observes that academic buildings have ‘steep steps’ (both physical and metaphorical) by design, in order to control who has access to the lofty Ivory Tower (Dolmage, 2017, p. 44). These ‘steep steps’ create barriers for any academic whose identities do not align with the expected white, cis-, heterosexual, abled (more specifically, hyper-able) identities of faculty, staff, or graduate students. Such barriers are further amplified for those with multiple marginalized identities, anyone who is first-generation and/or working class, and those who do not benefit from generational knowledge of academia.

The Ableism of Academic Research Practices

Within this ableist academic environment, people learn to become scholars and researchers. The education of future scholars, such as in graduate programs, also deeply reflects ableism and thus reproduces academic ableism. For example, when learning about the process of research and how to grow and develop as a researcher, students and other learners regularly encounter the expectation that researchers are completely objective, are fully attentive across all settings, have full control over their minds and bodies, and follow “best practices” as outlined in methods texts and articles. Yet few of these texts have been examined through the lens of critical disability theory (H. Pearson & Dickens, 2021). Kerschbaum and Price (2017) contend that current research methods and practices assume a ‘normative’ body and mind, and that considerations of disability assume that it is only the participant who might be disabled. Accommodations or adjustments necessary for disabled researchers remain overlooked, and research texts and literature generally exclude and erase the existence of disabled researchers.

Qualitative research texts, for example, assume or require an 'ideal,' hyperable researcher who can travel freely, adapt quickly to unexpected circumstances, and would never need to deal with issues like brain fog, panic attacks, or overwhelming fatigue (Kerschbaum & Price, 2017).

Historically this exclusion of disabled researchers has led to ableist practices and research rooted in the medical model of disability that treats disabilities as individual deficits that require remedy or cure (Lester & Nusbaum, 2018). Such a deficit approach is seen throughout research on neurodivergence and specific forms of neurodivergence, such as autism or ADHD.

The Erasure and Othering of Neurodivergent Researchers

Only recently have researchers begun to consider that neurodivergent people might be more than an object of study, but also a participant with agency, or even a co-collaborator (Cascio et al., 2021; Chown et al., 2017; Poulsen et al., 2022). Yet there is limited recognition of neurodivergent academics and their presence within academia. Nicole Brown observes that “academics with chronic illness, disabilities or neurodiversity are practically unseen and starkly under-represented in comparison to students with disabilities or disabled people in the general public (N. Brown & Leigh, 2020, p. 5). Any acknowledgement of neurodiversity in academia typically assumes that neurodiversity is a student issue that should be addressed by a student disability services office, and is not a staff, researcher, or faculty issue. Consider as an example an article in *Higher Education* titled, “Neurodiversity in Higher Education: A Narrative Synthesis” that is solely about students and seems to assume that all faculty creating adjustments for students are not neurodivergent themselves (Clouder et al., 2020). Academic ableism results in

the assumption that neurodivergence, or other forms of cognitive or mental disabilities, is incompatible with being a researcher or scholar.

Neurodiversity Research Causing Harm to Neurodivergent Researchers

Ableism is also apparent throughout neurodiversity research and published scholarship on neurodiversity. Research on autism, ADHD, or other forms of neurodivergence predominantly employs a medical or deficit approach to neurodiversity, focusing on treating, minimizing, or eliminating neurodivergent characteristics and behaviors. For example, for decades autism research has focused mainly on eliminating or finding a cure for autism, including hundreds of millions of dollars spent on funding this type of research each year courtesy of legislation like the Combating Autism Act of 2006 and multiple Autism CARES Acts over the last decade (Chen et al., 2015). Neurodiversity research remains “rooted in the field of medicine (and by extension psychiatry) which tends to treat deviation from the norm as disease, disorder, and dysfunction, and which tends to have a focus on remediation, prevention, and cure”(Botha, 2021, p. 2). For neurodivergent researchers, this means regularly encountering deficit framings of neurodiversity which Botha rightly recognizes as a form of violence, writing that researching neurodiversity as a neurodivergent person “is to constantly experience the aggression of a field which has yet to come to terms with its own ableism”(Botha, 2021, p. 7). Neurodivergent people are regularly othered by neurodiversity researchers, as Cos Michael details in her experience being introduced as “an autistic adult” at a panel talk, as if her adulthood needed to be declared and that of the other panelists did not (Michael, 2021). Michael remains hopeful that “as more neurodivergent researchers join academia, stasis will be

challenged” but also acknowledges that “those pioneers are forging uncharted paths, battling marginalization and prejudice” (Michael, 2021, p. 119).

At the risk of making this chapter slightly longer, I want to emphasize the impact of this prejudice and the violence of reading autism, ADHD, and neurodiversity research as a neurodivergent researcher. I have shouted, sworn, become so angry I shook, and wept at the way that all of us neurodivergent people are discussed and treated in so much research. To the extent possible, I have intentionally attempted to exclude that research from this work, to avoid encountering it again myself and to avoid further harm to others who may read this dissertation in its final form.

I must also acknowledge that research literature isn't the sole issue here. For example, because my work involved interviewing other neurodivergent people about their experiences, I was also continually encountering trauma similar to my own. As I wrote in my research notes, “Even when these interviews aren't especially traumatic, there's still the usual trauma of being made to feel like you're wrong, all wrong.” Doing this work results in constant reminders that neurodivergent people (like me) are medicalized, stigmatized, and marginalized.

One example of marginalization and prejudice in neurodiversity research is the demand for objectivity. Neurotypical researchers are treated as more objective than neurodivergent researchers, who must demonstrate and defend their objectivity in ways that are not expected or demanded from neurotypical researchers. This is a form of epistemic injustice, which is the devaluing, silencing, or other diminishment of “our status as knowers, interpreters, and providers of information” (Chapman & Carel, 2022, p. 1). As Botha describes, “Epistemic injustice pervades autism research in a way that only ever marginalizes autistic people in knowledge creation while providing an almost all-encompassing blanket of protection for non-

autistic researchers—non-autistic people have an assumed objectivity that means they do not have to defend their involvement in the creation of knowledge” (Botha, 2021). So not only does much neurodiversity research other neurodivergent people, but the ability to participate in this research is largely gatekept by neurotypical researchers. Botha points out that “blunt and open conversation is needed to address how autistic involvement is received, and whether the field is hospitable for us,” because “as it stands, it is barely hospitable, if at all,” and the same is true of neurodiversity research in general (Botha, 2021, p. 6). Neurodivergent researchers remain unexpected and are often unwelcome, assuming they have been able to successfully navigate all of the barriers erected by academic ableism they encountered throughout the course of their education. Given that neurodivergent researchers are not anticipated by academia, their exclusion from consideration in research methods is unsurprising.

Neurodiversity-Inclusive Research and Centering Disability

Increasingly, autistic researchers themselves have responded to ableism in neurodiversity research by proposing more inclusive methods for research with neurodivergent people, and other researchers have given more attention to the needs of neurodivergent research participants, especially those who are autistic (Bottema-Beutel et al., 2020; Cascio et al., 2020; Chown et al., 2017; Fletcher-Watson et al., 2019; Nicolaidis et al., 2020). Recognizing that autism research has largely been conducted *on* autistic people rather than *with* autistic people, Chown et al. (2017) propose a framework for inclusive autism research that was developed by a group of autistic people, including autistic academic researchers. This

framework is centered around the assumption that autism research should strive to improve the lives of autistic people, unlike much existing research aimed at eliminating or curing autism. Drawing on the social model of disability and emancipatory research methods, Chown et al. contend that autistic researchers should identify or validate the research problem, the research project itself should be grounded in the social model approach, representatives of the autistic community should hold (some degree of) co-ownership of the project, and the project must provide meaningful improvement for the lives of autistic people.

Focusing on a different aspect of neurodiversity research, Bottema-Beutel et al. (2020) respond to the omnipresence of ableist language by suggesting practices for researchers to avoid this type of language. Their suggestions include avoiding value-laden language (such as "high functioning," "low functioning," or "challenging behaviors"), honoring the language preferences of the person or group being referred to, and using terminology in the same manner as disability communities. The authors note that such "language choices are important, as they shape attitudes about autism and people's understanding of what it means to be an autistic person" (Bottema-Beutel et al., 2020, p. 5).

Other researchers have explored ethical considerations for research involving neurodivergent people. Cascio et al. (2020) build on previous work by Pellicano and Stears (2011), among others, to establish ethical "guideposts" for autism research, including individualized support, empowerment, holistic personhood, and a focus on relationships. In another work, Cascio et al. (2021) delve deeper into conceptions of 'empowerment' and the decision-making process in research involving autistic people, highlighting methods for

empowerment such as approaching consent as an ongoing process, making the consent process more accessible, sharing information (such as decisions made about the research purpose or design), and involving autistic people as co-researchers and not only as participants.

The Ongoing Development of 'Best Practices' in Neurodiversity Research

Drawing on over a decade of experiences working with autistic adults, Nicolaidis et al. (2019) conducted an institutional ethnography to produce a set of guidelines for including neurodivergent people as co-researchers and participants in autism research. These guidelines included seven practices for inclusive research: being transparent about the project goals and aligning community engagement with those goals, clearly defining roles, creating processes for communication and information sharing, building and maintaining trust throughout the project, collaborating on disseminating findings or project results, fostering co-learning and building capacity for community participation, and providing adequate compensation. Additionally, Nicolaidis et al. outline guidelines for including autistic participants, such as making the consent process accessible, minimizing the risk of exploiting the participants, adapting research instruments for autistic adults (since many existing instruments are not appropriate for the autistic community), and creating accessible interview guides. They note that it is equally important to always provide multiple forms of both synchronous and asynchronous communication. Nicolaidis et al. further observe that "the inclusion of autistic adults on the research team is feasible, important, and beneficial, but requires time and effort, clear processes for inclusion, a desire to learn from the community, and a genuine willingness to share power" (Nicolaidis et al., 2019, 2020).

Focusing on specific forms of research, Nicolaidis et al. (2020) explored methods for adapting survey instruments for use with neurodivergent people, seeking feedback and input from community partners and neurodivergent adults. The authors share lessons learned from six different studies that required adapting survey instruments for neurodivergent adults, and then outline common problems that often make surveys inaccessible. These accessibility issues include unclear language, inadequately specific response options, anxiety about answering a question correctly, a failure to acknowledge the full context of neurodiversity, questions that could be answered in a variety of ways depending on the situation, and ableist language. Most survey instruments are created for use with the general population and thus require adaptation to be appropriate and accessible to neurodivergent adults. Common adaptations to address these problems include simplifying language or providing clear definitions or examples, providing graphics or additional information with Likert scales, adding items or additional text to acknowledge autism-specific contexts, and eliminating ableist language. The authors note that "empowerment is accomplished both through research (research can empower people in other areas of life) and within research (research participants can be empowered)" (Nicolaidis et al., 2020, p. 134).

Although research guidelines and frameworks for autism-inclusive research provide suggestions that also apply to interview techniques, and suggestions for survey instrument adaptation can also provide additional guidance, the existing literature does not provide suggestions specific to neuroinclusive research methods or interviewing practices. Yet drawing on feminist, emancipatory research practices and existing literature on neurodiversity research

practices and inclusion of neurodivergent people provides a foundation for outlining important issues for consideration when researching neurodiversity. Additionally, it is important to note that despite the participation of autistic and/or ADHD researchers in many of the aforementioned articles, neurodivergent people are largely not presumed to be the main researchers themselves, but are consistently addressed in the literature as ‘community participants’ who might take on the role of co-researcher or of participant.

Doing Research Differently as a Neurodivergent Researcher

A limited number of research articles have begun to recognize that neurodivergent people are already part of academia and producing research, and thus have attempted to imagine what that might mean for research teams (Bertilsdotter Rosqvist et al., 2023; G. L. Williams et al., 2024). Bertilsdotter Rosqvist et al. (2019) describe their approach to emancipatory autism studies within their research group, which enables different ways of framing research, doing research, and disseminating research. They propose that continual reflexivity, shared ownership, intersectionality, diverse leadership, and findings that are accessible to the community are essential components of this emancipatory approach. Bertilsdotter Rosqvist et al. (2022) detail their attempts to work together as a neurodiverse research team including both neurotypical and neurodivergent researchers. Their methodology entails talking with each other from their own standpoint and talking back to power in a collective manner. They note that they are intentionally resisting “normative standards and creating our own sort of thinking spaces, our own sort of academia” in order to pave “the way for a future where individual needs and differences aren’t pathologized, or even

accommodated, but are just simply part of how we work” (Bertilsdotter Rosqvist, Botha, et al., 2022, p. 8). Both of these articles acknowledge the need for doing neurodiversity research differently from the traditional approach and grapple with what that difference might look like and mean for those involved.

Another significant aspect of difference related to doing research is cross-neurotype communication (in other words, between neurodivergent people and neurotypical people), which Hillary (2020) compares to cross-cultural communication. Hilary argues that neurodivergent people exhibit 'neuro-cultural' practices such as stimming, dimming bright lights, comfort with extended silence, and giving and listening to monologues on niche topics as a sign of respect. Thus, miscommunication across neurotypes is a matter of cultural difference, and not a communication deficit located in the neurodivergent person. Similarly, Jackson-Perry et al. (Jackson-Perry et al., 2020) discuss the different ways that neurodivergent people experience the sensory environment. They observe that neurodivergent people’s sensory experiences “are often pathologized, considered by diagnostic definition to be abnormal, and by anecdote to be extraordinary or other-worldly” (Jackson-Perry et al., 2020, p. 125). In discussing their own sensory experiences, they note that ‘sensory normate language’ is inadequate for the task of describing neurodivergent experiences. Such differences are easily overlooked or not prioritized in the ableist academy. All too many of the experiences of neurodivergent researchers fall outside the bounds of what is considered ‘normal’ and anticipated as part of the research process. Describing these experiences requires some trial and error, which requires time and intentional effort, but is crucial to centering neurodiversity in research.

Centering Disability in Research

The conception of ‘centering disability’ comes from work by Price and Kerschbaum (2016) on their experiences with qualitative interviewing that includes both disabled participants *and* disabled researchers. In order to question assumptions about who gets to be a researcher, and to acknowledge and support disabled researchers, Kerschbaum and Price developed “centering disability” as a method of recognizing the lived experiences of both disabled participants and disabled researchers in qualitative interviewing (Kerschbaum & Price, 2017; M. Price & Kerschbaum, 2016). Centering disability is not only about inclusion and accessibility, but also involves questioning norms and “turning to disabled people’s lived experiences to generate transformational knowledge that can contribute to more equitable practices,” including research practices (Kerschbaum & Price, 2017, p. 98). Research texts and practices regularly assume that researchers are “hyper-able research instruments capable of flexing and bending to any circumstance or situation they might encounter in their work” (Kerschbaum & Price, 2017, p. 99). Normative research practices cannot be merely adapted for disabled researchers but must instead be “reinvented” to include “new ways of moving in and around research methodologies” (Kerschbaum & Price, 2017, p. 100). Centering disability also requires new conceptions of who produces knowledge and what that knowledge might look like, because people with marginalized identities have long been excluded in such conceptions. Kerschbaum and Price suggest that rather than accommodating disability as it arises in certain circumstances, researchers should assume that disability is and will always be part of the research process, as will all aspects of each person’s identity.

Although Price and Kerschbaum focus specifically on qualitative interviewing, centering disability has also been applied to critical qualitative research more broadly (Lester & Nusbaum, 2021). Pearson and Dickens (2021) describe this centering of disability as a method for “researching back,” similar to talking back. Centering disability in research can “not only infuse socio-social justice and disability justice principles” but can additionally “facilitate environments where disabled scholars thrive rather than ‘co’-existing in survivor mode in toxic landscapes” (H. Pearson & Dickens, 2021, p. 89). To center disability is to disrupt and redefine who constitutes ‘researcher,’ what counts as knowledge, and to instead focus on community, solidarity, and radical care. Researchers who seek to center disability should also consider how “self-love and community care” can shape research design (H. Pearson & Dickens, 2021, p. 93). This effort will require grappling with how to define and understand self-love and care, but this struggle is necessary to resist ableist expectations and systems and to avoid reproducing marginalization and exploitation.

Centering Neurodivergence in Research

Neurodiversity research has historically privileged the voices and perspectives of neurotypical researchers, and positioned neurodivergent people as sources of data who are stripped of their own agency and voice. As Botha contends, “challenging the system means challenging the permissibility of perpetuating poor, outdated, or harmful science, including as what is defined as such changes over time” (Botha, 2021, p. 9). Resistance, then, requires not

adjustments or accommodations, but a reimagining and remaking of academic research. We need new ways of being academic researchers and new ways of doing academic research.

Centering disability offers an anti-ableist approach to reconceiving research or ‘researching back.’ Yet neurodivergent scholars may or may not identify as disabled, and in an area of research that continues to seek cures for neurodiversity or ways to eliminate autistic people, neurodiversity research requires a different kind of attention to the lived experiences and embodied knowledge of neurodivergent people as participants, *and* as scholars and researchers, with agency. Bertilsdotter et al. (2020b) argue that centering marginalization can turn “existing models on autism and other forms of neurodivergence on their head” and serve as a method for talking back to power (p. 226). Academia and our society at large are deeply and harmfully ableist, which “makes the *centering* of neurodivergent needs based on neurodivergent rather than cognitive normate understandings of these needs absolutely essential” (Bertilsdotter Rosqvist et al., 2020b, p. 227). What could this centering of neurodivergence look like in research, using Price and Kerschbaum’s conception of centering disability as a starting point? To this end, this study proposes eight principles for centering neurodivergence in research. These principles are grounded in neurodiversity research (including the works discussed above) and disability studies scholarship, while also drawing inspiration from the principles of disability justice. Together, then, the following eight principles are designed to serve both neurodivergent participants and neurodivergent researchers:

1. Integrate neurodivergent people as researchers *and* participants.

2. Aim at improving the lives of neurodivergent people in a way that aligns with neurodivergent people's priorities and values.
3. Use a critical disability theory approach to neurodiversity.
4. Give attention to power and privilege while finding ways to share power.
5. Value identity as multi-dimensional.
6. Strive to create collective access as an ongoing process.
7. Focus on relationality and interdependence.
8. Plan and provide for the sustainability of neurodivergent researchers.

As part of my own research on neurodiversity, I have encountered epistemic violence, experienced triggers of my own trauma, and encountered stigma and harmful stereotypes from neurotypical people. I have support systems in place, but they cannot always protect me. Yes, there are also moments of shared laughter and the joy of connecting with someone who simply 'gets it' without much explanation. There are also abundant moments of grief, shame, shared trauma, and the profound impact of the ongoing violence of ableism. Failing to plan for those challenges in advance will not benefit anyone and may result in a reactive response instead of an informed and proactive process of support and care.

Throughout the process of working on these principles, I received feedback from my research team colleagues, other disabled and neurodivergent researchers, and disability studies scholars. They all continually reminded me to be clearer about the impact of doing this work, and to give voice to my own concerns and difficulties. With that feedback in mind, and my own burnout lingering on the proverbial horizon, I added the eighth and final principle. I had originally imagined this concept of sustainability as woven into the other principles, but I came to realize the importance of naming this explicitly.

Principle 1: Integrate neurodivergent people as researchers and participants

The first principle emphasizes the need for neurodivergent people to be integrated into all aspects of research, from choosing a focus and designing the research to disseminating results to the community (Barnes, 2002; Barton, 2005; Cascio et al., 2021; Chown et al., 2017; Nicolaidis et al., 2019). Cascio et al. (2021) observe that researchers can “empower people with autism to contribute to research in ways other than as participants” (p. 129). They suggest community-based participatory research, also used and recommended by the AASPIRE research group (Nicolaidis et al., 2019). Chown et al. (2017) also emphasize the need for neurodivergent participation in the entire research process, arguing that research projects involving neurodiversity should be reviewed by neurodivergent researchers to “validate the identification and definition of a research project” (p. 727). Neurodivergent self-advocates have argued for more centering of neurodivergent perspectives in neurodiversity research, as their voices have predominantly been excluded altogether or treated solely as data for neurotypical researchers to use as they see fit. This is similar to calls for emancipatory research in disability studies where disabled people will ‘own’ and control the research agenda and the entire research process (Barnes, 2002; Barton, 2005), and also reflects the common call for “nothing about us without us.”

Principle 2: Aim at improving the lives of neurodivergent people in a way that aligns with neurodivergent people’s priorities and values

The second principle aims to redirect the attention of researchers away from solving the ‘problem’ of neurodiversity to addressing the issues that neurodivergent people encounter in their daily lives, following the leadership of those who most impacted (Chown et al., 2017; Sins

Invalid, 2019). A large proportion of neurodiversity research focuses on cure, treatment, or even elimination of neurological differences, and this is particularly true of autism research.

Centering neurodivergence, however, requires a different approach that is focused on improving the lives and experiences of neurodivergent people themselves. In proposing an emancipatory approach to autism research, Chown et al. (2017) emphasize the need for neurodiversity research to “be focused on producing outcomes with the potential to improve the lives” of neurodivergent people (p. 728). Research that is centered on the lives of neurodivergent people would never seek to eliminate this depth of lived experience but instead would value that complex embodied experience (Siebers, 2019), and seek to make improvements for the variety of issues and barriers that society creates for neurodivergent people, such as high unemployment, difficulties accessing health care, social stigma, stereotypes, and a general lack of inclusion and accessibility throughout society.

Principle 3: Use a critical disability theory approach to neurodiversity

The third principle recognizes that the medical model is pathologizing and results in negative views of neurodivergent people. The medical model assumes that neurodivergent lives are lacking, lived according to one’s deficits, and full of difficulties. Centering neurodivergence instead aligns with a neurodiversity approach to value neurological differences and examine the social, political, and relational factors in disabling and excluding neurodivergent people (Bertilsdotter Rosqvist et al., 2020b; Bottema-Beutel et al., 2020; Kafer, 2013; Walker & Raymaker, 2021). Chown et al. (2017) emphasize the need for the social model of disability to be at the center of neurodiversity research. This aligns with the neurodiversity paradigm, which

conceptualizes neurological differences as a form of human variation (Bertilsson Rosqvist et al., 2020a; Bottema-Beutel et al., 2020; Walker & Raymaker, 2021). Using critical disability theory provides the opportunity to scrutinize current socio-political norms as practices. Critical disability theory as a methodology involves questioning “the social norms that define particular attributes as impairments, as well as the social conditions that concentrate stigmatized attributes in particular populations” with the aim to produce “knowledge in support of justice for people with stigmatized bodies and minds” (Minich, 2016, p. 3). In this manner, then, critical disability theory demands social justice for neurodivergent people and, like disability justice, can serve as a “practice of what is yet-to-be” (Sins Invalid, 2019, p. 26). Research that integrates critical disability theory will attend to social norms, expectations, systems, and practices rather than neurodivergent people themselves.

Principle 4: Give attention to power and privilege while finding ways to share power

The fourth principle, attention to power and privilege, draws on feminist theory and is rooted in tenets of both disability justice and DisCrit. Sins Invalid, in their guide to disability justice, assert that “able-bodied supremacy has been formed in relation to other systems of domination and exploitation” and the “histories of white supremacy and ableism are inextricably entwined, created in the context of colonial conquest and capitalist domination” (Sins Invalid, 2019, p. 18). Working against these oppressive logics requires “being attentive to the ways that power plays out in our labors with and for one another” lest we reproduce the very oppression we seek to end (Sins Invalid, 2019, p. 67). The Academic Autistic Spectrum Partnership in Research and Education (AASPIRE) research group also notes the need for power

sharing in neurodiversity research, from policies and practices to decision-making and dissemination of research (Nicolaidis et al., 2019). They “strongly urge academic researchers to continuously consider how their power, privilege, and potential biases” may be impacting their research (Nicolaidis et al., 2019, p. 2012).

Principle 5: Value identity as multi-dimensional

The fifth principle urges neurodiversity researchers to recognize and value multiple dimensions of identity rather than investigating neurodiversity in isolation. Mallipeddi and VanDaalen (2021) argue that neurodiversity research “would benefit from the integration of an intersectional framework that considers race, gender, class, sexuality, and other constructs.” Intersectionality is also a key tenet of disability justice, which acknowledges that “we are many things, and they all impact us” (Sins Invalid, 2019, p. 23). Similarly, DisCrit “values multidimensional identities and troubles singular notions of identity such as race or dis/ability or class or gender or sexuality, and so on” (Annamma et al., 2016, p. 19). DisCrit also “seeks to reject the commonly held assumption that those who are perceived as deviating from the standards of Whiteness or ability necessarily want to achieve those standards” (Annamma et al., 2016, p. 20). The neurodiversity paradigm does not call for assimilation of neurodivergent people into cognitive normate culture, but rather emphasizes the need for neurodiversity to itself be treated as normal, and a regular part of human variation.

Principle 6: Strive to create collective access as an ongoing process

The sixth principle focuses on creating collective access as an ongoing process. Collective access is a key tenet of disability justice because “access needs aren’t shameful — we all function differently depending on context and environment” (Sins Invalid, 2019, p. 26). Collective access emerged from a desire “to shift the individualized and independent understanding of access and queer it and color it *interdependent*” (Mingus, 2010). Creating collective access is an essential component of centering disability and “is not only about achieving things together, but also being limited together” (M. Price & Kerschbaum, 2016, p. 27). Collective access is complicated, and as Mingus (2010) observes from her own experiences, “trying to move with a group of disabled people *with different disabilities* is very hard, takes enormous amounts of problem-solving, energy and creative solutions.” Yet that hard work and energy is required to create a research environment that centers neurodivergence instead of the usual societal norms and practices. Centering neurodivergence, however, builds on that problem-solving energy and creative expertise to create new possibilities and generate new insights. Access needs will conflict and will require communication and negotiation, and may even need to be altered or changed. Thus, access is not a one-time accommodation but a central and ongoing part of research that centers neurodivergence.

Principle 7: Focus on relationality and interdependence

The seventh and final principle of centering neurodivergence calls for a focus on relationality and interdependence. Interdependence is the recognition that to some degree we all depend on one another, and live in relation with each other and with all living systems

(Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018; Sins Invalid, 2019). This emphasis on interdependence and relationality is often missing in neurodiversity research which tends to treat neurodivergent people as “passive participants” or “a resource to be accessed when needed” (den Houting et al., 2021, p. 158). Focusing on relationality will also require building and maintaining trust through “an ongoing process of listening, respect, planning, follow-through, willingness to learn from each other, forgiveness, change, and celebrating success” (Nicolaidis et al., 2019, p. 2012). Relationality stands in direct opposition to the individualistic model of research in academia and is “less about ‘us and them’ and more about collective authenticity” (Bertilsdotter Rosqvist, Botha, et al., 2022, p. 8). Relationality and interdependence remind us that research impacts our society and requires intentionality and accountability to the community or communities we work with.

Principle 8: Plan and provide for the sustainability of neurodivergent researchers through radical care.

Radical care resists existing harmful practices and creates space for different ways of being an academic. Living in an ableist society takes a toll on neurodivergent people, and the same is true of conducting research within academic settings. As part of researching neurodiversity, neurodivergent researchers will regularly encounter pathologized approaches to neurodiversity, stereotypes, stigma, and the often painful and traumatic experiences of their neurodivergent peers and participants (Bertilsdotter Rosqvist, Botha, et al., 2022; Botha, 2021). As researchers, we “are embedded in what we do,” which is why we also need to “learn to safely and healthily conduct our work” through care for one another and ourselves (Mauldin,

2023a, p. 3). Although care is often associated with gendered forms of nurturing and providing emotional support for the benefit of others, or promoted as a method for ensuring optimum efficiency in the workplace through office yoga or mindfulness, radical care resists such capitalist conceptions and instead serves as “a critical survival strategy” that is “both a solution to and a symptom of the social deficits of late capitalism” (Hobart & Kneese, 2020, p. 2). Radical care, “as a set of vital but underappreciated strategies for enduring precarious worlds.” provides a different approach to care that is grounded in relationships and solidarity among people that involves collective action and working “together across class, race, ethnicity, religious, and state boundaries toward a common cause” (Hobart & Kneese, 2020). Disability justice similarly emphasizes the importance of creating radical care networks built around support and mutual respect and understanding (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018, 2022; Sins Invalid, 2019). The refusal to adhere to existing norms or to reinforce existing power structures can also be an act of radical care, in that it demonstrates solidarity with those whose existence does not align with predominant social expectations. To address and dismantle the ableism of academia requires “a radical care praxis that challenges the ongoing devaluation of human subjectivity; recognizes the persistence of institutional racism, sexism, heteronormativity, ableism, ageism, and classism” within our institutions (Dowler et al., 2019, p. 36). Developing care involves creating “cultures of caring for and being responsible to the material conditions” that shape the lives of academics (Dowler et al., 2019, p. 37). A culture of care also includes support for trauma-informed practices, mental health, and valuing differences such as neurodiversity. Radical care demands community-building that is centered around those least able to participate instead of

those who are most likely to attend, while also imagining new and different ways of participating.

*I've been fortunate to have support around me, and I know that support fell heavily to women academics (most of whom were also women with additional intersecting identities) who were not compensated for any of that labor. I want someone other than my research team to **care** about that imbalance, and about our well-being. I want an academic environment where I don't have to feel bad that my data analysis work has become overwhelming and triggering in a way I hadn't anticipated, and so it will now require additional time. I want an academic environment that won't continually lead to my own burnout, or that of my colleagues. Our institutions will not care for us, so we must use the power we have to resist academic individualization and instead build care networks and solidarity with one another, because doing so is essential to our long-term survival.*

*The care that has supported me has often come in small forms, like a bag of chocolate shared on a rough day, a second opinion on a research timeline that is in shambles due to overwhelm and exhaustion, or a reminder to **not** work on a holiday and rest instead (although really, that shouldn't be so extraordinary – and that's my point). Being a neurodivergent researcher engaged in neurodiversity research is rewarding, but it is also brutal at times, and I'm coming to a point in my own journey where I'm not sure how long I can survive academia. I don't want to see others encountering the same struggles. I want better for all of us. We deserve better.*

Creating Space for Different Ways of Researching Neurodiversity

Taken together, then, these principles of centering neurodivergence create a research environment for both researchers and research participants where neurodivergence is anticipated and designed for from the beginning. Centering neurodivergence is not only about accommodating neurodivergent researchers and participants but is a way of throwing aside normative assumptions and practices in favor of neurodivergent ways of being researchers and

doing research. Bertilsdotter et al. (2022) observe that few openly neurodivergent academics “are in secure positions in neurodivergence-related fields” (p. 8). They continue, “compare that with the number of non-neurodivergent people who are working research related to neurodivergence. What does this say about the aims of the research?” (Bertilsdotter Rosqvist, Botha, et al., 2022, p. 8). What this should tell us is that we need a new and different way of doing neurodiversity research where difference is no longer pathologized but anticipated and welcomed as part of doing the work of neurodiversity research.

To clarify further, centering neurodivergence does not exclude neurotypicality but instead opens meaningful space for neurodivergence and neurodivergent culture, space which is currently difficult to create and maintain (Botha & Gillespie-Lynch, 2022; Farahar, 2022; Hillary, 2020; Kapp, 2020; Straus, 2013). Doing so fosters an environment of what Yergeau (2018) terms “neuroqueer intimacy.” This neuroqueer intimacy “signifies a generous and inter-bodily gesturing, one that postures beyond brains, bones, and dermis; one that waves in a plurality of identities, orientations, affective stances, and lived experiences, modes ranging from autism to deafness to trauma to asexuality” (Yergeau, 2018, p. 86). The value of neuroqueer intimacies “is in their movement toward an elsewhere, an otherwise, a different future that – in the process of always becoming – jars free new ways of occupying the here and now” (Smilges, 2022, p. 187). In this manner, then, we can create new ways of being, doing, and participating in research.

Librarianship as Profession

For the general public, the word ‘librarian’ conjures up a specific mental image that generally borders on stereotypical. Within the profession, this idea of the librarian stereotype has been explored in library literature and continues to impact the profession (Jennings, 2016; Pagowsky, 2014; Pagowsky & Rigby, 2014), as do other factors including perceptions of professionalism (J. Brown & Leung, 2018; Drabinski, 2016; Hicks, 2014; Moeller, 2019; Seminelli, 2016), the service model (Arellano Douglas & Gadsby, 2020; Foster, 2007), the feminization of the profession (Emmelhainz et al., 2017; S. Evans et al., 2018; S. Higgins, 2017; Lapp, 2022; Sloniowski, 2016), and the other norms of the profession, especially whiteness and heteronormativity (Chou & Pho, 2018; Galvan, 2015; Hathcock, 2015; Hudson, 2017; Leung & López-McKnight, 2021; Schlesselman-Tarango, 2017). Librarianship as a field upholds and reinforces such social norms, including ableism, which impact the experiences of those who work within the profession. Unlike other professions and for-profit organizations, librarianship is a field that strives toward access and equity, as reflected in ALA’s Core Values of Librarianship (American Library Association, 2019). Yet the profession regularly fails to achieve that for library workers within the workplace context.

The “Library Spirit” and White Saviorism of Librarianship

In the United States, the field of librarianship, now a predominantly feminized profession, was mainly the purview of highly-educated white men until the late 1800s (Garrison, 1972; Maack, 1998). Women began entering the profession in 1852 and represented two-thirds

of the profession by 1878 and over 78% by 1910 (Garrison, 1972, p. 131). Amidst the Progressive Era concerns over the role of women and social values of “altruism and caring” (Maack, 1998, p. 58), librarianship became a “particularly suitable job for educated women,” and more specifically, college-educated white women (Pawley, 2022, p. 120). White, middle-class women were viewed as possessing the “innate characteristics necessary to be effective library workers” such as “piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity” (Schlesselman-Tarango, 2016, p. 673). Early library education programs even required a personality test as part of the admission process (Sloniowski, 2016, p. 674). When Melville “Melvil” Dewey began the first library school at Columbia College, program admittees were required to be a “person of good moral character” (Wiegand, 1986, p. 388). Dewey also claimed that the “domestic bent” of women made them “inherently suited to librarianship” (Pawley, 2022, p. 121). In 1886, he stated that the necessary qualities for library work were “accuracy, order (or what we call the housekeeping instinct), executive ability, and above all earnestness and enthusiasm” (Slyck, 1995, p. 163). Dewey knew that women could be paid “at only half the rate of the male staff” but could also be counted upon “for dedication, as well as extensive cultural and academic accomplishments” (Pawley, 2017, p. 75). While Dewey promoted women in the field of librarianship, he was also known to take advantage of his role and harass women, eventually stepping back from his leadership role within ALA due to complaints against him (Pawley, 2022). Before that, however, Dewey frequently emphasized “library spirit,” which was a commitment to service, or perhaps more accurately, “a personal commitment to self-sacrificing (that is, underpaid) service” (Pawley, 2022, p. 121). Similarly important was “library faith” or the belief

in the ability of books and reading to transform individuals, communities, and society at large, which also created “a moral justification for public investment in local libraries free to all” (Pawley, 2017, p. 76). Thus college-educated white women were brought into librarianship “to create welcoming spaces and offer patrons gentle guidance toward edifying and educative literature” (Sloniowski, 2016, p. 646). Black women also contributed to literacy movements in the 1800s and later made significant contributions to librarianship, such as Vivian Gordon Harsh who created a collection to “provide African Americans the kind of access to information about their history and culture that white readers took for granted,” a collection that is now the largest African American history and literature collection in the Midwest (Pawley, 2022, p. 11). Yet Black librarians like Harsh worked within “white structures of power,” and therefore they “often had to struggle within those power structures that racialized and gendered them” (Pollock & Haley, 2018, p. 17).

Feminized conceptions of librarianship also aligned with the belief that women should work to benefit the deserving poor and “to ‘convert’ through reading those of ‘inferior’ European origin (that is, from southern and eastern Europe) into first-class American citizens” (Pawley, 2022, p. 9). Libraries served as a public good, but only for those eligible for citizenship, while those who were denied citizen status, such as indigenous, Black, and Asian people, were similarly denied access to libraries or had to create their own libraries separate from local public libraries (Pawley, 2022; Schlesselman-Tarango, 2016). Although ‘library faith’ focused on the ability of libraries to create positive change in their communities, libraries simultaneously “neglected the information needs of African Americans and other people of color, as well as the

needs of others whose gender religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or disability (among other factors) placed them on the periphery of power” (Pawley, 2022, p. 9). Thus ‘library spirit’ and ‘library faith’ were intertwined with race, gender, and paternalism, creating in white women librarians “a subject fit to perform the work of colonialism in its variegated and feminized forms” as they worked to educate and ‘civilize’ marginalized people and communities (Schlesselman-Tarango, 2016, p. 673).

This long history of white saviorism in librarianship continues to impact the profession and “prevents adequate attention to our own working conditions,” as librarians “are always the caretaker, never the cared for” (S. S. Rosen, 2021, p. 3). To this day librarianship remains a feminized field, sometimes called a pink-collar profession, meaning that it is a field focused on care work (similar to nursing or teaching) and historically considered the work of women. Professional expectations of librarians are surprisingly unchanged since the nineteenth century, with library workers being “expected to do significant emotional labor, and be patient, willing to help,” and to consistently “offer service with a smile” (Sloniowski, 2016, p. 660). Additionally, the nature of librarianship “situates frontline workers precisely at the intersection of feminized work, service work, care work, and precarious work—all of which exist within historically entrenched systems of patriarchy and white supremacy and result in the deprofessionalization, devaluation, and sexualization of women’s labor” (Allard et al., 2020, p. 423).

Conforming to Whiteness in Librarianship

Despite ongoing efforts to diversify the profession, librarianship continues to be a field that is 85% white and is projected to remain significantly white (83%) for at least the next decade (Hullbert & Kendrick, 2023). However, the whiteness of the profession extends significantly beyond employment statistics and impacts the culture, division of labor, values, and practices of the profession. Hudson (2017) critiques approaches to diversity that argue that racism is a problem in LIS because “it segregates, shuts out, or ignores nonwhite people and perspectives,” contending that “regimes of racial subordination are far more multifaceted in their operations, however, and, far from exclusion, have frequently taken the form of integration, whether through assimilation, cooptation, or more complex strategies of inclusive control” (p. 13). Representation in LIS does not equate agency, nor does it guarantee deeper analyses of “the configurations of relations of power and assignment of value” within the profession (Hudson, 2017, p. 13). Instead, such framing of “diversity” as an issue of numbers prevents “deeper questions about the ways in which more fundamental assumptions and structures within the library world operate as sites for the perpetuation of white supremacy” (Hudson, 2017, p. 14). For example, the whiteness of the librarianship results in librarians of color being burdened with much of the diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) work in libraries (J. Brown & Leung, 2018) while also experiencing microaggressions (Alabi, 2018; Espinal et al., 2018), isolation and alienation (J. Brown et al., 2018), low morale (Galvan, 2015), and a complete lack of understanding from their white colleagues (J. Brown et al., 2018; J. Brown & Leung, 2018; Chiu et al., 2021; Hathcock, 2015; K. Kendrick & Damasco, 2019). Brown et al.

(2018) point out that the whiteness of librarianship is oppressive to anyone who doesn't fit expectations (for example, as related to attire or hairstyles), and they emphasize the need to reexamine the profession with the recognition that "our values, systems, policies, education, and institutions are based on whiteness" (p. 178). Galvan (2015) similarly observes that librarianship demands the performance of whiteness and creates barriers to entering the field through factors such as white savior narratives and access to wealth (for example, to afford an MLIS degree or 'professional' clothing for interviews). Cultural expectations of librarianship rooted in whiteness impact who and what is viewed as professional, and result in othering those deemed to fail in conforming. As a result, librarians who "wear natural hair, whose shape/structure make it difficult to find professional dress, or librarians with disabilities have found their bodies *as they exist* to be deemed unprofessional" (Galvan, 2015). For librarians of color, then, "playing at whiteness is still a requirement for career success" (Hathcock, 2015).

The expectation of conforming to whiteness demands emotional labor and creates stress and trauma for librarians of color, yet this impact is rarely acknowledged except by LIS scholars of color themselves (J. Brown & Leung, 2018; Espinal et al., 2018). In the workplace, "managers are still invested in this idea that people must be at work to be working, and at the same time they refuse to acknowledge that the workplace is hostile for many employees" (Espinal et al., 2018). White supremacy culture and its associated "assumptions, beliefs, and policies" undergird librarianship and "are seen as the norm rather than things to be challenged and ultimately transformed" (Chiu et al., 2021, p. 50). Like U.S. society, librarianship is deeply rooted in white supremacy culture, which directly impacts the hiring, retention, and advancement of

librarians of color. Efforts to change statistical representation in the field will only result in exposing librarians of color to further harm through racism, microaggressions, stereotype threat, attrition, and carrying the majority of DEI work, often without support (K. Kendrick & Damasco, 2019). What is needed instead is a “paradigm shift” and the dismantling of racism in the profession (Chiu et al., 2021). In a country where the supreme court has struck down affirmative action in college admissions and states are outlawing discussion of critical race theory in education systems, the dismantling of white supremacy has become increasingly complicated and even more urgent. Whether the field of librarianship will take up this call for dramatic change unfortunately remains to be seen, especially as resisting change is a choice that is both easy and politically convenient. But make no mistake, it is indeed a choice. Librarians and library leaders still have the opportunity to make a different choice. Libraries need to take a stance against racial injustice in their communities and within the profession itself (A. N. Gibson et al., 2017, 2020).

Gender and Heteronormativity in Librarianship

Along with the feminization of the profession, previous research has examined the gender pay gap in libraries (Galbraith et al., 2019) and gender norms in various aspects of the profession. For example, Drabinski (2016) examines cataloging and classification through the lens of queer theory, observing that “the ideology that consigns gay and lesbian sexuality to the subject classification for *Sexual deviance*, or classifies sexuality of all kinds as *Social problems*, has ramifications beyond the library catalog for people who claim those identities” (109).

Similarly addressing issues of cataloging and classification, the Homosaurus, which is “a controlled vocabulary of LGBTQ+-specific terminology that enhances the discoverability of and improves access to LGBTQ+ resources held by archives, libraries, and museums,” was developed in response to the lack of terminology and general gaps in existing classification systems like the Library of Congress Subject Headings (Cifor & Rawson, 2022, p. 2). Other research has examined the information practices of LGBTQIA+ communities (Kitzie et al., 2022), and information resources and access for trans and gender nonconforming (TGNC) library patrons (Wagner & Crowley, 2020). Wagner and Crowley contend that academic libraries are failing their TGNC patrons through checklist approaches such as creating gender-neutral bathrooms that do little to address the “systemic failures that continue to alienate, exploit and make invisible TGNC individuals” (Wagner & Crowley, 2020, p. 176). Their research findings showed “continued investments in heteronormative and cisnormative structures concerning information provision and access for TGNC patrons” (Wagner & Crowley, 2020, p. 159). While these works attend to and respond to heteronormativity and cisnormativity in librarianship, they focus primarily on patrons, and not on library workers or the profession itself.

US Census Bureau statistics indicated that in 2022, women made up 82% of the profession, but the census data does not collect information on transgender or gender nonconforming library workers (*Library Professionals*, 2023). The ALA Demographic study conducted in 2017 was similarly limited to only male or female gender options (Adolpho et al., 2023a). Little research has examined the experiences of LGBTQIA+ library workers, yet the ALA Taskforce on Gay Liberation was “the first professional gay caucus in the nation” (Nectoux, 2011,

p. xi), indicating the existence of a rich history that has often been overlooked. Volumes like Carmicheal's *Daring to Find Our Names* (1998) and Nectoux's *Out Behind the Desk* (2011) first brought attention to LGBTQIA+ library workers and their experiences in the profession. Yet to this day, as Adolpho et al. (2023a) observe, librarianship regularly ignores the existence of trans and gender diverse library workers and "often punishes" them, and in doing so, renders them "invisible to each other" (4). Too often libraries treat "the oppression of trans and gender diverse library workers and LIS students as a patron-only issue or something for HR to deal with," instead of investing in "structural changes that acknowledge that trans and gender diverse people aren't just our patrons; they're also our employees, coworkers, students, teachers, and volunteers" (Adolpho et al., 2023a, p. 8). This failure to name, acknowledge, and support LGBTQIA+ people within the profession upholds heteronormativity and cisnormativity in ways that may render visibility unsafe or career threatening, subjecting LGBTQIA+ library workers to microaggressions, discrimination, firing, or forcing them out of the profession (e.g. Held, 2023; Klein, 2023). This sometimes violent reinforcement of social norms is compounded for library workers who are multiply marginalized, such as BIPOC library workers who are also queer and/or disabled. The ALA may maintain that "if libraries are to be their best, their services and staff must reflect both the people they serve and the larger global community" (ALA Office for Research and Statistics, 2012) but writing that in a report appears to remain easier than making concerted efforts toward achieving that within the profession.

The Cost of Emotional Labor and Self-sacrificing Service

As a service-oriented profession, then, librarianship demands a friendly and helpful demeanor even as doing so may (and sometimes does) expose library workers to harm, including verbal abuse, harassment, intimidation, and physical violence (S. T. Anderson, 2022; Stevenson, 2022). Yet it is not only patrons who may enact harm on librarians, for a surprising number of librarians report bullying and abuse from co-workers and supervisors as well. A recent study found that 70% of respondents (n = 554) had faced workplace bullying, most frequently by supervisors and often for three or more years (C. A. G. Acadia Spencer, 2022). A similar number had witnessed workplace bullying, yet many reported that management and/or human resources had done little in response or responded in such a way that worsened the situation (C. A. G. Acadia Spencer, 2022). Acadia and Vogt contend that libraries are dysfunctional organizations that “are currently, and have been historically, in a position where they cannot figure out how to effectively help themselves, much less their employees” (S. Acadia & Vogt, 2022, p. 11). Much of the LIS literature fails to recognize the scale of dysfunction and treats work problems as individual problems, taking a ‘tips and tricks’ approach to offering coping strategies instead of addressing the larger socio-cultural issues that enable and sustain workplace dysfunction (S. Acadia & Vogt, 2022). Instead of questioning or critiquing their organizations and workplaces, library workers are expected to uphold vocational awe, which is the idea that libraries and librarianship are fundamentally good and above reproach. Ettarh (2018), who developed the concept of vocational awe, defines it as a “set of ideas, values, and assumptions librarians have about themselves and the profession that result in beliefs that

libraries as institutions are inherently good and sacred, and therefore beyond critique” (para. 3). Vocational awe within the workplace draws attention to individuals as the problem because the systems and structures of libraries and librarianship cannot be questioned or critiqued so it must be the library workers who are at fault, and therefore they must also bear the burden of change. Although tips and tricks, mindfulness, resilience, and taking breaks may help workers survive a dysfunctional organization, they do nothing to address the long-term, ongoing dysfunction in library workplaces (S. Acadia & Vogt, 2022).

Libraries and librarianship are also entangled with neoliberal capitalism. Consider for example the way that the value of libraries is no longer presumed but must be articulated and demonstrated, whether to administrators, taxpayers, or library boards (e.g. Oakleaf, 2010). Political scientist Wendy Brown identifies this economization of “even non-wealth generating spheres” as central to neoliberalism’s “governing rationality” in which “human beings become market actors and nothing but, every field of activity is seen as a market, and every entity (whether public or private, whether person, business, or state) is governed as a firm” (W. Brown, 2015). As service organizations meant to support the public, libraries have increasingly been forced into audit-oriented approaches to making their work valuable and efficient all while facing ongoing budgetary and staffing cuts (Public Library Staff and Diversity Report, 2022; “US Library Survey 2022,” 2023). Maintaining vital library services becomes the responsibility of fewer library workers who are continually tasked with ‘doing more with less’ and taking on the work of others as positions are cut and not replaced. For example, salaries in public libraries have dropped since 2002 and 27% of libraries lost positions in 2021 with the majority of those

positions being permanently eliminated (Public Library Staff and Diversity Report, 2022).

Academic libraries have similarly faced cuts or elimination of even tenured librarians, such as the firings at St. Cloud State University (Peet, 2019). Additionally, the spread of COVID-19 led to library workers being categorized as 'essential workers' who were either required to keep library services available or were reassigned to perform jobs such as contact tracing and child-care (Claudio, 2022; Jaffe, 2020; Schmidt, 2020). Chronic overwork and undervaluing of librarians is representative of neoliberalism's prioritization of "economic efficiency over the well-being and dignity of workers" (Brons et al., 2022, p. 99). Librarianship expects librarians to perform service for the benefit of others in a self-sacrificing manner, regardless of the personal cost.

Neurodiversity Employment in Libraries

In library literature, neurodiversity is largely presumed to be a patron issue, with minimal acknowledgment of neurodivergent library workers. Currently, literature on the experiences of neurodivergent librarians is limited to a few publications (Alexander, 2021; A. Anderson, 2021; A. M. Anderson, 2020; Eng, 2017; Lawrence, 2013; Nalepinski, 2021; Tumlin, 2019). The limited evidence suggests that neurodivergent librarians likely face problems of access similarly to other neurodivergent workers. These problems of access and ableism are surfaced and examined in neurodiversity employment literature, which is situated in fields such as psychology, organizational management, and vocational rehabilitation. Neurodiversity employment literature emphasizes a variety of barriers to access, such as limited knowledge and understanding of neurodiversity or disability (Black et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2015; Cooper &

Kennady, 2021; Högstedt et al., 2022; Lindsay et al., 2021; Longmire & Taylor, 2022; Nicholas et al., 2019; Raymaker et al., 2022). For example, Black et al. (2020) found a lack of neurodiversity education and understanding to be one of the most significant barriers in the workplace, and Cooper and Kennady (2021) found that it was rare for participants to find an understanding manager. Similarly, stigma and stereotypes are a pervasive issue in the workplace, with co-workers and supervisors 'othering' neurodivergent employees, disbelieving them, or expressing negative attitudes toward neurodivergent people (Botha et al., 2020; McIntosh et al., 2022; A. Pearson & Rose, 2021; Van den Bosch et al., 2019). The significance of these two issues, and their continual appearance throughout the literature, suggests that training may be an essential element for creating workplace environments that are less hostile to neurodivergent employees (Annabi & Locke, 2019; Burton et al., 2022; Bury et al., 2021; Cooper & Kennady, 2021; Hedley et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2022; Volpone et al., 2022).

Library literature indicates similarities to neurodiversity employment literature, with a lack of understanding of disability, stigma, and stereotypes mentioned in research on the experiences of disabled librarians (M. E. Brown, 2015; Hollich, 2020; Oud, 2019b; Schomberg, 2018). Hollich (2020) explains that disabled library workers face "discrimination and harassment due to their disability," are "less likely to hold management or supervisory positions," and encounter assumptions that they are "less capable, less skilled, or less productive" (p. 96). Pionke (2020) found that library workers held negative attitudes toward disabled people and "often revealed a great deal of ableism" (p. 134). Disability Studies scholar Kelly Campbell defines ableism as "a network of beliefs, processes and practices that produce a particular kind

of self and body (the corporeal standard) that is projected as the perfect, species-typical and therefore essential and fully human” (2001, Note 5). Disability itself is then viewed as a state of being Other or less-than human (F. Campbell, 2001, p. 44). Social Psychology scholars Kathleen R. Bogard and Dana S. Dunn intentionally define ableism more broadly, stating that ableism is “stereotyping, prejudice, discriminations, and social oppression toward people with disabilities” (Bogart & Dunn, 2019, p. 651). Ableism generally “renders disability as abject, invisible, disposable, less than human, while able-bodiedness is represented as at once ideal, normal, and the mean or default” (Dolmage, 2017, p. 7). In addition to the ableist attitudes Pionke (2020) noted in his study, disabled librarians report encountering similar attitudes from their library colleagues and reported that “colleagues do not actually understand what disability is.” (Oud, 2019a, p. 73). Furthermore, disabled librarians report encountering microaggressions, the minimization of their disability by colleagues, and the assumption that everyone is able-bodied (Oud, 2018, 2019b).

Neurodivergent Librarians

Currently, literature on the experiences of neurodivergent librarians is limited to a few publications. For example, Anderson (2020; 2021) conducted interviews with ten autistic librarians about their job seeking and workforce experiences. Giles-Smith and Popowich (2023) also conducted a small study of autistic librarians, surveying 13 academic library workers in Canada. Yet the voices and perspectives of neurodivergent librarians are underrepresented in the literature, with only a few publications from openly neurodivergent librarians. Several such

works are often cited regarding issues of neurodiversity employment in libraries, particularly Lawrence (2013), Eng (2017), and Tumlin (2019). These works are largely narrative in nature and critique the lack of engagement with neurodiversity in LIS. Lawrence, an autistic librarian, observes that “there is virtually nothing in the LIS literature discussing Autistic librarians or information professionals” (Lawrence, 2013, p. 103). Tumlin, who identifies himself as autistic, similarly notes a “dearth of scholarly writing about neurodiversity in information studies” along with a notable lack of neurodivergent authors (Tumlin, 2019, p. 14). Recognizing that “there is little written about librarians who are neurodivergent and their professional experiences,” Alice Eng interviewed Charlie Remy, a neurodivergent librarian (Eng, 2017), and much of this brief article is focused on Remy’s personal characteristics and individual experiences. Additionally, Nalepinski (2021), Alexander (2021), and Swick-Jemison (2023) each detail their experiences as neurodivergent librarians navigating workplaces that were not built with them in mind. Nalepinski² observes that “in a profession that claims to value equity, diversity, and inclusion, this lack of acceptance for mind and body differences should be inexcusable, and yet the experiences of library workers continue to demonstrate that librarianship is currently failing to take action in support of these stated values” (Nalepinski, 2021, p. 266). Yet the preponderance of library literature addressing neurodiversity focuses solely on patrons (including students) and specifically on young people and not adults (e.g. Paynter et al., 2020; Shea & Derry, 2019).

Library literature also fails to recognize the strengths, skills, and knowledge of neurodivergent people. In the few cases where strengths are mentioned (A. Anderson, 2020;

² I wrote this chapter under the pseudonym of Nalepinski. If these words sound familiar, that is because they are my own.

Remy et al., 2014), discussions of these strengths are given minimal space, especially in comparison to characteristics that are treated as problems to solve. Such an emphasis on deficits over strengths reinforces the stigma around neurodiversity and signals to neurodivergent people that they are not understood or accepted by the profession. Furthermore, this continued discussion of neurodivergence as a set of individual deficits conveys that to avoid being viewed as a 'problem,' neurodivergent people must mask or conceal their differences and keep their disability invisible to others, all of which comes with serious costs. As Brown observed, neurodivergent people find that "existing in an able-bodied neurotypical world is exhausting" (R. Brown & Sheidlower, 2019, p. 478). The lack of a positive, strengths-based attitude toward neurodivergent people upholds ableism, reinforces stereotypes, and causes harm, while further limiting library capacity for neurodiversity inclusion.

While training might help librarians improve their understanding of disability and neurodiversity, current training programs are focused on serving disabled patrons rather than improving working conditions for disabled library workers. The Chicago Public Library, for example, partnered with the Autism Program of Illinois to provide a full-day seminar and four one-hour presentations to help library workers improve accessibility for autistic patrons (Winson & Adams, 2010). Small, Schriar, and Kelly (2019) discuss a training program designed to help library workers across the state of Illinois to improve library services for autistic patrons. This initiative, called Targeting Autism, has included annual forums held in Springfield, IL, two-day intensive workshops offered at libraries across the state, and an online education module

offered through a partnership with Syracuse University's Project ENABLE. Project ENABLE created a series of self-paced online modules covering topics such as disability awareness, disability laws and policies, assistive technologies, and creating accessible libraries (Small et al., 2014, 2019). A similar initiative, called Project PALS, focused on developing a series of four asynchronous modules to assist library workers with learning how to better serve autistic patrons (A. Anderson & Everhart, 2015). Although these articles provide limited details about the training programs and their content, publicly available modules like those offered by Project ENABLE and Project PALS demonstrate an emphasis on the medical model of disability. J.J. Pionke (2020) further explains that "what is often lacking in education programs like Project ENABLE, and even in graduate school curricula, is an emphasis on developing and nurturing empathy, compassion, mindfulness, and emotional intelligence" (p. 138). Instead of orienting toward equity and social justice, these training programs seem to prioritize providing good customer service to disabled or autistic patrons. Although the intention of disability training programs may be to improve conditions for disabled people, this focus on the medical model reinforces ableist attitudes and perpetuates stigma toward people with disabilities, while leaving the existence and needs of disabled and neurodivergent employees unaddressed.

Neurodivergent librarians, like other neurodivergent employees, are also likely to encounter problems of access related to the work environment, including both the sensory environment and the physical environment (Burton et al., 2022; Bury et al., 2021; Högstedt et al., 2022; Khan et al., 2022; Volpone et al., 2022); with communication differences (Black et al., 2020; Gemma, 2021; Hillary, 2020; Raymaker et al., 2022); and in the complexities of disclosure

and accommodations processes (discussed in further detail below) (Burton et al., 2022; Cooper & Kennady, 2021; Lindsay et al., 2021; Oud, 2018; Raymaker et al., 2022; Romualdez et al., 2021). The impact of these barriers creates a cumulative effect that can result in stress, burnout, and low morale (Botha & Gillespie-Lynch, 2022; Högstedt et al., 2022; K. Kendrick & Damasco, 2019; Raymaker et al., 2020, 2022). Experiencing low morale in library workplaces can result in librarians experiencing physical and mental health issues, concealing aspects of their identity, seeking different employment opportunities within libraries, or leaving the profession altogether (K. D. Kendrick, 2021a; K. Kendrick & Damasco, 2019). Not only do these barriers create negative consequences for employees, then, but they may also have a deleterious impact on the library profession as a whole.

Little is also understood about the experiences of multiple marginalized neurodivergent employees in general, nor of librarians more specifically. In their review of library literature on disability, Gibson et al. observed that few studies “considered intersectionality and the experiences of disabled BIPOC and/or disabled LGBTQIA+ people” (A. Gibson et al., 2021b). A similar lack of intersectionality is observed in neurodiversity employment literature as well (Botha & Gillespie-Lynch, 2022; Doyle et al., 2022). Intersectionality must be considered, as no form of neurodivergence (or any other disability) exists in isolation. Yet the profession continues to center whiteness, and as Brown and Leung (2018) observe, “the closer your proximity to straight, white, cisgender, middle/upper class, able-bodiedness gets, the better you fit” (p. 340). Brown et al. (2018) contend that “librarians who are othered are often forced to conform, to edge toward proximities of whiteness and ‘fit’ within our profession’s structural hierarchies” (p.

164). Jennifer Vinopal suggests that this lack of attention to intersectionality, and to diversity in the library profession, signals “an invitation to us to look critically at our culture, our practices, and our assumptions, and investigate what it is about ourselves and our profession that is preventing underrepresented people from being able to, or even wanting to, enter and stay” (Vinopal, 2016). As Mia Mingus asks, “How are we re-imagining access in ways that include, but are not limited to disability; that encompass class, language, gender,” and other aspects of identity (Mingus, 2010)? Libraries have much work to do to answer this question.

Although there is little discussion of neurodivergent librarians specifically, library literature has recently begun to examine the experiences of library workers who identify as disabled in any way. The literature highlights a number of challenges that disabled librarians encounter in their workplaces, such as complicated and unclear accommodations processes (Hollich, 2020; Pionke, 2019), disbelief or stigma from colleagues and supervisors (M. E. Brown, 2015; Oud, 2019b), and stereotypes or a general lack of familiarity with disabilities (M. E. Brown, 2015; Litwak, 2022; Oud, 2019b; Schomberg & Highby, 2020; Syma, 2019). Several studies indicate that library administrators and supervisors in particular often lack an understanding of disabilities, especially invisible disabilities such as autism and dyslexia, or hold negative attitudes or stereotypes, which creates barriers to workplace inclusion. Oud (2019b) found that workplace barriers for disabled librarians included the assumption that library workers are not disabled, a negative view of disabled workers as lazy or less productive, and an overall lack of structures and systems to support disabled employees. Similarly, Pionke (2020) found that library management is often viewed as a barrier through actions and attitudes such

as resistance to change or ableist attitudes toward disabilities. The culture of libraries can also create difficulties for disabled librarians. For example, Schomberg (2018) critiques the library culture of performativity, overwork, toxic individualism, and a deficit approach to disabilities. Hollich (2020) contends that inclusion is not an individual problem but rather a systemic one, and therefore library organizations need to revisit their practices, policies, and culture from a critical perspective. These works all demonstrate that libraries lack disability knowledge and fail to be inclusive of disabled employees.

As a primarily white field and profession, librarianship has a long history of white saviorism in the name of service (Galvan, 2015; Schlesselman-Tarango, 2016), which continues to be apparent in the literature about disability and neurodiversity inclusion in libraries. Libraries are failing to draw on critical disability theory and other disciplines that have knowledge and experience about empowering neurodivergent people, and in so doing, are perpetuating further harm to their colleagues as well as to those they claim to serve. As members of a caring professions, librarians will “go to great lengths to help library patrons while deliberately dismissing the care-receiving needs of peers” (Schomberg, 2018, p. 116). Library literature demonstrates attention to serving disabled and neurodivergent patrons but remains outward-looking instead of inward-looking to attend to the working conditions of library workers. Continued inattention to library workplaces will leave harmful barriers in place and continue to force marginalized employees out of the profession, including neurodivergent librarians.

Library Workers' Values and Attitudes Toward Disabilities

Although the terms library, library worker, and library are often conflated, it is indeed the library workers who develop and carry out inclusion practices at libraries. Therefore, it is important to understand library workers' attitudes toward disabled and neurodivergent people, along with the potential impact of these perceptions. Yet library literature that examines the attitudes, knowledge, and values of library workers in relation to their readiness to serve disabled patrons is currently limited to a handful of articles. In an article published in 1988, Dequin, Schilling, and Huang noted that "no research" had been published "regarding attitudes of academic librarians toward disabled library users" (28). Their survey of 140 academic librarians in Illinois indicated that the librarians held "slightly positive" attitudes toward disabled students, with female librarians, librarians aged 20-29, and those who had contact with disabled people holding more favorable attitudes. Yet as they themselves observed, this "also implies that the attitudes of many other academic librarians need to improve" (Dequin et al., 1988, p. 31). In a similar study, Brodksy and Wells (2011) reviewed survey data from 72 members of the Alabama Library Association to identify library workers' preparedness to serve patrons with physical disabilities, and found generally positive attitudes toward disabled patrons and a willingness to provide equitable services, although what "equitable" meant to the participants remained unclear.

To examine librarians' readiness to serve disabled patrons, Walling looked to LIS programs to determine what level of preparation they were providing. Of the 34 schools that completed Walling's survey, 68% reported that they provided information on ADA, services for

disabled patrons, and adaptive technologies, yet at numerous institutions this content was not a requirement for the program (2004). Drawing on Walling's research and survey, Pionke (2020) surveyed 219 library workers to determine their level of comfort with serving disabled patrons. Respondents noted that accessibility is often an after-thought or provided only as needed; that services are often limited due to a lack of adequate staffing, inadequate knowledge, and an inability to be proactive; and that while libraries are trying to provide accessible electronic resources, vendors may not prioritize this work (Pionke, 2020). Participants also expressed concern that library administration or management were creating additional barriers to inclusion and accessibility. These barriers included an unwillingness to go beyond the bare minimum required by ADA, an assumption that disabled patrons didn't come to that library, and poor attitudes toward patrons with mental disabilities (Pionke, 2020, p. 134). Respondents also noted that libraries were only considering physical disabilities, not mental, developmental, or learning disabilities. Of additional concern was the extent to which the attitudes "reflected by respondents often revealed a great deal of ableism" (Pionke, 2020, p. 134). These ableist attitudes included showing frustration with the needs of disabled patrons and disbelief that someone was disabled or needed additional assistance. Underlying many of these areas, from various conceptions of disabilities to problematic attitudes toward disabled people, was a general lack of knowledge and education. Many of the respondents "expressed frustration" with "the complete lack of, or inadequacy of, needed training" (Pionke, 2020, p. 131). Respondents did not feel adequately prepared, nor did they feel that training about accessibility and disabilities was a priority for library administrators. Library workers often feel uncomfortable or

uncertain when working with disabled people, and this certainly impacts any attempts at inclusion. As Pionke observes, “making programs and spaces accessible takes time and training. By failing to provide it, library administration continues to indicate that people with disabilities aren’t a priority” (2020, p. 134). Pionke argues that the profession needs to create and offer training focusing on disability inclusion, examine library policies with inclusion in mind, and improve both recruitment and retention of disabled library employees.

These studies indicate that some library workers may not hold positive attitudes about disabled people, or, as suggested previously, hold narrow conceptions of disabilities that rely on stereotypes and are reflective of ableism. These same types of ableist attitudes are also observed in psychology research, which demonstrates that non-disabled people tend to hold “negative implicit and explicit attitudes about people with disabilities” (Bogart & Dunn, 2019, p. 656). In addition to the ableist attitudes Pionke (2020) noted in his study, disabled librarians report encountering similar attitudes from their library colleagues and reported that “colleagues do not actually understand what disability is.” (Oud, 2019a, p. 73). Additionally, disabled librarians report encountering microaggressions, the minimization of their disability by colleagues, and the assumption that everyone is able-bodied (Oud, 2018, 2019b). The prevalence of ableism maintains disability stigma and creates a work environment that is not welcoming to or inclusive of disabled librarians.

Neurodiversity Employment

Neurodiversity employment is an interdisciplinary area of research with literature situated in fields such as organizational psychology, vocational rehabilitation, human resources, organizational management, and other areas focused more specifically on autism and/or ADHD research. Each field brings its own perspective to neurodiversity employment, such as human resources literature investigating equitable workplace practices and reasonable accommodations (E. Patton, 2019; Szulc et al., 2021), or organizational management examining areas like organizational practices or the impact of the workplace environment (Carrero et al., 2019; Krzeminska et al., 2019; Van den Bosch et al., 2019; Vogus & Taylor, 2018). Historically, research into neurodiversity employment was grounded in a medical model understanding of neurodiversity (and often autism, more specifically) and focused on mitigating the individual's undesirable behaviors, which were viewed as deficits (e.g. M. D. Smith & Coleman, 1986). Additionally, early research often focused on neurodivergent people with co-occurring intellectual disabilities (e.g. Burt et al., 1991). As diagnoses evolved, such as the addition of "Asperger's syndrome" to the *DSM-IV* in 1994, so too did research evolve, as reflected in research from the early 2000s that began to examine the experiences of adults without co-occurring intellectual disability (e.g. Hurlbutt & Chalmers, 2004). The majority of this research, however, continued to treat neurodivergent people as possessing a variety of characteristics or impairments that resulted in difficulties in the workplace and required support from employers. In other words, the 'problem' was situated in the neurodivergent people themselves, who were considered "maladaptive" or "odd" (Holwerda et al., 2012, p. 330) and required costly support

services (e.g. Citera & Cowan, 2009). This view reflects the charity of model of disability, which treats disabled people as a burden requiring charitable resources and pity from others (Clare, 2001).

In 2013, when the company SAP announced its intent to create an autism hiring program, articles highlighted that this program was *not* a charitable initiative but an intentional effort to hire a from a previously excluded group that had talents and skills that could contribute to the company's success (Austin & Sonne, 2014). Research on neurodiversity employment increased as other companies like EY, SAP, and Microsoft began implementing neurodiversity hiring programs in attempt to recruit additional talent and out of recognition that their usual hiring practices often filtered out neurodivergent applicants (Austin & Pisano, 2017; Hedley et al., 2017). Researchers began to focus on the strengths that neurodivergent people could bring to the workplace and suggested that neurodivergent employees could provide a “competitive advantage” if companies were willing to adjust their practices to be more inclusive of different kinds of people (Austin & Pisano, 2017). Although this ‘competitive advantage’ argument has since been critiqued (e.g. Bury et al., 2020), this change in emphasis marked the beginning of a move toward the social model of disability, with research examining organizational practices that could be altered, instead of focusing on altering the individuals themselves.

Now neurodiversity employment research examines multiple factors in neurodiversity employment, including but not limited to barriers and enablers of inclusion (Annabi & Locke, 2019; Black et al., 2020; Bury et al., 2021; Högstedt et al., 2022; Raymaker et al., 2020), disclosure and accommodations (Gemma, 2021; Lindsay et al., 2021; McIntosh et al., 2022;

Murphy & Latham, 2022; Romualdez et al., 2021), the role of co-workers and supervisors in creating and maintaining an inclusive workplace (Bury et al., 2021; Longmire & Taylor, 2022; Martin et al., 2022), and other factors like masking or burnout that may impact a neurodivergent employee's workplace experiences (Botha et al., 2020; Cage & Troxell-Whitman, 2020; Hull et al., 2017; Jack, 2014; A. Pearson & Rose, 2021; Raymaker et al., 2020; Seers & Hogg, 2021). Much of the research aims at improving employment outcomes for neurodivergent people, who currently face high rates of under- and unemployment (S. M. Bruyère & Colella, 2022b). For example, autistic adults are three times less likely to secure employment than other disabled groups (Roux et al., 2015). Researchers also often cite the prevalence of autism in childhood, 1 in 36 according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC, 2023), as an additional reason for striving to improve employment outcomes for neurodivergent young people and adults (e.g. S. M. Bruyère & Colella, 2022a; Doyle et al., 2022). Although autism, ADHD, and neurodiversity research has a long history of being rooted in medical perspectives, researchers are increasingly informed by the neurodiversity movement perspective, in which the voices of neurodivergent people play a central role in the research and medical, pathologizing approaches are meant to be avoided or altogether rejected.

Barriers and Enablers of Workplace Inclusion and Empowerment

As part of examining the workplace environment and its impact on neurodivergent employees, researchers investigate factors that prevent neurodiversity inclusion, called barriers, as well as factors that support neurodiversity inclusion, known as enablers. Neurodivergent

employees report encountering numerous barriers to inclusion in their workplaces, from a general lack of familiarity with neurodiversity to more specific issues like stereotyping and discrimination. Stereotypes of neurodiversity frame neurodivergent people from negative perspectives that are also often gendered or infantilizing, assuming for example that neurodivergent people are child-like, 'odd' or weird in some way, or socially awkward white men with specialized interests (Botha et al., 2020; Högstedt et al., 2022; A. Pearson & Rose, 2021). Stereotypes and stigma may inform or result in additional barriers such as discrimination (Annabi & Locke, 2019; Cooper & Kennady, 2021), isolation and exclusion (Annabi & Locke, 2019; Austin & Pisano, 2017; Doyle et al., 2022; Gemma, 2021), and poor relationships with co-workers and supervisors (Annabi & Locke, 2019; Bury et al., 2021; Longmire & Taylor, 2022; Martin et al., 2022).

Researchers have also highlighted difficulties with the workplace environment and the ways that both physical and sensory aspects of the environment, such as an open office plan or a noisy location, can create barriers (Annabi & Locke, 2019; Burton et al., 2022; Bury et al., 2021; Högstedt et al., 2022; Khan et al., 2022; Volpone et al., 2022). Many neurodivergent employees also report that their colleagues lack an understanding of or familiarity with neurodiversity (Black et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2015; Cooper & Kennady, 2021; Högstedt et al., 2022; Lindsay et al., 2021; Longmire & Taylor, 2022; Nicholas et al., 2019; Raymaker et al., 2020). Co-workers and supervisors play an important role in the success and inclusion (or lack thereof) of neurodivergent employees. While the same may be true for all employees, "relationships with coworkers are likely even more consequential" for neurodivergent

employees (Longmire & Taylor, 2022, p. 170). Supportive and “high-quality” coworker relationships “can contribute to more positive job attitudes and overall effectiveness at work,” whereas unsupportive relationships can lead to “lower job satisfaction and well-being, as well as higher turnover intentions” (Longmire & Taylor, 2022, p. 172). Martin et al. (2022) found that supervisors with previous knowledge of neurodiversity or disability were more likely to develop higher-quality relationships with their neurodivergent employees than those without that knowledge who may create barriers to inclusion. Additional barriers include communication differences between neurodivergent and neurotypical people (Black et al., 2020; Gemma, 2021; Hillary, 2020; Raymaker et al., 2020), the lasting and compounding negative impact of stress and autistic burnout (Botha & Gillespie-Lynch, 2022; Högstedt et al., 2022; Raymaker et al., 2020), and difficulties with accommodations processes which are often unclear and highly bureaucratic (Burton et al., 2022; Cooper & Kennady, 2021; Lindsay et al., 2021; Raymaker et al., 2022; Romualdez et al., 2021).

Certain factors can also mitigate these barriers or serve to create an inclusive environment for neurodivergent workers. These opportunities include a workplace culture of diversity, employee education or training, professional development opportunities like mentoring, positive and supportive relationships with colleagues, control over the workplace environment, and flexible work arrangements (Annabi & Locke, 2019). Raymaker et al. (2022) found that a workplace culture that was accepting of differences and enabled people to be open about their neurodivergence was essential to their success in the workplace. Volpone et al. (2022) similarly highlight workplace climate “as crucial to focus on as organizations make

changes in their workplaces to be more inclusive of neurodiversity,” and draw attention to diversity climate, inclusion climate, and ethical climate (18). Diversity climate refers to the integration of historically marginalized populations through equitable practices, policies, and acceptance of differences (Volpone et al., 2022). An inclusive climate is one in which employees have a sense of belonging and feel valued. Inclusion climate has three dimensions: fairly implemented employment practices, the degree to which employees feel comfortable bringing their authentic identities to work, and “the extent to which the diverse perspectives of employees are voiced and used” (Volpone et al., 2022, p. 22). An ethical climate works alongside diversity and inclusion climates to “engage in conversations related to moral, social, legal, and medical topics” and incorporate “an organizational emphasis on social justice,” because without an ethical climate, “diversity and inclusion efforts may not have positive effects for employees” (Volpone et al., 2022, p. 24). Organizations can create positive impact by working to establish practices and norms that are supportive of differences and enable people to be themselves in the workplace.

Researchers have also highlighted the importance of workplace education, training, and mentoring to improve knowledge and acceptance of neurodiversity (Annabi & Locke, 2019; Burton et al., 2022; Bury et al., 2021; Cooper & Kennady, 2021; Hedley et al., 2017, 2021; Khan et al., 2022; Volpone et al., 2022). When neurotypical colleagues, including co-workers and supervisors, lack knowledge of neurodiversity or hold knowledge based on biases and stereotypes, altering their workplace practices requires a change in “both their level of understanding and the attitudes they hold” (Annabi & Locke, 2019, p. 511). Cooper and

Kennady (2021) recommend “quality neurodiversity awareness training for all employees,” and especially to increase manager knowledge and empathy (82). Seeking perspectives from neurodivergent people themselves, Davies et al. (2023) found that neurodivergent workers desired improvements in knowledge and acceptance from others in the workplace. Training specifically for neurotypical people “can help strengthen inclusion, as neurotypicals can understand the experiences of neurodivergent employees” as well own role “in leveraging and breaking down” barriers to inclusion (Volpone et al., 2022, p. 46). Yet training alone is insufficient for creating an inclusive and welcoming workplace, as Bury et al. (2021) found that even managers who had completed training and worked with neurodivergent employees for several years still “identified perceptions of workplace-based social challenges as largely attributed to issues of the individual” rather than looking to “other workplace/contextual or societal elements” (1623).

Disclosure and Accommodations

Neurodivergent workers are often hesitant to disclose their neurodivergence to colleagues out of fear of discrimination and bias (Cooper & Kennady, 2021; Davies et al., 2022; Raymaker et al., 2022; Romualdez et al., 2021). Deciding whether or not to disclose, and to whom, is a complicated process that may lead to increased understanding from others but can also result in stigma or bullying (Burton et al., 2022; Davies et al., 2022; Romualdez et al., 2021). Some form of disclosure is often required in order to receive accommodations or workplace adjustments and also gives neurodivergent people the opportunity to be themselves at work

without hiding this aspect of their identity. In some cases, workers disclose in response to a negative event in the workplace, as an attempt explain or mitigate a difficult situation (Romualdez et al., 2021). While disclosure can be one step toward receiving accommodations, the process for obtaining accommodations is a further complication. Employees encounter additional difficulties such as being unsure about the process and who to ask, or knowing what they can legally request.

The passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990 legally prohibited job discrimination against "qualified" individuals with disabilities due to their disability. While employers are now required to make reasonable accommodations for their disabled employees, "there has been ongoing tension over the meaning of reasonable accommodations" (Francis & Silvers, 2000, p. xxi). Additionally, this right to 'reasonable' accommodations is one that must be sought out "on an individual basis when access is denied or inadequate" (Hamraie, 2016, p. 264). Requesting accommodations requires disclosure of a disability and the involvement of a medical professional who "must verify that an employee is disabled, and identify what accommodations are needed" (Macfarlane, 2021, p. 9). The costs (monetary and otherwise) of such diagnoses and documentation present an additional barrier to receiving workplace adjustments. As a legal remedy, accommodations can provide a pathway for disabled neurodivergent workers to obtain supports for their individual needs that their employer is legally obligated to provide. Yet that process remains complicated and often exposes ways in which organizations remain hierarchical and resistant to inclusion and change (Gemma, 2021). Additionally, rates of receiving legal adjustments vary across research studies and additional

research may be needed to better understand the ways in which neurodivergent workers engage with legal accommodations processes (Lindsay et al., 2021; Romualdez et al., 2021).

Yet accommodations alone are insufficient. Accommodations processes position disabled people as “unimagined types” rather than as “desired or necessary members” of a workplace (Titchkosky, 2011, p. 80). The process of accommodations places the burden of minimizing discrimination upon the disabled person themselves, who must request and design their own access to their workplace. In this manner, then, accommodations processes serve as a form of neoliberal individual responsabilization, which is the “the reductive framing of systemic power dynamics as questions of individual choice and agency” (Crooks, 2019b, p. 8). The employee appears to have agency in identifying their needs, but that power rests instead with a medical professional and the organizational unit (*e.g.*, human resources) in charge of overseeing the bureaucracy of accommodations processes. Framing accommodations as a form of individual responsabilization means asking, “For what have individual members of this community been made responsible and what other alternatives exist?” (Crooks, 2019b, p. 9). Disabled employees, including neurodivergent librarians, have been made responsible for creating the conditions of access and inclusion in their workplaces. They bear the burden of educating their colleagues, adapting their workspaces, and navigating workplace norms and practices that were created without them in mind. Additionally, accommodations that are provided “on an individual basis do not sufficiently destabilize structural ableism or reduce inequality” (Carter et al., 2017, p. 111). Furthermore, employers “also have incentives to dispense accommodations in a way that maintains the status quo,” and employees who must

assume the costs and labor of obtaining their rights (Schomberg & Highby, 2020, p. 36).

Inequality and ableism remain in place and neurodivergent employees must adapt or risk being deemed unable to perform the duties of their position. Accommodations, however, are not the only option. Prioritizing equitable access, instead of focusing solely on accommodations, can shift the burden away from disabled employees alone and draw attention back to the systemic power dynamics that create barriers to access.

Masking and Burnout

Masking, sometimes also referred to as camouflaging, occurs when neurodivergent people work to conceal or hide aspects of their neurodivergence. Masking may be a conscious effort or may occur unconsciously, and takes the form of “suppression of natural responses and adoption of alternatives across a range of domains including social interaction, sensory experience, cognition, movement, and behavior” (D. Miller et al., 2021, p. 53). For people who discover their neurodivergence later in life, they may not be aware of their masking and may need to engage in a process of “unmasking” as they sort out their own identity and determine which aspects of their identity are true to themselves and which are components of masking (Leedham et al., 2020; A. Pearson & Rose, 2021; D. Price, 2022). Although some people have learned new habits to hide certain behaviors, such as sitting on your hands to prevent hand waving or flapping, masking often takes active thought and effort that becomes tiring. Not surprisingly, then, masking can have a negative impact on the well-being of neurodivergent people (Davies, Heasman, et al., 2023; Raymaker et al., 2020). The effort required to mask

creates an enormous “resource drain” and can also lead to suicidality, substance abuse, and other harmful behaviors (D. Miller et al., 2021, p. 33).

The high costs of masking, along with other aspects of being a neurodivergent person living in a neurotypical world, can lead to a form of burnout known as autistic burnout. Research into autistic burnout is relatively new, although the term has been used within the community to describe “a state of incapacitation, exhaustion, and distress in every area of life” (Raymaker et al., 2020, p. 134). Neurodivergent employees have shared that the ongoing stress in their lives, often experienced as exhaustion, impacts not only their work situation but their daily lives as well, leading to strict control of non-work activities or the fear of losing control of their own situation (Högstedt et al., 2022). Raymaker et al. (2020) found autistic burnout to be a “a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic life stress and a mismatch of expectations and abilities without adequate supports” that is “characterized by pervasive, long-term (typically 3+ months) exhaustion, loss of function, and reduced tolerance to stimulus” (140). In a research designed to clearly define autistic burnout, especially as distinct from burnout experienced by neurotypical people, Higgins et al. (2021) developed a clinical definition of autistic burnout as “a severely debilitating condition” that is “preceded by fatigue from camouflaging or masking autistic traits, interpersonal interactions, an overload of cognitive input, a sensory environment unaccommodating to autistic sensitivities” and other stressors (2365). They contend that autistic burnout is marked by both “significant and mental exhaustion” and “interpersonal withdrawal” (J. M. Higgins et al., 2021, p. 2365). Although individuals may take steps to recover from autistic burnout, such as spending time on personal

interests or withdrawing from contact with others, “societal change to reduce stigma, discrimination and inhospitable environments for autistic people is vital for long-term and sustained prevention and recovery from autistic burnout” (Mantzas et al., 2022, p. 983).

Theoretical Framework

This research follows a general feminist and critical disability theory framework, placing emphasis on privileging marginalized voices, challenging assumptions about who is capable of producing knowledge, and acknowledging identity as multi-dimensional. Critical disability theory serves as a theoretical lens for this work, particularly scholarship on models of disability and the societal assumptions and beliefs about disabilities (Kafer, 2013; Oliver, 2013; Siebers, 2008). Disability justice and DisCrit literature will serve to build on these models by calling for attention to intersectionality, which holds that systems of power overlap and interact to create distinct impacts and experiences of multiple forms of oppression (Annamma et al., 2016; Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018; Sins Invalid, 2019). Critical disability theory as a lens draws attention to structures and systems, to the knowledge of disabled people themselves, and to ableism and its far-reaching impacts. Critical disability theory also serves as a methodology, rooted in feminist methods, that examines social norms and societal conditions. Critical disabilities as a methodology involves questioning “the social norms that define particular attributes as impairments, as well as the social conditions that concentrate stigmatized attributes in particular populations” with the aim to produce “knowledge in support of justice for people with stigmatized bodies and minds” (Minich, 2016, p. 3). This methodology must also

strive “to radically disrupt the multiple sociopolitical ideologies that assign more value to some bodies and minds than to others” and must be “a methodology enacted in and through a commitment to accessibility” (Minich, 2016, p. 5).

Given the minimal attention to neurodiversity employment in the library literature, researchers must look elsewhere for a theoretical framework that adequately addresses neurodiversity employment. Currently, the only established framework is the Organizational Interventions Mitigating Individual Barriers (OIMIB) framework developed by Hala Annabi and Jill Locke (2019). The OIMIB framework is grounded in organizational science and was originally developed to study gender in IT employment, then adapted for autism employment. OIMIB draws on critical perspectives, such as feminist theory, to examine marginalization and the intersecting factors that contribute to and sustain systems of inequity in workplaces. Therefore, this framework aligns well with my examination of the marginalization and exclusion of neurodivergent librarians in library workplaces, even though my work is not grounded in organizational science. I draw on OIMIB to highlight these intersecting factors of marginalization and the structures and systems that sustain them.

The OIMIB framework includes individual-level constructs, intervention-level constructs, and organizational-level constructs along with the relationships among these constructs and how they interact. Although the framework was developed for the context of the IT field, the adapted OIMIB framework has also been used in other fields. For example, Buckley et al. (2021) examined autism employment in the field of performing arts in the UK, comparing their findings with the adapted OIMIB framework and finding that they were in alignment. This

verification of the OIMIB framework in a context beyond IT suggests the framework can be effectively applied to other contexts where “there are similarities in the experiences of the populations in question” (Annabi & Locke, 2019, p. 506). Annabi and Locke focus specifically on autism, but research indicates that people with other forms of neurodivergence, such as ADHD, experience similar workplace barriers (Högstedt et al., 2022; Holthe & Langvik, 2017; McIntosh et al., 2022).

Because the OIMIB framework specifically focused on autism employment programs, however, the framework requires modifications for the library context and for the purposes of this research. Neurodiversity employment programs do not currently exist in libraries, therefore that construct was replaced by a construct focusing on the impact of professional norms and

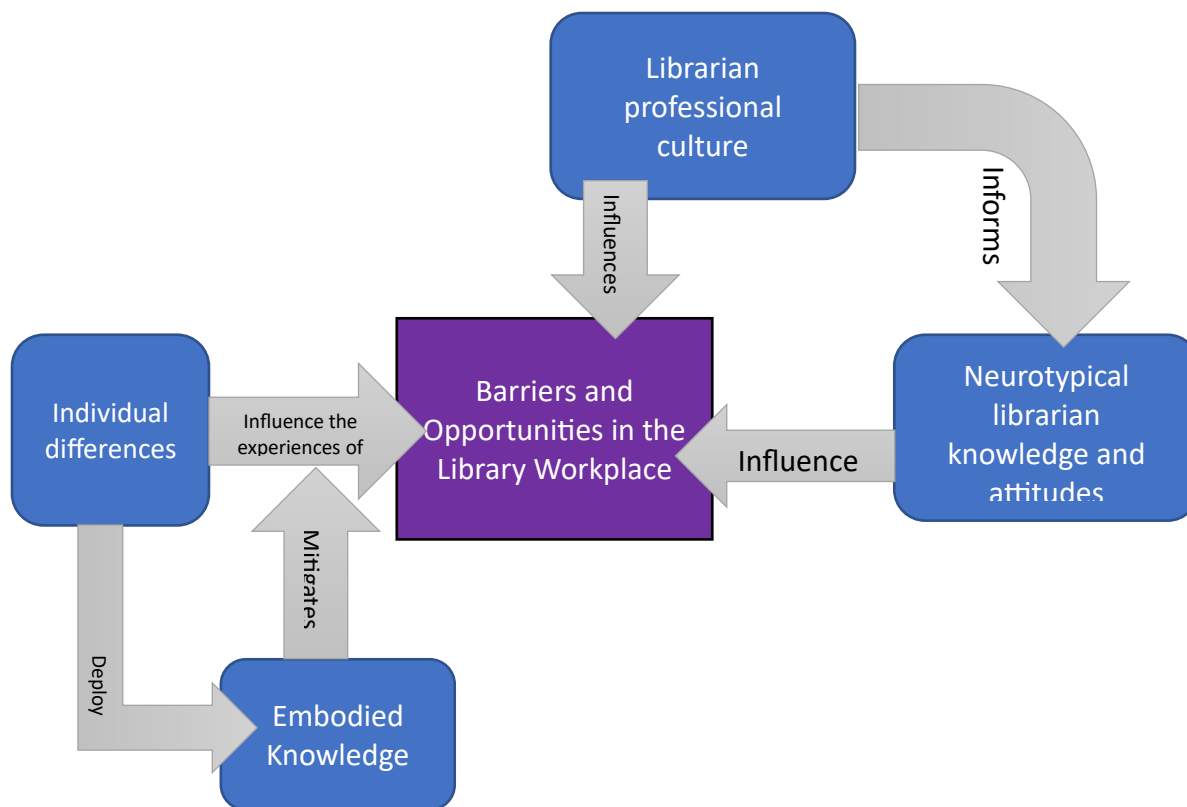


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

expectations, which influence how librarianship manifests within the workplace. Additionally, the “Coping Methods” construct was renamed to “Embodied Knowledge” to reflect the idea from disability and neurodiversity studies that neurodivergent people may do more than “cope” in their workplace, but also bring extensive knowledge and lived experience to their workplaces from living in a world that is not built for them. Naming this knowledge specifically is an intentional act of epistemic justice in resistance to narratives that prioritize neurotypical knowledge and values over the perspectives of neurodivergent people. Furthermore, whereas the OIMIB framework focused on organizational interventions to mitigate individual barriers, this research study focuses on changing professional norms and expectations, in order to mitigate barriers so that we can create a more inclusive workplace *and* profession. The modified framework (illustrated in Figure 1 above) proposes that neurodivergent librarians experience **barriers and opportunities** depending on their **individual differences**. These individual differences influence how and when neurodivergent librarians deploy their **embodied knowledge** to mitigate their experiences of barriers in the library workplace. **Librarian professional culture** influences those barriers in the workplace and informs **neurotypical librarian knowledge and attitudes**, which in turn also influence barriers and opportunities in the library workplace. The framework, like OIMIB, includes individual-level constructs and organizational-level constructs, but also includes the profession-level construct of librarian professional culture.

The framework as a whole describes neurodiversity employment in libraries at individual, organizational, and professional levels as well as the interactions and relationships

among these constructs. The value of this framework lies in its focus on improving both library workplaces *and* the profession itself. By focusing on changing the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of neurotypical librarians, this research will shift the burden of access and inclusion away from neurodivergent librarians and focus on systemic change. The goal is to make library workplaces inclusive by design and not by chance.

Individual Differences

The first component of '***Individual differences***,' as in the original OIMIB framework, is an individual-level construct that draws on the Individual Differences Theory of Gender and IT (IDTGIT) as detailed by Trauth, Quesenberry, and Huang (2009). This theory emerged from attempts to understand gender underrepresentation in IT and challenge gender essentialism (E. M. Trauth et al., 2009; E. M. Trauth, 2013). In IT research, there was a developing recognition that women might be underrepresented because they had been socialized in ways that encouraged them away from IT fields, but little examination of the differences among women who persisted in IT careers and women who did not (E. M. Trauth, 2023). The individual differences theoretical framework was developed to address these differences among women, and thus contends that the underrepresentation of women in IT "can best be explained by the interaction of: the social shaping of gender and IT in a particular (socio-cultural) context, the intersectionality of gender with other identity characteristics (e.g., ethnicity, age, parenthood)," and other factors such as "selective (societal and institutional) reinforcement" of a person's abilities and interests, the "influence of significant others in an individual's life/career," and how

a person responds to these societal, personal, and institutional influences (E. M. Trauth, 2023, p. 27). This framework has since been extended to examine the experiences of other gender minorities as well as issues around race/ethnicity and disability (Loiacono & Cao, 2023; McGee, 2018; E. Trauth et al., 2016). The individual differences theory was incorporated into the OIMIB framework to enable a “nuanced understanding of differences in similarities in experiences and responses” (Annabi & Lebovitz, 2018, p. 1055). For research on autism and neurodiversity employment research, then, the individual differences theory explained why some neurodivergent employees were impacted by certain aspects of the workplace while others were not (Annabi & Locke, 2019).

In the context of librarianship, a highly feminized field, the individual differences theory facilitates examination of differences among neurodivergent librarians, including gender identity, racial and ethnic identity, class, previous employment experiences, and other significant aspects of a person’s background. According to this theory, individual differences, including aspects like co-occurring conditions and socio-economic status, influence the experiences of each person in their workplace. The individual differences construct includes three sub-constructs (as outlined in Table 1): 1) *individual identity*, which includes personal demographics like age and race, and career items like the type of position; 2) *individual influences*, which includes personal characteristic like educational background and personal influences like mentors; and 3) *environmental influences*, including cultural influences, economic influences, policy influences, and infrastructure influences (E. M. Trauth et al., 2009).

Table 1: Conceptual Framework Constructs and Sub-Constructs

Individual Differences	Barriers	Opportunities	Embodied Knowledge
<u>Individual identity:</u> Personal demographics, career items <u>Individual influences:</u> Personal characteristics, Personal influences <u>Environmental influences:</u> Cultural influences, Economic influences, Policy influences, Infrastructure influences	Stereotyping Stigma Discrimination Isolation/exclusion Poor colleague relationships Inappropriate workplace environment Neurotypical workplace expectations Unmet communication needs Lack of employer knowledge/familiarity of neurodiversity Lasting impact of stress Accommodations processes	Culture of diversity & inclusion Employee education Positive colleague relationships Flexible arrangements Control over workplace environment Meeting communication needs Trauma-informed approach	Informal networks Informal mentoring Individual changes Ignoring barriers Change-agent mindset Using "special interest" or strengths for career Using tools to support needs Disclosing diagnosis Requesting accommodations Identity development Consistently high performance Leaving the profession

Barriers and Opportunities in the Library Workplace

The second component of the conceptual framework, '***Barriers and opportunities in the library workplace***,' is an organizational-level construct that exists in the workplace environment. In the same way that "social and organizational structures create barriers to individuals with

autism in the IT workplace,” so too do the social and organizational structures of library workplaces create barriers to neurodivergent librarians (Annabi & Locke, 2019, p. 509).

Depending on factors such as co-occurring conditions and individual needs, neurodivergent librarians will experience these barriers in different ways, to varying degrees, or some not at all (Annabi & Locke, 2019). **Barriers** are those aspects of the workplace environment that present challenges to the neurodivergent librarian, cause them to feel excluded, or otherwise impede their ability to be successful in their position. Neurodivergent workers experience stereotyping and stigma in the workplace, which leads to concealment of their neurodivergent identity, increased stress, and impede professional growth and advancement (Botha et al., 2020; Burton et al., 2022; Högstedt et al., 2022; Huang et al., 2023; Krzeminska et al., 2019). Stereotypes are set and often oversimplified or incomplete ideas about neurodiversity, and those ideas are often articulated as characteristics assigned to a group from incomplete knowledge or experience.

Botha et al. (2020) found that common stereotypes around autism included “a lack of verbalness, being male, being infantile, or capable of violence” (11). Stigma, which “refers to the possession of an attribute that marks persons as disgraced,” is often linked with stereotypes (A. Pearson & Rose, 2021, p. 53). Research indicates that co-workers and supervisors often hold stigmatizing beliefs about neurodiversity (Annabi & Locke, 2019; Botha et al., 2020; Burton et al., 2022; Doyle et al., 2022; Huang et al., 2023; Santuzzi & Keating, 2022). When colleagues act upon negative beliefs or assumptions about neurodivergent workers, the result is workplace discrimination, which may take the form of workplace bullying, probation, or even termination of employment (Annabi & Locke, 2019; Cooper & Kennady, 2021; Davies, Romualdez, et al.,

2023; Longmire & Taylor, 2022; Raymaker et al., 2020; Santuzzi & Keating, 2022). In a study of autism employment in the UK, researchers found that “57% of autistic applicants have experienced discrimination during the selection process and 68% have experienced discrimination in the workplace” (Cooper & Kennady, 2021, p. 81). Unsupportive or poor relationships with workplace colleagues present another barrier to workplace inclusion, with research highlighting the “destructive impacts of unsupportive or antagonistic co-workers” (Longmire & Taylor, 2022, p. 172). Neurodivergent workers may also experience isolation and exclusion in their workplaces, being left out workplace social relationships as well as professional opportunities (Annabi & Locke, 2019; Austin & Pisano, 2017; Burton et al., 2022; Doyle et al., 2022; Gemma, 2021).

Additional workplace factors present challenges for neurodivergent workers, such as the workplace environment, neurotypical workplace expectations, communication needs, and the accommodations process. Aspects of both the physical and sensory workplace environment may be inappropriate for neurodivergent workers, such as located in a busy area, fluorescent lighting, constant distractions, or the noise of the HVAC system (Annabi & Locke, 2019; Burton et al., 2022; Bury et al., 2021; Högstedt et al., 2022; Khan et al., 2022; Volpone et al., 2022). Neurotypical workers may also expect or demand certain workplace behaviors or practices that may not come naturally to everyone, including expectations around the speed of work and executive functioning (Annabi & Lin, n.d.). Neurodivergent workers also may have different communication preferences which may go unmet in the workplace, such as the need for clear communication or having information shared in different formats (Black et al., 2020; Bury et al.,

2021; Gemma, 2021; Hillary, 2020; Raymaker et al., 2022). Unsurprisingly, the numerous barriers and challenges encountered by neurodivergent workers can result in ongoing stress that leads to additional consequences and/or burnout (Högstedt et al., 2022; A. Pearson & Rose, 2021; Raymaker et al., 2020).

Opportunities are workplace factors that enhance the inclusion and empowerment of neurodivergent librarians. Flexible arrangements, where the employer allows or encourages flexible approaches to work such as a flexible schedule or remote work, may create a workplace more welcoming of neurodivergent employees (Annabi & Locke, 2019; Burton et al., 2022; Högstedt et al., 2022; Tomczak, 2022). Similarly, having control over the workplace environment enables neurodivergent workers to adjust their work area to meet their own needs, such as closing the door to an office or turning off fluorescent lights (Annabi & Locke, 2019; Högstedt et al., 2022). By aligning communication expectations with the preferences of neurodivergent employees, neurotypical colleagues can offer clear and transparent communication in desired formats (Hillary, 2020; Högstedt et al., 2022). Positive and supportive relationships with co-workers and supervisors "can contribute to more positive job attitudes and overall effectiveness at work" (Longmire & Taylor, 2022, p. 172). Researchers also highlight the importance of employee education for fostering positive workplace relationships and improving neurotypical knowledge and attitudes toward neurodivergent employees (Annabi & Locke, 2019; Burton et al., 2022; Bury et al., 2021; Cooper & Kennady, 2021; Hedley et al., 2017, 2021; Khan et al., 2022; Volpone et al., 2022).

A culture of diversity and inclusion, where the workplace understands and values differences, creates an environment that is supportive of neurodiversity, especially when coupled with “social justice elements” that address forms of social disparity such as income and privilege (Volpone et al., 2022, p. 27). Creating an inclusive workplace “requires more than increasing diverse representation and implementing equitable [human resources] practices; it requires a change in interaction patterns” (Volpone et al., 2022, p. 22). In the case of neurodivergent employees, it is especially important that the workplace deploy a trauma-informed approach that recognizes that employees may have past history of trauma and acts accordingly, given the high prevalence of trauma among neurodivergent people (Högstedt et al., 2022; Raymaker et al., 2020). For example, research demonstrates a high prevalence of interpersonal abuse, bullying, and other forms of trauma among neurodivergent people (J. A. Evans et al., 2023; Moseley et al., 2023; A. Pearson, Rees, et al., 2022).

The Embodied Knowledge of Neurodivergent Librarians

The third component of the framework is “***Embodied knowledge***,” an individual-level construct that builds on the OIMIB construct of “individual coping methods” to center neurodivergent experiences through the lens of critical disability theory. This construct focuses on how neurodivergent librarians respond to the barriers they encounter in their workplaces. This naming brings together feminist scholarship on marginalization, as incorporated into IDTGIT and OIMIB, with critical disability theory. Accordingly, this conception of embodied knowledge is rooted in Tobin Sieber’s conceptions of “complex embodiment” and disability as a form of

knowledge (Siebers, 2008, 2019). Complex embodiment situates people with disabilities as knowledge producers “to such an extent that people with disabilities are identified as such by their possession and use of the knowledge gathered and created by them as longtime inhabitants of nondisabled society” (Siebers, 2019, p. 47). Neurodivergent librarians have developed knowledge and expertise through their experiences living and working in environments that are not built for them. This embodied knowledge includes tactics like strategic disclosure and masking (D. Miller et al., 2021; A. Pearson & Rose, 2021), but also knowledge of tools and other strategies, such as social critique, that can be deployed in various ways to navigate the workplace barriers and challenges that neurodivergent librarians encounter. The OIMIB framework highlights a number of strategies, such as “developing informal networks, seeking informal mentors, and ignoring barriers,” along with other tactics like masking or leaving the profession (Annabi & Locke, 2019). Masking is a “response to stigma and trauma involving suppressing and projecting aspects of identity in order to maintain safety” (A. Pearson & Rose, 2023, p. 203). In attempts to avoid stigma, neurodivergent employees may also make individual changes and ignore barriers rather than disclosing or requesting accommodations (Annabi & Locke, 2019; Black et al., 2020; Raymaker et al., 2020; Romualdez et al., 2021). Alternatively, some neurodivergent employees choose to disclose in order to access workplace accommodations and feel authentic in the workplace (E. Patton, 2022; Romualdez et al., 2021; Santuzzi & Keating, 2022). Neurodivergent employees engage in a complex process of identity development and management as they encounter barriers and opportunities in their workplaces (Bertilsdotter Rosqvist, 2019; Bertilsdotter Rosqvist, Hultman, et al., 2022; Botha et

al., 2020; Finn et al., n.d.; Gemma, 2021; Van den Bosch et al., 2019). Neurodivergent employees may also make use of their so-called 'special interest' or particular area of passion and expertise, apply their personal strengths to their work, or perform at a consistently high level as a way to mitigate workplace challenges (Annabi & Locke, 2019; Bury et al., 2020; Raymaker et al., 2022).

Librarian Professional Culture

The fourth component of the modified framework, '***Librarian professional culture***,' is a profession-level construct that focuses on the norms, values, and expectations of the library profession. Library professional culture includes conceptions of professionalism (J. Brown & Leung, 2018; Drabinski, 2016; Hicks, 2016; Seminelli, 2016), the service orientation of librarianship (Arellano Douglas & Gadsby, 2020; Foster, 2007), vocational awe (Chiu et al., 2021; Ettarh, 2018), whiteness (J. Brown et al., 2018; Chou & Pho, 2018; Galvan, 2015; Hudson, 2017; Leung & López-McKnight, 2021), the feminization of the profession (S. Higgins, 2017; Lapp, 2022; Schlesselman-Tarango, 2016; Sloniowski, 2016), and benevolent ableism (Nario-Redmond et al., 2019), which is well-intended ableism meant to help others (*e.g.*, pushing a wheelchair user without their permission). These norms, values, and expectations of the library profession influence workplace barriers and inform neurotypical knowledge and attitudes toward their disabled colleagues.

Neurotypical Knowledge and Attitudes

The fifth construct is ***Neurotypical knowledge and attitudes***, which influence (and create) workplace barriers previously discussed, such as stigma, stereotypes, and communication differences. Neurotypical librarians have varying degrees of familiarity with neurodiversity, or may be completely unfamiliar with neurodiversity (A. Gibson et al., 2021b; Pionke, 2020). Stereotypes and misconceptions of neurodiversity, and of specific forms of neurodiversity like autism and ADHD, impact the experiences of neurodivergent librarians and may contribute to or detract from inclusion in the workplace. Neurotypical colleagues and supervisors may lack adequate information about neurodiversity, hold stereotypes or misconceptions, and reinforce stigma in the workplace (Annabi & Locke, 2019; Chen et al., 2015; Cooper & Kennady, 2021; Högstedt et al., 2022). The attitudes and behaviors of neurotypical colleagues have a significant impact on inclusion in the workplace and impact the neurodivergent employee's sense of 'fit' in the organization, lead to isolation and exclusion, or reinforce a medical understanding of neurodiversity that situates the 'problem' in the neurodivergent employee instead of workplace factors (Bury et al., 2021; Longmire & Taylor, 2022; Martin et al., 2022).

Conclusion

Ableism and other forms of social marginalization, such as racism and heteronormativity, are deeply rooted in the profession of librarianship. In libraries, neurodiversity is generally conceived of as a patron issue and neurodivergent librarians remain overlooked by LIS

literature. This chapter presents literature from critical disability theory, library and information science, and research on neurodiversity employment to ground my work in critical theory and explore methods for creating a more just society for neurodivergent people. Critical disability theory draws attention to the societal norms, assumptions, structures, and practices that presume a normate bodymind to the exclusion of other ways of being. Critical models of disability like disability justice and DisCrit highlight the importance of understanding identity as multi-dimensional and investigating the role of intersectionality in neurodiversity employment. Library and information science literature provides essential context for neurodiversity employment in libraries and surfaces key factors in public and academic library employment (e.g. library workers' service orientation, the prevalence of vocational awe and low morale, whiteness, and the feminization of the profession) that are distinct to the library profession. Neurodiversity employment literature examines the workplace context, the role of supervisors and co-workers in the workplace environment, and the supports and systems that improve the workplace experiences of neurodivergent employees. Together these bodies of literature undergird the principles for centering neurodivergence and the theoretical framework presented here.

Chapter 3: Methods

Introduction

This chapter outlines the method used in this study, beginning with an introduction to my case study methodology and the applicability of case study methodology to this research. This section is followed by details on defining the case, the unit of analysis, the case study sites, and the research plan. Data collection techniques and the related mechanics are detailed next, followed by the data analysis process. The chapter closes by addressing the quality of the research and limitations of the study.

This research is rooted in a social constructivism and transformative approach and seeks to improve the lives of neurodivergent librarians according to their priorities (Creswell & Poth, 2018; M. Q. Patton, 2015). Neurodiversity employment has been examined in other contexts and fields, such as IT, but is a phenomenon that is underexamined in the profession of librarianship. The research on neurodivergent librarians is minimal, as highlighted in Chapter 2. The few existing articles either reflect the personal experiences of a neurodivergent librarian (Eng, 2017; Lawrence, 2013; Tumlin, 2019) or present findings from relatively small sample sizes (A. Anderson, 2020, 2021).

As mentioned previously, this study is designed to address this gap in the literature and address four research questions:

1. What barriers and enablers to workplace inclusion and empowerment do neurodivergent librarians experience?

2. How do neurodivergent librarians navigate workplaces that may not be designed for them?
3. How do the norms and expectations of librarianship and library organizations impact the inclusion, exclusion, and marginalization of neurodivergent librarians?
4. How might neurotypical supervisors and employees adjust or alter their workplace environment and/or practices to increase libraries' capacity to recruit, onboard, retain, and advance neurodivergent librarians?

To conduct an in-depth examination of neurodiversity employment in the profession of librarianship, this study used a single embedded case study design to investigate the phenomenon of neurodiversity employment in librarianship. To explore the depth and breadth of the experiences of neurodivergent librarians, neurodivergent supervisors, and their colleagues, and to investigate the context of librarianship, this study used a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis, employing content analysis of interview data and document analysis of library standards and competencies.

Positionality Statement

Qualitative research, and especially feminist and disability studies approaches to research, emphasizes the importance of considering researcher positionality and relationality (Creswell & Poth, 2018; S. N. Hesse-Biber, 2007; Lester & Nusbaum, 2021). As a neurodivergent person myself, that viewpoint deeply informs my research, from the framing of the research questions to my focus on centering neurodivergence throughout this study, including the

neurodivergence of research participants but my own as well. I identify as white, disabled, chronically ill, queer, and still haven't found descriptors for my gender that seem to 'fit' me well. Having worked in both public and academic libraries, I am also positioned as an 'insider' in this manner among this population, although my experience in academic libraries was longer and more recent. I am also positioned as an insider in that, like many of my neurodivergent participants, I have a lifetime of experience living in a world that was not built for people like me. While these perspectives can serve as strengths that I bring to this research, they also present potential biases. To ensure that I examined and worked to mitigate any potential biases throughout this research, I consulted regularly with my research team, which included researchers with identities and perspectives different from my own. Although researchers "can never know the full extent of their biases," they can "think through" how aspects of their own identity might influence their research through reflexive practices such as journaling and memoing (Corbin & Strauss, 2014, p. 47). Researcher reflexivity played a crucial role in being aware of my own perspectives and process throughout this study. Reflexivity "necessitates that you critically assess and continuously reassess your positionality, subjectivities, and guiding assumptions as they directly relate with and shape your research" (Ravitch & Carl, 2020, p. 375). Thus, reflexivity was not a one-time practice but an ongoing process throughout the research.

Case Study Methodology

This research used qualitative case study methodology using semi-structured interviews and document analysis techniques. This choice of methodology aligns with the research

questions and the critical approach outlined in Chapter 2, and provides the opportunity to center the neurodivergence of the participants and the researcher. Case study method is appropriate for researching the phenomenon of neurodiversity employment in librarianship because it “serves the purpose of understanding how one’s perception or behaviors are influenced by those around them, programs and policies, and physical environment” (Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2022, p. 70). A distinctive feature of case studies is its use for investigating “a contemporary phenomenon in its real-work context” (Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2022, p. 70).

Other research methods would not be feasible or would not allow for a rich examination of the phenomenon of neurodiversity employment in library settings. For example, an experiment would be inappropriate for this research because of the inability to control variables in the workplace setting. Although a survey might be used to explore some of the context of neurodiversity employment, “a survey’s ability to investigate the context is extremely limited” (Yin, 2018, p. 15). Grounded theory, another widely used qualitative method, focuses specifically on a process or action and is used to generate theory when “theory is not available to explain or understand a process” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 87). In the case of neurodiversity employment in librarianship, much is already known and existing theories offer multiple ways of examining and understanding this issue, as discussed in Chapter Two. My research instead focuses on building on existing theory and generating new theory, making case study an appropriate choice (Ravitch & Carl, 2020; Yin, 2018).

Library literature is replete with case studies, however Yin (2018) makes an important distinction between research and *nonresearch* case studies. Nonresearch case studies “do not

claim to follow a research method” and may not “formally describe the methodologies” (Yin, 2018, p. 19). Research case studies, by contrast, highlight “methodic procedures, especially the reporting of all evidence fairly” (Yin, 2018, p. 20). Research case studies require clear documentation of procedures, such as those for “limiting or eliminating any biases,” and prioritizing transparency (Yin, 2018, p. 20). This chapter attempts to prioritize transparency and explicit detail in this manner.

Instrumental Case Studies

Case study methodology supports a variety of research purposes and intentions, but that research may take different forms. Creswell and Poth (2018) delineate three forms of case study based on intent of the analysis: instrumental case study, collective case study, and intrinsic case study. The collective case study involves the use of multiple cases, and the intrinsic case study involves a unique case that is itself the focus of study. This research is an instrumental case study, which can be used “to inform changes in practices, programs, and policies” (M. Q. Patton, 2015, p. 295). An instrumental case study “focuses on an issue or concern” that is not unique to the case (that would instead be an intrinsic case study) but deserves further exploration and investigation (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 98). For example, instrumental case studies can be used to identify “factors that explain the differences between what works and what doesn't work,” which is an important component of this research (M. Q. Patton, 2015, p. 295). As such, this research is an instrumental study in that it seeks to improve the workplace experiences of neurodivergent librarians, and to transform library workplaces

and the occupational culture of the profession itself to become more inclusive and less marginalizing of neurodivergent library workers.

Defining the Case

This study is an instrumental multiple embedded case study. Although case study research “is a distinctive mode of social science inquiry,” different fields and traditions approach case study research differently, meaning that “case study designs have not been codified” (Yin, 2018, pp. 18, 26). The design of this case study follows practices that are considered key aspects of case study research, including developing clear and specific research questions, defining the case, bounding the case, and using multiple data sources (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2022; M. Q. Patton, 2015; Wildemuth, 2017; Yin, 2018). The research questions for this study, as detailed in the introduction, are predominantly the types of how and why questions that Yin (2018) contends are most appropriate for case study research.

An important early step in case study methodology is defining the case under study. This research examines the phenomenon of neurodiversity employment in the context of librarianship, with public libraries and academic libraries as the two cases. In case study research, the case under study may be a “concrete entity, such as an individual, a small group, an organization, or a partnership,” or the case may be less concrete, such as “a community, a decision process, or an event” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, pp. 96–97). What ultimately matters in defining the case is that the case is “a real-world phenomenon that has some concrete manifestation” (Yin, 2018, p. 31). Neurodiversity employment in librarianship is a real-world

phenomenon that occurs in the profession of librarianship, within public and academic libraries, and manifests in the lived experiences of neurodivergent employees, the perspectives and attitudes of neurotypical library workers, and in the occupational culture of the library profession. This research examines two cases – public libraries and academic libraries – to develop an understanding of neurodiversity employment across sites. Public and academic libraries were selected as the cases because they are likely to predict either similar results or “contrasting results but for anticipatable reasons” (Yin, 2018, p. 55). This replication approach results in multiple-case studies yielding evidence that is generally deemed “more compelling” than single-case studies (Yin, 2018, p. 54). Although public and academic libraries have much in common, there are also distinctive differences, so together these cases contribute vital insights into library workplaces across the profession.

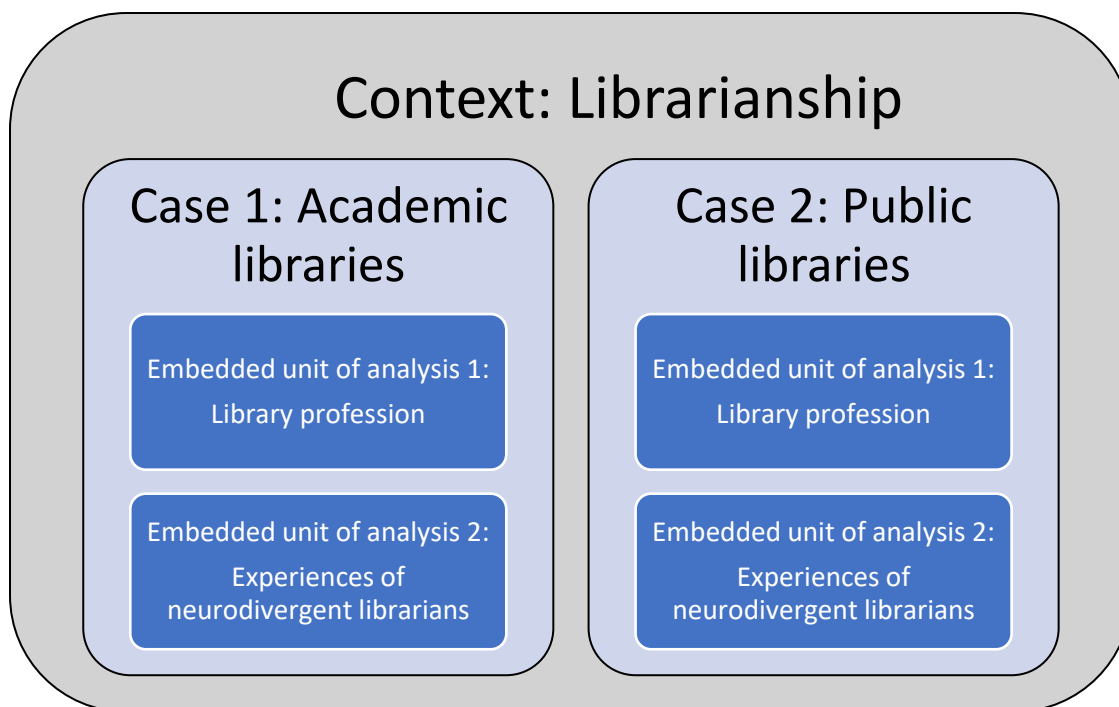
Case studies may also include embedded units within the main case study (Yin, 2018). Yin (2018) outlines four types of case study design: single-case, embedded single-case, multiple case, and embedded multiple-case. As the name suggests, single-case studies focus on one case while multiple case studies involve more than one case. An embedded case study involves “units of analysis at more than one level” where “attention is given to a subunit or subunits” within the same case (Yin, 2018, p. 51). Focusing on subunits “can often add significant opportunities for extensive analysis, enhancing the insights into the single case” (Yin, 2018, p. 54). Such an embedded design can be used in both single- and multiple-case designs. This study follows an embedded design to examine the occupational culture of librarianship as it manifests

in each type of library, and to examine the experiences of neurodivergent librarians in both types of libraries.

Unit of Analysis

In qualitative research, the unit of analysis is “the primary focus of an empirical study” and is “the *who* and/or *what* at the center of the study” (Ravitch & Carl, 2020, p. 84). This research involves a multi-level analysis, which means that there are multiple units of analysis. The two cases – public libraries and academic libraries – are themselves multiple instances of a unit of analysis (type of library). Within each of these cases are two additional embedded units of analysis: the library profession and the experiences of neurodivergent librarians. Figure 2 presents the design of this study following Yin (2018).

Figure 2: The multiple embedded case study design



Selecting and Bounding the Case Study Sites

This multiple embedded case study was bounded by the type of library, by role within the library, and by forms of neurodivergence. Bounding a case involves “placing a boundary around some phenomenon of interest” (M. Q. Patton, 2015, p. 259). These boundaries may include “spatial, temporal, and other explicit boundaries” (Yin, 2018, p. 31). Bounding the case is essential for determining “the scope of your data collection and, in particular, how you will distinguish data about the subject of your study (the 'phenomenon') from data external to the case (the 'context')” (Yin, 2018, p. 31).

This case was bounded by library type because although neurodivergent librarians likely work in every area of librarianship, such as school libraries and special libraries, public and academic librarianship requires a similar preparation for library work (unlike school librarians, who may be required to complete additional teacher certification), and often have a similar organizational structure with a library director who leads managers, supervisors and/or other librarians. This focus on two types of libraries, public and academic libraries, allows for an in-depth analysis that can then be adapted for use in more specialized settings. This study also focused specifically on librarians, and not all library workers, although the definition of ‘librarian’ was intentionally left open-ended out of recognition that many library employees are doing the work of librarians without necessarily holding that official role or having that designation in their official title. Both public and academic librarians often hold similar roles within their organization and may perform similar duties, such as reference and collection

development, although they carry out that work for different communities. Additionally, public librarians may and do become academic librarians, and the reverse is also true.

Neurodiversity, and neurodivergence more specifically, generally includes a variety of neurocognitive differences, such as autism, ADHD, Tourette's, dyslexia, dyscalculia, and others, this study focused specifically on autism and ADHD in order to build on existing research on autism and ADHD employment, to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences associated with these two forms of neurodivergence, and to allow for greater representation across other forms of identity, such as gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality. Doing so aligns with a key principle of centering neurodivergence, which involves treating identity as multi-dimensional (see Chapter 2 for additional details on these principles). Women and people of color encounter numerous difficulties obtaining a diagnosis for forms of neurodivergence, such as autism or ADHD, and are frequently misdiagnosed with other conditions such as anxiety, eating disorders, or behavioral issues (Devlin, 2018; Fadus et al., 2020; Ginsberg et al., 2014; Joho, 2021). Additionally, women and people with racialized identities are less likely to be believed by medical professionals and are often considered to be unreliable narrators of their own lived experiences (Hoffman et al., 2016). Diagnostic procedures also require time, money, and the availability of a professional in the area, which may result in diagnosis being an impossibility. Given these barriers to accessing a diagnosis in the first place, this study considered self-identification or self-diagnosis as valid and did not require an official diagnosis from a medical professional. Doing so is also in alignment with the political relational model of

disability, which acknowledges that medical diagnosis and processes are themselves socially constituted and “embedded in economic realities and relations” (Kafer, 2013, p. 6).

Sources of Evidence

Not only does this study strive to investigate the stories and experiences of neurodivergent librarians, but so too does it examine how library structures, policies, knowledge, and practices shape those experiences in ways that lead to access, inclusion, exclusion, or marginalization. Examining the phenomenon of neurodiversity employment in librarianship requires a qualitative approach to collecting sources of evidence to adequately explore the depth and breadth of these lived experiences and to capture those stories and experiences. Qualitative methods are an appropriate approach because they are used for “capturing stories to understand people’s perspectives and experiences,” for “elucidating how systems function and their consequences for people’s lives,” and for “understanding context” (M. Q. Patton, 2015, p. 13). Because this research aims to be transformative in nature, a qualitative approach is a “powerful stance” that can “generate counternarratives” and create “the potential to provide interruptive and ultimately transformative experiences (as defined by the range of people whom it affects)” (Ravitch & Carl, 2020, pp. 24–25).

This study makes use of multiple sources of evidence, as outlined in Table 2 below. Making use of multiple sources of evidence is another key aspect of case study method that distinguishes it from other methods like experiments, where the experiment itself is the main source of evidence (Creswell & Poth, 2018; M. Q. Patton, 2015; Yin, 2018). The significance of

collecting data from multiple sources in case study research is highlighted by Yin (2018) who asserts that “the need to use multiple sources of evidence far exceeds that in other research methods, such as experiments, surveys, or histories” (Yin, 2018, p. 127). The purpose of using multiple sources of evidence is to “provide multiple measures of the same phenomenon,” also known as data triangulation (Yin, 2018, p. 128). Collecting multiple sources of evidence often involves the use of processes such as “observation, interviews, and document collection” (Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2022, p. 70). This study makes use of interviews with neurodivergent librarians, neurodivergent supervisors, and neurotypical librarians, along with a document analysis of professional standards and competencies. Evidence was obtained from multiple sources not solely for the purpose of data triangulation, but primarily to gain insight into multiple perspectives within the library workplace. The few previous studies have only reflected the perspectives of a limited number of neurodivergent librarians, representing an essential perspective, but workplaces include both neurodivergent and neurotypical employees (A. Anderson, 2021; A. M. Anderson, 2020). Research demonstrates that neurotypical colleagues can significantly impact the workplace experiences of neurodivergent employees, so this is another significant perspective worth exploring in this study (S. M. Bruyère & Colella, 2022b; Longmire & Taylor, 2022). This study additionally examines the experiences of neurodivergent supervisors to better understand experiences that may be distinct to the supervisory role.

Table 2: Sources of Evidence

Phenomenon and Research Question	Level of Analysis	Sources of evidence
Library profession (RQ 3)	Profession	Interviews with neurodivergent librarians Interviews with neurotypical librarians Documents from professional organizations
Experiences of neurodivergent librarians (RQ1 and 2)	Individual	Interviews with neurodivergent librarians
Workplace environment (RQ 4)	Organization	Interviews with neurodivergent librarians Interviews with neurotypical librarians

Research Plan

This multiple embedded case study followed an interpretive approach carried out in three phases. The first phase involved semi-structured interviews with 35 neurodivergent librarians and 15 neurodivergent library supervisors. The second phase examined library workplaces through 36 interviews with colleagues of neurodivergent librarians, specifically co-workers and supervisors. And last, the third phase of the research employed document analysis to examine the professional norms and expectations of librarianship, providing an occupation-level analysis of the profession of librarianship.

Phase 1: Identifying Barriers, Enablers, and Workplace Practices as Experienced by Neurodivergent Librarians

The first phase of the study focused on research questions 1, 2 and 4:

1. What barriers and enablers to workplace inclusion and empowerment do neurodivergent librarians experience?
2. How do neurodivergent librarians navigate workplaces that may not be designed for them?
4. How might neurotypical supervisors and employees adjust or alter their workplace environment and/or practices to increase libraries' capacity to recruit, onboard, retain, and advance neurodivergent librarians?

The goal of this phase was to explore the workplace experiences of neurodivergent librarians, with particular attention to the barriers and enablers they encounter in libraries that impact their ability to succeed, persist, and advance in the profession. Interviews also explored the practices and supports that neurodivergent librarians are currently using in their workplaces, as well as methods and practices they would like to see implemented in their workplaces.

Phase 2: Examining the Workplace Practices and Neurodiversity Knowledge of Neurotypical Librarians

The second phase of this study also focused on research questions 1, 2 and 4, but with the purpose of exploring the knowledge and perspectives of neurotypical librarians. Interviews with 36 neurotypical librarians, including 12 neurotypical librarians and 24 neurotypical supervisors, focused on the organizational context, the neurodiversity knowledge and familiarity of the participants, and the kinds of support, resources, or practices they felt would help them support neurodivergent library colleagues.

Phase 3: Examining the Professional Norms and Expectations of Librarianship

The third phase of research, focused on research question 3:

3. How does the occupational culture of librarianship and library organizations impact the inclusion, exclusion, and marginalization of neurodivergent librarians?

This phase involved a document analysis of important library documents such as the American Library Association (ALA) Standards for Accreditation of Master's Programs in Library and Information Studies, the ALA Core Competencies for Librarianship, the Library Leadership and Management Association (LLAMA) Core Leadership Competencies for the Library Profession, the Reference and User Services Association (RUSA) Professional Competencies for Reference and User Services Librarians, and other documents identified during this phase of research. This document analysis then informed further analysis of the interview transcripts to examine how the norms and expectations of the profession surfaced in the workplace experiences of the librarian participants. The interviews were compared to the norms, expectations, and other aspects of occupational culture observed in the document analysis.

Data Collection

Data collection for Phases 1 and 2 began in February, 2023 and concluded in August, 2023. Data collection for the Phase 3 document analysis began in October, 2023 and concluded in December 2023. Additional details on the data collection process are provided in the sections below.

Semi-Structured Interviewing Technique

Researchers designing and conducting qualitative interviews can take several different approaches to the interview process. For this research, I chose to use semi-structured interviews in which I developed specific questions to be asked of all participants, but also used probing and follow-up questions as needed during the interview (Ravitch & Carl, 2020). This choice aligned with feminist research and critical disability theory, in that both focus on examining experiences that have been overlooked or ignored, and then using that knowledge to enact change. Feminist research challenges existing knowledge and seeks to surface and elevate perspectives that have gone unnoticed or been erased or excluded (Deitch, 2020). Feminist interviews, in particular, are “concerned with getting at experiences that are often hidden” (S. Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 118). Feminist interviews are, *by design*, an interactive conversation between the researcher and the participant that relies on follow-up questions, use of probes, and active listening (DeVault, 1990; DeVault & Gross, 2014; S. Hesse-Biber, 2007). Yet neither general research methods texts nor feminist research methods directly examine the interview process with disability and/or neurodivergence in mind. Even in frameworks like emancipatory disability research, meant to center collaboration between researcher and participants, “the lived experiences of disabled, d/Deaf, and autistic researchers remains absent or the ‘unexpected guest’” (H. Pearson & Dickens, 2021, p. 82).

Kerschbaum and Price (2017) set out their approach to centering disability in qualitative interviews, which “unsettles theoretical and methodological assumptions and uncovers taken-for-granted and normative practices in the traditional, qualitative interview” (Lester &

Nusbaum, 2018, p. 5). Centering disability means asking: “If we assume that disability is part of the qualitative interview situation, how does that unsettle commonplace assumptions about qualitative interviewing?” (Kerschbaum & Price, 2017, p. 98). Similarly, how might assuming that neurodivergence is part of the qualitative interview situation alter or unsettle assumptions about qualitative interviews? In attempts to answer this type of question, some autistic researchers have recently proposed more inclusive methods for research with autistic people, and other researchers have given more attention to the needs of neurodivergent research participants, yet this literature remains broad in scope, focusing on issues such as ethics, ableism, and community engagement (Bottema-Beutel et al., 2020; Cascio et al., 2020; Chown et al., 2017; Nicolaidis et al., 2019). While these issues are all important considerations for the research process, they do not provide direct guidance on best practices for interviewing neurodivergent people, especially given that common research practices (like the face-to-face interview) may present challenges for neurodivergent participants. Therefore, this research study drew on feminist semi-structured interview practices informed by the principles of centering neurodivergence (outlined in Chapter 2) to create a neuroinclusive qualitative interview process for the researcher and all participants.

Centering neurodivergence in the interview process took different forms, including providing clear and transparent communication prior to the interview, sharing interview questions in advance, disclosing my own neurodivergence, prioritizing access needs, and making space for different ways of being in a virtual interview. All these seemingly small changes to the interview process were designed to be signals to neurodivergent participants that they were

recognized and welcomed in the interview space. These acts also served as a form of care for participants. Sociologist Laura Mauldin, writing about her own experiences researching spousal caregivers, explains that disclosing to participants her own experience as a spousal caregiver “was part of keeping them safe. I was going to be asking them questions about things that may potentially be very traumatic, or something they are actively grieving about. I wanted them to know that they would not need to do the additional work of managing my responses or worrying about being judged” (Mauldin, 2023a, p. 6). Similarly, I disclosed my own neurodivergence at the beginning of each interview to remind participants of the perspective and understanding that I brought to this work as a neurodivergent researcher. I also welcomed pets, children, and reminded participants that they were welcome to fidget, stim, and did not have to make eye contact. Because the interviews were 90 minutes long, a ‘brain break’ was provided halfway through the interview, and I always used that break to check in with participants to see how they were feeling and what adjustments, if any, we might need to make to the interview process. To honor the multi-dimensional identities of participants, they were asked how aspects of their identity other than neurodivergence impacted their experiences in libraries. Additionally, they were asked several questions at the end of the interview that encouraged them to state their priorities and identify areas of significance from the interview.

As I wrote the paragraph above, I began to experience Big Feelings. If you aren't familiar with Big Feelings, for me this phrase describes the sudden onset of many intense feelings that are difficult to sort out and name individually. As I wrote out all the things that I did to center neurodivergence in the interviews, I realized I once again spoke about these things as if they did not impact me (you may notice I have a real knack for doing this). At the time, I genuinely believed I was doing this work in this manner for the participants, but until I

experienced these interviews myself, I didn't realize the impact that centering neurodivergence would have on me. I got to fidget and stim, I could avoid eye contact when needed without feeling guilty, and I got a brain break! I could even mention my visual timer (often marketed for use with children) without the fear of being infantilized. This is an additional impact of centering neurodivergence in the interviews – I also got to be myself, at least with the neurodivergent participants.

Individual interviews were conducted with four separate groups of participants: neurodivergent librarians, neurodivergent library supervisors, and neurotypical librarians, and neurotypical supervisors. In order to make these interviews as accessible as possible for all neurodivergent participants, and for any other participants who might benefit from similar accommodations, participants were given several choices for interview modality: Zoom conversation with cameras, Zoom conversation without cameras on, Zoom chat, or optionally an interview via email. Although these modality options would mean that each interview could occur differently, all modalities offered the opportunity to collect “rich and thick” data that is essential for effective qualitative research (Patton, Gibson 2017). All participants chose to conduct the interviews via Zoom, with some choosing or needing to turn off their camera for a variety of reasons (such as issues with internet connectivity or personal preference). In some interviews, participants requested to use the chat for sharing the interview questions to help them remember what had been asked.

Interview Protocol

The interview protocols were designed to explore aspects of the conceptual framework outlined in Chapter 2. To that end, the interview protocols for neurodivergent librarians aimed

to surface each individual's background, the barriers and enablers of inclusion they experienced at work, and the embodied knowledge they deployed while navigating their library workplace. The interview protocols for neurotypical librarians focused on understanding each individual's background, their workplace context, and their familiarity with and attitudes toward neurodiversity. Thus, a separate interview protocol was developed to guide the interview process for each group of participants. Initially the protocols focused on three main groups of participants: neurodivergent librarians, neurotypical co-workers, and neurotypical supervisors. In the process of conducting the interviews, however, an additional group emerged, that of neurodivergent supervisors, so a protocol was developed specifically for this additional group with the intention of investigating experiences that might be distinct to the supervisory role. Additionally, the protocols for neurotypical co-workers and neurotypical supervisors were modified slightly to allow for the participation of those who might not know for certain whether they had a neurodivergent library colleague. The final groups of participants and their respective interview protocols are outlined in Table 3, and the final interview protocols are included in the appendices.

Table 3: Groups of interview participants

Participation Category	Interview Protocol Used	Number of participants
Neurodivergent Librarians	Neurodivergent Librarians Protocol	35
Neurodivergent Librarian Supervisors	Neurodivergent Librarian Supervisors Protocol	15

Neurotypical Co-worker of Neurodivergent Librarian	Neurotypical Co-Worker Protocol	6
Neurotypical Supervisor of Neurodivergent Librarian	Neurotypical Supervisor Protocol	17
Neurotypical Librarian	Neurotypical Co-Worker Protocol	6
Neurotypical Supervisor	Neurotypical Supervisor Protocol	7

The interview protocols for neurodivergent librarians focused on background and work history, employment experiences in libraries, barriers to and enablers of inclusion, and areas for improvement in library workplaces. Neurodivergent library supervisors were also asked about their background and work history, their employment experiences in libraries, barriers to and enablers of inclusion, and areas for improvement in library workplaces, but they were additionally asked questions about their current organization and their role as a supervisor. Keeping in mind that participants' responses might be touching on difficult experiences or surfacing trauma, the questions were carefully organized to ease into the conversation with background information, building rapport before addressing questions around workplace barriers, and then creating space for generative conversation in addition to the potentially difficult aspects of the interview. In doing so, I worked to document "not only the painful elements of social realities but also the wisdom and the hope" (Mauldin, 2023b, p. 139).

The protocols for neurotypical librarians and supervisors were similar and included questions about their organizational context, their familiarity with neurodiversity, the state of neurodiversity employment at their current library, and the kinds of support, resources, or

practices they felt would help them support neurodivergent library colleagues. Neurotypical supervisors were asked these same questions with the addition of a few questions about their supervisory role and management practices. In the second version of the protocols for neurotypical librarians and supervisors, the questions that addressed working with a neurotypical colleague were revised to avoid that assumption and allow participants to respond in whatever way was applicable for their experience and their workplace, whether or not they worked with a neurodivergent colleague.

Participant Recruitment Mechanics

Criterion sampling was used to recruit librarians who represented a wide range of backgrounds, position types, levels of management, geographic location, and socio-economic status. The eligibility criterion included current or recent (with the past five years) employment in an academic or public library (or both), and being at least 18 years of age. One additional criterion for neurodivergent librarians was a diagnosis or self-identification of autism and/or ADHD. For neurotypical participants, the additional criteria was self-identifying as neurotypical.

Recruitment for participants began in February 2023. The general call for participation was circulated on multiple platforms, and was shared with ALA and ACRL members via ALA Connect. The listing was also posted on we here, LibParlor, and on social media such as Twitter, Mastodon, and Facebook. Members of the research team also circulated the call within their professional networks. Librarians continued to circulate the call for participants on library listservs, such as JESSE, IACRL, and CARLI, as well as on private Discord servers. Attempts were

made to share the call via additional ALA listservs, but unfortunately the lists were not working at the time. The response, however, was overwhelming, with over 36 participants reaching out and scheduling interviews within 24 hours, and 12 more bookings in the following 24 hours with an additional 20 inquiries about participating. There were also several inquiries from school librarians wishing to participate, however because these participants did not meet the requirement of working in a public or academic library, they were not scheduled for interviews.

In total, 50 neurodivergent librarians scheduled and completed interviews by the beginning of April, 2023. Recruitment for neurotypical participants similarly began in February 2023, and continued into July, 2023. Neurotypical participants were recruited in the same manner, with the addition of sharing the call with state library associations to encourage participation from across the United States. Initially the call for participants focused specifically on colleagues and supervisors of neurodivergent librarians, however due to limited participation (6 co-workers and 17 supervisors), the call was opened up further in June 2023 to include any neurotypical librarians and supervisors, instead of limiting the call to only those who were aware that they worked with a neurodivergent librarian. This resulted in an additional 13 interviews, with 6 more librarians and 7 additional supervisors, for a total of 36 interviews with neurotypical librarians and supervisors. Prior to interviews, participants also completed an intake survey to verify their eligibility for this study, as discussed previously. The intake survey also collected demographic data, such as age, racial/ethnic identity, gender identity, sexual identity, education level, and household income.

Document Analysis

As I set out to conduct this research, I discovered that document analysis is often mentioned in research texts, but few details are provided about carrying out the process. Patton (2015) for example, mentions that documents can serve as a source of supplemental data for fieldwork and interviews and provides a table of different document types, but does not provide any information on how to analyze these data-rich documents. Creswell and Poth (2018) similarly highlight documents as a valuable data source, particularly for case studies, but only suggest that researchers “analyze” documents (p. 163). Ravitch and Carl (2020) make a stronger case for document analysis in qualitative research, arguing that “the review of existing, relevant, and contextual documents is an essential component of the data collection and analysis process” (p. 151). For the purposes of my research, this document analysis serves as a method for exploring the professional culture of librarianship as articulated through professional standards, guidelines, and competencies.

Ravitch and Carl (2020) stress that researchers should “spend considerable time identifying, collecting, organizing, reviewing, and analyzing all relevant documents that contextualize and relate to the phenomenon under study and the context more broadly” (Ravitch & Carl, 2020, p. 151). This advice proved helpful in beginning the process of document analysis, although I was still unsure how to proceed with the analysis itself. First, however, I needed to determine which documents I would analyze.

Identifying Relevant Documents

To determine which documents I would analyze, I began by looking to all of the various professional organization websites, including the American Library Association (ALA) and divisions of ALA such as the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), the Public Library Association (PLA), the Reference and User Services Association (RUSA), and Core: Leadership, Infrastructure, Futures (Core). I initially sought out documents that would cover both academic and public librarianship broadly, such as the ALA Core Competences of Librarianship. My aim in looking to these official documents was to understand the profession-level, or occupational, context of my larger study on neurodiversity employment in librarianship. Documents produced by professional organizations are considered “official documents” that are “developed, produced, or disseminated by institutions” and used in case studies for examining the context of the research focus (Ravitch & Carl, 2020, p. 152). These professional documents of librarianship were selected for their ability to add contextual information to my work, and also to serve as additional research data (Bowen, 2009).

As I perused the ALA website, I discovered there were many more standards documents than I had anticipated, so I realized I would need to be selective in what I chose to study (American Library Association, 2007). Some of these documents also touched on standards for outreach or education for library communities, such as the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education that outlines a framework for information literacy education in academic libraries. Documents of this nature were determined to be out of scope for this because they did not focus on the professional expectations and requirements for librarians. So

too did I exclude documents that touched on one narrow aspect of librarianship, such as the RUSA Guidelines for Interlibrary Loan Operations Management. While such documents are important, they do not speak to the general requirements and expectations of the profession.

To capture the general expectations of the profession of librarianship, I chose to focus on documents produced by ALA and by three ALA divisions: ACRL, RUSA, and Core, as outlined in Table 4 below. Since PLA does not have any of its own standards or competency documents but instead points to ALA documents, the ALA documents served to represent the expectations of the profession as a whole, as well as the expectations of public librarianship. Documents produced by ACRL served to elucidate the context of academic librarianship, while RUSA documents speak to the public service aspect of librarianship that is central to both public and academic libraries, including functions such as reference, instruction, technical assistance, and more. Finally, the Leadership and Management Competencies set forth by Core reflect expectations for library leaders and supervisors across the profession. Although these individual documents may stand on their own, they are also interlinked through references within each document. For example, the ALACCL and the RUSA Competencies both reference the RUSA Guidelines and include them among essential competencies. So while each document was treated independently for the purposes of initial analysis, these documents remain interwoven with one another. These interlinkings were taken into consideration after each document was analyzed individually. Once I had selected the set of documents for further examination and analysis, I collected the documents and reviewed each of them to familiarize myself with their content. These steps are commonly suggested in texts that discuss qualitative document

analysis techniques (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Dalglish et al., 2020; F. A. Miller & Alvarado, 2005; Wood et al., 2020).

Table 4: Library profession documents included for analysis

Professional Documents Selected for Document Analysis
Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Standards for Libraries in Higher Education (ACRL Standards for Libraries)
Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE) Position Statement on Information Ethics in LIS Education (ALISE Position Statement)
ALA Accreditation Standards (not abbreviated)
ALA Code of Ethics (ALA Code)
ALA Core Competences of Librarianship (ALACCL)
ALA Core Values of Librarianship (ALA Core Values)
Core: Leadership and Management Competencies (Core LMC)
Reference & User Services Association (RUSA) Guidelines for Behavioral Performance of Reference and Information Service Providers 2013 (RUSA Guidelines 2013)
RUSA Guidelines for Behavioral Performance of Reference and Information Service Providers 2023 (RUSA Guidelines 2023)
RUSA Professional Competencies for Reference and User Services Librarians (RUSA Competencies)

Documents as Content and as Commentary

Documents are commonly thought of as containers of knowledge that can be identified, labeled, and even extracted, such as through an analytical coding process (Bowen, 2009; Dalglish et al., 2020). Yet documents can also be more than mere containers, and may serve additionally as commentary or as social agents (F. A. Miller & Alvarado, 2005; Prior, 2008; Wood et al., 2020). For the purposes of my research, I elected to treat the documents as both

containers of knowledge and as commentary on the profession of librarianship. When approaching documents as commentary, “what matters is not the information they contain or what social facts they include; what matters is their production, exchange, operation, or action” (F. A. Miller & Alvarado, 2005). My attention, then, is to how these documents operate and what they communicate to the profession, or more accurately, to everyone within the profession of librarianship. The documents produced by library professional organizations represent “a reality reflective of wider norms and values, rather than ‘independently adequate’ reflections of fact” (Wood et al., 2020). Therefore, my analysis focused not only on what the documents were saying, but also the larger messages that they convey to current and future librarians, and the potential impact of such messages.

Data Analysis

All interviews were conducted virtually and recorded using Zoom. During the interview, I jotted down notes and quotes that stood out to me. After each interview, I wrote detailed memos on my observations of the interview, referring back to my initial notes and writing down my key takeaways and particularly insightful comments from the participants, any salient details about the interview process itself (such as any questions that were missed), themes that appeared to be emerging across interviews, aspects of the interview that were relevant to the conceptual framework, and notes on my own experiences as a neurodivergent interviewer and researcher. These notes were kept separate from the interview transcripts and were reviewed on occasion to facilitate further awareness of any potential themes across the interviews. This

note-taking process represented the initial steps of data analysis, because “data analysis begins when researchers initiate data collection” (Vanover et al., 2021, p. 153).

The qualitative data from the interviews were analyzed using an iterative approach to content analysis outlined by Miles et al. (2020), including data collection, data condensation through coding, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions, all of which were grounded in the conceptual framework outlined in Chapter 2. Data analysis began with the post-interview memos and was followed by data reduction through deductive and inductive coding (Miles et al., 2020). In preparation for coding, video recordings were transcribed verbatim and transcripts were checked against the recordings for accuracy. All personal identifying information was removed from the transcripts. Transcripts were imported into Atlas.ti for analysis. Prior to coding, each transcript was re-read for the researcher to become familiar with the data. The coding process began with the development of a coding scheme, available in the appendices, that was based on existing literature and grounded in the conceptual framework outline in Chapter 2. This method of deductive coding, or a priori coding, involves developing a “start list” of codes from a “literature review, conceptual framework, list of research questions, hypothesis, problem areas, and/or key variables that the researcher brings to the study” (Miles et al., 2020, p. 74). The deductive codes were grouped according to three main areas of focus for this phase of the study: barriers to and enablers of access and inclusion, the embodied knowledge of neurodivergent librarians, and individual differences as described in the IDTGIT framework (E. M. Trauth et al., 2009). These areas of focus represent significant aspects of the conceptual framework presented in Chapter Two. Coding followed an iterative process of assigning codes

from the coding scheme, writing analytic memos, and revising the coding scheme as additional codes emerged from the data.

To code the interview transcripts, I first identified the coding unit and then assigned one or more codes to that unit. A thematic unit of analysis is a section of text from the interview transcript that represents a single instance of a theme related to the research questions. This thematic instance can be expressed in a phrase, sentence, paragraph, or even multiple paragraphs (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2017). For the purpose of this study, I did not predefine the length of the coding unit but instead used an *ad hoc* strategy to determine how to segment the interview into coding units (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). Thematic units were assigned to text of any size half a sentence or larger in order to maintain context and avoid too much fragmentation (Elo et al., 2014). Thematic units could also overlap with each other or be contained within a larger thematic unit. This enabled capturing a large theme as one coding unit, for example across multiple paragraphs, while identifying smaller thematic units within that larger unit. Multiple codes were often assigned to each thematic unit.

The coding process also involved the use of inductive codes that emerged during the data analysis process and were not present in the initial codes (Miles et al., 2020). To maintain internal consistency across all codes, inductive codes had to meet criteria suggested by Corbin and Strauss (2014). All inductive codes had to be “well-differentiated” from existing codes, defined clearly, and include “sufficient variation to show the range” to which the code applies (Corbin & Strauss, 2014, pp. 198–199). Inductive coding in this manner allows the researcher to be “open to what the site has to say rather than determined to force-fit the data into preexisting

codes” (Miles et al., 2020, p. 74). The coding process was treated as an iterative process, which began with deductive coding and memoing and continued as inductive codes emerged from the data. These inductive codes were then applied and the process continued. Potential inductive codes were also discussed with fellow researchers for additional perspective on their suitability and distinctiveness from existing codes.

Throughout the coding process, I also wrote analytic memos, which are “a brief or extended narrative that documents the researcher’s reflections and thinking processes about the data” (Miles et al., 2020, p. 88). These memos included reflections on what was surprising or interesting, observations about any emerging codes or patterns, personal reactions to the interview transcript content, and questions for future consideration (Miles et al., 2020). These memos enabled me to “play with ideas and test out theories” as well as note areas of uncertainty or things that I found puzzling. As an example, as I grappled with the number of participants who described their relationship with their colleagues as positive but then told stories that indicated otherwise, I reflected on the potential impact of ‘library nice’ in how these librarians discussed their workplaces and their colleagues. This felt like important context for the interviews in general that I had not previously considered. The process of memoing served as an important practice for “the hard work of theorizing” the data (Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2022, p. 139).

I didn't plan to include any personal narrative in this chapter, but here I am now for a second time, much to my own surprise. As I was writing about the process of writing memos, I remembered some of the content of those memos and realized that I needed to acknowledge the impact of doing this research as a neurodivergent researcher. Many of my memos include emotional reactions and attempts to articulate the overwhelm I was experiencing yet again through these interviews as I engaged with them multiple times throughout the data analysis phase of this research. As the transcripts reminded me of each participant's stories of struggle and survival, I had to engage deeply with the challenges and harms they experienced, which sometimes left me exhausted and overwhelmed, while simultaneously resurfacing similar harms and hardships I have experienced in my own life. While I strongly believe this work deserves and benefits from the perspectives of a neurodivergent researcher, I would be remiss if I failed to acknowledge that this work also comes with a cost. I found myself carrying not only my own experiences and "all that I could not tell people because no one would understand," but as an interviewer and researcher I also found myself "carrying all the things that my participants also feel they cannot tell people...because they are actually telling me. And I am containing them all" (Mauldin, 2023b, p. 131). I had developed strategies for supporting and caring for my participants, but I quickly learned I needed to do the same for myself because a failure to do so would make this process, and potentially this research, unsustainable for me. Even having done so, the emotional strain was intense at times, and even now I'm not sure I have the words to adequately convey the depth of this experience.

To improve the clarity and consistency of the coding scheme and the coding process, I made use of an intercoder process. Intercoder reliability, often discussed as the process of determining "the agreement between different coders regarding how the same data should be coded," was used in this research to clarify code definitions along with how and when codes were applied to the data (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020, p. 2). In this study, the intercoder process served not as a quantification of validity, but as a method for reflexivity and dialogue among researchers with the goal of increasing clarity and consistency in data analysis. In keeping with

this purpose, intercoder is reported as a simple percentage rather than using measures of agreement like Pearson's r , Cohen's kappa, or Krippendorff's alpha (Miles et al., 2020). Although the percentage method does not eliminate the possibility of agreement due to chance, the percentage here is meant to demonstrate a high level of internal consistency. For this purpose, the goal was to reach somewhere between the 80%-90% range as a signifier of clarity and transparency (Miles et al., 2020).

Generally, the intercoder process serves as a method to demonstrate that "the basic analytic structure has meaning that extends beyond an individual researcher" (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020, p. 3). Research recommends using a subset of the data for the intercoder process, so coders worked with four interviews representing 10% of the total number of interviews (Lombard et al., 2002; O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). Interviews were selected from members of each group (librarians and supervisors) and different forms of neurodivergence (Autism and ADHD) in order to "to ensure representativeness of the entire data set" (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020, p. 5). The intercoder process was first used with one interview, so that the researcher and independent coder could then discuss and analyze any discrepancies or inconsistencies, with clarifications made to the coding scheme before working with the entire subset of interviews. After completing this process with one initial interview from the subset, I realized that I had not been adequately clear on how to use each group of codes, so I addressed this issue by adding additional guidance to the intercoder directions and coding scheme. Additionally, some codes lacked clarity and required revision. For example, the independent coder was unclear on how poor a colleague relationship needed to be to be coded as a "poor

colleague relationship,” so the definition for this code was clarified to address this issue.

Analysis of the coding of the whole subset demonstrated some differences in both assigning the thematic unit as well as in the application of codes, so I made additional adjustments by revising definitions within the coding scheme along with clarifying the parameters for applying specific codes. As an example, the independent coder had applied “type of position” to any mention of the librarian’s work duties, whereas this code was intended to apply only to one mention of their specific librarian role, such as digital initiatives librarian or technical services lead.

An additional issue was the approach to creating thematic units, which differed significantly. As a neurodivergent researcher myself, I was engaging with neurodivergent storytelling in a way that preserved their story, which I had not adequately communicated to the coder. In the next iteration, I clarified to begin with the whole response as the thematic unit, and then break down the response into smaller units as appropriate. This clarification yielded improvements in thematic unit selection. Engaging in the intercoder process in this manner, we were able to achieve 94% agreement after four rounds, thus meeting the goal of at least 80% agreement as a standard goal (Lombard et al., 2002; O’Connor & Joffe, 2020). For this research, reaching this threshold serves as a signifier of clarity and transparency in the coding scheme and process.

The next phase of data analysis involved cross-comparisons between the embedded units of public and academic libraries to identify areas of significance within each context. I also conducted a similar cross-comparison across the library roles to develop a deeper understanding of the barriers, opportunities, and embodied knowledge that may be distinct to

neurodivergent library supervisors. The purpose of these cross-comparisons was twofold: first, to determine whether the findings apply beyond one library context, and second, to “deepen understanding and explanation” (Miles et al., 2020, p. 95). These findings are presented in the following chapter.

Research Quality

Qualitative researchers have outlined many different approaches to ensuring the validity and quality of qualitative research, for example Creswell and Poth (2018) outline eleven different perspectives while Miles et al. (2020) mention reviewing twenty-six different tactics. Although there is no one set method and the discussion around determining quality in qualitative research remains ongoing, this study followed practices outlined by Miles et al. (2020) and Yin (2018) to enhance credibility, validity, transferability, and research rigor. Yin (2018) outlines four criteria for determining the quality of case study research: construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability. Construct validity involves “identifying correct operational measures for the concepts being studied,” meaning that the indicators need to correspond appropriately to the constructs under examination in the study (Yin, 2018, p. 42). In case study research, three tactics support construct validity, including using multiple sources of evidence, maintaining a chain of evidence, and undergoing review by key informants (Yin, 2018). As mentioned previously, this research gathered evidence from multiple sources using multiple qualitative methods, including interviews with multiple groups of participants (neurodivergent librarians, neurodivergent library supervisors, neurotypical co-workers, and

neurotypical supervisors) and document analysis of professional norms and expectations. The purpose of maintaining a chain of evidence is to “allow the reader of the case study to follow the derivation of any evidence from initial research questions to ultimate case study findings” (Yin, 2018, p. 134). This chapter provides details on the methods and techniques used to design the study, collect data, and analyze the data, and the following chapter presents specific evidence, all of which are in keeping with the research questions outlined in Chapter 1 and presented again at the beginning of this chapter. This research underwent extensive review and discussion with peer and expert researchers to assess the quality of the research with a critical eye and to offer alternative perspectives (Miles et al., 2020; M. Q. Patton, 2015; Yin, 2018). I regularly sought input and discussed the research with a larger research team as a form of “external check” to ask “hard questions about methods, meanings, and interpretations” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 263). My advisor, colleagues, and committee have also provided feedback and suggestions informally and through formal processes such as my general exam and annual PhD Student Reviews. The presentation of a preliminary study and drafts of Chapters 1-4 for my Dissertation Proposal Defense presented yet another significant step in this process of review and feedback that informed the final version of this dissertation.

The second criteria, internal validity, concerns the extent to which inferences made in the study are well-supported by evidence, cannot be explained by other means, and generally make sense (Miles et al., 2020; Yin, 2018). Tactics to enhance internal validity include considering rival explanations, generating thick and rich descriptions, linking data to existing or emerging theory, and presenting clearly connected findings (Miles et al., 2020; Yin, 2018). The

majority of this work is carried out in Chapter 4, where I present my findings, and is incorporated into Chapter 5 where I discuss the implications of this research. In Chapter 4, I provide rich descriptions and in Chapter 5, I link these findings to existing research and theory.

The third criteria, transferability, addresses the extent to which the findings “have meaning and resonance to other individuals, sites, and times” (Miles et al., 2020, p. 306). As a researcher influenced by postmodern and social constructivist thinking, I attend to generalizations with a careful and critical eye. Thus, this study focuses on extrapolations and transferability rather than generalizability. Firstly, this research study follows common library research practice in extrapolating “high-quality lessons” (M. Q. Patton, 2015, p. 714) to provide direction for future practices that will improve the inclusion of neurodivergent librarians within the profession. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, this study follows a number of criteria outlined by Miles et al. (2020) to support the transferability of case studies. Following those recommendations, the “characteristics of the original sample of person, settings, processes, and so on” are “fully and sufficiently described” in Chapter 4 in order to “permit adequate comparisons with other samples” (Miles et al., 2020, p. 307). Demographic data was collected from all participants, along with contextual information such as library type, size, and location, and are detailed in the findings in chapter four. The findings also include adequate “thick description” to enable “readers to assess the potential transferability and appropriateness for their own settings” (Miles et al., 2020, p. 307). Additionally, steps were taken to ensure that the sample was diverse enough to enable applicability to other contexts. This study focused on the context of both public and academic libraries to allow for its adaptation in more specialized

settings, such as school libraries, museums, or non-profit organizations. Additionally, this study intentionally deployed sampling that is “diverse enough to encourage broader applicability when relevant” (Miles et al., 2020). This research can then serve as a foundation for additional research that addresses additional forms of neurodivergence and includes broader participation from neurodivergent librarians or other library workers, as discussed further in Chapter 5.

The fourth criteria is reliability, involves minimizing errors and biases and conducting the research with care (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Miles et al., 2020; Yin, 2018). Tactics to support and enhance reliability include maintaining a clear chain of evidence, clearly defining research constructs, making research procedures explicit, performing intercoder reliability checks, and engaging in peer review (Miles et al., 2020; Yin, 2018). Methods for maintaining a clear chain of evidence and obtaining peer review have already been discussed, as these two tactics also support the first criteria of construct validity. I have previously defined the constructs for this research as part of my conceptual framework, covered in Chapter 2. Additionally, I have worked to make my research procedures clear and explicit throughout this chapter, including details on the ongoing intercoder reliability process and the changes made as a result of that process.

Limitations

No research study is without limitations, as researchers make a multitude of decisions in designing an effective and meaningful study, so this study also has its limitations. Each decision made regarding the scope of this study creates potential limitations because as the study includes some populations, so it also excludes others. For example, this study focused

specifically on autism and ADHD, leaving other forms of neurodivergence such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, intellectual disabilities, and many others for future research. Although many of the participants experienced multiple forms of neurodivergence, this research cannot accurately reflect the experiences of all neurodivergent librarians, although significant overlaps and similarities are anticipated. Similarly, because this study involved what in some fields would be considered a limited number of neurodivergent librarians in the interview process, their perspectives may not fully align with the experiences of all neurodivergent library workers in public or academic libraries, especially given the wide variety of roles and job descriptions across the field.

Finally, the study focused on academic and public libraries, leaving out other forms of librarianship with different contexts, such as school librarians or special librarians. The study focused on the context of public and academic libraries so that it can be adapted for use in more specialized settings. Additionally, to address these limitations, this study deployed sampling that is “diverse enough to encourage broader applicability when relevant” (Miles et al., 2020). This study can then serve as a foundation for additional research that addresses additional forms of neurodivergence and includes broader participation from neurodivergent librarians or other library workers.

It is also important to observe that the methods for this study, including both the survey and interviews, may exclude any autistic or ADHD librarians with intellectual disabilities. Because librarian positions often require an MLIS degree (or its equivalent) from an ALA-accredited institution, this likely serves as a barrier for many people, including those with

intellectual disabilities, and prevents them from entering the profession in the first place, or prevent them from obtaining librarian positions. Yet this is not the only pathway to librarianship, and further research in this area is needed, particularly to address the needs of library workers with intellectual disabilities and other forms of neurodivergence not included in this study.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

The findings presented in this chapter are from the study where I conducted 86 interviews, including 33 interviews with neurodivergent librarians, 17 neurodivergent library supervisors and 36 interviews with neurotypical librarians. Additionally, I conducted a document analysis of key professional standards and guidelines. As discussed in Chapter 2, this research was informed by the ableism and normativity inherent in public and academic libraries that exclude neurodivergent librarians.

To investigate the consequences of ableism and normativity, this study examined the following research questions from the perspective of neurodivergent librarians:

1. What barriers and enablers to workplace inclusion and empowerment do neurodivergent librarians experience?
2. How do neurodivergent librarians navigate workplaces that may not be designed for them?
3. How do the norms and expectations of librarianship and library organizations impact the inclusion, exclusion, and marginalization of neurodivergent librarians?
4. How might neurotypical supervisors and employees adjust or alter their workplace environment and/or practices to increase libraries' capacity to recruit, onboard, retain, and advance neurodivergent librarians?

The findings from this study include both theoretical and empirical findings. This chapter first addresses the theoretical findings, which involve the expansion of the conceptual

framework outlined in Chapter Two. The empirical findings are discussed second, and are arranged according to the four research questions.

*I spent a lot of time worrying about how to write this chapter the “right” way, even though I was reminded a number of times that there is no one right way, and that **my** way would be the right way for me and for this work. Like one of the librarians I interviewed, though, I found myself waiting for the trap: Yes, there was no right way, but **not like that!** I had to push myself to think about the stories I wanted to tell, or more accurately, the stories from this research that I felt needed to be told. I had to take ownership of this research and of this writing. I’ve been told that this is not an uncommon struggle, yet I feel like this struggle is elevated when you’ve been told your whole life that your way of being, and especially your way of expressing yourself, is always wrong. Not only did I doubt my own voice, I also doubted my own perception. Even with the encouragement from my committee, I had to put a sticky note on my monitor where I would see it every day, reminding me that “You know what you’re doing, so go do it the best you can!” What you are reading here is my attempt to do just that.*

Refining the Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework presented in Chapter 2 proposes that neurodivergent librarians experience **barriers and opportunities** depending on their **individual differences**. These individual differences influence how and when neurodivergent librarians deploy their **embodied knowledge** to mitigate their experiences of barriers in the library workplace. **Librarian professional culture** influences those barriers in the workplace and informs **neurotypical librarian knowledge and attitudes**, which in turn also influence barriers and opportunities in the library workplace. As discussed in Chapter 2, this work made modifications to build on the OIMIB framework by Annabi and Locke (2019). This modified framework

describes neurodiversity employment in libraries at individual, organizational, and professional levels as well as the interactions and relationships among these constructs. The framework includes the following constructs:

- Barriers to and opportunities for neuroinclusion (an organizational-level construct)
- Embodied knowledge of neurodivergent people (an individual-level construct)
- Individual differences (an individual-level construct)
- Librarian Professional Culture (a profession-level construct)

Throughout the data analysis process, fifteen additional sub-constructs and seventeen additional indicators were added during the iterative data analysis process outlined in Chapter 3. The revised coding scheme is available in the appendices and the additions are discussed here and summarized in Table 5 and Table 6. Additional profession-level codes were added, as summarized in Table 7 and discussed below.

Table 5: Sub-constructs added to the conceptual framework

Construct	New sub-constructs	Description/Rationale
Barriers	Shame	A humiliating feeling of wrong or foolish behavior. This sub-construct captures the way that some of the librarians had come to blame themselves for their own neurodivergent behaviors and ways of being.
	Unclear expectations	Neurodivergent people are unclear on practices, policies, or other forms of expectations in their workplace. This sub-construct was added because so many of the neurodivergent librarians raised

		this as a particular problem in their workplace.
Enablers	Neurodivergent leadership	Neurodivergent people leading the library from positions of authority and power. This sub-construct was added to reflect the positive influence that neurodivergent leaders have on neurodivergent librarians and staff.
	Autonomy	Neurodivergent librarians are able, and are trusted, to be self-directed in their work. This sub-construct was added due to the number of librarians who emphasized that having control over their workload was essential to their success.
	Employer familiarity with neurodiversity	This sub-construct corresponds to an existing barrier code and was added to facilitate comparisons between barriers and enablers.
	Addressing stereotypes and stigma	This sub-construct corresponds to an existing barrier code and was added to facilitate comparisons between barriers and enablers.
	Building on strengths	This sub-construct corresponds to an existing barrier code and was added to facilitate comparisons between barriers and enablers.
	Supporting accommodations	This sub-construct corresponds to an existing barrier code and was added to facilitate comparisons between barriers and enablers.
	Mental health support	Managers and the organization provide necessary practices and services for the mental well-being of employees, such as encouraging use of PTO for mental health days. This addition reflects the emphasis by neurodivergent librarians on the need for time off to rest and recover.

	Pandemic work model changes	<p>Workplace shifts during the pandemic, such as the shift to remote work, created different working conditions.</p> <p>This sub-construct captures the impact of the pandemic on work expectations and norms.</p>
	Parallel work	<p>Making use of body doubling to help achieve work tasks.</p> <p>This sub-construct was added to capture the use of this specific method for completing work tasks.</p>
	Trauma-informed approach	<p>The workplace recognizes that employees may have a history of trauma and acts accordingly.</p> <p>This sub-construct was added after being mentioned specifically by several librarians.</p>
Embodied Knowledge	Retreat space	<p>Using a quiet, isolated, hidden-away spot away from regular workspaces to escape or recover as needed.</p> <p>This sub-construct captures this strategy used by neurodivergent librarians to navigate workplaces not built with them in mind.</p>
	Prepping	<p>Engaging in a detailed process of getting ready for meetings, discussions, or other workplace situations in order to know what to expect ahead of time.</p> <p>The sub-code was added to reflect the extra labor that neurodivergent librarians put in to prepare for workplace situations.</p>
	Aligning employment with personal values	<p>Needing or desiring employment that is in keeping with personal beliefs and values.</p> <p>This sub-construct reflects the choices that neurodivergent librarians made in selecting librarianship as a profession.</p>

Key Additions to the Framework

Analysis of the interviews with neurodivergent librarians revealed shame as an additional barrier. This concept is not discussed in neurodiversity employment literature but comes instead from critical disability theory, especially the work of Eli Clare (2017). Participants, especially those who discovered their neurodivergence later in life, shared how ashamed they had come to feel about their ways of being. For example, Abby described the impact of being undiagnosed for so long:

“So having, having ADHD and being undiagnosed was super hard because there were things I would want to do that I felt like I couldn't make myself do. And it felt like I was lazy and unmotivated and just sort of generally felt terrible about myself all the time.”

Analysis also revealed the significant impact of the pandemic on working conditions, and how that had altered how neurodivergent librarians thought about their own workplace needs. Some of the librarians, like Wren, described grappling with how much the pandemic had improved their working situation:

“When I was in my apartment 24/7 living like the perfect life, I felt like the world was burning around me, but I was at peace in my living room and it was the weirdest thing because suddenly the world functioned like I did.”

Multiple librarians also described the strategy of improvising quiet retreat spaces for isolation and recovery by identifying a go-to space where they could “hide” away from others as needed. Skye, for example, described how she used a storage area as her retreat space:

“I have like my little hiding spots around the library if I need to go just compose myself. Like I have a box of tissues hidden in one of our collection storage areas, and I feel so ridiculous that I have that. But you know, it's just a place where only people in my department have access to it. And you can generally know when people are gonna go in there. So it's a safe place. Like if I just need a minute...so like, I was crying in there last week because I was just like, I don't know what to do and I just need a minute and I cannot cry in this office in front of all my student employees.”

Neurodivergent librarians also enacted other forms of embodied knowledge to counter the impact of workplace barriers, including preparing in advance (such as visiting a classroom or meeting room in advance, or creating scripts for meetings or conversations), and reaching out to colleagues to participate in parallel work sessions in order to accomplish essential work tasks.

Finally, analysis revealed that neurodivergent supervisors play an important role in leading organizational change. They reported using the power associated with their supervisory role to change aspects of their organization or to hire other neurodivergent library workers. Neurodivergent supervisors also shared strategies that they enacted to support their direct reports, such as using meeting templates and sending weekly email updates to library staff. Although they faced challenges similar to neurodivergent librarians, they used the power of their role to enact change and improve working conditions for their colleagues.

In addition to the sub-codes that were added to the framework, I also added indicators for previously existing sub-codes and newly added sub-codes. The seventeen new indicators are outlined in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Indicators added to conceptual framework

Sub-construct	New indicators/sub-indicators	Rationale
Stigma	Internalized stigma	Existing indicators addressed external forms of stigma but not the ways that neurodivergent people have come to accept stigma about themselves.
Discrimination	Fear of discrimination	This indicator was added to address one of the reasons that neurodivergent librarians would avoid disclosing.
	Microaggressions	Existing indicators did not address this form of discrimination that is especially pertinent for librarians with multiple marginalized and/or racialized identities.
Neurotypical expectations	Workplace socializing	Participants discussed the expectation to attend social events as part of their job, which was not captured by other existing indicators.
	Eye contact	Similar to socializing, this indicator was added to capture behavioral expectations in the workplace.
Accommodations	Perceived as for other people	The existing indicators for accommodations did not address the perception of participants that accommodations might not apply to them or their needs.
Control over workplace environment	Flexible work space	This indicator reflects participants' desire to have a work space that could be adapted as their needs changed throughout the day or week (such as a standing desk).
Employer knowledge	Disability knowledge and familiarity	Added to mirror the Barriers code for lack of employer knowledge
	Neurodiversity knowledge and familiarity	Added to mirror the Barriers code for lack of employer knowledge
Informal networks	Neurodiversity community	The original indicators addressed support from friends and family or professional connections, but that left out the support participants were seeking out and finding from the broader neurodiversity community.

Individual changes	Self-medicating	This indicator was added to reflect the use of substances such as caffeine or alcohol as an adaptive strategy.
Prepping	Process of preparation	This indicator was added to this new sub-code to capture the ways participants described preparing for various workplace situations.
	Scripts	This indicator was added to this new sub-code to capture the process of practicing communication interactions ahead of time.
Personal influences	Intersectionality	Existing codes did not adequately capture the intersectional experiences of multiply marginalized librarians.
	Significant life experiences: Late diagnosis/ID, negative work experience, pandemic-related Dx/ID, trauma	Sub-indicators were added to this existing indicator to capture specific significant experiences mentioned by participants.
Infrastructure influences	ADHD prescription laws and policies	Recent changes in laws around amphetamines significantly impacted the process for obtaining prescriptions and medication for ADHD, so this indicator was added to capture that.

Along with these aforementioned additions, I added eight profession-level codes with corresponding sub-constructs as outlined in Table 7. All of these constructs and sub-constructs were added to the coding scheme during the document analysis process outlined in Chapter 3.

Table 7: Profession-level constructs added to conceptual framework

Construct	New sub-constructs	Description/Rationale
Core values	Access	Library resources and services are available and accessible to all. Added as a key core value mentioned throughout the interviews.

	DEI	<p>Specific mention of valuing diversity, equity, and inclusion.</p> <p>Added as a key core value mentioned throughout the interviews.</p>
	Public good	<p>The assertion that libraries are an essential public good and are fundamental institutions in democratic societies.</p> <p>Added as a key core value mentioned throughout the interviews.</p>
	Professionalism	<p>Specific mention of "professionalism" within library workplaces.</p> <p>Added as a key core value mentioned throughout the interviews.</p>
	Social justice	<p>Discussion of the social responsibility of libraries and/or librarianship.</p> <p>Added as a key core value mentioned throughout the interviews.</p>
Continuous change	(none)	<p>Managing or coping with a quick process of change in libraries.</p> <p>Added to reflect the emphasis on preparation for ongoing change in libraries.</p>
Credentialism	MLIS	<p>Emphasis placed upon the importance of the MLIS or equivalent degree.</p> <p>Added to capture the significance of the MLIS degree or equivalent training.</p>
Emotional labor	(none)	<p>Emphasis on the ability of the librarian to appear available, friendly, and welcoming and ready to serve patrons and make them feel at ease.</p> <p>Added to capture the emotional labor librarians carry out across the profession.</p>
Hyperable librarian	Extensive knowledge/skills	<p>The demand for librarians to acquire and demonstrate skills and knowledge across multiple areas and aspects of librarianship.</p>

		Added to capture the variety of knowledge and skills demands placed upon librarians.
	Lifelong learning	<p>Librarians are expected to stay up to date on current trends and other areas relevant to the profession.</p> <p>Captures the ongoing demand for continued professional education.</p>
	Innovation	<p>The demand for librarians to develop and advance cutting-edge services, programs, and other novel ideas to the benefit of the library.</p> <p>Reflects the expectation that librarians go above and beyond in their work.</p>
Normative ways of being	Performing attention	<p>Engaging in eye contact and 'positive' body language for the benefit of others.</p> <p>Added to capture the specific demands for eye contact and other ways of attending to the needs of others.</p>
	Excellent communication	<p>The librarian is effective in multiple modes and forms of communication without having communication needs of their own.</p> <p>Reflects the way communication needs are discussed in professional documents and by library managers.</p>
Library nice		<p>Prioritizing the performance of being "nice" over skills or expertise, esp. as related to race and gender.</p> <p>Added to capture the emphasis on acting 'nice' in libraries that is especially placed on women and librarians of color.</p>
Service-orientation		<p>Emphasis on support offered directly to patrons, such as answering questions and offering programming or other services.</p> <p>Added to capture the significant emphasis on service throughout professional documentation and the interviews.</p>

Empirical Findings

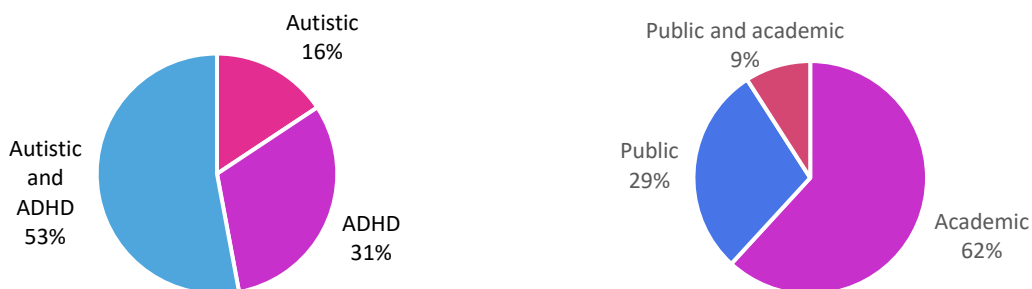
This section details the empirical findings from the interviews with 50 neurodivergent librarians and 36 neurotypical librarians. Descriptive information about the participants is covered first, followed by the findings related to each specific research question.

Neurodivergent Librarians Background Information

To preserve the confidentiality of participants and to minimize the potential for de-anonymization of data, participant demographics are reported categorically rather than associating specific demographic data with each participant.

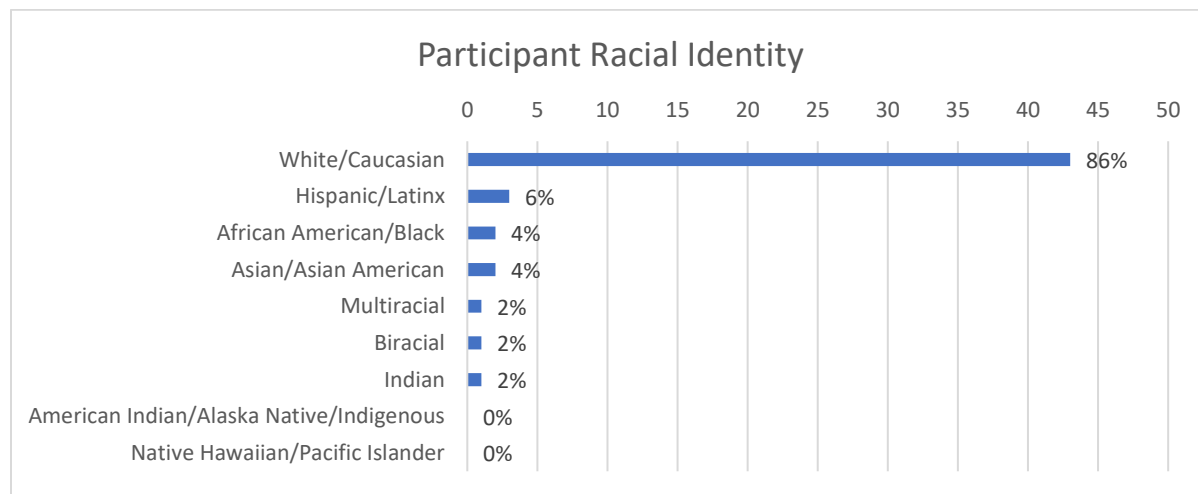
In this group of 50 participants, 53% (25) of the participants identified as ADHD, 31% (16) identified as both autistic and ADHD (often called AuDHD), and 16% (8) identified as autistic (as shown in Figure 3). Of the 50 librarians interviewed, 68% (34) had or currently worked solely in academic libraries, 32% (16) had or currently worked in public libraries, and 10% (5) had worked in both public and academic libraries.

Figure 3: Neurodivergent identity and library type of interview participants



As shown in Figure 4, 86% (43) participants identified as White/Caucasian, which represents a lack of diversity across racial and ethnic identities, but this number does align directly with the composition of the library profession, which remains significantly white (86%) despite ongoing efforts to increase racial and ethnic diversity (Hullbert & Kendrick, 2023). Numbers of those who identified as African American/Black, Hispanic/Latinx, and Asian/Asian American also correspond closely to the makeup of the profession, at 4% (2) identifying as Black or African American, 6% (3) as Hispanic or Latino, and 4% (2) as Asian (Hullbert & Kendrick, 2023).

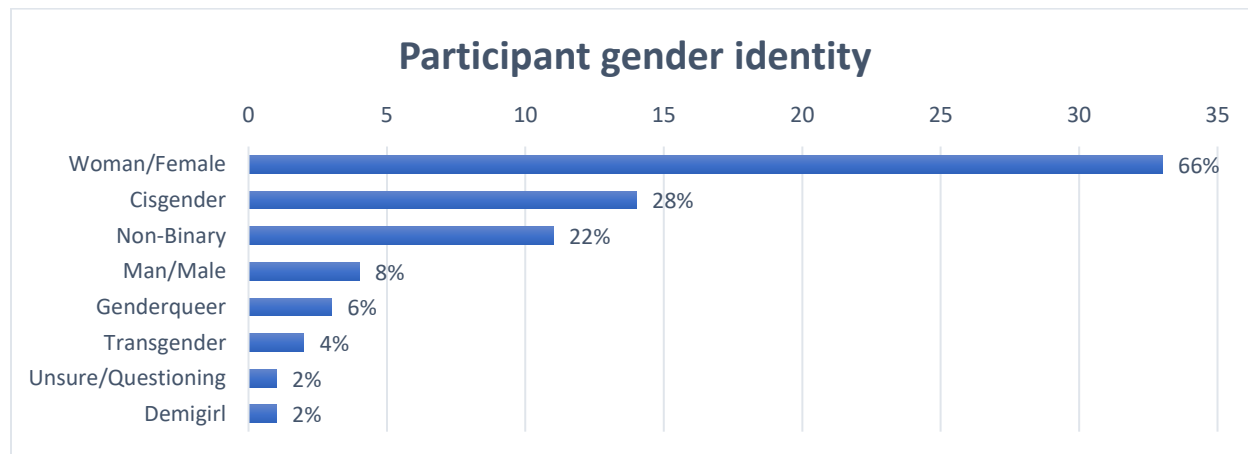
Figure 4: Racial/Ethnic identities reported by interview participants



Although the participants identified predominantly as women/female (66%, 33), this number is lower than that usually reported for the profession, which according to U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics is 82% (Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO, 2023). More significantly, a variety of other gender identities were reported by participants, as shown in

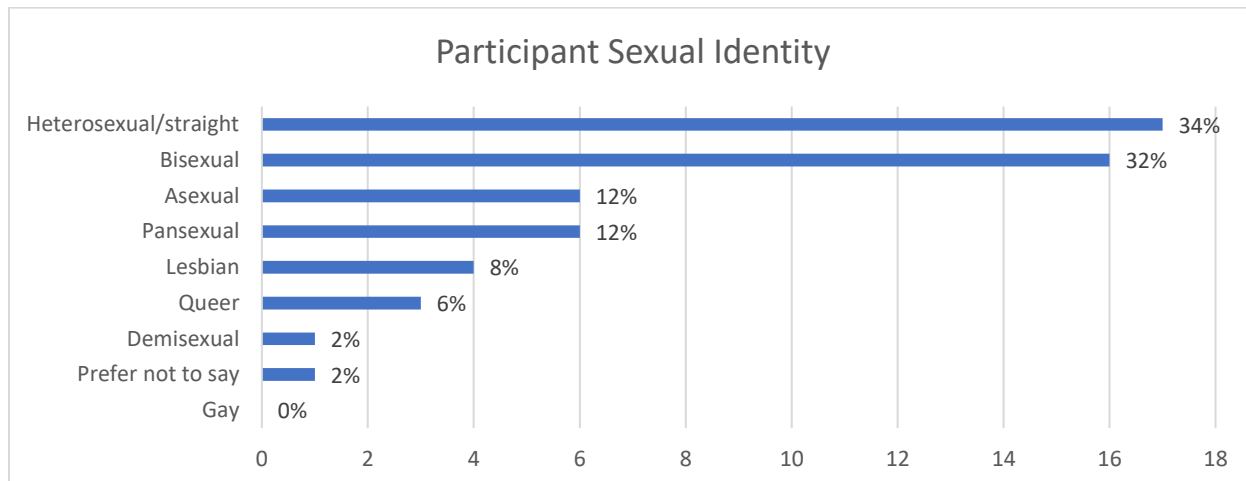
Figure 5 below. Unfortunately, the most recent ALA demographic study from 2017 only included male and female in its gender options, so currently “we do not know how many trans and gender diverse people are part of the library profession” (Adolpho et al., 2023b). As discussed in chapter two, the librarian profession upholds heteronormativity, so the number of gender diverse participants may seem surprising at first glance. Current research, however, is beginning to support knowledge oft-discussed in neurodivergent communities, by suggesting that a significant portion of neurodivergent people may not identify along gender or sexual binaries (Botha & Gillespie-Lynch, 2022; Glackin et al., 2023).

Figure 5: Gender identities reported by interview participants (who could select multiple identities)



Participants also reported a wide variety of sexual identities, as shown in Figure 6 below. Of note was the fact that only 34% (17) of the interview participants identified as heterosexual/straight, with 32% (16) identifying as bisexual, 12% (6) identifying as asexual, 12% (6) identifying as pansexual, 8% (4) identifying as lesbian, and 6% (3) as queer, with one participant identifying as demisexual.

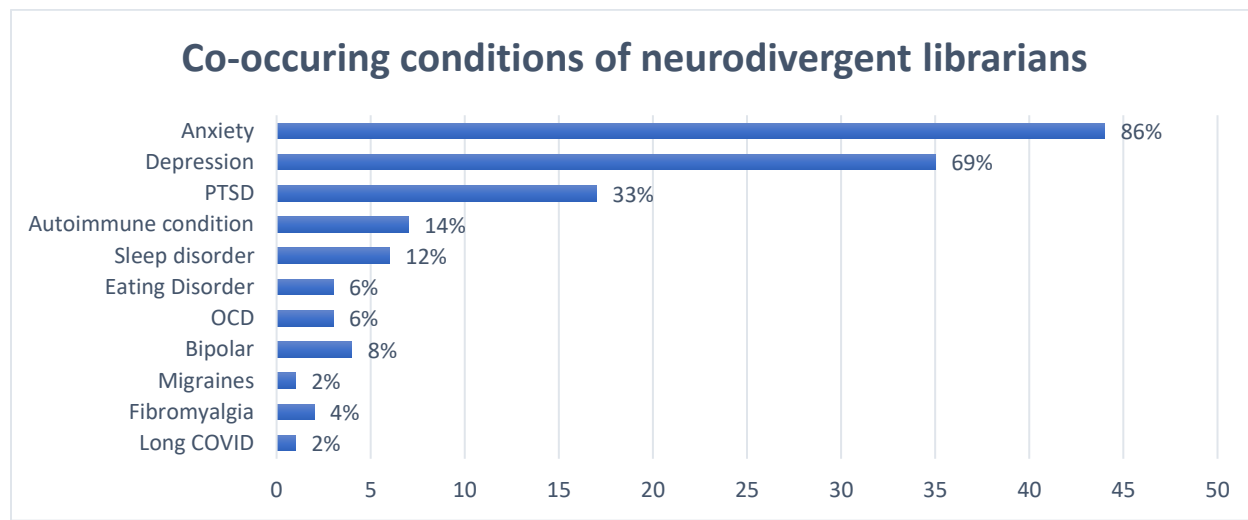
Figure 6: Sexual identities reported by interview participants (who could select multiple identities)



The participants also reported a wide variety of co-occurring conditions, as highlighted in Figure 7 below. Of particular note are the high co-occurrence of anxiety as reported by 86% (44) of participants, of depression reported by 69% (35) of participants, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) reported by 33% (17) of participants. By comparison, the National Institute of Mental Health reported that among U.S. adults, the lifetime prevalence of anxiety is 31.1%, major depression is 8.3%, and PTSD is 6.8% (NIMH, n.d.). Lai (2023) reported that among autistic people, research indicated that the prevalence of anxiety was 13%, depression was 37%, and rates of PTSD were increased. Yet it is also important to note that “the prevalence of symptoms that are subthreshold to clinical diagnoses can only be higher” (Lai, 2023). The co-occurrence of ADHD and anxiety is also significant at around 25%, although some studies suggest higher rates from 47-53% (D’Agati et al., 2019). The high percentage of anxiety, depression, PTSD, and other co-occurring conditions in this study may be due to the lack of a

required diagnosis, meaning that this data may be reflective of rates of co-occurrence that are currently overlooked by research that requires an official diagnosis.

Figure 7: Co-occurring conditions reported by neurodivergent librarian participants



Neurotypical Librarians Background Information

Of the 36 neurotypical librarians interviewed, 58% (21) had or currently worked solely in academic libraries, 39% (14) had or currently worked in public libraries, and 3% (1) had worked in both public and academic libraries. The neurotypical librarians predominantly identified as White/Caucasian (86% - 31), with 6% (2) identifying as Hispanic/Latinx, 6% (2) as African American/Black, 3% (1) as Asian/Asian American, and 3% (1) as Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. Regarding gender identity, the neurotypical librarians overwhelmingly (86%, 31) identified as Woman/Female, with 28% (10) identifying as cisgender, 6% (2) as non-binary, 6% (2) as Man/Male, and 3% (1) identifying as genderqueer. The neurotypical librarians were also significantly less diverse than the neurodivergent librarians in relation to sexual identity, with

75% (27) identifying as heterosexual/straight, 14% (5) as bisexual, 6% (2) as lesbian, 3% (1) as queer, 3% (1) as gay, and 3% (1) as pansexual.

Areas of Significance

The interviews revealed areas of significance at multiple levels: the individual level (such as barriers to success encountered by librarians), the organizational level (such as a lack of knowledge about neurodiversity across the library organization), and the profession level (such as professional guidelines that demand hyperability and emotional labor). At the individual level, librarians worked to align their employment with their personal values, negotiated their own neurodivergent identity (or identities), enacted embodied knowledge, relied on professional autonomy to manage their workload, and experienced ongoing impact from the barriers they encountered in their workplaces. At the organizational level, a lack of employer knowledge reinforced normative expectations, disclosure provided the main (or only) pathway to workplace adjustments, formal and informal accommodations were burdensome and not consistently supported. Despite these challenges, however, neurodivergent managers or supervisors were leading change within their organizations to address many of these issues. The profession of librarianship also presented additional challenges, such as an overall lack of managerial training, a dysfunctional work culture, and multiple emotional and physical impacts from a professional devotion to service and emotional labor.

RQ1: What barriers and enablers to workplace inclusion and empowerment do neurodivergent librarians experience?

Barriers in library workplaces limit access and inclusion for neurodivergent librarians, while enablers improve the workplace experience. This study revealed significant barriers for neurodivergent librarians, along with enablers that could mitigate some of the barriers (see Table 8 for a complete list).

Table 8: A complete list of barriers and enablers in library workplaces

Barriers	Enablers
Stereotyping, Stigma	Addressing stereotypes and stigma
Shame and internalized stigma	Trauma-informed approach
Discrimination	A culture of diversity and inclusion
Isolation and exclusion	Building on the strengths of all library workers
Poor colleague and supervisor relationships	Positive colleague and supervisor relationships
Inappropriate workplace environment	Control over the workplace environment
Neurotypical workplace expectations	Neurodivergent leadership
Unclear expectations	Clear and transparent communication
Communication needs going unmet	Meeting communication needs
Lack of employer knowledge of neurodiversity	Employee knowledge and education about neurodiversity
The lasting impact of stress	Mental health support
Accommodations processes that are unclear and/or bureaucratic	Supporting accommodations
	Autonomy
	Parallel work/body doubling
	Flexible schedules

	Pandemic work model changes, such as hybrid or remote work options
--	--

Barriers to success and inclusion in library workplaces included negative stereotypes and stigma, fear of discrimination, isolation, and an inaccessible work environment, all of which are in keeping with existing research. Unclear expectations were also consistently cited as a barrier consistently cited as a barrier by over a third (20) of the participants, who noted that they only became aware of unwritten expectations when they were reprimanded for doing something 'wrong.' Wren³ explained the complexity of seeking clarity around unwritten expectations, sharing, *"We don't have a written dress code and I had to like, talk to three different people before I could get an answer of is what I'm wearing okay."* This lack of clarity around policies, procedures, and expectations impacted neurodivergent librarians similarly across all forms of identity.

During the interviews, neurodivergent librarians also highlighted enablers of inclusion and success, such as flexibility and autonomy. Participants (33/50) stressed the importance of having an understanding and supportive supervisor and team, and of being valued and trusted as an employee. A flexible work schedule, the ability to work from home, and the ability to be self-directed were also cited as enablers. Librarians in this study (31/50) also discussed the importance of the physical and sensory environment, valuing a private workspace that allowed control over lighting, noise, and potential interruptions. For some, this meant not only having a physical door to close, but also the ability to do so without being seen as unprofessional or

³ Pseudonyms are used for all participants to protect their identity.

unwilling to engage with others. Respect for boundaries also arose as an important enabler, with several librarians discussing workplace conversations and workshops on setting and keeping boundaries. Several librarians also noted that having a neurodivergent supervisor created a much more understanding and supportive workplace environment. Librarians in this study (33/50) also highlighted the need for changes in organizational culture to be more welcoming of differences and different ways of working. Doing so would ideally minimize the need for masking and the cost associated with constantly “performing” in the workplace. Of particular significance were the ongoing impact of these workplace barriers, a lack of employer knowledge about neurodiversity, and a failure to consistently support formal and informal accommodations. Yet autonomy in the workplace helped neurodivergent librarians sustain their employment in normative library workplaces.

Ongoing Impact of Workplace Barriers

The effort required to constantly navigate normative workplaces, and the cost that doing so exacted, was discussed by 39 of 50 participants. This effort demanded additional labor that they reported was not required of neurotypical librarians, whose ways of being aligned with the neuro-normative expectations of their library workplaces. Experiencing these barriers over an extended period could impede recovery time and lead to burnout, or even prevent recuperation from burnout. Maggie talked about experiencing burnout and the lack of any space to recover or deal with that as a librarian, noting that,

“Like, one thing we think I talk about a lot is, I don't know, no one gets over burnout

doing the same thing, right? And there's this whole layer of autistic burnout before you

get to regular job burnout. And it's like, if anyone would just be like, Hey, take a week and just work at home. I don't even need vacation. I just need to hide and I can still get work done. I just need some space to recover without having time off, without being seen as lazy. It's different than sick or vacation. I can come back, I just need space to do it. But there's no acknowledgement of that or really any mechanism for getting rest while still working."

Even if they weren't dealing with burnout, over half (28) of the participants discussed the cost of masking at their workplaces, of the energy they expended to 'fit' in with their colleagues, and the impact it had on their personal lives, making it difficult to complete necessary tasks like preparing food or doing the dishes or the laundry. The autistic and AuDHD librarians in this study especially emphasized the effort they put into masking in their workplaces. Rose explained that masking in the workplace had become a continuation of a lifetime of masking:

"I essentially was socialized to hide my difference and hope that no one noticed, otherwise it would turn into some of the narratives that were given to me were that I was too sensitive. You know, if I was having some sort of meltdown over sensory things, it was me being inconvenient."

Maintaining masking in the workplace was also discussed by these 28 participants as a source of additional fatigue, and as Ruth noted, *"when you are a person who masks and you're in an office environment, that's a lot of added stress."*

Throughout the interviews, the neurodivergent librarian participants consistently reported that they are constantly working to adapt to their workplaces instead of the

workplaces being flexible or inclusive of them. As Finn explained, library workplaces expect *“that the neurodivergent person adapts themselves to the environment that they are in, rather than the environment being flexible enough to accommodate or invite or adapt to the neurodivergent person in it.”* Paul summarized the impact of this expectation, explaining:

“I have to be the one who's uncomfortable to make everybody else around me comfortable. And like, that's what really sucks. And I think that sort of encapsulates the neurodivergent experience, we sort of suffer that burden of discomfort and exhaustion everything so that all our neurotypical people around us can not be uncomfortable in our presence.”

Nearly all of the participants (43 of 50) shared that often they carried the burden of adapting to their workplace environment and navigating workplace norms and practices that were created without them in mind. For over half of the participants (26), this burden came with mental, emotional, and physical costs, and was exhausting to the extent that it impacted their personal lives as well as their professional experiences. Joan described how her efforts to adjust to her workplace led to daily exhaustion that impacted her life outside of work:

“So I feel like I'm quote unquote on for eight hours, and then towards the end of the day, I can turn off a bit, but it means that my home life is crazy because things are not getting done because I'm spending all my energy trying to be on at work.”

Joan was not the only librarian who faced this issue. Skye talked similarly about feeling exhausted and offered this example of its impact on her life:

“Like yesterday, I got a haircut after work and I walked in and I was like, please just cut my hair. Don't make small talk. I can't do it. But luckily she's pretty quiet too, so she was like, yes, I don't wanna talk either. I'm like, great!”

While feeling unable to speak with the person cutting your hair might feel like a minor inconvenience, this was just one example of the ways that working in an inaccessible workplace environment could leave neurodivergent participants too exhausted to deal with anything after work. ADHD librarian participants also reported needing to manage their medications so they could function at work, but then they paid the cost for that later. As Brooke described,

“I don't typically take my medicine on the weekends because I can conserve the medication for when I need it for work. But if there's a long period of time where I don't, the same things that happen here will happen at home. It is my, I have two full laundry baskets of clean laundry. I do not have the willpower after a day of work to take the steps necessary to get those things folded or hung up and put away in their place. Following a recipe, I mean, something as simple as that, I can't measure and plus I can't, or I spend so much time doing that, then it's too late to cook.”

Recent changes in laws and practices around obtaining medication for ADHD, along with medication shortage, led to some librarians rationing their medication in this manner, but doing so led to exhaustion after or outside of work. Although many librarians may feel tired after a long day at work, the neurodivergent librarians in this study experienced fatigue to a degree that it interfered with or prevented their ability to complete essential tasks like food preparation. Gabi observed,

"I shouldn't have to be living this way, but because of the way society is set up, that's what's happened. And I really wish that people understood it to the sense that, this is why we're so tired at the end, why we can't do these things. And why we just need a break every once in a while, and let us have our things."

The neurodivergent librarian participants put in great effort to conceal their differences, make adjustments on their own, and conform to normative library workplaces. Yet that labor and effort is not visible to their supervisors or colleagues. Daniel summed up this experience, saying, *"I'm killing myself to fit, cooperate, and it doesn't get recognized at all."*

Additionally, library workplace barriers interact with, and are amplified by, intersecting identities. In this study, two librarians of color reported experiencing racialized microaggressions while also navigating neurodiversity stereotypes and stigma. Microaggressions related to librarian's personal identity but also impacted their professional work. As Gabi detailed,

"I had supervisors who tried to be supportive but instead would pigeonhole me, for lack of a better term. I had one supervisor, when I was trying to start applying to conferences and submitting materials, would tell me that I should only focus on Latinx topics. And I was like, that's not even my area of interest, but okay."

In some instances, microaggressions and racialized discrimination interacted with neurodivergence, resulting in distinctly difficult situations for librarians of color. For example, an autistic black woman does not only experience unwanted hair-touching as a black woman, but also as an autistic person who did not like to be touched and has sensory sensitivities. Librarian Nova explained,

“Like if I wasn't neurodivergent and then I was neurotypical and African-American, it still would bother me, but it wouldn't have that extra effect of, okay, now I need to go home and I can't have anything touch me. I don't even like my skin touching me now. I just keep experiencing that. So it's all of those things together that make it so compounding and so bad. I'm always like, I wish I could just pick one problem. So I'm gonna have all these problems, that's fine. But today can I just be black and not have the other ones? So today I'm gonna be pansexual and we're not gonna deal with any of the other things, but it doesn't work like that.”

Several (3 of 16) librarians in this study with multiple marginalized identities also reported encountering other forms of discrimination, including gender-based discrimination. During an interview Brian wryly observed, *“me being non-binary in the workplace, I know is playing the game on hard mode. I mean, I'm already queer, I'm already autistic. Why not just add more layers?”* Another neurodivergent librarian who identified as non-binary affirmed this sentiment, noting that they were often misgendered by their colleagues and supervisors. Ruby shared with me, *“I get misgendered a lot. Like it's pretty much a daily thing.”* Given the significant overlap between neurodivergence and gender-diverse identities, this interplay of identities results in amplification of barriers and isolation in the workplace. In some cases, librarians experienced intense harassment and discrimination for their identities, with two participants having filed a harassment or discrimination claim at their workplaces.

Lack of Employer Knowledge Reifies Normative Workplaces

Among the 50 neurodivergent librarians, 37 reported encountering a lack of neurodiversity knowledge amongst their library colleagues, and what little knowledge existed was often informed by stereotypes or misconceptions. Additionally, 26 of the 50 librarians reported multiple incidents related to a lack of colleague or supervisor knowledge. When colleagues demonstrated a lack of knowledge and understanding of neurodiversity, librarians felt uncomfortable disclosing and continued to mask. Similarly, misconceptions about neurodiversity reinforced stigma and the perceived need for neurodivergent librarians to mask in their workplaces. Remy described their experience in libraries with stigma, observing:

“I feel like most of the problems I have around being neurodivergent are due to other people's lack of understanding and the stigma. And if we could just get rid of some of that, then I don't feel like my neurodivergence really hampers my job that much. It mostly butts into other people's expectations of how I should be doing my job.”

A lack of knowledge or understanding also resulted in workplace discrimination, with 21 of 50 librarians reporting that they were treated differently from their colleagues or denied promotions based on their neurodivergent ways of being. As Kay expressed, *“Neurodivergency, particularly in my experiences with ADHD have gotten me reprimanded, have gotten comments on my portfolios, because they didn't like that I was too animated, and they didn't like that I made jokes and they said I talked too much.”* Even when supervisors were trying to gain some knowledge, that didn't always lead to improvements in the workplace. Daniel emphasized this, explaining, *“I think there's just a genuine awareness issue or lack of awareness issue. Yeah. and so it's great that, that he's read like the Forbes top five ways to deal with your autistic employee*

article, but that's not translating into like a thoughtful awareness of those issues or those sort of same interactions."

The majority (23/37) of neurotypical librarians in this study acknowledged this lack of knowledge and explained that they wanted to know more, but not all were sure how to go about vetting sources in order to find the right kind of information. Kristin, a co-worker of a neurodivergent librarian noted, *"I want to be an advocate and I don't really know how to advocate."* This lack of familiarity was also touched on by Paige, a neurotypical supervisor, who discussed her knowledge of neurodiversity by explaining, *"I would say I have, like if it was a scale of one to ten, I'd probably have a three or four familiarity with neurodiversity. I think I understand what it means, but I'm not well-versed in every way that it could show up."* Another neurotypical supervisor admitted limited familiarity with neurodiversity but emphasized her desire to learn more, as she explained,

"I want to be a good supervisor in that I let people do the best that they can do with where they're at, and how do I best support that without getting in their way? And how can I do that for a neurodiverse person? What are the things that I as a supervisor need to know? What are the things that I as a collaborative colleague, what's something that I would need to know? What are the basic things that I should know when working with somebody that may be on the spectrum or neurodiverse in any way?"

Daryl, another neurotypical supervisor, relied on his colleagues to provide accurate information, acknowledging that *"as the most privileged group in the world, a cishet, white, middle-aged man, I tend to take my cues about people who are not those things from them and let them tell*

me where they would like me to read more about them, the sources that they would like me to look at.”

Neurotypical librarians in this study also reported that they found little administrative support for neuroinclusion efforts, even at institutions with strong DEI initiatives, because disability and access were not included in their institutions’ conceptions of DEI. If disability was considered, it was primarily with a focus on physical accessibility and invisible disabilities (and thus neurodiversity) were overlooked. As Julie, a public library supervisor, reported,

“The library’s notion of diversity, I believe they’re very supportive of physical disability. But when it comes to hidden disabilities, that’s where there’s not as much support, it seems, both visually in terms of whether it’s author events or staff programming or just even in terms of management training.”

In attempts to build knowledge for themselves and across their organization, neurotypical librarians in this study reported seeking out training from counseling centers or public schools, but such trainings did not align well with the needs of the library or presented deficit understandings of neurodiversity, and thus did not lead to the anticipated gain in knowledge and know-how. Additionally, issues with understaffing and overwork limited capacity for taking on anything else, so even for those who wanted to learn more and improve, it could prove difficult to prioritize that or make time for that work and learning.

Failure to Support Formal and Informal Accommodations

Few participants (10 of 50) reported seeking official workplace accommodations, as most preferred to either deploy their own strategies or make informal arrangements with their

supervisor. Even when neurodivergent librarians reported obtaining formal accommodations, the extent to which those accommodations are honored may vary. Daniel explained that his supervisor had *“kind of lived up to like the letter of the accommodations, but maybe not the spirit of the accommodations, which has been kind of challenging.”* Over half (28) of the neurodivergent librarians who participated in this study also observed that the official accommodation processes were unclear and highly bureaucratic. Wren described their lack of clarity on how and when to go about obtaining accommodations:

“One thing about the accommodations process: Ironically enough, they're not super clear about it. There's no like written step-by-step walking you through how to do it here because you can ask for it informally and that's your first step, but then I don't really know where to go from there. I know that we have an office on campus for that and their email address and all of that's online, but I don't know how that would get back around to my supervisor without it seeming like I went above their head and that kind of thing. And then before I got my formal diagnosis, I didn't know if I was allowed to ask for informal accommodations because I wasn't formally diagnosed. And obviously it's not a problem now cause I have the documentation, but I didn't know if I could even ask informally.”

In addition, such processes are not designed for people with multiple conditions and multiple doctors. Riley shared the number of doctors they saw for various conditions and having to determine which doctor's letter was *“good enough”* for accommodations purposes. As Riley described:

“And so it's like, do we get the cardiologist to sign off these papers or the neurologist or like <laugh>, my general practitioner. Oh, but that's not good enough. You need a specialist. Okay, which one?”

Accommodations processes don't often consider the complexity and potential overlap of co-occurring conditions. This presents a significant barrier, as 44 (86%) of the participants reported anxiety issues, 35 (69%) reported depression, and 17 (33%) experienced PTSD. They also reported a variety of other co-occurring conditions that could require seeing multiple doctors, as was the case for Riley.

The librarians I interviewed often discussed accommodations as a last resort to be pursued only when absolutely necessary. For some, previous negative employment experiences made them wary of disclosing their neurodivergence and resulted in fear and anxiety about how their peers and supervisor might view them. Erin described her experience with a previous attempt at disclosure after obtaining an official ADHD diagnosis, explaining that *“I did disclose it in a conversation with a former supervisor, and I didn't feel that that went very well <laugh> so I stopped disclosing it.”* Even when participants decided to request formal accommodations, the process was highly bureaucratic, and human resources staff (who were designated to process accommodations requests) created additional barriers for neurodivergent librarians. For those who received accommodations, some supervisors voiced support yet failed to take action or steps toward changing the workplace environment.

Professional Autonomy Helps Sustain Employment in Libraries

During the interviews, neurodivergent librarians also highlighted enablers of inclusion and success, such as flexibility and autonomy. Professional autonomy manifested through multiple means, such as determining daily work and tasks, work from home options, flexibility with work schedules, and workplaces that could be adjusted as needed. Because their needs were variable, and could change from day to day, having autonomy to decide what to do and when helped the neurodivergent librarians in this study manage their workload. For some (13/50), the pandemic had offered different models for working that provided new possibilities for neurodivergent librarians. Rose spoke of the working conditions that had resulted during the pandemic and emphasized the significance of flexibility, saying,

“This idea of making space for things like alternative working arrangements has been so impactful, just flexibility in general. The idea of work from home, shorter work days, cuz I mentioned it more in my notes, but this idea of having to interact with people and kind of mask myself for eight hours a day, and for a while I was trying to do 10 hours that was not optimal, it was so incredibly exhausting. So the idea of how do we shape work to make it so that humans can have like full lives both in and outside of work, right?”

Lex similarly emphasized the impact of flexibility and hybrid work options:

“I think that I got very lucky in that my workplace already has a lot of flexibility built into their structure. So we have a policy for hybrid work, so I can work two days from home and three days on site, which is really, really nice and my supervisor is very, very flex. She's very flex. She's very much like so long as your work gets done and you show up to meetings and everything when you need to. Like if you need to leave early and stay later

the next day or things like that. If you end up having to come in on a day when you're meant to be working from home, then take another day that week where you're working from home. So yeah, that sort of flexibility is already built into the culture there. So that's taking care of a lot of like the needs or resources or supports that I feel like I would've needed otherwise."

Participants also discussed the importance of the physical and sensory environment, valuing a private workspace that allowed control over lighting, noise, and potential interruptions. For some, this meant not only having a physical door to close, but also the ability to do so without being seen as unprofessional or unwilling to engage with others. Kit expressed that *"having an office has been significantly more helpful than anything; just being able to shut the door, that has been helpful."* Librarians who did not have their own office often wished they did, such as Skye who wanted *"an office <laugh> with a door I can close <laugh>. Yeah. Preferably not a glass door, so that if I need a moment to fall apart, I don't have people staring at me."* Cora stated a similar desire, explaining,

"What I do want, you know, is like a more private workspace with like an option to let coworkers know like how interruptible I am, if that makes sense. So like, you know, a door that I could close and like a whiteboard on it that could say, I'm in a meeting, please don't disturb. Or, you know, I need the next one hour to be focused time. And to have that be understood as a valid reason to have that kind of private space."

Although the librarians recognized that not all library buildings include private office space, that was nonetheless the ideal for many, especially for public librarians who were less likely to have

any private workspace. Some librarians discussed wanting options for how their workspace was set up, such as Brooke:

“I think that a lot of what we are starting to see now for students with shiftable spaces and whiteboards or non-permanent ways of brainstorming that are just built into the space, but can be customized to what you need it to be. Like if you need a table off in the corner, you can push it off in the corner. Or if you need a great, big whiteboard or you don't, you just need a little whiteboard. Having those different working options.”

During the interviews, library supervisors similarly highlighted the significance of flexibility and autonomy, such as a flexible work schedule and the ability to work from home. Supervisors also discussed the importance of the physical and sensory environment and appreciated when their supervisory role provided the benefit of a private workspace that allowed control over lighting, noise, and potential interruptions. Supervisors were often expected to check in on other library workers and be available as needed, so they valued the ability to close a door or put up a sign and take some quiet time to work independently without interruption.

RQ2: How do neurodivergent librarians navigate workplaces that may not be designed for them?

The neurodivergent librarians in this study developed a rich variety of strategies for managing their lack of access in their workplaces, based on their own needs and what is possible within their library organization. They enacted this embodied knowledge while navigating their neurodivergent identity and identifying their own workplace needs. Many (28/50) of the librarians in this study reported that they continue working in libraries due to the

ways that the profession's values aligned with their own personal and professional values.

Neurodivergent supervisor participants, on the other hand, reporting using the power of their role to enact change in the workplace and improve working conditions for their fellow employees, especially their fellow neurodivergent colleagues.

Enacting Embodied Knowledge at Work

To manage workplace environments that were not constructed with neurodivergent people in mind, all of the librarians in this study had used their lived experience to develop strategies that could minimize some inaccessible aspects of their workplaces. As Tess expressed, *"I haven't gotten official accommodations, but I have adopted a lot of strategies."* These strategies represent forms of embodied knowledge, which builds on OIMIB's conception of coping strategies as outlined in Chapter 2. As another example of this embodied knowledge, participants who had their own workspaces adapted the environment around them to address problems like lighting or temperature, often working around problematic rules and regulations that thwarted an accessible environment. As Daniel detailed, *"So right now my lights are off in my office. I actually brought in my own Walmart light, because yeah, there's only one allowable type of light bulb in the official lights, that's a very god awful fluorescent light bulb, which they buy in bulk from the state or whatever."* Paul encountered similar issues with the library workspace, explaining, *"I brought my own lights and fans and just sort of adapted the sensory things in my office."* Neurodivergent librarians in this study applied the knowledge they had gained from lived experience, while also noting that they really shouldn't have to bring their own accommodations and adjustments themselves. As Brooke observed, *"It sounds kind of bad,*

but I just sort of took the onus on myself to make sure that I had what I needed.” By providing what they needed for themselves, the librarians in this study also avoided disclosure and the accommodations process, both of which could prove complicated and harmful.

Participants who did not have their own workspaces also drew on their lived experience to inform how they adapted to inaccessible workspaces. Skye, for example, discussed the need to find a location away from others for recovery time. Skye explained,

“I have like my little hiding spots around the library if I need to go just compose myself. Like I have a box of tissues hidden in one of our collection storage areas, and I feel so ridiculous that I have that. But you know, it's a place where only people in my department have access to it. And you generally know when people are gonna go in there <laugh>. So it's a safe place. Like if I just need a minute.”

Arlene similarly discussed the importance of having a space away from others, noting,

“I have found that I need at least a workspace that is private to myself for parts of the day, whether I have, you know, my own cubicle or if I have, you know, an office that at least that certain parts of the day, I know that it's not going to be shared with other people. Privacy and being able to have some space to myself really does matter to me, and I've found that that's not something I can treat as a luxury....I have been joking for years about the librarian puppy nap room that I've been campaigning for <laugh>, just a nice quiet, dark room with bean bags and soft sofas and puppies that need to be socialized and help you take a nap.”

Beyond the workspace itself, all neurodivergent librarian participants shared multiple forms of embodied knowledge, such as using digital tools or physical tools, and building neurodiversity community within their workplace. Miranda, for example, shared her use of tools: *“I need a calendar, I need to know when my stuff is, I need to know when the library stuff is. I need to be able to keep track of that. I need my to-do lists.”* Calendars were frequently cited as an essential tool for neurodivergent librarians, who used them to keep track of their work, meetings, and other aspects of their work and personal life. An additional benefit of digital calendars was the ability to set up reminders, or multiple reminders if needed. Seven participants also mentioned a desired improvement in the way their library organizations made use of calendars because this was such an essential tool for them individually. Other digital tools included project management tools, task tracking apps or software (sometimes used within a calendar), smart watches, and to-do lists. Participants also reported making their own physical to-do lists, or using paper planners or journals to take notes and keep track of work tasks and deadlines. Neurodivergent librarians also shared that they used other physical items to support their workplace needs, such as white noise machines, headphones, fidget devices, whiteboards, knitting, and craft supplies like knitting. As Ren explained,

“The other thing that I have done is I have built in brain breaks for myself, and that's what I just call them. But it gives a, gives me like five minutes to basically let, allow my brain to diverge from whatever I'm doing. Because if I don't, my brain will get overstimulated and overloaded. And I have a lot of things in my office that some people might, would be considered childish <laugh>. But I do, I have a stuffed animal that I will

mess with for about five minutes. I have a puzzle in there that I work on for about five minutes. I have some other textual sensory pins and tools that have like fidget spinners on them or something of slime. I have those in there to help the, with the neurodivergence. Cuz if I don't give my brain those outlets, then I will get overwhelmed. I will start forgetting things."

Eleven neurodivergent librarians in this study also shared that finding other neurodivergent library workers and building community with them created an informal system of ongoing support. Miranda, for example discussed the importance of knowing someone in the workplace who understood neurodiversity without having to explain it:

"We have slightly different symptoms, but it's still helpful to talk about and be open with somebody about how we struggle at work and what's bothering us. And it's really nice to be able to vent a little bit and, and to be open with at least somebody at work who understands some of the struggles of having ADHD and working in the library."

Sometimes neurodivergent librarians worked to support each other through methods such as body-doubling, as explained by Wes, *"occasionally we do working in parallel, like body doubling kind of thing. We wouldn't call it that, but we'd just say like, Hey, do you wanna work together? I'm lonely in my office. Okay, yeah. We'll just go both work next to each other."* Even when librarians were navigating across different forms of neurodivergence, they still deeply valued this neurodivergent community in the workplace. As Monica described,

"Something that's completely changed my life is having a couple close allies at work who I also know that they have some neurodivergence as well. And so we, we check in. So like

one of them, I have a standing, you know, meeting with them once a week for a half hour, where we just do a, you know, a check-in. And either we do some body doubling for each other, or we just talk through frustrations, you know? Or I have someone who has a peer to me that I check in with, you know, some of the social stuff, the political stuff that I don't get ... So just having that, you know, private support really is, it changes everything."

Despite the barriers they encountered in their workplaces, all of the neurodivergent librarians in this study developed or discovered methods for providing their own methods to support their needs and navigate their lack of access. This embodied knowledge couldn't always mitigate existing barriers, but it did provide a means for the librarians to sustain their employment in libraries.

Late Diagnosis and Identity Negotiation

The majority (43, 86%) of neurodivergent librarians I interviewed indicated that their awareness of their own neurodivergence came in adulthood (often later in adulthood), and for some the pandemic played a significant role in helping them realize that their work lives could be different (and less harmful). Recognition of their neurodivergence came through various forms, such as memes or videos on social media, conversations with neurodivergent colleagues or friends, suggestions from therapists, and sometimes even official diagnostic testing. Nova explained that for her, *"it wasn't until covid hit, everyone was at home still and I was on TikTok a lot and there were a lot of different neurodivergent people who were like describing their experiences and I was like, oh, this, everyone doesn't think like this. Like this isn't normal."* This

realization helped Nova seek out a diagnosis and better understand herself. Remy shared a similar journey to an informal diagnosis, describing how

“there started being a lot of memes on Facebook about autistic people in autism. And I was like, I feel like I’m relating to these memes more than I should be. But that’s not a diagnostic tool, <laugh>. So I started doing research. I came across a lot of research on how AFAB people are frequently missed in autism diagnosis and are frequently misdiagnosed as having ADHD. And the more I read, the more familiar it sounded.”

While learning of their own neurodivergence was deeply meaningful, this late diagnosis or identification meant that many (31/50) of these librarians were still working to identify their own needs and ways of being in the world after masking for so long. They discussed the ongoing process of learning to unmask or to unlearn previous behaviors and negative attitudes toward themselves. Maggie discussed the generally positive impact of her late diagnosis by explaining that *“I think really what it comes down to is I feel like I’m finally working with myself to help myself rather than working against myself, trying to make myself be who I’m not supposed to be.”* Magdalene explained that

“releasing four decades of masking <laugh> is really kind of challenging. And I know, I don’t have to do that if I don’t want to, but not doing it is, it just, it makes me so tired. It makes me so, like, yeah. So I’m working on getting more comfortable with just sort of doing what I need to do.”

At least three librarians shared that they were so used to doing the work of adapting on their own that they found it difficult to know or imagine what their workplace might do to support them.

Aligning Employment in Libraries with Personal Values and Strengths

As a service-oriented profession, librarianship is deeply focused on helping others and meeting their information needs. For the majority (28/50) of the neurodivergent librarians I interviewed, this aspect of the profession aligned closely with their own personal and professional values. Vidya mentioned how she had chosen to pursue librarianship because she valued the idea of libraries, explaining, *“I really enjoy the environment of libraries. I like even just the idea behind a library. Like I really like it. Particularly public libraries where it's a place where you can spend time and hang out without the expectation of spending money.”* Other librarians discussed how they had chosen libraries because they felt that other types of employment would not align with their personal and professional values. As Magdalene shared, *“I hated working for corporate America because it felt soulless, like, I'm gonna tell you right now, I hate capitalism.”* Although aligning employment with personal and professional values may reflect similar choices made by neurotypical librarians, the neurodivergent librarians in this study particularly emphasized the significance of the social justice focus of libraries and its connection to neurodivergent ways of being. Kay, for example, explained that *“with our typical strong sense of justice, with autistics in particular, librarianship can be fulfilling.”*

The neurodivergent librarians in this study consistently emphasized how much they enjoyed being to help others and see the impact of their efforts, which was rewarding and

affirming both professionally and personally. Daniel summed up his positive experiences in librarianship by explaining that,

“just in general I really care about helping people and I think it's definitely a people helping profession that's pretty much positive. We don't really have to do anything too mean as a library and we don't collect fines anymore, which is one of the few mean things librarians ever had to do. We let people eat in the library now. We don't, we try to keep a couple floors quiet, but we have lots of areas we don't have to be quiet, so there's no shushing, there's no kicking people out because of food. We're not collecting fines. So it's a pretty positive way to be able to work with people and help people.”

The positive aspects of helping others brought neurodivergent librarians to the profession and was cited as a reason for remaining invested in the work of libraries.

Neurodivergent Managers Leading Workplace Change

Neurodivergent library supervisors in this study encountered many of the same barriers to success and inclusion as the non-supervisor participants, including negative stereotypes and stigma, fear of discrimination, isolation, and an inaccessible work environment, all of which are in keeping with existing research. Like the other participants, they too carried the burden of educating their colleagues, and navigating access in their workplace, which similarly proved to be taxing for supervisors. This, however, is particularly challenging in the manager role - as managers are both subject to these barriers, and responsible for addressing them for their direct reports. Lana described hiring a neurodivergent library worker and then needing to advocate for that employee with library leadership. Lana explained, *“you know, if they've gotten*

frustrated with something that she's done, but I can tell there's like very clear they don't actually understand. So then I have to kind of go, okay, from her standpoint, I can understand why she did this and here's my guess of why." In the same way that Lana advocated for this direct report, she also had to explain her own differences and needs:

"what happens is if you get yourself into some sort of pickle <laugh> and, and it kind of, you know, centers around any one of these neurodivergent traits that you have, not only do you have to be able to advocate for yourself and ask for what you need, but you kind of have to explain the backstory of it. Because if you just say you know, I struggle with this, or, you know, people are like, why? That's like, it's always like, why can't you just be on time? Well, right."

Miranda also expressed concern about the impact of her own neurodivergence on her direct reports, and shared, *"my facial expressions don't always match my emotions or like what I'm trying to convey."* Miranda worried, *"I'm like, oh my god, everyone's gonna misunderstand. I don't want my direct reports to hate me."*

Despite these challenges in their supervisory role, some (6/17) of the neurodivergent library supervisors felt that their neurodivergence enabled them to bring strengths to that role as well. For a few, this meant being more understanding of differences and empathetic toward their direct reports. Others reported using the power associated with their supervisory role to change aspects of their organization or to hire other neurodivergent library workers. Nova shared that she felt that one of the strengths she brought to her role as a neurodivergent librarian was *"the ability to, especially like being a supervisor position, having the ability to hire*

other neurodivergent people who would struggle in other industries or maybe like really struggle with interviews.” Carmen also stressed the strengths of being a neurodivergent supervisor, saying,

“I feel like it helps me be more direct with people of like, this is what I expect. This is why, let me know if you have questions. And I think it helps me be more, tolerant is not the right word, but maybe patient with people where I don't take people's things personally. It's just like, well, this is just how people are, you know? And it helps me, I think, I spend so much of my time just like helping people work with other people. And I think it helps me navigate interactions between people in a better way. And because establishing boundaries for myself is so important, I think it helps me help others with their boundaries.”

Other library supervisors (7/17) discussed ways that they were leading change in their libraries, such as making modifications to hiring practices to make them more neuroinclusive, or altering library policies for improved clarity and transparency. This emphasis on change was discussed in more depth by neurodivergent supervisors when compared to the interviews I conducted with neurodivergent librarians who did not have supervisory roles. While some (7/17) neurodivergent librarians in this study did mention their attempts to advocate for or lead change, such as organizing a book group around neurodiversity, the majority (11/17) of neurodivergent supervisors tended to discuss their role as change agents as an essential part of their approach to leadership in their library. Many of them drew on their lived experience as a neurodivergent person to identify areas needing improvement, such as unclear policies or

inconsistent workflows. Furthermore, their understanding of differences and empathy for their library team drove them to improve working conditions for everyone, from allowing flexibility in schedules to carving out library space for private offices for all the librarians. As Brooke observed, *“Knowing what it feels like to be overwhelmed and the difficulty in juggling so many tasks, I think in some ways have made me more empathetic and maybe, how's the right word, advocate more for people than I might have for myself.”* Some of the neurodivergent supervisors even pushed the boundaries of their organization’s policies to improve access, like Cathy who explained, *“I work with my staff as far as letting them do things remotely when they can, whatever I, as much as I can get away with you know, depending on our policies.”*

Neurodivergent supervisors in this study also shared strategies they had learned to make themselves effective that were transferrable to how they support and work with their reports, especially neurodivergent reports. For example, using a template to guide conversation during one-on-one meetings, which helped both the neurodivergent supervisor and employee prepare in advance for the meeting and know what to expect throughout. As Nova detailed,

“I found a template for my meetings...it has sections and I give it to them ahead of time and it has like okay, give me three wins and three woes from the last month. So we do this monthly...it has a section for upcoming projects with due dates because that helps me help them keep track cuz I can't, I barely remember what I need to do myself. I can't remember what projects I give everyone else all the time...So it's helpful for me to pull this sheet...and then there's a section that asks what are your priorities for the month? And that helps me in particular with my newer neurodivergent staff.”

Such strategies represented different forms of embodied knowledge the participants were deploying in their library workplaces. Lastly, more than one neurodivergent supervisor in this study stressed the importance of advancing neurodivergent librarians into leadership roles because of the strengths they bring to leadership positions. They indicated that neurodivergent library leaders could offer new perspectives and innovative ideas for advancing the work of libraries and the profession itself.

*In case you're wondering what I was up to while writing this chapter, we have now reached the point where I began to struggle with medical issues. So not only was I facing the challenge of disentangling ideas that, in my networked thinking, are all tightly interwoven, but now I had to do so through the worst brain fog I have ever experienced (and I have multiple autoimmune conditions and fibromyalgia, so brain fog is kind of normal to me). Normally my brain would have been ping-ponging with a plenitude of connections among interviews, documentation, analysis, and theory. Now I found...well, nothing. I knew the connections were there, as though I could sense them in some corner of my mind, but I couldn't reach them. The moment I did, though, they were quickly gone again. Some days I would scroll through my chapter, unable to make sense of the words I'd written. Was it stress? Or anxiety? Or burnout? Or a new medical condition? Or the worsening of an old one? Or all of the above? No answers were apparent. Whatever it was, the act of writing began to feel like attempting to weave a tapestry while the yarn was dissolving in my hands. So, I went to the store and bought giant marker drawing pads, dragged out my markers in fun colors, and spent a lot of time sprawled out on the floor trying to drag my thoughts from my mind and onto paper where I might not lose them again so easily. I tried not to freak out about being 'behind' but to give myself the space to think and write as I could (with the always generous support of my advisor). Maybe every PhD student has a story about how hard their dissertation became to write, but I can't speak for them. I can only tell you my story, a story of entangled invisible disabilities that have impacted my entire PhD journey, and my life. **This** is what it means to be a neurodivergent researcher.*

RQ3: How do the norms and expectations of librarianship and library organizations impact the inclusion, exclusion, and marginalization of neurodivergent librarians?

Although the neurodivergent librarians in this study consistently emphasized how much they enjoyed being able to help others and see the impact of their efforts, they also acknowledged the impact of librarianship's service orientation. Neurodivergent librarian participants had to weigh the benefits of librarianship with the drawbacks of continually serving others. Often, they were doing so in a dysfunctional library organization where they might experience discrimination, bullying, and/or low morale. While the profession of librarianship devotes great care to the needs of patrons, there is little recognition of the needs of library workers themselves. Guiding professional documents emphasize the need for librarians to meet the needs of others without having needs of their own, and librarianship's criteria for competency and effectiveness as a librarian require emotional labor that can lead to burnout for all librarians. Yet for neurodivergent librarians, the cost of service is compounded by the toll of navigating access as a neurodivergent librarian in a normative workplace.

Normative Expectations in the Library Workplace

The majority of neurodivergent librarians in this study (30/50) emphasized the amount of effort they were contributing toward meeting normative expectations in their workplaces. In other words, within library workplaces, neurotypical ways of being dominate and are strongly associated with beliefs around 'professionalism' in libraries. These normative ways of being included beliefs around the need to make eye contact with co-workers or library patrons,

unspoken assumptions about the pace or timeline of library work, emphasis on socializing in the workplace, and demands for certain types of executive functioning. Meeting these normative expectations required neurodivergent librarian participants to perform as though they were neurotypical, an effort that was laborious and taxing. As Paul explained,

"It's like having two jobs, you know, on the one hand I have to do my research and teach and do all this stuff, but on the other hand, I have to learn the social norms, and be seen and heard in the right places and sort of put on the performance. I think that's, to put a point on it, it's that performative aspect that is just incredibly pointless and exhausting."

When neurodivergent librarian participants failed to perform in accordance with normative ways of being, they were critiqued or reprimanded. Gabi, for example, shared that *"people would say things to me like, why can't you make eye contact?"* Such colleagues' attitudes are reflective of the general lack of understanding of neurodiversity in library workplaces and extent to which neurotypical ways of being dominate work culture. These neurotypical expectations were also entangled with gender and race, which Shannon explained concisely: *"Professionalism is just code for don't upset the white guy."*

Neurodivergent supervisors in this study similarly experienced the impact of normative expectations. Brian, a neurodivergent supervisor, described the effort he put into meeting such expectations:

"I mean, I work all the time on making sure that I'm doing the right thing or saying the right thing, which is exhausting. It's what's expected of us in the world. It's actually

doubly what's expected of us because we're already functioning with a disability that people don't want to see."

Even some of the neurotypical librarians noted the ableism inherent in normative conceptions of professionalism. Jennifer, a neurotypical library supervisor, observed, *"I think that the skills that I talk about, the skills that people always try to pride librarians on, it sounds like it's very neurotypical behavior."*

In response to these normative workplace expectations, neurodivergent librarians in this study expressed a desire for workplaces to be more understanding and accepting of different ways of being. Lex, for example, wanted the opportunity to process communication, explaining:

"I think that sometimes things are a little faster paced than would be I'd prefer like meetings and such. I take, it takes me a minute to let things sit in and gel and that can mean that I'm tend to be kind of quiet and slow in meetings."

Paul pointed to the expectations around socializing in the workplace and voiced a desire for *"more consideration for things like...the sort of informal socializing that's I've sort of forced myself to go to, mixers and things like that with the staff, even though that's the single most uncomfortable thing for me to do."* Neurodivergent librarians in this study were pushing themselves to perform according to these normative ways of being, but doing so came with a toll and served to highlight the ways in which library workplaces excluded and marginalized neurodivergent librarians. For some, this effort was carried out in libraries with toxic organizational culture, where librarians experienced bullying and low morale. Furthermore, this harmful workplace culture reinforced self-blame, and the belief that it was the fault of the

neurodivergent librarian for not being able to adapt, rather than the workplace culture that was creating a harmful environment.

Weighing the Benefits and Costs of Service

The service nature of the profession, combined with historic underfunding and understaffing along with being a feminized field, often resulted in librarians being expected to serve others in a self-sacrificing manner. Librarians in this study described being overworked, expected to “wear too many hats,” and take on the work of colleagues who had left the library. Rose described her experience of being the sole librarian for a short period after other colleagues had left, explaining the impact of that on both herself and her incoming colleagues:

“I was working by myself as I was as the only librarian for a half a minute there. So in terms of like wearing multiple hats, it was like I was the only hat and it was like a patchwork quilt of hats that was supposed to be covered. And I want to make sure I bring it up in terms of my relationship with my coworkers as well because that certainly didn't help with the work trauma that I then wasn't able to be helpful to new humans because I was burned out and completely exhausted by how things were run before other humans even came to assist.”

Four participants shared that they were investigating other career options, and four participants reported experiencing autistic burnout. Lana shared that even though she enjoyed her job and had wonderful colleagues, she realized that, *“I do have moments where I go, can I do this for the rest of my life? I don't know. I don't know. And so, you know, I've started kind of potentially keeping an eye open for other jobs I could be interested in, but that's a big scary move for me.”*

Despite how scary that might be, Lana wondered if another job might be better for her in the long run. Brian also worried about the impact of his job, sharing that *“I go home and I crash out on my bed because I'm exhausted. And I can barely move. It takes all of my brain power to do this all damn day.”* Neurodivergent librarians cared about helping others and wanted to stay in the profession, but wondered if the cost of performing this service was too high.

Professional documents on library core values and competencies convey a strong message about the importance of service to libraries and librarianship. As a qualitative researcher, I tend to avoid counting things, yet I could not help but notice with curiosity the number of times that service or services were mentioned in these documents. To satisfy my curiosity, I discovered that those words are used 110 times across nine documents, most of which are 10 pages long or less. In this case, then, this frequent repetition serves to emphasize the importance and priority of service within librarianship. By contrast, the needs of librarians as the people who carry out all this service work are never mentioned. Some documents, such as the ACRL Standards for Libraries, conflate the library with the people who work in the library. Statements such as *“The library provides collections that incorporate resources in a variety of formats, accessible virtually and physically”* render invisible the people who do this work along with the extensive labor that goes into efforts like managing and maintaining a library collection (ACRL, 2006).

This emphasis on service is evident from the accreditation standards to the competencies for librarians. The ALA Accreditation Standards state that the primary purpose of the LIS curriculum is to provide for *“the study of theory, principles, practice, and legal and*

ethical issues and values necessary *for the provision of service*” (emphasis added). Service is also one of the Core Values of Librarianship, which stress the importance of providing “the highest level of service to all library users” (American Library Association, 2019). Other documents, like the ACRL Standards for Libraries and the RUSA Guidelines, similarly convey the significance of “excellent, user-centered service,” which is specifically named as the main goal of the RUSA Guidelines. The librarian, then, is situated as a service-provider whose labor is subsumed into “the library” as a public good. Research has demonstrated that librarians have taken up this service-orientation as essential to their professional identity, and may even be asked to provide library services on their own time (Hicks, 2014, 2016; McElroy, 2017). While this service-orientation may seem noble on its surface, it is also “weaponized” against library workers who are expected to be “passionate enough to serve without complaint” (Ettarh, 2018). Librarians are expected to endure a great deal, including abuse from patrons and low compensation, all in the name of service (Lieu et al., 2019; Silva & Galbraith, 2018).

Service itself is not the issue, then, but rather the extensive expectations that come along with the service-orientation and prioritize services over the needs of the librarians who provide those services. Libraries seemingly hold no responsibility to librarians or any other library workers, except to manage them as resources for the library. Library managers are expected to guide employees “to work in cooperation with others” and to “help individuals resolve conflict in a constructive manner” but no expectations around supporting employees are detailed in any of the documents (Core, 2020). The Core Leadership and Management Competencies only briefly mention the need for library leaders to use “strong communication

skills to encourage dedication to mutual accountability, investment in the team's goal and purpose, and support for success of the team and its members." Here library workers only appear to merit support when and if they are accountable for and invested in the purpose and success of the library writ large, and they are only acknowledged as members of a larger team and not as individuals with individual strengths and needs. One of the neurodivergent librarians, Rose, explained this thusly, "customer service was the bottom line, which meant ...the person giving the service is never the forefront of the idea."

Librarianship's guiding professional documents outline a multitude of responsibilities toward patrons but overlook librarians' responsibilities to one another in the workplace. This lack of responsibility for care within the library workplace results in the expectation that neurodivergent librarians navigate their own access and perform as neurotypical, despite the high emotional and physical cost that is associated with doing so. Combined with the impact of the service-orientation of libraries, the cost may be too high for neurodivergent librarians to avoid burnout and remain in the profession.

The Demand for a Hyperable Librarian

In addition to upholding normative expectations, many of the guiding professional documents of librarianship reflect a multitude of qualifications, abilities, and even behaviors that are expected of any professional librarian. Documents such as the ALA Core Competencies of Librarianship (ALACCL) mention that librarians are not expected to begin their careers with the entirety of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes represented within, yet the expectation is that future librarians will view the Core Competencies "as a list of goals that they should aim to

achieve through their LIS education and early years of on-the-job experience” (*ALA Core Competences of Librarianship*, 2013). In other words, all librarians should have achieved all of these “goals” or should have acquired many of these competencies prior to their first position and should acquire the rest within the first few years of working in librarianship. The ALACCL alone require a wide variety of knowledge, including ethics, information organization, the history of libraries, laws impacting libraries, the information lifecycle, and human resources practices; along with the skills and abilities that apply that knowledge, such as managing employees, budgeting, marketing, conducting assessments, and project management. Emily, a neurotypical librarian, confirmed the need in libraries for a wide variety of knowledge: *“I would say we do need to have a broad knowledge of a lot of things. We do everything.”* This need to know how to do and how to be everything takes a toll on neurodivergent librarians, as Maggie, a neurodivergent supervisor, explained: *“I just feel like I’m like a revolving door of like information and delegation...it’s so draining that it’s really hard to find time for the things I want to do or all the other things I have to do. And so it’s hard, but it’s just the relentless volume.”*

The RUSA Competencies similarly emphasize the extensive knowledge and skills required of librarians in order to carry out their work. While the RUSA Competencies are specific to those library workers who are involved with “providing reference and user services to patrons,” the same is not true of the ALACCL which expect *all* librarians to meet these criteria (RUSA, 2008). Requiring such extensive knowledge and skills of librarians reflects the oft-discussed “unicorn librarian” who must meet an extensive list of job requirements and be all things to their library (Guhde & Keith, 2018). In the language of critical disability theory, librarians must be hyperable,

meaning exceedingly abled in bodymind (Dolmage, 2017; M. Price, 2011). Librarians must know everything about libraries and librarianship and be ready to apply any aspect of that knowledge at a moment's notice. Yet that alone is also inadequate, for both the ALA Accreditation Standards and the RUSA Competencies stress innovation and the need for librarians to "demonstrate innovations in their programming, services, and resource selection and management." Librarians must go above and beyond to provide and implement innovative approaches to their work in libraries. So, too, are librarians responsible for their own continuing education under the guise of lifelong learning. The ALACCL state in the first paragraph of the document that "it is essential that library professionals working throughout their careers in school, academic, public, special, and governmental libraries be life-long learners to acquire specialized and advanced knowledge beyond those specified in this Core Competences document." In other words, despite the extensive knowledge and skills outlined in the ALACCL, librarians are expected to exceed those and must continually pursue further knowledge and skills, whether or not that is supported by their library workplace. Mary, a neurotypical supervisor, emphasized the need for librarians to constantly be learning on the job, sharing that "the only way that you're going to get better is just continually learn. A degree is nice, but really, a degree is just a stepping stone. You're going to be learning your entire life. And if you don't want that, don't come to a library." Yet too often the cost of lifelong learning falls to individual librarians, and although professional organizations offer some free webinars, the cost of professional development is often quite high, making lifelong learning unobtainable for many (Comanda et al., 2021). Additionally, professional development opportunities may not be

accessible for disabled librarians, creating additional barriers to this expectation of lifelong learning and further emphasizing the need to be a hyperable librarian.

Librarians are often expected to enter their roles fully formed and adapt to the organization without or with minimal onboarding. Such a lack of onboarding was described by Carmen, a neurodivergent librarian, who described how the lack of onboarding was compounded by a complete lack of preparation for a new librarian: *“they didn't even have an office for me when I got there. They put me in a library study room and they were like, okay, like you can work here for a while.”* Lex talked about how they had received some onboarding but that a lot of aspects of the position and the work *“fell through the cracks with onboarding because the people who used to do those things left or something.”* Kristin, a neurotypical librarian, shared that *“our onboarding process is not great for new employees. So that can lead to retention problems down the line. And I just recently asked about onboarding for new leaders in the library, and there's not really a program in place for that as well.”* Kristin's observation is indicative of a lack of adequate onboarding with libraries, as well as the failure of library organizations to prepare managers to take on supervisory roles. The majority of library supervisors (23 of 40) I spoke with confirmed that they had received no training as they moved into managerial roles. Cathy, a neurodivergent library supervisor described how much she had received: *“Nothing, nothing. You know, you're dropped in, you're in with the fishes.”* Another neurodivergent supervisor, Abby, described inquiring about managerial training, saying, *“So I remember specifically asking, Hey, is there a supervisor training? No, there was not <laugh>. So a lot of what I did learn was from my boss, but the sort of on the fly training, as needed, not all*

at once." Abby wanted adequate preparation for a new managerial role, but that proved challenging. As Abby explained further, *"I had tried to seek out webinars or trainings or whatever, but also, it's hard when you're actually trying to do the job and then you have to do this extra stuff as well. So it's like, when do you, where do you put this in?"* This lack of training was also true for people who moved into director roles, as Carmen explained, *"when I was interim director...I was supervising everyone in the library and the institution didn't give me any additional support for like, oh, well now you're supervising eight people instead of one person, here's X, Y, Z. Yeah, no."* Neurotypical librarians in this study also confirmed a lack of training for library managers. When asked if the library had provided any managerial training or experience, Jennifer replied, *"No management experience whatsoever. No formal training. I've never had formal training either. I'll say that. So everything I've learned has just been on the job, figuring it out as I go."* This experience was echoed by Holly, who responded similarly to this question about managerial training: *"Zero. It was very learn on the job."*

For the library supervisors in this study who had received some form of training, the training was often led by HR or an outside organization and was inadequate for library management roles. Rose described a consortium-led training program as *"very boring"* and *"very unhelpful,"* explaining that *"they spent a lot of time on covering your butt legally. And documenting if someone's misbehaving, right? It was very oriented to this idea of, how do you become a manager who can't get your company sued for discrimination."* Another neurodivergent library supervisor, Maggie, described the training program she participated in at her organization, explaining that *"it's just the really sweet HR guy, doing like Franklin Covey*

PowerPoints.” Only a few librarians received other forms of training, such as being sent to leadership training at programs like the Harvard Leadership Institute, or more direct forms of training, like shadowing and working alongside a branch manager. Many described taking up the work of learning management skills on their own, without support from their organization and without the time to do so. This placed the librarians in this study in a difficult position where instead of feeling prepared for their role they were, as Monica described, *“learning from mistakes.”* The work of librarianship demands that librarians are prepared for all roles, including supervisory and leadership roles, without preparing them adequately for any of that work. Librarians must instead be ready and able to learn on their own while carrying out the duties and responsibilities of their managerial role.

Furthermore, due to chronic understaffing and retention issues, librarians must also be prepared to take on the work of others who have left the library organization. Neurodivergent and neurotypical librarians alike reported significant issues with understaffing and retention (41/87), and the impact of this situation on library workers. Neurodivergent librarians like Theresa explained, *“We have jobs that we cannot do...I can't take a third or fourth job on my shoulders.”* Neurodivergent librarians in this study highlighted understaffing as a significant contributor to workplace stress, such as Arlene who acknowledged the impact of understaffing on all library workers, sharing,

“I know this is across the workforce. Everybody is understaffed. But I really wish places weren't having to, like, just having one person call out wouldn't bring everything

crashing down for the day... if everybody wasn't doing three people's jobs <laugh> I think that would benefit everyone."

Neurotypical librarians in this study described similar scenarios at their workplaces, as Victoria described, *"Right now, we're at a weird place because we're so short-staffed, and we are especially short-staffed in the areas that physically keep the library running, so it's people who are manning the service desks or keeping the mail running."* Shea emphasized the impact of understaffing, saying that:

"the librarians here are extremely overworked... we're really understaffed, and before the pandemic, we had almost three times that much of full-time staff. So it's a very - we don't get a lot of leisure time during the day. We're constantly, consistently working. And I find that a lot of the staff is unhappy psychologically."

Shea further explained that the impact of this understaffing required all the librarians to take on any and all library work. As Shea described, *"We're all tasked with learning how to code. We don't have a circulation librarian. We all do circ. No matter who - I do circ, every day, I do three hours of circ, even though I'm the assistant director. It's not a great environment right now."* This unwritten expectation that librarians be ready and able to take up extra work and sustain their organization with their own individual efforts also led to librarians being reluctant or unable to take sick days or vacation, because doing so might lead to additional work for their library colleagues or result in their branch closing for the day. Bodies and minds are not built to survive without rest, and yet the expectation is that librarians consistently perform at a high level with the ability to adapt to any work at a moment's notice and take up additional labor that they are

already prepared to do or will learn quickly on their own. In other words, librarianship demands a hyperable librarian and allows for no less.

Having worked at a library where a male colleague was allowed to send an email stating that he wasn't coming in and would need someone to cover his shift, while all the women were expected to find their own replacements to cover their sick days, I feel I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge here that this demand for hyperability is also entangled with gendered conceptions of care in a feminized profession, but you'll hear more about this soon. I also want to acknowledge that because of my own experiences as an academic librarian, I could feel the stress and exhaustion of the librarians who spoke about the impact of understaffing and retention issues. I could feel the tension creeping back into my own body, along with a fatigue with a profession that isn't protecting its workers, particularly those with marginalized identities. There are individuals who are making a difference, but when will this profession learn and choose to change?

The Cumulative Impact of Emotional Labor

The interviews confirmed that library work too often takes a lasting toll on neurodivergent librarians, similar to discussions in library literature on burnout and low morale in libraries (Corrado, 2022; Davis Kendrick, 2020; Geary & Hickey, 2020; K. D. Kendrick, 2023; D. L. Smith et al., 2020). Yet for the neurodivergent librarians in this study, the impact of lasting stress and burnout (as discussed above) combines with the impact of the emotional labor that is required of librarians. Emotional labor is “the idea that one must regulate their emotions in order to accomplish their job” and is especially prominent in service fields dominated by women, such as librarianship (Emmelhainz et al., 2017; Rodger & Erickson, 2021). Professional guiding documents in librarianship reflect a demand for emotional labor in library workplaces.

Drawing on the work of Emmelhainz et al. (2017), I identified emotional labor through language that emphasized approachability, readiness to serve, and ensuring the comfort of patrons. The RUSA Guidelines (2013 and 2023) emphasize the specific ways that librarians must behave and be perceived by and respond to others. Previous analysis of the RUSA Guidelines 2013 observed that “they over-articulate what the librarian should do, as though she cannot perform professional labor on her own terms” and they “imply that how she handles her job should be regularly scrutinized, regulated, and policed” (Emmelhainz et al., 2017, p. 40). The RUSA Guidelines 2013 mandated specific ways of being, such as maintaining eye contact and displaying a “supportive demeanor.” Similar to previous findings, my document analysis confirmed that these guidelines outlined “expectations to be approachable, receptive, polite, supportive, encouraging, and attuned to patrons” which “require the librarian to suppress her own emotions, needs, and evaluations of her environment, managing competing priorities with no evident strain or stress” (Emmelhainz et al., 2017, p. 37).

The updated 2023 version of the RUSA Guidelines demonstrates some improvement in this area, with less focus on some specific aspects of the librarian’s behavior, yet still requiring librarians to ensure the comfort of patrons and “set the tone for the entire communication process.” Librarians are expected to maintain approachability, visibility, and readiness to interact with patrons at any time. When approached by a patron, librarians should direct “their full attention to the person by putting aside all other activities and initiating eye contact, using welcoming body language, or offering a greeting.” The RUSA Guidelines 2023 also outline the expectation that librarians maintain “a high degree of nonjudgmental interest” when interacting

with patrons. The RUSA Guidelines 2023 may reflect language that was carefully chosen by the authors of this revision, yet the guidelines still ultimately reinforce the requirement that librarians conceal their own emotions while performing normative behaviors like maintaining eye contact. This expectation of emotional labor and normative behavior is not limited to the RUSA Guidelines alone because other documents, such as the ALACCL and the RUSA Competencies, include the RUSA Guidelines among their core competencies. The ALACCL also advise library leaders to be able to “manage their own and other people’s emotions” (*ALA Core Competences of Librarianship*, 2013). Seemingly, then, emotions are not allowed to be felt or experienced but instead must be “managed” at all times. By extension, then, emotional labor is a core competency of librarianship that requires librarians to also perform attention, support, and approachability in a normative manner. Together these documents reinforce gendered, ableist perceptions of service-oriented labor.

The demand for emotional labor was confirmed by neurotypical supervisors like Daryl, who explained that *“even if you're the best library employee in the world, you can't sit at the desk and not interact with people. And some of it is performative. You have to look like you're ready to interact with them as well.”* Lily, a neurotypical librarian, shared that *“one thing [that is valued at the library] is availability, being available at all times.”* Neurodivergent librarians in this study also stressed the need perform availability and approachability. Ren explained that *“at least in a reference librarian and those forward-facing people you've got to be able to have that open approachability and the, that will to talk <laugh>, the will to engage in conversation.”* Yet approachability and readiness to engage in conversation were not sufficient, as

neurodivergent participants also described the need to be emotionally responsive while taking on the emotional impact of patron interactions. Cathy described this effort in detail:

“You kind of have to be switched on, especially when I was in public libraries, you know, you're front facing, you're there. Since we are a hub for communities and as we all know just from the research and publications and everything that's come out more and more in the way of almost social work expectations of us. And that can be hard. For one, if you are higher on an emotional range, you know, you internalize some of the things that are going on, especially when you're working with patrons that are experiencing homelessness or something.”

For Cathy, as for other neurodivergent librarians in this study, emotional labor was also interwoven with workplace masking. Cathy explained further, *“I am ridiculously introverted. I know it kind of comes with the territory. I'm masking most of the time. If I'm out there, I wanna look like I'm social and approachable. It wears me out. You can only do it for so long before you need to take a break, come back from it, kind of get off the grid for a little bit. Cuz it's tiring to put that face on for hours and hours and hours.”* The demand for librarians to be constantly available and approachable proved harmful for neurodivergent librarians in this study who needed quiet time free from interruptions and distractions, and private space to lower the mask for a little while. Expectations around emotional labor were also entangled with gendered expectations of how to perform and demonstrate care for others, as detailed by Shannon:

“People want the warm and fuzzy all the time and ... I can be kind and caring without it being

like, 'Aw, baby, of course. You know, hun.' And this is like, I'm not performing that side of being a woman anymore."

Emotional labor was not only required for patron interactions, but also played a role in internal library interactions as well. Neurodivergent librarians in this study described expectations to be "nice" in the workplace, also known as 'library nice,' which can lead to low morale and/or leaving libraries (K. D. Kendrick, 2021b). Within the workplace, 'library nice' results in questions not being welcomed and conflict going unaddressed. The expectation to be nice was mentioned by several (4) neurodivergent librarians. For example, Miranda shared that her library director had established group norms for the library team, and as Miranda described, *"we were talking about refreshing the group norms we had established, and later we were coming back to make sure everyone still agreed on them. And like, one of the group norms was that everyone should be nice and not be sassy. And I'm like, define sassy."* At Miranda's workplace, niceness was explicitly named as an expectation for everyone on the team, without being clearly defined, while being sassy in any way was deemed unacceptable or unprofessional. Another neurodivergent librarian, Maggie, described a situation where there was some friction across the team that Maggie was working to address. Yet when a supervisor heard about this situation, as Maggie explained, *"she's like, well I just wanna make sure everyone's being nice and there's not friction between the units. And I was like, we've been so polite, but, there's me and a couple others, we are extremely straightforward. We are just having a conversation about the thing."* Maggie explained the impact of this conversation, saying, *"that meeting really bothered me and I just felt really chastised even though she didn't*

come out and put any blame. And just the notion that we don't want any friction. There's nothing inherently wrong with friction. Let's have some friction and fix the thing, instead hiding from it." Other neurodivergent librarians described similar situations with supervisors who were conflict-avoidant and wanted library workers to perform library nice, which in some cases resulted in a failure to address significant issues like bullying and microaggressions in the workplace. Demands from supervisors to perform library nice were also described as "tone policing," which impacted librarians of color in ways that were bound up with their racialized identities. Furthermore, this demand for library nice counteracted the efforts of neurodivergent librarians who were working to be more authentic to their own neurodivergent ways of being. Shannon addressed this impact, and its entanglement with gender, as she shared:

"With the childhood I had, I'm in the process of becoming a reformed people pleaser, you know? And so there is this pressure by especially other cis women to be the people pleaser and to care about people liking you. And like, I just, that's one thing that, I'm not putting back on the mask. I am not doing it anymore. I spent my entire life worrying about everybody else but me. I'm worrying about me now. I'm not gonna be a dick, a jerk. I'm not gonna be inappropriate in any way. I'm not a vengeful person. I'm not a manipulative person. But I'm not gonna run you down if, you know, I sense something's off. Like, you have to meet me halfway as adults and professionals."

For neurodivergent librarians, many of whom were already working hard to conform to normative workplaces, emotional labor exacted an additional toll and reinforced white, feminized, neurotypical ways of being.

RQ4: How might neurotypical supervisors and employees adjust or alter their workplace environment and/or practices to increase libraries' capacity to recruit, onboard, retain, and advance neurodivergent librarians?

The librarians who participated in this research study believe that their peers are well-intentioned, but workplaces do not become inclusive on good intentions alone. Actions are required to counter the current exclusion of neurodivergent librarians in their workplaces. While neurodivergent librarians ultimately desired a major shift in how libraries conceive of neurodivergence, they also highlighted the importance of practices that could help libraries work toward that change and the normalization of different ways of being. Enacting neuroinclusive practices is not simply a matter of following a checklist, however, and requires collective work to develop, maintain, and continually adjust access in library workplaces, as each person's needs will vary. Neurodivergent librarians particularly emphasized the need to normalize and support workplace adjustments (including but not limited to formal and informal accommodations), for neurotypical library workers to improve their understanding of neurodiversity, and for all library workers to contribute to an organizational culture of access and inclusion.

Normalizing and Supporting Workplace Adjustments Without Disclosure

The neurodivergent librarians in this study reported encountering significant barriers to accommodations, as discussed previously in this chapter. To address these barriers, the participants expressed a desire for more support and advocacy for accommodations, along with

the normalization of accommodations as one aspect of negotiating access in library workplaces. Disclosure alone was an inappropriate pathway to workplace access, because discussions with neurodivergent librarians about if and when they disclose their neurodivergence revealed complexities around disclosure in the library workplace. While some librarians openly disclosed to anyone (10/50), others only disclosed to a trusted (often also neurodivergent) library colleague (5/50) or a supervisor (14/50) who had already demonstrated their capacity to be understanding and empathic of differences. Participants also discussed alternatives to disclosure, such as asking for certain things without specifically citing their neurodivergent identity. As an example, Miranda explained,

“I think I might go as far as telling my boss, like, when you gimme something to do, you better give me a deadline and follow up with me because otherwise I'm not gonna get it done. So, there might be some upward managing my manager that happens. But that's maybe as far as I'm comfortable going right now.”

Disclosure was especially complicated for participants with multiple forms of neurodivergence and/or co-occurring conditions. These librarians shared how they might reveal some aspects of their identity or certain conditions while carefully avoiding mentioning others. As Cora shared,

“I've kind of taken an approach of like, there are some things I'll disclose to people and some things like other parts of my identity that I won't...I feel like I have to be judicious about who I disclose to and the extent to which I do.”

Additionally, disclosure wasn't a one-time event, but an ongoing act that presented another draining aspect of being neurodivergent. Wren summed up this experience: *“I wish that, this is*

pie in the sky, but I wish you could just be who you are without having to necessarily disclose, regardless of what your identity is, when you have a concealed identity, having to come out over and over and over again is exhausting.”

To reduce the anxiety and difficulty around accommodations, then, library organizations need to take active steps to support and normalize discussions around access in the workplace, for all library workers, along with following through on access requests, such as requesting communication in a certain format, or needing a quiet space for recovery time. Even signaling support for accommodations makes a difference, as noted by Ren: *“My director and my other faculty members have said, you're more than welcome to ask for accommodations. They even volunteered that information for me and I have told them I appreciated that. I just haven't felt the need because everyone is so understanding and accommodating.”* Abby shared that after she disclosed her ADHD, her supervisor *“without me having to ask, she helped me out with some accommodations and things, advocating for that,”* and Abby highly valued this support that was immediately provided as though it were normal, and not only available upon request. Kelsey also discussed normalizing workplace adjustments, suggesting that questions about what employees needed could be included in an onboarding survey or process, such as *“what would it take to make your office space comfortable?”* As Kelsey further explained, this approach *“doesn't require you to disclose or to have any of those conversations. You know, the choice is still up to you then.”* The ability to choose when and how to disclose, and to have workplace access disentangled from disclosure, was cited by neurodivergent librarians in this study as an important step toward improving workplace access.

Although, the neurotypical librarians in this study expressed a desire to support their neurodivergent library colleagues, many assumed that disclosure was the pathway to people receiving the workplace adjustments they needed, even as they simultaneously acknowledged some of the difficulties around disclosure. As Rachel, a neurotypical supervisor, explained, *“I think a lot of people-- there's sort of a fear where you're a little bit afraid of disclosing those disabilities to your workplace for fear of maybe they don't want me at this position. However, those same things could help with accommodations.”* Another neurotypical supervisor, Hazel, expressed a desire for disclosure as a pathway to providing support, sharing, *“I know I personally have felt frustration at not knowing how to deal with a certain situation because I didn't know what I was dealing with, didn't know how to recognize it, also didn't know should I go to HR? Should I leave HR out of this?”* Mary was one of the few neurotypical librarians who described a different process, where a supervisor would ask, *“What can we do to help you?”* Mary continued, *“It needs to be, ‘What do we need to do? What kind of support? What kind of training? What kind of assistance can we get you?’”* Bridget also took a different approach with her direct reports, even though she worked at a library organization that had strict rules around medical accommodations. As Bridget described,

“I've more or less adopted a policy of, ‘I'm not going to ask. You don't tell me.’ And so as just an example, something comes up. They need to request to work from home for a day. This is perfectly within policy. It's perfectly fine. It's up to the discretion of the supervisor. And so I can say yes because that is all the information that I need.”

In doing so, Bridget was normalizing workplace adjustments, such as the need to work from home, while avoiding the requirement to disclose a specific condition. As Bridget summed up, *“I just try to sort of walk that line to be as flexible as I can be within the confines of the policies that I'm aware of.”* In this way, individual supervisors could use the power of their role to improve and normalize workplace access for everyone, even within library organizations that held strictly medicalized understandings of and processes for workplace accommodations.

Demonstrating Understanding of and Compassion Toward Different Ways of Being

In addition to desiring the normalization of different access needs in the workplace, neurodivergent librarians in this study highlighted the importance of understanding and compassion toward different ways of being. Cora, for example, expressed that *“more awareness of neurodivergence as a thing that exists in the world would be awesome too. And what it means to be autistic, to have ADHD, what does that mean for an individual? And of course, knowing that it's also a very individualistic experience.”* Paul expressed a similar desire, saying, *“I would love for all my coworkers for the whole library, the whole university, even just to, to have a lot more education about what autism actually is.”*

Some neurodivergent participants were willing to help with that education, even as they recognized that this work should not be their responsibility. Wren, for example, expressed a desire for colleagues to *“spend like 24 hours with their brain functioning how mine does because there's no other way for them to understand deeply like what's going on, like why I'm spinning in circles in my office because my brain can't figure out what task to do.”* In recognition of the absence of that possibility, Wren said, *“I wish I could hand them a stack of literature and be like,*

Hey, here's what I'm dealing with. Here's what I wish that you would know...like assigned readings just for a week.” Wren added, “And that they wouldn't take that wrong cuz I know that they probably would... that's the point of the readings, is so that you know that I'm not meaning for you to take this the wrong way.” Letitia expressed a similar desire for improved understanding of neurodiversity, stressing that “the most important thing is making institutional changes to understanding what neurodivergence is. It's gonna be a tough one for sure. But yeah, that's my biggest one is making sure everyone knows that it exists and it's beyond just saying, oh yeah, there's an invisible disability and that's it. <Laugh>.” For Letitia, this was the most important takeaway from our entire interview discussion.

*Letitia and I shared a moment of laughter here, not in a funny, haha, way, but instead in shared understanding that came from lived experience, of knowing all too well what “that’s it” looked like and having experienced it directly. A knowing laugh that “that’s it” resulted in the work of access and inclusion falling back to us as individuals, while any understanding remained superficial at best. When do we get to move past neuroinclusion 101? I worry that my work will contribute to more “that’s it” moments, even as I attempt to encouragingly push neurotypicals to learn more and act on that learning. How do we move past that? I’m tired of “that’s it,” and I know the fellow neurodivergent librarians I spoke with are, too. That should **not** be it.*

Some of the neurodivergent librarians in this study (15/50) similarly stressed a need for neurotypical colleagues to educate themselves, such as through staff training or reading groups. Kelsey observed that “*I do think that there is certainly space for some sort of maybe formal training.*” Nova also emphasized that neurotypical people “*need to educate themselves and*

make changes if necessary,” thus pointing out that learning should lead to tangible actions and lasting changes.

Neurotypical librarians in this study (32/37) also discussed their need to learn more, particularly focusing on employee training as a possibility. They acknowledged their lack of training, and saw professional development as a potential pathway to learning how to take action and create changes in the library workplace. Emily shared, *“Certainly, we've had no training. There hasn't been anything specifically mentioned about neurodivergent staff.”* Lily expressed a desire for education, explaining, *“I think if I had more experience and more training in how to interact with people of varying neurodivergence would be incredibly helpful...I think that's something that we need. That's crucial.”* Yet these neurotypical participants weren't sure how to seek out or provide such training. On acknowledging a lack of training, Olivia reflected, *“this means that I probably should do that, right?”* A few neurotypical librarians shared that they had reached out to local or campus partners for training, although those did not always meet the specific needs of the library. Predominantly, however, neurotypical librarians reported a complete absence of education on neurodiversity in the workplace. Some wanted managerial focused training, while others wanted an introduction to neurodiversity and how it might present in the workplace setting. Violet suggested that *“there needs to be a lot more resources available to neurotypical library workers about what it's like to be neurodivergent, how that plays out for different individuals. I think that kind of insight will be helpful.”* Violet especially desired education that would support *“an empathetic response to understanding what somebody else's reality is like,”* acknowledging that *“my impression is my team, by and large,*

doesn't have that sense of how to empathize with somebody who is neurodivergent." As neurodiversity employment research indicates, having an understanding and supportive team (including colleagues and managers) improves the workplace experiences of neurodivergent employees (Longmire & Taylor, 2022). The same holds true for neurodivergent librarians, yet the library organizations represented in this study are largely lacking acceptance of and compassion toward different ways of being. Building that understanding is an essential step toward addressing workplace barriers and changing library workplaces to be more neuroinclusive.

Creating a Culture of Access and Accountability

The majority (34/50) of neurodivergent librarians in this study also highlighted the need for changes in organizational culture to be more welcoming of differences and different ways of working. Doing so would ideally minimize the need for masking and the cost associated with constantly "performing" in the workplace. Finn addressed this desire for a cultural shift, sharing:

"I'm sure that plenty of organizations will point at their formal policies and like, we have an anti-harassment policy, we have an anti-bullying policy. What more do you want? And it's like, well, I'd like your culture to shift then so that that instead of this, so that people are more willing to go, huh, maybe I've got somebody with a brain that works differently than mine rather than, this person is not cut out for this work because they seem to, you know, because they keep doing rude or socially awkward things."

Kit similarly expressed a desire for *"an environment that recognizes that people's needs are completely different."* Kit additionally emphasized the need to *"meet folks where they are...So I think first and foremost just absolving us of all, you know, the responsibility of some normalcy."*

There isn't a normal." This idea of altering the organizational culture and reducing normativity in the workplace was emphasized throughout the interviews, by librarians and supervisors alike. Some neurodivergent supervisors and directors were drawing on their own lived experience to alter their organization's culture. Carmen, a neurodivergent library director, shared their attempts to foster an organizational culture where *"you don't have to fake it, like I don't know, I wanted there to be kind of more authenticity about like, we're all humans and we all deal with different things, so let's just like be okay with that, I guess."*

The neurodivergent librarians in this study also detailed specific aspects of a cultural shift. Betty, for example, discussed the need for *"normalizing taking a sick time for a mental health day if you need to, getting overwhelmed or whatever. Just normalizing that. You can say, I am really overwhelmed, or I'm really overstimulated right now. I need to walk away for five minutes. And not being penalized for that."* Other aspects of an inclusive organizational culture included addressing the barriers and enacting the enablers previously discussed. This desire for an inclusive organizational culture did not exclude the need for individualized adjustments, however. Miranda explained that a universal approach could only go so far: *"I think there's an aspect of specialization that something like a checklist can't get to."* The desire expressed by neurodivergent librarians and supervisors in this study, then, was for an inclusive culture of access where individualized adjustments were normalized and accepted as part of working in an organization.

Notably, the neurotypical librarians in this study did not speak to this need for a cultural shift, instead tending to focus on what they might do differently for individuals in their

workplace. Mia, a neurotypical supervisor, was a notable exception. Mia emphasized the need for such shifts in libraries and librarianship, saying:

“I mean, it's the same-- that we think about when we're recruiting and retaining diverse staff and librarians, right? We recognize that we can't assimilate into this traditionally white female, white male-led organization, right? Of course, we need to make cultural changes and organizational changes in how people feel like they belong, and becoming inclusive. And so the same needs to be said and done for neurodivergent folks too.”

As Mia observed, cultural changes are necessary for the inclusion and access of library workers with any marginalized identities, not only neurodiversity, but also including racial and ethnic identities, gender identities, sexual identities. This was the shift that the neurodivergent librarians in this study desired overwhelmingly: an organizational culture where differences were normalized, anticipated, and navigated with care.

Conclusion

The data analysis for this study, including interviews with neurodivergent librarians and supervisors, interviews with neurotypical librarians and supervisors, and a document analysis of guiding professional documents, revealed significant barriers for neurodivergent library workers. The neurodivergent librarians in this study discussed the variety of challenges they encountered in their workplaces, from unclear expectations to bearing the burden of educating colleagues and adapting to an ableist and exclusive workplace environment where employers lacked knowledge of neurodiversity and failed to support the needs of neurodivergent librarians. They

also highlighted aspects of their workplaces that supported their needs, such as hybrid or remote work, a flexible work schedule, a private workspace, and having a neurodivergent supervisor. The majority of the librarians were still exploring their own neurodivergence, working to unlearn harmful attitudes, and still striving to understand their own needs and authentic ways of being in the world. Neurodivergent supervisors emphasized the strengths they brought to library leadership, especially their dedication to improving their workplaces and the profession. Significantly, neurodivergent librarians desired a more inclusive culture in their workplaces, while most neurotypical librarians were focused on making individual adjustments without the same attention to the larger issue of organizational culture. Additionally, guiding professional documents emphasized the importance of librarians serving others while having minimal needs of their own. Thus, the profession of librarianship demands emotional labor and reinforces white, feminized, neurotypical ways of being.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

This study revealed that neurodivergent librarians encounter a number of challenges presented by their workplaces, but also employ their own learned expertise in navigating such challenges to improve their workplace experience. Yet findings from this study also indicated that doing so comes with a cost that is added to the burden associated with the strong service-orientation of library work. In other words, the work of making library workplaces accessible and inclusive often falls to the individual because library work environments are designed and maintained in ways that exclude neurodivergent librarians. Instead, libraries need to create organizations that aren't only serving patrons but are also enacting critical access and collective care within the workplace, thus honoring the core values of librarianship. As library workers are increasingly asked to defend the existence of libraries and the work of librarianship, addressing care injustice is vital so library work remains sustainable without further cost to neurodivergent librarians, and to everyone else in this field.

In this chapter, I will elaborate on the intellectual and practical contributions of this work, while interweaving them with the significant themes that emerged during analysis. This study offers multiple contributions that are theoretical, methodological, and practical in nature. These contributions are relevant to LIS scholarship, neurodiversity employment research, and critical disability theory, while also adding to the knowledge and practices of library organizations. Throughout this chapter, I will also highlight the practical contributions for library

organizations and librarianship as a profession as they strive to improve access for neurodivergent library workers.

This chapter is organized by theme and works from the individual outward to the organization and the profession of librarianship. As I discuss these key themes, I contextualize them through the lens of critical disability theory, which draws attention to the societal norms, assumptions, structures, and practices that presume a normate bodymind to the exclusion of other ways of being. I also highlight the implications of this work, how it builds on or challenges existing research, and the practical takeaways for libraries and librarianship. The five key themes include:

1. the influence of individual differences on workplace experiences,
2. the embodied knowledge of neurodivergent librarians,
3. the costs of navigating access individually,
4. neurodivergent supervisors leading organizational change, and
5. access as a value.

Each section of the chapter begins with a quote from a participant, which is an intentional act of centering neurodivergence. The eight principles for centering neurodivergence in research, outlined previously in Chapter 2, focus on meaningful research participation of neurodivergent people while sustaining neurodivergent researchers amidst the ableism of academia. These principles extend the disability studies methodology of centering disability to address the specific needs and circumstances of being a neurodivergent researcher, especially one who is involved with neurodiversity research. Thus, as in previous chapters, I continue to

reflect on my experiences with doing this work as a neurodivergent researcher. Following the discussion of the five significant themes from this study, I will provide a brief restatement of the contributions of this work, the limitations of this study, and opportunities for further research.

As I was writing this chapter, I was also navigating new health issues that intensified my brain fog, fatigue, and chronic pain. This chapter felt like it required a process of sense-making, but was I making sense? I wasn't sure. I drew charts, mind maps, and outlines and spent a lot of time on the floor with paper around me as though I were a detective in a murder-mystery film. If I'd had space for a bulletin board, I would have become a meme. Doing this work helped me organize my thoughts at times, but the actual words for this chapter came slowly, fitfully, as though I were drawing them from a deep well with a rusty mechanism. Some days the mechanism refused to move at all, no matter how hard I pushed. Sometimes overwhelm can cause me to experience difficulties with putting my thoughts into words, but this was no time for that to happen! I had a dissertation to finish, after all. Yet beating myself up about that certainly wasn't helping either. So I wrote whatever I could whenever I could, through the brain fog, dizziness, and pain. I told myself this is what it means to be a disabled and neurodivergent researcher: it means pushing and pushing myself even when I don't want to or cannot. I know that's the voice of academic ableism and not a reflection of what I want for anyone else, or myself. I want there to be space to be neurodivergent without feeling an unexpressed need to act as though I'm something else, but I guess that belief is part of what this chapter and this study are all about.

Theme 1: Individual differences influence the experience of workplace barriers and needs

As outlined in Chapter 2, the conceptual framework for this study builds on the Organizational Interventions Mitigating Individual Barriers (OIMIB) framework, which itself draws on the Individual Differences Theory of Gender and IT (IDTGIT) to highlight the influence

of individual differences on the ways that a person is present in and understands their work and workplace. In IDGIT, individual differences serve to illuminate factors that enable some marginalized people to succeed in the workplace while others do not. OIMIB builds on IDGIT and contends that individual differences influence the way that neurodivergent employees experience workplace barriers and opportunities for success. Both OIMIB and IDTGIT were developed for the IT profession, so for this study I built on OIMIB to further develop this framework for libraries. This modification of OIMIB, which I am calling OIMIB for Libraries (OIMIB-L), acknowledges the context of library workplaces and names the lived knowledge and expertise that neurodivergent employees enact and embody in their workplaces. As in OIMIB, OIMIB-L retains a focus on the individual differences theory to examine differences among neurodivergent librarians, including gender identity, racial and ethnic identity, class, previous employment experiences, and other significant aspects of a person's background, that influence their workplaces experiences. In this section, I explore some of the individual differences that played a significant role in the workplace experiences of neurodivergent librarians I interviewed.

This study revealed that in library organizations, late identification of neurodivergence, a history of trauma, gender-diversity, and racial and ethnic identity are significant aspects of individual differences that compound the experience of workplace barriers. Late identification of neurodivergence impacts librarians' ability to understand their authentic ways of being and their workplace needs. A history of trauma influences how neurodivergent librarians understand themselves and navigate triggers in their workplace. Librarians with multiple intersectional identities, including gender, racial, and ethnic identity, also encounter multiple

forms of oppression and discrimination in their workplaces. Thus, these individual differences can compound the barriers that neurodivergent librarians encounter in the workplace.

Late Identification of Neurodivergence

Late identification of neurodivergence resulted in participants learning new ways of understanding themselves while also not necessarily being able to identify what they needed in the workplace and why.

Sydney: "I feel like one of the things that's a little frustrating about not getting diagnosed until adulthood is that you just like, feel like you have to catch up with so much stuff."

An overwhelming majority (43/50) of the neurodivergent librarians who participated in this research had identified their neurodivergence as an adult, often later in life after masking for decades. As a result, these librarians were engaged in a complicated process of learning to understand themselves through a new lens, while trying to learn to unmask, reduce harmful attitudes and behaviors toward themselves, and recognize and support their own needs. An overall lack of access to adult diagnosis resulted in individualized efforts to learn and adjust to this new way of understanding themselves and their needs. In some cases, people in their personal circles were not supportive or accepting of this new lens, which created additional tensions and anxiety for the librarian participants as they worked to learn and discover what it meant to be authentic to themselves.

The findings from this study confirmed what the literature has demonstrated, which is that for those who do not identify their neurodivergence until adulthood, the negative consequences are high, including depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and other factors that contribute to a reduced quality of life (Holthe & Langvik, 2017; Leedham et al., 2020; Lupindo et al., 2023; Seers & Hogg, 2021). Combined with the high stigma of autism and ADHD, a later identification of neurodivergence may also lead to internalized stigma, shame, and negative self-image (Holthe & Langvik, 2017; Huang et al., 2023; A. Pearson & Rose, 2021). The interviews also revealed new dimensions to the literature in that an adult diagnosis or identification also results in missing out on opportunities to understand oneself and learn to identify one's own needs, potentially leading to a feeling of "needing to catch up" as expressed by Sydney above. Research has only recently begun to investigate the impact of adult diagnosis, however, resulting in limited understanding of the impact of a late diagnosis on employment experiences. In ableist workplaces dominated by neuronormativity, neurodivergent librarians don't necessarily know what will help improve their work experiences because they have only recently learned about their own neurodivergence and are still navigating what that means for their identity, their needs, and their ways of being in the world.

Yet late identification of neurodivergence is not limited to negative consequences, but can simultaneously result in new and improved understanding and acceptance of oneself. People who have identified their neurodivergence as adults engage in processes of acceptance as they reexamine their past experiences and develop new understandings of them through the lens of neurodiversity (Leedham et al., 2020; Stagg & Belcher, 2019). As part of this process of

unlearning negative perceptions of and attitudes toward themselves, they may also claim their neurodivergent identity as an intentional act of resistance to stigma and ableism (Botha et al., 2020). As outlined in Chapter 4, many of the neurodivergent librarians who participated in this study described a similar process of reexamining their past experiences and trying to develop a more positive understanding of themselves. This process was complicated, however, and could be hindered by lack of access to an official diagnosis, which left some of them wondering if they had come to an authentic understanding of their neurodivergence.

Participants revealed that as they engaged in processes of unlearning masking behaviors and working to identify their own workplace needs, they may not have access to diagnostic providers, because most practitioners are only trained to diagnose children and young adults. For example, participants reported waiting a year or more to obtain a diagnosis, or having to drive across the state because of limited access to trained professionals. Yet formal accommodations processes would require neurodivergent librarians to provide both an official diagnosis and specific requests for workplace adjustments to the provider. For the librarians who participated in this study, these documentation requirements create significant barriers to obtaining official workplaces accommodations. Additionally, the high rate of adult identification of neurodivergence in this study suggests that other librarians may be neurodivergent without having yet identified as such. Therefore, accommodation processes alone are insufficient for improving access to support, retain, and advance neurodivergent librarians, and ***library organizations need to look to other methods beyond ADA accommodations to instead focus on improving access through cultural shifts and inclusive practices.***

This study affirms research on the complexity of adult diagnosis, while highlighting how a late diagnosis or identification of neurodivergence interacts with workplace barriers like the challenges of the formal accommodations process. While research has begun to examine the experience of late diagnosis (Attoe & Climie, 2023; Leedham et al., 2020), neurodiversity employment research has largely focused on employees with an official diagnosis, thus overlooking how a late diagnosis or identification of neurodivergence influences the experience of workplace barriers.

History of Trauma

A history of trauma leads neurodivergent librarians to fear discrimination and be ashamed of who they were – feelings that could easily be retriggered in an ableist work environment.

Mitch: “It always comes back to that the processing, the trauma of being autistic and late diagnosis will never end...I think that that's something that perhaps a lot of other late diagnosed adult autistic adults can relate to is that like we feel like we're being like re-traumatized every time somebody higher up treats us like a child, you know? So, and a lot of the traits that we show are considered like childlike, which is unfair, you know?”

An additional issue for the librarians who participated in this study was a history of trauma, such as bullying at school or work, or other forms of interpersonal violence. This trauma could be triggered by negative attitudes from others in the workplace, discrimination, or

other forms of negative work experiences. Because these librarians had been made to feel as though they were “weird” outsiders, their traumatic experiences had also become entangled with shame and internalized stigma. In other words, they had become ashamed of their authentic ways of being in the world and had come to believe that, as others indicated previously, there was indeed “something wrong” with them in some way. These experiences align with existing research demonstrating that neurodivergent people report high rates of childhood bullying, interpersonal violence, and workplace bullying (Fox, 2024; Mellifont, 2020; A. Pearson, Rees, et al., 2022; A. Pearson, Rose, et al., 2022). The participants who had internalized negative narratives about themselves also discussed the pressure they felt to conceal their neurodivergent ways of being through masking. In this manner, the interviews with neurodivergent librarians further emphasized research into the impact of trauma experienced by autistic people, which demonstrates that “bullying, teasing, and social and societal messaging that stigmatizes autistic traits and autism may create an environment for many autistic people in which hiding a key part of themselves becomes a learned response” (J. A. Evans et al., 2023, p. 10). For the participants in this study, their trauma complicated the process of identifying their workplace needs, because triggers could occur unexpectedly at any moment in the workday, as Mitch’s quote above indicates.

As noted in Chapter 2, the librarians who participated in this study reported experiencing anxiety and depression at high rates – 44/50 (89%) and 35/50 (69%) respectively, rates that are significantly higher than in the general population. Similarly, they also reported higher rates of PTSD (17/50, 33%), demonstrating that neurodivergent librarians are impacted

by co-occurring conditions which can result from their traumatic experiences. Research similarly demonstrates higher rates of trauma and PTSD among neurodivergent people (Peleikis et al., 2022; Rumball et al., 2021). Currently, few studies examine the role of trauma in neurodiversity employment experiences, but those that do recognize many neurodivergent people have a history of trauma, and related co-occurring conditions, and contend that workplaces must adopt trauma-informed workplace practices (Raymaker et al., 2022). This study builds on OIMIB's focus on individual differences to demonstrate that some significant life experiences, such as trauma, can play a crucial role in workplace experiences and the ability to succeed. Thus, approaches to improving access and inclusion that fail to consider how this history of trauma will prove inadequate for addressing the needs of many neurodivergent librarians.

Library organizations need to adopt trauma-informed culture and practices because neurodivergent librarians have experienced traumas that can be triggered in ways that impact their well-being and success in the workplace.

This study further emphasized research into the trauma experiences of neurodivergent people, which highlights both a high occurrence of trauma and a learned response to trauma resulting in masking (Fox, 2024; A. Pearson, Rees, et al., 2022). Furthermore, this study highlights the significance of trauma in the workplace for neurodivergent employees, which is an aspect of neurodiversity employment that has been briefly mentioned (e.g. Raymaker et al., 2022), but not explored further. The interviews thus further illuminate current understandings of the impact of trauma on workplace experiences by emphasizing the impact of trauma triggers in the workplace and the need for trauma-informed approaches.

Gendered Conceptions of Neurodivergent Librarians

In the feminized profession of librarianship, neurodivergent librarians encounter not only gendered conceptions of care work but also gendered conceptions of neurodivergence, which result in expectations for gender performance and disbelief or misconceptions of neurodivergence

Arlene: "I think the predominance of, I don't know, I think a certain kind of mindset about female dominated workplaces tends to hold true. And I think it tends to make things difficult for a lot of us, especially those of us who aren't quite so good at performing femininity...it seems like women of an older generation have tended to get to higher positions in the workplace by navigating the workplace as women in a man's world. It's kind of, you know, you can't really beat them, you gotta play the same game kind of thing."

Librarianship is a field predominated by white women, as indicated by ALA membership surveys and demographic studies of the profession (ALA Office for Research and Statistics, 2012; "US Library Survey 2022," 2023). Thus far, neurodiversity employment research has largely focused on IT fields, where autism and then neurodiversity employment hiring programs were developed to bring new talent into the workforce, with the goal of increasing productivity and ultimately the profit of the organization. Yet research and demographic data on gender in IT fields demonstrates that IT remains a male-dominated field despite years of attention to gender in both IT education and employment (Annabi, 2018; Annabi & Lebovitz, 2018; National Center for Women & Information Technology, 2024; E. M. Trauth et al., 2009). This study, however,

focuses on a feminized profession dominated by gendered conceptions of service and care work, where the focus of the organization is not profit but rather serving the community. In this service-oriented profession, then, neurodivergent librarians encounter gendered expectations of what it means to be a librarian in a feminized profession, while also encountering gendered conceptions of neurodivergence.

Historically, research on autism and ADHD centered on boys, and particularly on middle-class white boys, as exemplified by the research of Leo Kanner but also in contemporary attempts to define a “female phenotype” and stereotypes of an inattentive or hyperactive boy (Jack, 2014; Yergeau, 2018). Such male-dominated conceptions of neurodivergence result in the underdiagnosis or misdiagnosis of autistic and ADHD women, and at higher rates for those with racialized identities (Attoe & Climie, 2023; Gilyard, 2023; Holthe & Langvik, 2017; Leedham et al., 2020). Yet research also demonstrates that neurodivergent people identify as gender-diverse at higher rates than the general population, signifying a potential misfit between the gendered perceptions of neurodiversity and the reality (Goetz & Adams, 2022; Gratton et al., 2023).

Recent research suggests that not only do women and gender-diverse people face additional barriers to diagnosis and identification, but their neurodivergent ways of being are likely to be treated as personal problems or quiriness, instead of being recognized as aspects of their neurodivergence (Tien et al., 2025). This misrecognition or dismissal of their neurodivergence led woman and people assigned female at birth to internalize harmful narratives about their differences, leading to “detrimental social outcomes and poor self-worth” as they continually encountered misunderstanding and negative attitudes toward their

authentic self (Tien et al., 2025, p. 8). Societal expectations of women and people socialized as female can lead to the suppression of their neurodivergent ways of being, such as sensory differences, whereas the expression of the same difference in men would be recognized as a potential sign of neurodivergence. Thus, the neurodivergence of men is more likely to be met with belief, in part because “society at large affords males the opportunity to live without constraints or expectation, often resulting in early recognition of differences, diagnosis, and appropriate support” (Tien et al., 2025, p. 9). Such gendered societal expectations and stereotypes of how neurodivergence presents outwardly are also present in workplaces and influence the recognition and misrecognition of neurodivergence in an employment context.

In libraries, where the service-orientation of work demands care work and emotional labor from librarians for the benefit of others, gendered stereotypes influence how neurodivergence is recognized, misunderstood, or met with disbelief, as was commonly experienced by the participants in this study. The gender-diverse neurodivergent librarians who participated in this study also reported encountering microaggressions and discrimination related to their gender identity, such as colleagues refusing to use the correct pronouns or continually misgendering people. As Arlene observed in the quote above, librarians encounter expectations to perform gender, or feminized care more specifically, in their workplace. Research suggests that this additional burden to conform to narrow conceptions of gender may reinforce the need to mask in the workplace, while also contributing to negative health outcomes and poor well-being (Tien et al., 2025).

This study builds on the literature examining gendered conceptions of neurodiversity, while further demonstrating that women and gender-diverse neurodivergent librarians are expected to perform both neuronormativity and gendered care while their neurodivergence is misunderstood or not believed. Yet vocational awe, the idea that libraries as a public good are sacred and above critique, along with the demand for 'library nice' further pressures neurodivergent librarians to assimilate instead of questioning the exclusionary aspects of their workplace (Ettarh, 2018; K. D. Kendrick, 2021b). ***To improve workplace access for neurodivergent librarians, then, library organizations must also attend to the gendered expectations of care within the profession of librarianship to improve workplace access for neurodivergent librarians.***

Previous work has primarily examined neurodiversity employment in IT fields, so this work is the first extensive study in a profession outside of the IT context. Furthermore, because librarianship is a feminized profession, this is the first study to examine the experiences of neurodivergent workers within a feminized care profession. Additionally, this work builds on previous research to highlight the complex interplay of gender identity, the dismissal of neurodivergence in anyone other than men, and the expectation for feminized care in library workplaces.

The Intersections of Racial Identity and Neurodivergence

Librarianship is a predominantly white profession, grounded in white supremacy culture, and thus exposes neurodivergent librarians with intersectional identities to multiple forms of oppression.

Nova: "I feel like me being black, me being part of the LGBTQIA and me being now neurodivergent, like all of those things have had an effect on my library experience. Some positive and some, especially being in a very rural [region], have been very challenging to deal with."

Although a significant majority of participants in this study identified as white (86%), in alignment with the overall whiteness of the library profession, the neurodivergent librarians with racialized identities shared that they encountered multiple forms of stereotypes, microaggressions, and discrimination. Not only were they confronted with stereotypes of neurodivergence, but they simultaneously encountered racial stereotypes and microaggressions in their workplaces. Librarians were also pigeonholed according to their racial identity, as discussed in Chapter 4, and thus encountered multiple forms of marginalization and oppression in their library workplaces.

Furthermore, the whiteness of librarianship is not only reflected in the lack of racial diversity of the profession, but also in the values, practices, and organizational culture of libraries. Librarians of color regularly experience the aforementioned marginalization while also being held to professional expectations rooted in whiteness (Alabi, 2015; Galvan, 2015; Hudson, 2017). Given the culture of whiteness within the profession, then, librarians of color are

tokenized while also being expected to perform whiteness in their workplace, from their hair and dress to their demeanor and tone of voice.

Librarians of color, as Nova detailed above, may also have additional intersectional identities that further collide with normative expectations in librarianship and library organizations. As Finn described,

“Librarianship is also a heavily gendered profession and comes from a specific kind of socioeconomic background and specific racial category. And tends to the point where nice white ladies might all have shared social and cultural and other unwritten roles, and then someone barges in like, I don't look like you, I don't think like you, and yet I'm the bad person here because I'm the one who keeps pointing out that you are all running on shared expectations that I don't share.”

These unwritten shared expectations are rooted in white supremacy culture, gendered expectations, cisgender heteronormativity, ableism and neuronormativity, and reinforce multiple forms of oppression. Only certain ways of being are deemed acceptable, requiring librarians to perform whiteness, neurotypicality, and gender in specific ways that align with the service-orientation and care work of librarianship. This study demonstrates the need for library organizations, and neurodiversity employment literature more broadly, to acknowledge and explore the interplay of racial and ethnic identities with neurodiversity employment experiences. Furthermore, ***to improve workplace access for neurodivergent librarians, library organizations must address all forms of structural exclusion and oppression.***

Due to a general lack of attention in neurodiversity research to other aspects of identity beyond neurodiversity, some previous studies have highlighted the need for neurodiversity employment to address intersectional identities (Annabi & Locke, 2019; Doyle et al., 2022; Mallipeddi & VanDaalen, 2021). This study builds on such calls by drawing attention to the multi-dimensional aspects of neurodivergent librarians' identities and how those identities interact with barriers and opportunities in the workplace. The interviews with librarians of color further highlighted the impact of intersectional identities, drawing attention to the multiple forms of oppression they encounter in their workplaces, further emphasizing the need to attend to intersectional identities in neurodiversity employment research.

*As a neurodivergent librarian and researcher myself, my own individual differences have influenced my workplace experiences and my path to this dissertation. A number of years ago, my therapist suggested that we work together through a questionnaire about autism, and we were only on the second page when my therapist said something along the lines of, "Okay, I don't think we need to go any further." As was typical of my overachieving self, I passed! Yet because seeking an official diagnosis as an adult is so difficult, I did not receive my own official diagnosis until the fall of 2022 – while I was working on this dissertation! At times I felt like an imposter, even as I assured others that an official diagnosis was not required for this research. The specialist who diagnosed me was trained to diagnose **either** autism **or** ADHD, unless both diagnoses were significantly present, so my official diagnosis still doesn't reflect my AuDHD identity.*

*Reading my official report was difficult – the language was oriented toward deficit and did not reflect my understanding of myself or my knowledge and lived experience of neurodivergence. I filed it away in the hope that I wouldn't have to pull it out again, even as I was relieved to have this aspect of my identity confirmed, albeit through a medicalized approach. It was **more** real now somehow, even though of course it was deeply real for me before that. Having lived the majority of my life without this understanding of myself, I*

struggled to see myself in a positive manner and concealed my neurodivergence at great cost to myself. I was bullied throughout school and deeply internalized that I was a burden and would never be enough, so I adjusted by masking and overachieving, and becoming (more of) a people-pleaser. Throughout these interviews, I heard similar stories from neurodivergent librarians, who were navigating their identity and trying to unlearn all the harmful narratives they'd been told about themselves and their salient identities. Some of them wondered how long they could stay in a profession that actively excluded them, and this was also my experience and part of what drove me to leave my position as an academic librarian and take up this research. I was angry and determined to make things better in whatever way I could.

*What I didn't know at the time was how much doing this research would create space for me to unmask and accept myself and my ways of being. I still have a 'professional' persona that I try to put on sometimes, but it has become heavy over the years and I have grown weary from its weight. Being able to share my neurodivergent identity with others while doing this research has lessened that burden, as I work to hold onto this understanding of myself as a **positive** aspect of my identity. I met and talked with incredible librarians who are committed to their work and the profession, and have so much to offer their library communities. They are also encountering challenges that prevent them from being their best at their library. Libraries matter, and so do the people who do all the essential work of this profession. We need to care for them, too.*

Theme 2: Neurodivergent Librarians Enact Embodied Knowledge to Create Their Own Access

To survive ableist workplaces, neurodivergent librarians have enacted their complex embodiment of neurodivergence and developed their own systems and strategies for navigating and providing their own access.

Tess: "I have adopted a lot of strategies. One thing I do is, I have a lamp in my office, so I never have the overhead lighting on because it's just too bright and it

is just too harsh. So I have a lamp in my office, so the lighting's low. I ask for a white noise machine, both for privacy when I meet with staff who may be coming to me about an issue, but also for my own comfort. And so I have the white noise machine on like every day that I'm in the office. I also do what I call no Meet Mondays, which is, I have no meetings on Mondays. And I'm remote on Mondays, which is also helpful because librarian jobs can be very meeting heavy... so I am not available unless there's an emergency. So that's another thing I do. And then I'm very big on the planners I use."

As discussed in Chapter 2, my conception of embodied knowledge builds on the OIMIB (Annabi & Locke, 2019) construct of “individual coping methods” to center neurodivergent experiences through the lens of critical disability theory. The OIMIB framework highlights the ways that neurodivergent employees deploy “coping strategies” to mitigate or otherwise address workplace barriers, such as “developing informal networks, seeking informal mentors, and ignoring barriers,” along with other tactics like masking or leaving the profession (Annabi & Locke, 2019). This study affirmed these strategies and tactics, while adding to them in the context of libraries. Thus, as the neurodivergent librarians in this study navigated workplace access, they developed and applied their learned experiences and knowledge to improve their working conditions. This knowledge reflects Tobin Sieber’s conception of “complex embodiment” as disability knowledge (Siebers, 2019). Too often the knowledge of neurodivergent people has been overlooked or dismissed, so the act of naming and highlighting this knowledge also serves as a form of epistemic justice, while also seeking to create epistemic justice for the study participants. Taken together, then, this study brings together these two bodies of knowledge to counter deficit understandings of neurodiversity and neurodivergence,

and to recognize the expertise that neurodivergent librarians have developed from navigating spaces that exclude them by design.

In disability studies scholarship, disability is understood “as a way of perceiving and orienting to the world” (Titchkosky, 2011, p. 4). Through this orientation, then, disability is furthermore “a critical lens on the world and a methodology for noticing and investigating processes and power relations” (M. Price, 2024, p. 150). Neurodivergent librarians are similarly applying a critical lens to their workplaces to not only observe workplace relations and structures but to also adjust or resist according to their needs. In other words, neurodivergent librarians are enacting their embodied knowledge to create and improve access for themselves and for others. As Brooke shared,

“Knowing what you need and advocating for that is an important thing to do. Just because something is invisible or it doesn't affect everybody, doesn't mean it's not a real concern and...your perspective matters. You can be the person in the room that you wish had been there when you were.”

Brooke, like other neurodivergent library supervisors (for details, see Chapter 4), believed that advocating for change in their library organization was necessary in order to improve working conditions for others and to be an example to other neurodivergent library workers.

As detailed in Chapter 2, neurodiversity research has historically approached neurodivergence from a deficit-oriented stance. Such research has informed societal views of neurodiversity, which remain based on this medicalized deficit perspective and therefore the lived experience and depth of knowledge of neurodivergent employees has largely been

disregarded until recently. This study, however, demonstrates that librarians draw on their experiences with marginalization to develop practices and strategies for navigating access in workplaces that are exclusionary by design. This knowledge constitutes a form of “complex embodiment” in that it is disability knowledge that neurotypical people do not possess (Siebers, 2019). Neurodivergent librarians have experienced exclusion, marginalized, and deficit-oriented stereotypes of their existence. Viewing such experiences from their critical, neurodivergent lens has enabled them to develop embodied knowledge that circumvents and upends neuronormativity and ableism in the workplace through both indirect strategies, such as bringing in a lamp from home as Tess discussed above, and direct workplace action like taking meeting notes and emailing minutes to colleagues afterwards. ***Neurodivergent librarians have developed knowledge and expertise about their work environments that could benefit all library workers and library organizations, if that knowledge were recognized and valued in ways that did not further burden neurodivergent employees.***

This study builds on OIMIB’s conception of “coping strategies” to frame them through the lens of critical disability theory. As such, this work affirmed the coping methods in OIMIB while also surfacing additional strategies and tactics, such as aligning employment with personal values and the need for a retreat space, as emphasized by participants. My naming of embodied knowledge brings together feminist scholarship on marginalization, as incorporated into IDTGIT and OIMIB, with critical disability theory. Furthermore, this naming contributes an expansion of complex embodiment that acknowledges and explores disability knowledge as a form of epistemic justice.

Given infinite time and funding, there are many more stories I could share about the experiences of neurodivergent librarians. Thanks to the IMLS grant that funded this work, some of these stories will be shared in a forthcoming toolkit. This isn't a pitch for the toolkit, but rather an acknowledgement that the librarians I spoke with shared their embodied knowledge with me in the form of tips, tricks, tools, strategies, and more. While some of these were highlighted in Chapter 4, there is much more to share back. This dissertation is not meant to be the end of this work, but the beginning. Neurodivergent librarians have so much knowledge to share that can and will benefit librarians, the work of librarians, and the profession, and they are already doing so in different ways within their library organizations.

Theme 3: Navigating Workplace Access Takes a Toll on Neurodivergent Librarians

Neurodivergent librarians are navigating access in their ableist workplaces by drawing on their embodied knowledge, but that invisible labor exacts both short-term and long-term costs on physical and mental well-being.

Paul: "I have to be the one who's uncomfortable to make everybody else around me comfortable. And like, that's what really sucks. And I think that sort of encapsulates the neurodivergent experience, we sort of suffer that burden of discomfort and exhaustion everything so that all our neurotypical people around us can not be uncomfortable in our presence."

The OIMIB framework used in this study was developed for examining neurodiversity employment programs within IT, and such programs can serve to mitigate workplace barriers and create opportunities for success. In libraries, however, such programs do not exist. The

result, then, is that in library organizations, the work of mitigating barriers and enacting enablers falls solely to individuals: the efforts of the individual employee or of an especially understanding supervisor. As neurodivergent librarians carry out this individual work of constructing their own workplace access, they are taking up this burden under the influence of neoliberal responsabilization. As discussed in Chapter 2, responsabilization is “the reductive framing of systemic power dynamics as questions of individual choice and agency” (Crooks, 2019b, p. 8). Neoliberal responsabilization places the labor of access upon individuals, rather than rather than altering the setting, thus leaving individuals to do the work of negotiating complicated structures and processes in normative workplaces to survive. Within the context of this study, this manifests in librarians advocating for themselves rather than the library organization working to provide access to all from the beginning. The result, then, is that neurodivergent librarians must navigate ableist work environments and provide their own access, often masking to conform with neuronormativity, and these efforts take a toll in both the long- and short-term, their physical and mental well-being, and leading to work/life imbalance and burnout.

As enumerated in Chapter 4, neurodivergent librarians in this study highlighted the barriers they encounter in their library workplaces, affirming the barriers discussed in neurodiversity employment literature, as discussed in Chapter 4. These barriers included negative stereotypes and stigma, fear of discrimination, isolation, and an inaccessible work environment. Yet this study also illuminated the impact of unclear expectations in libraries, which presented a significant barrier to participants. These barriers constitute a lack of access

for library workers whose needs do not align with normative workplace expectations. Those who encounter this lack of access are left with few options: mask and ignore the lack of access, request formal or informal accommodations to improve access, or enact other strategies for navigating this lack of access. Neurodivergent librarians regularly used a combination of these options to sustain their employment and themselves in library workplaces, but this means that neurodivergent librarians are dedicating additional energy, resources, and time to create their own access in their workplaces, an effort which presents another significant barrier. In some cases, providing one's own access even comes with a monetary cost, as in purchasing a lamp for an office instead of using the overhead lights, as discussed in Chapter 4.

Navigating a lack of workplace access also comes with an “emotional cost,” a concept developed by disability studies scholar Margaret Price to encompass the fatigue, stress, labor, risk, and intense personal cost associated with negotiating access (M. Price, 2024). Navigating access requires managing the emotions and impressions of others (such as supervisors) and may expose a neurodivergent person to stereotypes and stigma. As Price explains, “the more difficult a disability is to explain, the more hostility it seems to invite – and the more likely a disabled person may be to avoid those emotionally costly conversations in the first place” (2024, p. 118). Thus, negotiating workplace access involves “a system of personal triage” to determine what is worth the emotional cost and under which circumstances (M. Price, 2024, p. 122). This triage process is also entangled with intersecting identities and requires additional labor to navigate across multiple marginalized identities. Neurodivergent librarians of color, for example, reporting navigating barriers related to their neurodivergence and their racial identity.

This cost of navigating access as an individual requires invisible labor that is simultaneously complicated and exhausting. In other words, the emotional costs “for disabled employees are high in part because they must work so hard, and often in very personally and emotionally charged ways, to negotiate access” (M. Price, 2024, p. 123). This study highlights that the work of navigating access in ableist workplaces is ongoing and often invisible, and the long-term emotional cost of this work takes a toll on neurodivergent librarians.

Research demonstrates the significant impact of masking and burnout (previously highlighted in Chapter 2). The high cost of masking can lead to exhaustion, depression, suicidality, substance abuse, and other harmful behaviors (J. A. Evans et al., 2023, 2023; D. Miller et al., 2021). In the workplace, masking and stress create long-term impacts, leading to burnout and/or leaving the position and workplace (Botha & Gillespie-Lynch, 2022; Högstedt et al., 2022; Raymaker et al., 2022). Yet masking and burnout are simultaneously interacting with other aspects of a neurodivergent librarian’s identity and workplace experiences, such as co-occurring conditions like anxiety and depression, a history of trauma, workplace bullying and microaggressions, misgendering, and other forms of marginalization. Furthermore, issues in library organizations like low morale and organizational dysfunction amplify the difficulties with navigating access in an ableist workplace (S. Acadia & Vogt, 2022; Corrado, 2022; Davis Kendrick, 2020). In libraries, then, individual responsabilization burdens neurodivergent librarians with navigating access individually, as their own personal responsibility. In doing so, ***library organizations fail to recognize that access is instead an organizational culture issue that requires organizational change.*** Thus, neurodivergent librarians are excluded in their

workplaces and are forced to assimilate and/or address the barriers on their own and at significant individual cost to themselves.

This study identified key barriers to workplace access in libraries, thus extending neurodiversity employment literature to address the context of libraries and librarianship, which unlike previous neurodiversity employment work in IT, represents examination of a feminized care profession. Previous LIS scholarship has highlighted the role of individual responsabilization in framing power structures as matters of individual agency, specifically as related to equity of access to information (Crooks, 2019b). My work builds on this critique of individual responsabilization to examine access in library workplaces. In doing so, I also draw on critical disability theory and framings of access as the ways that people engage with the space and environment around them. Thus, this work extends the concept of individual responsabilization to surface the invisible labor of navigating workplace access, providing one's own accommodations, and masking. Additionally, my work builds on previous studies on neurodiversity employment that highlighted the ongoing impact of workplace stress (Högstedt et al., 2022) and the impact of work pressures on mental health and burnout (Raymaker et al., 2022), to further illuminate the ongoing impact of individualized approaches to navigating access, including masking and efforts to assimilate to neurotypical expectations. Furthermore, my work also links Price's (2024) conception of 'emotional cost' with critiques of individual responsabilization to draw attention to the impacts of workplace structures that burden neurodivergent librarians.

*I want to note that emotional cost impacts **all** disabled people, and this concept recognizes that our bodyminds don't always fit neatly into diagnostic boxes. Is my brain fog due to my hEDS, my medication, my lack of sleep, the stress of being neurodivergent in a normative world? Yes? Whatever it may be, I still have to navigate my work with my brain fog and decide who I can trust with this information. Like me, the neurodivergent librarians who participated in this study experienced a variety of co-occurring conditions, which means we aren't only navigating access for one way of being, but the complexity of our interwoven bodymind existence. This effort is exhausting, even when well-received, and it represents labor that remains invisible to others who don't have to put in this kind of work.*

Theme 4: Neurodivergent Library Supervisors Lead Organizational Change

Neurodivergent library supervisors are using the power of their role to enact organizational change and improve working conditions for all library workers.

Ruth: "Neurodivergent people do have really creative brains can really think outside the box. And I think that those are aspects of libraries that are needed and important. Because we can't do things the way we have been doing them. We need to change because the world changes and society changes. And I think that the change in sometimes some of the ways we think about and do the work being more creative, being more proactive can be really important. And it just feels like neurodivergent people could be at the front of some of that work. And definitely creating spaces that, like we've talked about, you know, how would you change a workplace? Well, yeah, let's also change that library atmosphere. So maybe they have dimmer lights or more different kinds of seating or, I know that most libraries, you don't have to be quiet anymore, but just breaking those old stereotypes and bringing in some new ideas would be helpful for the public."

Currently, few studies have examined the experiences of neurodivergent supervisors in any profession, with most research focusing on the perspectives and experiences of neurodivergent employees and their neurotypical managers. The lack of research in this area reflects the predominant assumption that neurodivergent people are employees but do not hold managerial, supervisory, or other leadership roles within their organizations. The failure to investigate neurodivergent leaders, however, simultaneously reflects the ableism of our society, in that neurodivergent people are always presumed to be in need of support and therefore incapable of holding leadership roles. This study demonstrates that not only are neurodivergent library supervisors capable of being leaders within their organizations, but they are also using the power of their role to lead and exact organizational changes that are beneficial to all library workers and to the communities that the library serves. In the library workplace, as shown by this study, neurodivergent supervisors become agents of change, resist normativity and ableism, and create space for different ways of being.

As reported in Chapter 2, about two-thirds (11/17) of the neurodivergent supervisors reported using the power associated with their supervisory role to change aspects of their organization or to hire other neurodivergent library workers. This emphasis on change was discussed in more depth by neurodivergent supervisors when compared to the interviews conducted with neurodivergent librarians who did not have supervisory roles. Neurodivergent supervisors tended to discuss their role as change agents as an essential part of their approach to leadership in their library. Many of them drew on their embodied knowledge to identify areas needing improvement and enact changes in practices and policies. Furthermore, their

understanding of differences and empathy for their library team drove them to improve working conditions for everyone at their library organization. Because of the strengths they bring to leadership positions, neurodivergent library leaders offer new perspectives and innovative ideas for advancing the work of libraries and the profession itself, demonstrating the impact neurodivergent librarians and supervisors have in leading organizational and professional change. ***Neurodivergent library supervisors, then, are positioned to enact essential changes in library workplaces that improve library programs, services, and working conditions for everyone.***

This study adds to previous neurodiversity employment scholarship by examining the experiences of neurodivergent supervisors and demonstrating that neurodivergent employees make strong contributions in their supervisory roles, thus challenging previous research that presumed that managers and supervisors were neurotypical. My work illustrates that the workplace experiences of neurodivergent supervisors are complicated given that they must navigate their own access while also managing upward for themselves and their direct reports. Yet this work also identifies the significant role that neurodivergent supervisors play in leading organizational change, as they build on their own experiences, their understanding of differences, and their empathy for their library team to improve working conditions for everyone. Thus, this study is the first to draw attention to the role of neurodivergent library supervisors in offering new perspectives and innovative ideas for advancing the work of libraries and the profession itself.

Theme 5: Access is Not a Professional Value in Library Workplaces

Librarianship values access for patrons but consistently fails to enact that value in library workplaces, which results in care injustice for neurodivergent librarians.

Brian: "I think part of it is like not only are there plenty of neurodiverse people who are in careers and able to successfully mask, we're trying our damndest we're wanting to be in this field. It just needs to be easier. And part of the conversation is, I harken back to what is obvious to you may not be obvious to me. I really do try and live by that phrasing. And that's where the dialogue is trying to happen. I mean, we're volunteering for these studies and basically begging to be heard. I don't know, maybe it wouldn't be a terrible idea to, you know, I don't know. Listen."

Although "access" is cited as a Core Value of Librarianship, placing emphasis on the importance of providing "opportunities for everyone in the community to obtain library resources and services with minimal disruption," this value is not enacted within library workplaces (American Library Association, 2019). Librarianship emphasizes the significance of access for patrons and in doing so, attends to the needs of library communities. Yet library organizations are simultaneously failing to attend to the needs of the library workers who are enacting that access and care for the benefit of library patrons. Simultaneously, the service-orientation of libraries is also heavily emphasized in library workplaces, resulting in self-sacrifice as expected 'professional' behavior. This self-sacrifice adversely impacts neurodivergent librarians who are already performing additional labor to navigate and provide their own access in workplaces that exclude them through multiple means. The values of librarianship, like access

and equity, are in tension with neoliberal, ableist library workplaces that treat access as a matter of individual responsabilization. For neurodivergent librarians, who are excluded from their workplaces through a variety of means previously mentioned, individual responsabilization results in library organizations failing to provide access. Instead, access is navigated through the work of the individuals whose needs are not already met under the existing conditions. These access needs are treated as a problem to be remedied instead of being recognized as a failure of the organization to create working conditions that are suitable for all employees.

In library organizations, access is designed to be provided for only those whose bodyminds align with normative expectations. Anyone else must individually request access and negotiate the terms of that access, such as through formal or informal accommodations. Such requests may be handled by an understanding supervisor, but neurodivergent librarians also reported being sent to HR to navigate the accommodations process without any additional support from the library. Yet access and accommodations are not the same – accommodations processes approach all disabilities “as a personal need” which requires intervention “rather than collective action or exploration” (Titchkosky, 2011, p. 12). Access, however, refers to the “way people have of relating to the ways they are embodied as beings in the particular places where they find themselves” (Titchkosky, 2011, p. 3). Access, then, involves how people engage with the space and environment around them, including the physical and sensory space but also other aspects of the environment, such as which bodyminds are anticipated and which are not. Through the lens of critical disability theory, access is not solely an individual need, but “needs to be understood as a complex form of perception that organizes socio-political relations

between people in social space” (Titchkosky, 2011, p. 4). The emerging field of critical access studies further examines these socio-political relations to critique the presumption of access as a “self-evident good” and examine the ways that access “has been shaped by historical perceptions of the user as a white, middle-class, productive citizen” (Hamraie, 2017, p. 14). In library organizations, perceptions of productivity are also entangled with neuronormativity, and demand that librarians perform executive function, communication, and social skills in specific ways. Neurodivergent librarians, for example, discussed being expected to prepare documents well in advance of a deadline or attend social events with their colleagues outside of the workplace. Therefore workplace access is not solely a list of interventions, but is an ongoing process that “shifts constantly” and requires “thinking about subtle connections such as trauma triggers, cross-cultural communication, proximity of bodyminds, and ongoing relationships” (M. Price, 2024, p. 30). Neurodivergent librarians highlighted interventions that can make a difference, but they also dreamed of workplaces that were designed for a variety of bodyminds, and the possibilities that such a rich form of access would enable.

The lack of rich access processes in library organizations results in librarians performing care for others without receiving care in return. As discussed in Chapter 4, library professional documents outline extensively methods, practices, and behaviors for librarians to employ to serve library patrons, yet there is little attention or guidance provided for how librarians and library workers engage with each other in their organizations. These documents convey a message that librarians must sacrifice themselves to their service work, a form of care work, because that is what it means to be a librarian. Being a librarian is then synonymous with caring

for others without caring for yourself or your colleagues. This self-sacrifice, which is also entangled with the expectations that librarians are hyperable, is a form of care injustice. Care injustice is “where people — whether they are situated as care workers, care receivers, and others — deteriorate under the name of care when care is used as a mechanism to enhance political economy and neglect the well-being of those situated as care workers and care recipients” (Nishida, 2022, p. 7). Vocational awe, the lack of access for neurodivergent librarians, and the overall lack of the profession’s attention to the working conditions of all library workers are signifiers of an inability to practice the values of librarianship within the workplace. The library profession claims to value access for patrons, while failing to engage in access for library workers and simultaneously upholding access barriers, which results in care injustice throughout librarianship. The result of this care injustice is the deterioration of the people who are providing care, who in this study are neurodivergent librarians, but also anyone else who is experiencing a form of marginalization in their library workplace.

My work focuses on access, instead of inclusion or accessibility, to emphasize the need for cultural change that resists and dismantles ableism in library organizations. Accommodations are one form of access, and are a legal right that should be readily available to all library workers. Yet accommodations do not change the organizational culture, policies, and practices that are contributing to the exclusion of neurodivergent (and other) library workers. I draw on conceptions of access and critical access from critical disability theory to emphasize the need to not only change workplace practices and policies to be more ‘inclusive’ but to also reshape what access means to the library profession. In doing so, I enrich critical disability scholarship on

access through the neurodiversity paradigm in order to attend to socio-political relations in library workplaces and their impact on neurodivergent librarians.

Previous neurodiversity employment research has examined employment in the IT field and in smaller organizations, yet no work has yet undertaken a profession-level examination of a field outside of IT. My work thus represents the first such investigation, while also being the first in-depth examination of neurodiversity employment in library organizations. Additionally, this work builds on previous analysis of the guiding professional documents of librarianship, which highlighted the demand for emotional labor in libraries (Emmelhainz et al., 2017). This study furthers this previous work by examining professional documents through the lens of critical disability theory to attend to normativity and the conditions of neurodiversity employment in libraries. Furthermore, I build on Nishida's (2022) conception of care injustice and extend it to work outside of the healthcare context, thus situating librarianship as another field of care work that experiences care injustice. My work further highlights the cost of care injustice on care workers, especially related to burnout. Finally, this work expands on critical access studies (Hamraie, 2017) to investigate access in the workplace and the ways that workplaces are exclusionary by design.

The Need to Normalize Differences and Enact Collective Accountability

Uprooting the ableism and neuronormativity inherent in librarianship requires a paradigmatic shift away from neoliberal individual responsabilization to collective accountability.

Remy: "We are not faulty neurotypical people."

Mia, a neurotypical librarian: "It's the same thing that we think about when we're recruiting and retaining diverse staff and librarians, right? We recognize that we can't assimilate into this traditionally white female, white male-led organization, right? Of course, we need to make cultural changes and organizational changes in how people feel like they belong and becoming inclusive. And so the same needs to be said and done for neurodivergent folks too."

Neurodivergent librarians are already doing the work of enacting embodied knowledge to mitigate barriers, enact enablers, and navigate access in ableist workplaces. Yet these efforts come with a cost to them, are not sustainable, and are insufficient for confronting and altering the ableism and neuronormativity in library organizations that serve to exclude them. The neurodivergent librarians who participated in this study emphasized that they were not "faulty neurotypical people" (as Remy stressed in the quote above) who were failing to assimilate, but people whose differences were actively excluded by ableism in the workplace. Although librarianship is rooted in ableism and whiteness, the choices made by people within library organizations too often uphold that foundation instead of confronting it and shifting their practices accordingly. As discussed in Chapter 2, the care work of librarianship has too often come in the form of white saviorism. Furthering white saviorism and promoting self-sacrifice as an unwritten professional expectation will only result in care injustice that continues to harm and exclude marginalized librarians.

Instead of focusing on disclosure in order to receive adjustments or accommodations, ***library organizations should learn from the neurodivergent librarians who participated in this study and their efforts to normalize differences, redefine workplaces access for everyone, and dismantle ableist practices and attitudes.*** Neurodivergent librarians also discussed advocating for change in their organizations, with a particular emphasis on improving working conditions for not only themselves but for others across the organization. The refusal to adhere to existing norms or to reinforce existing power structures serves as an act of care, in that it demonstrates solidarity with those whose existence does not align with predominant social expectations. In other words, neurodivergent librarians are negotiating access for themselves, and for others, to address ableism and care injustice by enacting care in their workplace. Yet to enact change and dismantle such norms requires additional action in solidarity with others to imagine different possibilities for current practices, policies, and expectations.

Care as a concept is often associated with gendered forms of nurturing and providing emotional support for the benefit of others. Under neoliberal capitalism, self-care has been promoted as a method for ensuring optimum efficiency in the workplace, with workplaces sending emails suggesting desk yoga or offering workshops on mindfulness and mental well-being. In such capitalist, efficiency-driven methods of care, “those who fail to practice self-care may indeed be labeled ‘noncompliant’ and thus less deserving of care” (Hobart & Kneese, 2020, p. 4). In this context, care becomes a form of self-management and regulation that must be performed individually by all workers. Yet recent conceptions of care resist capitalist expectations of effective labor and instead frame care as “a critical survival strategy” that is

“both a solution to and a symptom of the social deficits of late capitalism” (Hobart & Kneese, 2020, p. 2). This form of care is “the foundation and necessity for inclusivity, accessibility, and from-the-ground-up social transformation” (Nishida, 2022, p. 7). Care is not an action or set of actions but is “a way to orient ourselves and direct our energy toward something or someone,” which can be deployed as a “tool for people to resist oppression and engage in alternative and collective ways of living” (Nishida, 2022, pp. 9, 17). What might such collective approaches to care and access enable in libraries? Or, as Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha (2018) asks, “What does it mean to shift our ideas of access and care (whether it’s disability, childcare, economic access, or many more) from an individual chore, an unfortunate cost of having an unfortunate body, to a collective responsibility that’s maybe even deeply joyful?” (33).

This study revealed organizational practices, referred to as enablers, that can make a difference for neurodivergent library workers, such as flexible schedules, workplace autonomy, and other enablers outlined in Chapter 4. Such practices and policies can improve working conditions for neurodivergent library workers, yet “moving toward access in ways that take relations, space, time, cost, and above all, justice into account will require a different approach altogether” (M. Price, 2024, p. 169). Ultimately, then, a paradigmatic shift is required for libraries to practice the core values of access and equity in their workplaces. ***Libraries need to build workplace access transparently, collectively, and for everyone — not as a special individual request, but as a regular and ongoing practice of librarianship.*** Rather than maintaining individual responsabilization, library organizations need to work toward collective accountability, where negotiating and navigating a variety of access needs is a normal part of

working together (M. Price, 2024). Collective accountability does not ignore past harms but instead “occurs *through and because of* harm, not in spite of harm” (M. Price, 2024, p. 177). It is through this collective care work that library organizations can create a culture of critical access and equity and uphold the values that are the core of the profession of librarianship. In practice, this may look like making space for conversation instead of making assumptions, such as discussing openly communication, collaboration, and other workplace preferences. For example, asking during a meeting, “how is the noise level in this space” affords everyone the opportunity to respond according to their needs, rather than feeling obligated to disavow having any needs. For some organizations, these kinds of changes may require cultural shifts, while others may adapt more easily, yet there will always be failures along the way. Fearing such failures, however, instead of embracing them as moments of learning and collective accountability, will impede change.

Libraries need to enact the core values of the profession not only for patrons, but also for each other in library workplaces. Because libraries already value access and care for patrons, the field is well-positioned to extend access and care within library organizations, and can thus serve as a model for other professions where care injustice is prevalent. Doing so is also increasingly important as libraries continue to face challenges and threats, and library work is becoming increasingly unsustainable. ***Library organizations must take actionable steps toward shifting organizational culture to normalize and honor differences across the library team.*** Doing so can improve working conditions for all workers. Collective work is necessary to care for each other and rebuild library organizations from within to create a culture of critical access,

because such care will not be forthcoming from outside of the organization. As library workers are increasingly asked to defend the existence of libraries and the work of librarianship, addressing care injustice is vital so library work remains sustainable without further cost to neurodivergent librarians, and to everyone else in this field.

My work expands on critical disability scholarship on collective care and collective accountability to situate collective care as a means for dismantling ableism and neoliberal responsibilization by altering socio-political relations within library workplaces. Additionally, this study proposes methods for enacting collective accountability as an ongoing organizational process that can also serve to address care injustice within librarianship. In doing so, I add to conceptions of care justice, particularly in the context of labor in a feminized profession.

Although previous LIS scholarship has called for attention to the experiences of neurodivergent library workers (Lawrence, 2013; Nalepinski, 2021; Tumlin, 2019), the literature is thus far limited to a few small studies (A. Anderson, 2021; A. M. Anderson, 2020). This study is the first in-depth examination of the experiences of neurodivergent librarians (defined broadly, as discussed previously), and the first study to do so through the lens of critical disability theory. In doing so, my work brings together scholarship from three interdisciplinary fields: neurodiversity employment research, critical disability studies, and LIS scholarship. While the emerging field of neurodiversity studies draws on critical disability theory, neurodiversity employment literature focuses predominantly on the social model of disability. This study moves beyond the social model to acknowledge that access for neurodivergent workers requires a paradigmatic shift in workplace structures and attitudes.

Contributions

As discussed in each section above, this study offers multiple contributions that are theoretical, methodological, and practical in nature. These contributions are relevant to LIS scholarship, neurodiversity employment research, and critical disability theory, while also adding to the knowledge and practices of library organizations. I provide a brief summary here of the contributions previously discussed throughout the themes in this chapter.

This study makes the following theoretical contributions:

1. Eight Principles for Centering Neurodivergence in Research that focus on sustaining neurodivergent researchers amidst the ableism of academia. These principles extend the disability studies methodology of centering disability to address the specific needs and circumstances of being a neurodivergent researcher, especially one who is involved with neurodiversity research.
2. A modified conceptual framework for investigating neurodiversity employment that builds on the OIMIB framework to acknowledge the context of library workplaces. This modification of OIMIB, or OIMIB for Libraries, also names the lived knowledge and expertise that neurodivergent employees enact and embody in their workplaces.
3. An expansion of complex embodiment that acknowledges and explores disability knowledge as a form of epistemic justice.

4. An extension of the concept of individual responsabilization that surfaces the invisible labor of navigating workplace access, providing one's own accommodations, and masking.
5. A complication and reshaping of access in libraries that draws on critical disability theory to attend to socio-political relations in library workplaces. I thus emphasize the need for an expanded conception of access that enacts the profession's values within the workplace.
6. A linking of Price's (2024) conception of 'emotional cost' to critiques of individual responsabilization in order to draw attention to the impact of workplace structures that burden neurodivergent librarians.
7. An expansion of collective care and collective accountability that situates collective care as a means for dismantling ableism and addressing care injustice.

This study also adds to current understandings of neurodiversity employment by providing the following contributions:

1. One of the few works examining the experiences of neurodivergent managers. Previous research largely presumed that managers and supervisors identified as neurotypical, but this study demonstrates the existence and strong contributions of neurodivergent managers.
2. The first extensive study in a profession outside of IT fields. Neurodiversity employment research has drawn attention to inequities in various workplaces, especially in

technology fields, but has yet to examine librarianship, a service-oriented profession that may be especially appealing to neurodivergent people.

3. Drawing attention to the multi-dimensional aspects of neurodivergent people's identities and how those identities interact with barriers and opportunities in the workplace.
4. A critical reframing of neurodiversity employment through the lens of critical disability theory, emphasizing the need for changes in workplace practices, along with a paradigmatic shift in existing structures, policies, culture, and values of library organizations and the profession as a whole.

This study also makes the following practical contributions to neurodiversity employment in library organizations:

1. Identifying key barriers to access and inclusion for neurodivergent librarians in library workplaces.
2. Identifying key success enablers for neurodivergent librarians that can be enacted in library organizations without burdening the neurodivergent employee.
3. Enumerating embodied knowledge practices and strategies that neurodivergent library workers can enact in the workplace to support their distinct needs and improve their success.
4. Emphasizing the need for library organizations to take actionable steps toward shifting organizational culture, adopting trauma-informed practices, attending to gendered

expectations of care, and addressing all forms of structural exclusion and oppression in order to normalize and honor differences across the library team.

Limitations

No research study is without limitations, as researchers make a multitude of decisions in designing an effective and meaningful study, so this study also has its limitations. Each decision made regarding the scope of this study creates potential limitations because as the study includes some populations, so it also excludes others. For example, this study focused specifically on autism and ADHD, leaving other forms of neurodivergence such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, intellectual disabilities, and many others for future research. Although many of the participants experienced multiple forms of neurodivergence, this research cannot accurately reflect the experiences of all neurodivergent librarians, although significant overlaps and similarities are anticipated. Similarly, because this study involved what in some fields would be considered a limited number of neurodivergent librarians in the interview process, their perspectives may not fully align with the experiences of all neurodivergent library workers in public or academic libraries, especially given the wide variety of roles and job descriptions across the field.

In this study, neurotypical employees proved more difficult to recruit than neurodivergent librarians. Given that many of the neurodivergent librarians reported that they did not feel safe disclosing to co-workers and supervisors, library managers and administrators may not know that there are neurodivergent employees in their organization. Additionally,

those we were able to recruit self-selected into the study, which likely resulted in a more positive attitude toward neurodiversity across this group, and a desire to improve their workplace practices.

Finally, the study proposed a focus on academic and public libraries, leaving out other forms of librarianship with different contexts, such as school librarians or special librarians, although these findings may be adapted for use in more specialized settings. Additionally, to address these limitations, this study deployed sampling that is “diverse enough to encourage broader applicability when relevant” (Miles et al., 2020). This study can then serve as a foundation for additional research that addresses additional forms of neurodivergence and includes broader participation from neurodivergent librarians or other library workers.

It is also important to observe that the methods for this study, including both the survey and interviews, may exclude any autistic or ADHD librarians with intellectual disabilities. Because librarian positions often require an MLIS degree (or its equivalent) from an ALA-accredited institution, this likely serves as a barrier for many people, including those with intellectual disabilities, and prevents them from entering the profession in the first place, or prevent them from obtaining librarian positions. Yet this is not the only pathway to librarianship, and further research in this area is needed, particularly to address the needs of library workers with intellectual disabilities and other forms of neurodivergence not included in this study.

For Future Research

This study serves as a starting point for further research into neurodiversity employment in library organizations, which could investigate aspects of neurodiversity employment raised during this study. Further research is needed to understand the complex interaction of neurodivergent identity and other forms of identity, with particular attention to additional marginalized identities, including but not limited to gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality. A limited number of librarians with racialized identities participated in this study, so the interplay of identities for BIPOC library workers requires further examination.

This study suggests that librarianship is a field that is especially appealing to neurodivergent workers, and that there is a higher rate of neurodivergence among library workers than any existing statistics would indicate. Therefore, future work is needed to examine the experiences of all library workers, beyond those with librarian roles, to examine the interplay of employment roles, wages, union status, staffing levels, and part-time or full-time employment on the workplace experiences of neurodivergent library workers. Given that the findings from this study also suggest a significant lack of managerial training in libraries, additional research is needed to understand the impact of this lack of training on organizational culture and practices, especially as related to neurodiversity employment.

Furthermore, this study demonstrated a need for additional research into the experiences of neurodivergent managers, who experience similar barriers to the neurodivergent librarian peers while also being in a role requiring them to advocate for their direct reports and potentially manage upward. Additional research is needed to understand the barriers and

opportunities that are specific to this role, along with the organizational practices that will mitigate barriers and transform library workplaces in ways that will remove the burden from neurodivergent supervisors to navigate their own access while simultaneously improving access for others in the organization.

*As I worked on this study, talked with neurodivergent librarians, and heard their stories and their experiences, I learned **from them** that **I am enough as I am**. I am still a work in progress, and I may never learn to fully unmask, but I know that this work has helped me take significant steps toward accepting myself as someone who is wonderfully different. I am immensely grateful to my fellow neurodivergent librarians for trusting me with this work and for emphasizing the importance of doing this work while also being better to myself just as I am. Thank you.*

There is so much work to do here, and I cannot do it by myself, nor should I. So many library workers have significant knowledge and expertise to contribute to this work going forward. I only hope that my work can serve as a foundation for others to build on so that over time we can create the change that is deeply needed in libraries.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol for Neurodivergent Librarians

Brief overview of purpose of the interview and consent forms (5 minutes)

“Thank you for agreeing to participate in this Interview. My name is Christine Moeller, and I am a neurodivergent academic librarian and a PhD student at the UW Information School. We’ll begin today by going over some logistics, telling you some background information, what this study is about, your rights as a participant, and then we’ll get started.”

“Please direct your attention to the Consent Form.”

[Review consent form, give participant a chance to read it over, ask questions, and then sign the form if they haven’t done so already.]

Interview Introduction

As a reminder, the purpose of this research project is to investigate the challenges and opportunities that neurodivergent librarians experience in the library workplace. In this interview, I will ask you questions about your experiences as a library worker. There are no ‘right’ answers to these questions, so how you answer is your decision. You can take your time to respond, and you and I are both welcome to make facial expressions and use hand gestures or other forms of communication in addition to words. I want to make sure this interview is accessible for you and for me, so I have turned on the live transcription which you should also be able to see now. Other options you are welcome to request include turning off your video, moving the conversation into the chat, or using the chat to post questions (such as the ones I am asking of you). Would any of these options be helpful for you? You can also let me know later if your needs change.

During the interview, you may skip a question or come back to it later. You or I can ask for breaks at any point, and I will check in with you halfway through the interview. The interview will last about 90 minutes, and we’ll take a five-minute break around halfway through that time. You can also ask to end the interview at any time you wish. If any of my questions are unclear, you can ask me to explain or provide some examples.

I want to hear your story, so descriptive answers are more helpful than short answers. The details you share will help us understand how we can help improve workplaces for neurodivergent librarians.

Before we begin the interview, what questions do you have for me about this research project or this interview process?

[Respond to questions]

Reminder of consent to recording:

I am going to begin recording now. You can confirm that we have your permission to record this interview by clicking on the button that pops up on your screen. I will also remind you that all information will be completely confidential, and the recordings will be deleted after we have transcribed the interview. There will be no identifying information in the transcripts. Are you ready to begin?

Let's start by talking about your background and your career history.

1. Tell me about yourself and your life right now?
 - a. Where are you from and where do you currently live?
 - b. What is your educational background?
 - c. What is your family background?
 - d. What is your marital status?
 - e. Do you have any children?
 - f. What is your living situation (who do you live with)?
2. When did you first become aware that you were neuro-distinct?
 - a. What did it mean for you to learn that you are neuro-distinct? (What impact did this have on you and your family?)
 - b. Did you receive any therapies or interventions How did that impact you?
3. What attracted you to libraries?
 - a. Did you have any experience with libraries prior to considering this as a career?
 - b. Was there anyone you spoke to about librarianship as a potential career?
4. Can you walk me through your education/preparation experience?
 - a. Did you pursue any educational experience and what was it like?
 - b. Did you pursue any type of intervention/therapy did you pursue? How did that impact you?
 - c. Did you receive any type of support throughout your education? How did that impact you?
5. Now I'd like to discuss your experiences working in libraries. Can you walk me through your employment history in libraries?
 - a. When/how long have you worked in libraries?
 - b. Any key individuals that guided/influenced you?
 - c. What types of roles did you fill in libraries?
 - d. What type of support/accommodations did you receive throughout your employment?
 - i. What was it like to obtain these accommodations?
 - ii. Were they effective? How?
 - iii. What were their impacts?
 - e. What (additional) types of resources or supports would you like your workplace to provide for you? [*If examples are needed: meeting agendas, different ways to participate in large events, a quiet recovery space, ability to work from home.*]
6. What do you like most about working in libraries?

- a. What are the key factors/enablers that enabled your employment in libraries?
 - b. Have you experienced key events/policies/programs/individuals that enabled you to secure employment/succeed/persist in libraries?
 - c. What are the key factors/barriers that hindered your employment in libraries?
 - d. Have you experienced key events/policies/programs/individuals that acted as barriers for you to secure employment/succeed/persist in libraries?
7. What strategies did you use over the years to address barriers and ensure your success in libraries?

We're about halfway through the questions now. Before we continue, I want to check in with you and see how you're feeling right now. What, if any, adjustments should we make to the interview process before continuing? (*Optional: suggest a five-minute break depending on time*)

[If colleague relationships haven't been discussed in previous section, continue here. Otherwise skip to Question 10]

Let's continue discussing your experiences in libraries by focusing for a moment on your working relationships with colleagues.

8. Describe your relationship with your supervisors (current and past)?
 - a. Describe what they did well to support you?
 - b. Describe what they did not do well that created barriers for you?
9. Describe your relationship with your co-workers (current and past)?
 - c. Describe what they did well to support you?
 - d. Describe what they did not do well that created barriers for you?
10. What, if anything, do you wish your co-workers or supervisors knew or understood about neurodiversity?

As we move into the final section of the interview, we will shift our focus to areas for improvement in libraries.

11. Imagine for a moment that your workplace is fully inclusive for neurodivergent employees. What does that look like to you?
12. What advice would you give to other neurodivergent people considering working at a library?
13. What else would you like to discuss regarding your experience supervising a neurodivergent librarian that we have not yet discussed? What did we miss?
14. Thinking back over our discussion today, what do you feel is the most important thing for our research team to know?
15. Would you consider sharing the call for participation with any neurodivergent librarians you might know who work or have worked in libraries?

Closing

Thank you so much for your time today. You are welcome to reach out to me after this interview if you think of anything else you would like to add.

After the interview, our research team will send you a brief feedback survey so you can help us identify ways to improve this interview process. Participation in this survey is optional and all responses are anonymous. You will also receive your gift card via email.

We will be conducting more interviews, analyzing the data, and designing specific best practices for the employment of neurodivergent librarians. We will share our findings from these interviews on our website, so please feel free to check there for updates on this research. If you have any questions, additional comments, think of something you wanted to add, or if you have any concerns please feel free to contact our research team at our email neurodiversity@uw.edu.

Appendix B: Interview Protocol for Neurodivergent Supervisors

Brief overview of purpose of the interview and consent forms (5 minutes)

“Thank you for agreeing to participate in this Interview. My name is Christine Moeller, and I am a neurodivergent academic librarian and a PhD student at the UW Information School. We’ll begin today by going over some logistics, telling you some background information, what this study is about, your rights as a participant, and then we’ll get started.”

“Please direct your attention to the Consent Form.”

[Review consent form, give participant a chance to read it over, ask questions, and then sign the form if they haven’t done so already.]

Interview Introduction

As a reminder, the purpose of this research project is to investigate the challenges and opportunities that neurodivergent librarians experience in the library workplace. In this interview, I will ask you questions about your experiences as a library worker. There are no ‘right’ answers to these questions, so how you answer is your decision. You can take your time to respond, and you and I are both welcome to make facial expressions and use hand gestures or other forms of communication in addition to words. I want to make sure this interview is accessible for you and for me, so I have turned on the live transcription which you should also be able to see now. Other options you are welcome to request include turning off your video, moving the conversation into the chat, or using the chat to post questions (such as the ones I am asking of you). Would any of these options be helpful for you? You can also let me know later if your needs change.

During the interview, you may skip a question or come back to it later. You or I can ask for breaks at any point, and I will check in with you halfway through the interview. The interview will last about 90 minutes, and we’ll take a five-minute break around halfway through that time. You can also ask to end the interview at any time you wish. If any of my questions are unclear, you can ask me to explain or provide some examples.

I want to hear your story, so descriptive answers are more helpful than short answers. The details you share will help us understand how we can help improve workplaces for neurodivergent librarians.

Before we begin the interview, what questions do you have for me about this research project or this interview process?

[Respond to questions]

Reminder of consent to recording:

I am going to begin recording now. You can confirm that we have your permission to record this interview by clicking on the button that pops up on your screen. I will also remind you that all information will be completely confidential, and the recordings will be deleted after we have transcribed the interview. There will be no identifying information in the transcripts. Are you ready to begin?

Let's start by talking about your background and your career history.

1. Tell me about yourself and your life right now?
 - a. Where are you from and where do you currently live?
 - b. What is your educational background?
 - c. What is your family background?
 - d. What is your marital status?
 - e. Do you have any children?
 - f. What is your living situation (who do you live with)?
2. When did you first become aware that you were neuro-distinct?
 - a. What did it mean for you to learn that you are neuro-distinct? (What impact did this have on you and your family?)
 - b. Did you receive any therapies or interventions How did that impact you?
 - c. Did you receive any type of support throughout your education? How did that impact you?
3. What attracted you to libraries?
 - a. Did you have any experience with libraries prior to considering this as a career?
 - b. Was there anyone you spoke to about librarianship as a potential career?
4. Now I'd like to discuss your experiences working in libraries. Can you walk me through your employment history in libraries?
 - a. When/how long have you worked in libraries?
 - b. Any key individuals that guided/influenced you?
 - c. What types of roles did you fill in libraries?
 - d. What type of support/accommodations did you receive throughout your employment?
 - i. What was it like to obtain these accommodations?
 - ii. Were they effective? How?
 - iii. What were their impacts?
 - e. What (additional) types of resources or supports would you like your workplace to provide for you? *[If examples are needed: meeting agendas, different ways to participate in large events, a quiet recovery space, ability to work from home.]*
5. What do you like most about working in libraries?
 - a. What are the key factors/enablers that enabled your employment in libraries?
 - b. Have you experienced key events/policies/programs/individuals that enabled you to secure employment/succeed/persist in libraries?
 - c. What are the key factors/barriers that hindered your employment in libraries?

- d. Have you experienced key events/policies/programs/individuals that acted as barriers for you to secure employment/succeed/persist in libraries?
- 6. What strategies did you use over the years to address barriers and ensure your success in libraries?

[If colleague relationships haven't been discussed in previous section, continue here. Otherwise skip to Question 10]

Let's continue discussing your experiences in libraries by focusing for a moment on your working relationships with colleagues.

- 7. Describe your relationship with your supervisors (current and past)?
 - a. Describe what they did well to support you?
 - b. Describe what they did not do well that created barriers for you?
- 8. Describe your relationship with your peer managers or other co-workers?
 - c. Describe what they did well to support you?
 - d. Describe what they did not do well that created barriers for you?
- 9. What, if anything, do you wish your co-workers or supervisors knew or understood about neurodiversity?

We're about halfway through the questions now. Before we continue, I want to check in with you and see how you're feeling right now. What, if any, adjustments should we make to the interview process before continuing?

Let's go ahead and take a five minute break now, and we will return at [time].

Supervisor Questions

For this part of the interview, we'll shift to focus more on your role as a library supervisor. Let's begin that discussion by focusing on some of the details about the library where you work (or worked)

- 10. How would you describe the organizational culture of your library?
- 11. What kinds of professional development or other support programs, like mentoring, are available for library workers?
 - a. What kind of opportunities for professional advancement or promotion exist at your library?
 - b. What steps, if any, have library leadership taken to support or advance diversity, equity, and inclusion within the workplace?
- 12. As you probably know, there are a lot of stereotypes of librarians, like the strict older woman with a bun and glasses, and more recently the cheery tattooed librarian. How would you describe librarians to someone outside of the profession?
 - a. And how would you describe what librarians do?
 - b. Has your understanding of librarians changed since you became a manager? If so, how?

- c. What librarian/employee traits or characteristics are most valued at your library?
(For example, think about job ads that might list qualifications like the ability to juggle many tasks at once)

Next let's discuss your role as a library supervisor.

13. Tell me a little bit about your experiences as a library supervisor.
 - a. What are your supervisory responsibilities? How many folks do you supervise?
 - b. How would you describe your approach to supervising other employees?
 - a. What are some of your management practices (such as one-on-one meetings, annual reports, and so on)?
 - b. How do you support the work of your direct reports?
 - c. How do you manage/create cohesion and collaboration within your neurodiverse team (how do you work to set an equitable tone/practices/expectation across neurotype)?
 - d. What are some of the challenges and benefits of being a neurodivergent supervisor?
14. What kind of preparation or training did you receive to become a manager, if any?

As we move into the final section of the interview, we will shift our focus to areas for improvement in libraries.

15. Imagine for a moment that your workplace is fully inclusive for neurodivergent employees. What does that look like to you?
16. What advice would you give to other neurodivergent people considering working at a library?
17. What else would you like to discuss regarding your experiences that we have not yet discussed? What did we miss?
18. Thinking back over our discussion today, what do you feel is the most important thing for our research team to know?

Closing

Thank you so much for your time today. You are welcome to reach out to me after this interview if you think of anything else you would like to add.

After the interview, our research team will send you a brief feedback survey so you can help us identify ways to improve this interview process. Participation in this survey is optional and all responses are anonymous. You will also receive your gift card via email.

We will be conducting more interviews, analyzing the data, and designing specific best practices for the employment of neurodivergent librarians. We will share our findings from these interviews on our website, so please feel free to check there for updates on this research. If you have any questions, additional comments, think of something you wanted to add, or if you have any concerns please feel free to contact our research team at our email neurodiversity@uw.edu.

Appendix C: Interview Protocol for Neurotypical Co-Workers of Neurodivergent Librarians

Brief overview of purpose of the interview and consent forms (5 minutes)

“Thank you for agreeing to participate in this Interview. My name is Christine Moeller, and I am a neurodivergent academic librarian and a PhD student at the UW Information School. We’ll begin today by going over some logistics, telling you some background information, what this study is about, your rights as a participant, and then we’ll get started.”

“Please direct your attention to the Consent Form.”

[Review consent form, give participant a chance to read it over, ask questions, and then sign the form if they haven’t done so already.]

Interview Introduction

“As a reminder, the purpose of this research project is to investigate the challenges and opportunities that neurodivergent librarians experience in the library workplace. In this interview, I will ask you questions about your experiences as a library worker. There are no ‘right’ answers to these questions, so how you answer is your decision. You can take your time to respond, and you and I are both welcome to make facial expressions and use hand gestures or other forms of communication in addition to words. I want to make sure this interview is accessible for you and for me, so I have turned on the live transcription which you should also be able to see now. Other options you are welcome to request include turning off your video, moving the conversation into the chat, or using the chat to post questions (such as the ones I am asking of you). Would any of these options be helpful for you? You can also let me know later if your needs change.

During the interview, you may skip a question or come back to it later. You or I can ask for breaks at any point, and I will check in with you halfway through the interview. You can also ask to end the interview at any time you wish. If any of my questions are unclear, you can ask me to explain or provide some examples.

I want to hear your story, so descriptive answers are more helpful than short answers. The details you share will help us understand how we can help improve workplaces for neurodivergent librarians.

Before we begin the interview, what questions do you have for me about this research project or this interview process?”

[Respond to questions]

Reminder of consent to recording:

I am going to begin recording now. You can confirm that we have your permission to record this interview by clicking on the button that pops up on your screen. I will also remind you that all information will be completely confidential, and the recordings will be deleted after we have transcribed the interview. There will be no identifying information in the transcripts. Are you ready to begin?

Let's start by discussing some of the details about the library where you work (or worked).

1. What is the organizational structure of your library?
 - a. How is the library staffed and managed?
 - b. How many librarians?
2. As you probably know, there are a lot of stereotypes of librarians, like the strict older woman with a bun and glasses, and more recently the cheery tattooed librarian. How would you describe librarians to someone outside of the profession?
 - a. And how would you describe what librarians do?
 - b. Has your understanding of librarians changed in the time you've worked in libraries? If so, how?
 - c. What librarian/employee traits or characteristics are most valued at your library? *(For example, think about job ads that might list qualifications like the ability to juggle many tasks at once)*
3. How would you describe the organizational culture of your library?
4. What kinds of professional development or other support programs, like mentoring, are available for library workers?

Let's talk for a moment about retention and advancement, which the PLA has reported is an increasing issue in libraries.

5. Has your library had any issues retaining employees?
 - a. If so, what has been done, if anything, to address that?
 - b. If not, why do you think that is the case?
6. What kind of opportunities for professional advancement or promotion exist at your library?
7. What steps, if any, have library leadership taken to support or advance diversity, equity, and inclusion within the workplace?

Now let's talk more about how library employees interact and collaborate at your library.

8. What is your current role in the library?
 - a. How did you come to that role? How long have you been in this role?
9. How would you describe the approach at your library to working with other library employees? *(For example, some libraries are team-based and some are not)*
 - a. How do co-workers interact at your library *(For example, some librarians only see each other at formal meetings and work independently, while others often work on collaborative projects)*? How often?
 - b. What are some of the collaboration practices at your library *(such as one-on-one meetings, annual reports, team projects, and so on)*?

Now I want to discuss working with neurodivergent employees.

10. Can you describe your familiarity with neurodiversity?
 - a. When and how did you become familiar with neurodiversity?
 - b. Are there additional things you would like to know or learn about neurodiversity?
11. How many neurodivergent library workers do you currently, or have you previously, worked with? And for how long?
 - a. Can you describe how this might be similar or different from working with other employees?
 - b. What has been working well?
 - c. What are some of the challenges?
12. What has your library done to support or inhibit the inclusion of neurodivergent employees?
 - a. What support have neurotypical library workers received to create an inclusive work environment for neurodivergent employees?
 - b. What has your supervisor or other managers done to create or inhibit an inclusive work environment?
 - c. What would you like your library to do to support you or to support inclusion?
13. What resources, support, or guidance, if any, have you used to help you work with a neurodivergent co-worker?
14. What else would you like to discuss regarding your experience working with a neurodivergent librarian that we have not yet discussed? What did we miss?
15. Thinking back over our discussion today, what do you feel is the most important thing for our research team to know?

Closing

Thank you so much for your time today. You are welcome to reach out to me after this interview if you think of anything else you would like to add.

After the interview, our research team will send you a brief feedback survey so you can help us identify ways to improve this interview process. Participation in this survey is optional and all responses are anonymous. You will also receive your \$35 gift card via email.

We will be conducting more interviews, analyzing the data, and designing specific best practices for the employment of neurodivergent librarians. We will share our findings from these interviews on our website, so please feel free to check there for updates on this research. If you have any questions, additional comments, think of something you wanted to add, or if you have any concerns please feel free to contact our research team at our email neurodiversity@uw.edu.

Appendix D: Interview Protocol for Neurotypical Supervisors of Neurodivergent Librarians

Brief overview of purpose of the interview and consent forms (5 minutes)

“Thank you for agreeing to participate in this Interview. My name is Christine Moeller, and I am a neurodivergent academic librarian and a PhD student at the UW Information School. We’ll begin today by going over some logistics, telling you some background information, what this study is about, your rights as a participant, and then we’ll get started.”

“Please direct your attention to the Consent Form.”

[Review consent form, give participant a chance to read it over, ask questions, and then sign the form if they haven’t done so already.]

Interview Introduction

“As a reminder, the purpose of this research project is to investigate the challenges and opportunities that neurodivergent librarians experience in the library workplace. In this interview, I will ask you questions about your experiences as a library worker. There are no ‘right’ answers to these questions, so how you answer is your decision. You can take your time to respond, and you and I are both welcome to make facial expressions and use hand gestures or other forms of communication in addition to words. I want to make sure this interview is accessible for you and for me, so I have turned on the live transcription which you should also be able to see now. Other options you are welcome to request include turning off your video, moving the conversation into the chat, or using the chat to post questions (such as the ones I am asking of you). Would any of these options be helpful for you? You can also let me know later if your needs change.

During the interview, you may skip a question or come back to it later. You or I can ask for breaks at any point, and I will check in with you halfway through the interview. You can also ask to end the interview at any time you wish. If any of my questions are unclear, you can ask me to explain or provide some examples.

I want to hear your story, so descriptive answers are more helpful than short answers. Feel free to provide as much detail as you can, because those details will help us understand how we can help improve workplaces for neurodivergent librarians.

Before we begin the interview, what questions do you have for me about this research project or this interview process?”

[Respond to questions]

Reminder of consent to recording:

I am going to begin recording now. You can confirm that we have your permission to record this interview by clicking on the button that pops up on your screen. I will also remind you that all information will be completely confidential, and the recordings will be deleted after we have transcribed the interview. There will be no identifying information in the transcripts. Are you ready to begin?

Let's start by discussing some of the details about the library where you work (or worked).

1. What is the organizational structure of your library?
 - a. How is the library staffed and managed?
 - b. How many librarians?

As you probably know, there are a lot of stereotypes of librarians, like the strict older woman with a bun and glasses, and more recently the cheery tattooed librarian.

2. How would you describe librarians to someone outside of the profession?
 - a. And how would you describe what librarians do?
 - b. Has your understanding of librarians changed since you became a manager? If so, how?
 - c. What librarian/employee traits or characteristics are most valued at your library? *(For example, think about job ads that might list qualifications like the ability to juggle many tasks at once)*
3. How would you describe the organizational culture of your library?
4. What kinds of professional development or other support programs, like mentoring, are available for library workers?

Let's talk for a moment about retention and advancement, which the PLA has reported is an increasing issue in libraries.

5. Has your library had any issues retaining employees?
 - a. If so, what has been done, if anything, to address that?
 - b. If not, why do you think that is the case?
6. What kind of opportunities for professional advancement or promotion exist at your library?
7. What steps, if any, have library leadership taken to support or advance diversity, equity, and inclusion within the workplace?

Next let's discuss your role as a library supervisor.

8. What is your current role in the library?
 - a. How did you come to that role? How long have you been in this role?
 - b. What are your supervisory responsibilities? How many folks do you supervise?
9. How would you describe your approach to supervising other employees?
10. What are some of your management practices (such as one-on-one meetings, annual reports, and so on)?
11. How do you support the work of your direct reports?
12. What kind of preparation or training did you receive to become a manager, if any?

Now I want to discuss supervising neurodivergent employees.

13. Can you describe your familiarity with neurodiversity?

- a. When and how did you become familiar with neurodiversity?
 - b. Are there additional things you would like to know or learn about neurodiversity?
14. How many neurodivergent folks do you currently, or have you previously supervised? And for how long?
- a. Can you describe how this might be similar or different from supervising other employees?
 - b. What has been working well?
 - c. What are some of the challenges?
 - d. How do you manage/create cohesion and collaboration within your neurodiverse team (how do you work to set an equitable tone/practices/expectation across neurotype)?
15. What has your library done to support or inhibit inclusion of neurodivergent employees?
- a. What support have you received as their manager?
 - b. What support have neurotypical library workers received to create an inclusive work environment for neurodivergent employees?
 - c. What would you like your library to do to support you or to support inclusion?
 - d. What resources, support, or guidance, if any, have you used to help you supervise a neurodivergent employee?
16. What else would you like to discuss regarding your experience supervising a neurodivergent librarian that we have not yet discussed? What did we miss?
17. Thinking back over our discussion today, what do you feel is the most important thing for our research team to know?
18. Would you consider sharing the call for participation with any neurodivergent librarians you might know who work or have worked in libraries?

Closing

Thank you so much for your time today. You are welcome to reach out to me after this interview if you think of anything else you would like to add.

After the interview, our research team will send you a brief feedback survey so you can help us identify ways to improve this interview process. Participation in this survey is optional and all responses are anonymous. You will also receive your \$35 gift card via email.

We will be conducting more interviews, analyzing the data, and designing specific best practices for the employment of neurodivergent librarians. We will share our findings from these interviews on our website, so please feel free to check there for updates on this research. If you have any questions, additional comments, think of something you wanted to add, or if you have any concerns please feel free to contact our research team at our email neurodiversity@uw.edu.

Appendix E: Interview Protocol for Neurotypical Librarians

Brief overview of purpose of the interview and consent forms (5 minutes)

“Thank you for agreeing to participate in this Interview. My name is Christine Moeller, and I am a neurodivergent academic librarian and a PhD student at the UW Information School. We’ll begin today by going over some logistics, telling you some background information, what this study is about, your rights as a participant, and then we’ll get started.”

“Please direct your attention to the Consent Form.”

[Review consent form, give participant a chance to read it over, ask questions, and then sign the form if they haven’t done so already.]

Interview Introduction

“As a reminder, the purpose of this research project is to investigate the challenges and opportunities that neurodivergent librarians experience in the library workplace in order to build neuroinclusive libraries. In this interview, I will ask you questions about your experiences as a library worker. There are no ‘right’ answers to these questions, so how you answer is your decision. You can take your time to respond, and you and I are both welcome to make facial expressions and use hand gestures or other forms of communication in addition to words. I want to make sure this interview is accessible for you and for me, so I have turned on the live transcription which you should also be able to see now. Other options you are welcome to request include turning off your video, moving the conversation into the chat, or using the chat to post questions (such as the ones I am asking of you). Would any of these options be helpful for you? You can also let me know later if your needs change.

During the interview, you may skip a question or come back to it later. You or I can ask for breaks at any point, and I will check in with you halfway through the interview. You can also ask to end the interview at any time you wish. If any of my questions are unclear, you can ask me to explain or provide some examples.

I want to hear your story, so descriptive answers are more helpful than short answers. The details you share will help us understand how we can help improve workplaces for neurodivergent librarians.

Before we begin the interview, what questions do you have for me about this research project or this interview process?”

[Respond to questions]

Reminder of consent to recording:

I am going to begin recording now. You can confirm that we have your permission to record this interview by clicking on the button that pops up on your screen. I will also remind you that all

information will be completely confidential, and the recordings will be deleted after we have transcribed the interview. There will be no identifying information in the transcripts. Are you ready to begin?

Let's start by discussing some of the details about the library where you work (or worked).

1. What is the organizational structure of your library?
 - a. How is the library staffed and managed?
 - b. How many librarians?
2. As you probably know, there are a lot of stereotypes of librarians, like the strict older woman with a bun and glasses, and more recently the cheery tattooed librarian. How would you describe librarians to someone outside of the profession?
 - a. And how would you describe what librarians do?
 - b. Has your understanding of librarians changed in the time you've worked in libraries? If so, how?
 - c. What librarian/employee traits or characteristics are most valued at your library? *(For example, think about job ads that might list qualifications like the ability to juggle many tasks at once)*
3. How would you describe the organizational culture of your library?
4. What kinds of professional development or other support programs, like mentoring, are available for library workers?

Let's talk for a moment about retention and advancement, which the PLA has reported is an increasing issue in libraries.

5. Has your library had any issues retaining employees?
 - a. If so, what has been done, if anything, to address that?
 - b. If not, why do you think that is the case?
6. What kind of opportunities for professional advancement or promotion exist at your library?
7. What steps, if any, have library leadership taken to support or advance diversity, equity, and inclusion within the workplace?

Now let's talk more about how library employees interact and collaborate at your library.

8. What is your current role in the library?
 - a. How did you come to that role? How long have you been in this role?
9. How would you describe the approach at your library to working with other library employees? *(For example, some libraries are team-based and some are not)*
 - a. How do co-workers interact at your library *(For example, some librarians only see each other at formal meetings and work independently, while others often work on collaborative projects)*? How often?
 - b. What are some of the collaboration practices at your library *(such as one-on-one meetings, annual reports, team projects, and so on)*?

Now I want to discuss neurodiversity in the workplace.

10. Can you describe your familiarity with neurodiversity? (When and how did you become familiar with neurodiversity?)
11. What additional things would you like to know or learn about neurodiversity?

12. Do you have experience working with neurodivergent colleagues in any capacity? *[If yes, can ask questions below, if not skip to next question]*
 - a. Can you describe how this might be similar or different from working with other employees?
 - b. What has been working well?
 - c. What are some of the challenges?
13. What steps, if any, has your library taken to include neurodivergent employees?
 - a. What support have neurotypical library workers received to create an inclusive work environment for neurodivergent employees?
 - b. What has your supervisor or other managers done to create or inhibit an inclusive work environment?
14. What could your library do to create a neuroinclusive work environment?
15. What resources, support, or guidance, if any, would help you work with a neurodivergent co-worker?
16. What else would you like to discuss regarding neurodiversity employment in libraries that we have not yet discussed? What did we miss?
17. Thinking back over our discussion today, what do you feel is the most important thing for our research team to know?
18. Would you consider sharing the call for participation with any other librarians you know who might be interested in participating?

Closing

Thank you so much for your time today. You are welcome to reach out to me after this interview if you think of anything else you would like to add.

After the interview, our research team will send you a brief feedback survey so you can help us identify ways to improve this interview process. Participation in this survey is optional and all responses are anonymous. You will also receive your \$35 gift card via email.

We will be conducting more interviews, analyzing the data, and designing specific best practices for the employment of neurodivergent librarians. We will share our findings from these interviews on our website, so please feel free to check there for updates on this research. If you have any questions, additional comments, think of something you wanted to add, or if you have any concerns please feel free to contact our research team at our email neurodiversity@uw.edu.

Appendix F: Interview Protocol for Neurotypical Library Supervisors

Brief overview of purpose of the interview and consent forms (5 minutes)

“Thank you for agreeing to participate in this Interview. My name is Christine Moeller, and I am a neurodivergent academic librarian and a PhD student at the UW Information School. We’ll begin today by going over some logistics, telling you some background information, what this study is about, your rights as a participant, and then we’ll get started.”

“Please direct your attention to the Consent Form.”

[Review consent form, give participant a chance to read it over, ask questions, and then sign the form if they haven’t done so already.]

Interview Introduction

“As a reminder, the purpose of this research project is to investigate the challenges and opportunities that neurodivergent librarians experience in the library workplace in order to build neuroinclusive libraries. In this interview, I will ask you questions about your experiences as a library worker. There are no ‘right’ answers to these questions, so how you answer is your decision. You can take your time to respond, and you and I are both welcome to make facial expressions and use hand gestures or other forms of communication in addition to words. I want to make sure this interview is accessible for you and for me, so I have turned on the live transcription which you should also be able to see now. Other options you are welcome to request include turning off your video, moving the conversation into the chat, or using the chat to post questions (such as the ones I am asking of you). Would any of these options be helpful for you? You can also let me know later if your needs change.

During the interview, you may skip a question or come back to it later. You or I can ask for breaks at any point, and I will check in with you halfway through the interview. You can also ask to end the interview at any time you wish. If any of my questions are unclear, you can ask me to explain or provide some examples.

I want to hear your story, so descriptive answers are more helpful than short answers. Feel free to provide as much detail as you can, because those details will help us understand how we can help improve workplaces for neurodivergent librarians.

Before we begin the interview, what questions do you have for me about this research project or this interview process?”

[Respond to questions]

Reminder of consent to recording:

I am going to begin recording now. You can confirm that we have your permission to record this interview by clicking on the button that pops up on your screen. I will also remind you that all

information will be completely confidential, and the recordings will be deleted after we have transcribed the interview. There will be no identifying information in the transcripts. Are you ready to begin?

Let's start by discussing some of the details about the library where you work (or worked).

1. What is the organizational structure of your library?
 - a. How is the library staffed and managed?
 - b. How many librarians?

As you probably know, there are a lot of stereotypes of librarians, like the strict older woman with a bun and glasses, and more recently the cheery tattooed librarian.

2. How would you describe librarians to someone outside of the profession?
 - a. And how would you describe what librarians do?
 - b. Has your understanding of librarians changed since you became a manager? If so, how?
 - c. What librarian/employee traits or characteristics are most valued at your library? *(For example, think about job ads that might list qualifications like the ability to juggle many tasks at once)*
3. How would you describe the organizational culture of your library?
4. What kinds of professional development or other support programs, like mentoring, are available for library workers?

Let's talk for a moment about retention and advancement, which the PLA has reported is an increasing issue in libraries.

5. Has your library had any issues retaining employees?
 - a. If so, what has been done, if anything, to address that?
 - b. If not, why do you think that is the case?
6. What kind of opportunities for professional advancement or promotion exist at your library?
7. What steps, if any, have library leadership taken to support or advance diversity, equity, and inclusion within the workplace?

Next let's discuss your role as a library supervisor.

8. What is your current role in the library?
 - a. How did you come to that role? How long have you been in this role?
 - b. What are your supervisory responsibilities? How many folks do you supervise?
9. How would you describe your approach to supervising other employees?
 - a. What are some of your management practices (such as one-on-one meetings, annual reports, and so on)?
 - b. How do you support the work of your direct reports?
10. What kind of preparation or training did you receive to become a manager, if any?

Now I want to discuss neurodiversity in the workplace. Can you describe your familiarity with neurodiversity? (When and how did you become familiar with neurodiversity?)

11. What additional things would you like to know or learn about neurodiversity?
12. Do you have experience working with neurodivergent colleagues in any capacity?

- a. *[If yes, can ask questions below, if not skip to next question]*
 - b. Can you describe how this might be similar or different from supervising other employees?
 - c. What has been working well?
 - d. What are some of the challenges?
 - e. How do you manage/create cohesion and collaboration within your neurodiverse team (how do you work to set an equitable tone/practices/expectation across neurotype)?
13. What steps, if any, has your library taken to address the inclusion of neurodivergent employees?
- a. What support have managers received?
 - b. What support have neurotypical library workers received to create an inclusive work environment for neurodivergent employees?
 - c. What could your library do to create a neuroinclusive work environment?
14. What resources, support, or guidance, if any, would help you supervise a neurodivergent employee?
15. What else would you like to discuss regarding neurodiversity employment in libraries that we have not yet discussed? What did we miss?
16. Thinking back over our discussion today, what do you feel is the most important thing for our research team to know?

Closing

Thank you so much for your time today. You are welcome to reach out to me after this interview if you think of anything else you would like to add.

After the interview, our research team will send you a brief feedback survey so you can help us identify ways to improve this interview process. Participation in this survey is optional and all responses are anonymous. You will also receive your \$35 gift card via email.

We will be conducting more interviews, analyzing the data, and designing specific best practices for the employment of neurodivergent librarians. We will share our findings from these interviews on our website, so please feel free to check there for updates on this research. If you have any questions, additional comments, think of something you wanted to add, or if you have any concerns please feel free to contact our research team at our email neurodiversity@uw.edu.

Appendix G: Coding Scheme

Barriers and Enablers

Table 9: Coding Scheme Barriers and Enablers

Construct	Sub-Constructs	Definition	Indicators	Definition
Barriers	Stereotyping	Set and often wrong or incomplete ideas about neurodiversity or disabilities more broadly, often articulated as characteristics assigned to a group from incomplete knowledge or experience	Autism stereotype	The neurodivergent librarian experiences attitudes or comments from others that reflect assumed oversimplified characteristics of autism
			ADHD stereotype	The neurodivergent librarian experiences attitudes or comments from others that reflect assumed oversimplified characteristics of ADHD
			Disability stereotype	The neurodivergent librarian experiences attitudes or comments from others that reflect assumed oversimplified characteristics of disability

	Stigma	Negative beliefs about neurodiversity or disability in general	Autism stigma	The neurodivergent librarian experiences attitudes or comments from others that reflect negative incorrect beliefs about autism
			ADHD stigma	The neurodivergent librarian experiences attitudes or comments from others that reflect negative incorrect beliefs about ADHD
			Disability stigma	The neurodivergent librarian experiences attitudes or comments from others that reflect negative incorrect beliefs about disability
			Internalized stigma	The neurodivergent librarian has accepted stereotypes and stigma and believes those things about themselves

	Shame	A humiliating feeling of wrong or foolish behavior	Self-blame or guilt	The neurodivergent librarian feels they are at fault for their own situation or neurodivergent behaviors.
	Discrimination	Acting with prejudice toward others	Fear of discrimination	Neurodivergent librarian worries that they will experience acts of prejudice and may alter their behavior to avoid that occurring.
			Microaggressions	Brief statements, actions, or incidents experienced by the neurodivergent librarian that are subtle or indirect forms of inequitable treatment of a marginalized group.
			Inequitable treatment	Neurodivergent librarian experiences unfair treatment, such as probation or being fired

			Denial of accommodations	The neurodivergent librarian's requests for ADA accommodations are denied and/or unmet
	Isolation/exclusion	Feelings of being left out or alone	Professional exclusion	Neurodivergent librarian is left out of projects or collaborative work
			Social exclusion	Neurodivergent librarian is left out of social interactions in the workplace
	Poor colleague relationships	Experiencing negative interactions within the workplace	Poor co-worker relationships	Neurodivergent librarian experiences discomforting or harmful interactions with co-workers
			Poor supervisor relationship	Neurodivergent librarian experiences discomforting or harmful interactions with supervisors
	Inappropriate workplace environment	Aspects of the workplace environment fail to meet the needs of the employee	Workplace sensory environment	Sensory elements of the environment (such as lighting or noise levels) cause the

				neurodivergent librarian discomfort, distraction, or pain
			Workplace physical environment	Physical elements of the environment (such open workspaces) prevent meaningful work or fail to create a safe space for the neurodivergent librarian
	Neurotypical workplace expectations	Neurotypical workers expect or demand certain workplace behaviors or practices that may not come naturally to everyone	Speed of work	The employer or colleagues of the neurodivergent librarian expect work-related tasks to occur at a certain speed or within a certain amount of time
Workplace socializing			The neurodivergent librarian is expected to attend social events outside of normal work expectations	
Eye Contact			The neurodivergent librarian is, or feels, expected to make and/or maintain eye contact when speaking with others, regardless of how that might feel for them.	

			Executive functioning	The neurodivergent librarian is expected to plan, focus, remember, and juggle multiple tasks effectively
Communication needs unmet	Expectations around communication do not align with preferences of neurodivergent employee		Unclear communication	The neurodivergent librarian receives communication lacking in detail and transparency
			Communication not in desired format	The neurodivergent librarian receives communication given through means different than desired or requested
Lack of employer knowledge/familiarity	Colleagues have little knowledge or hold misconceptions of neurodiversity		Misconceptions about neurodiversity	Colleagues of the neurodivergent librarian express incorrect information about neurodiversity
			Disbelief	Colleagues of the neurodivergent librarian assume that the neurodivergent librarian is not or could not be neurodivergent in some way

			Lack of knowledge about neurodiversity	Colleagues of the neurodivergent librarian possess little to no information about neurodiversity
			Lack of knowledge or misconceptions about disability	Colleagues of the neurodivergent librarian possess little to no information about disability or co-occurring conditions
	Lasting impact of stress	Ongoing stress leads to additional consequences and/or burnout	Mental or physical health issues	The neurodivergent librarian experiences changes in mental or physical health due to library workplace stress
			Personal life impacted/ work-life balance	The neurodivergent librarian experiences changes in personal life due to library workplace stress

			Autistic/ADHD burnout	The neurodivergent librarian is nearing or experiencing autistic/ADHD burnout
	Accommodations processes	Workplace accommodations are a legal process provided under the ADA to provide workplace supports and adjustments as appropriate.	Unclear accommodations process	The neurodivergent librarian experienced uncertainty about who to contact for accommodations, how to move forward with requests, or what to ask for
			Perceived as for other people	The neurodivergent librarian views accommodations as not for them, their needs, or only for other people with different forms of disability
			Complicated/bureaucratic accommodations process	The neurodivergent librarian encounters excessive requirements, paperwork, difficulties with HR that hinder their request for accommodations

Opportunities	Culture of diversity & inclusion	Workplace understands and values differences	Racial diversity culture	The library workplace includes and values people from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds
			Disability/ND inclusion culture	The library workplace includes and values disabled/ neurodivergent people
	Employee education	Workplace provides employees with neurodiversity training and/or support	Employee training	Library workers receive educational offerings like a webinar or workshop
			Employee mentoring/coaching	Library workers receive ongoing education and support such as CoP, affinity groups, coaching

	Positive colleague relationships	Experiencing positive interactions within the workplace	Positive co-worker relationships	The neurodivergent librarian experiences positive interactions with co-workers
			Positive supervisor relationship	The neurodivergent librarian experiences positive interactions with supervisors
	Flexible arrangements	Employer allows or encourages flexible approaches to work	Flexible schedule	The neurodivergent librarian's schedule and work hours may vary as needed or desired, or schedule allows for variation of tasks as desired by librarian.
			Hybrid or remote work	The neurodivergent librarian's location of work (office/home) may vary as needed as desired

	Control over workplace environment	Employee has a workspace they can adapt to meet their needs	Sensory environment	The neurodivergent librarian can adapt sensory elements of the environment (such as lighting or noise levels) to meet their own needs
			Flexible work space	The neurodivergent librarian can adapt furniture or other items in their workplace to meet their own needs (such as a standing desk than can be used seated or standing)
			Physical environment	The neurodivergent librarian can adapt physical elements of the environment (such as closing door) to meet their own needs
	Meeting communication needs	Expectations around communication align with preferences of neurodivergent employee	Clear and transparent communication	The neurodivergent librarian receives communication that has adequate detail and transparency
			Communication in desired format	The neurodivergent librarian receives communication given through means as desired or requested to meet their own needs

	Neurodivergent leadership	Neurodivergent people are leading the library as supervisors or other positions of authority and power.		
	Pandemic work model changes	Workplace shifts during the pandemic, such as the shift to remote work, created different working conditions.	Normalizing different methods of working	Methods of work that were previously unavailable, such as remote work, became anticipated and expected.
	Parallel work	The neurodivergent librarian makes use of body doubling to help them achieve work tasks.		
	Trauma-informed approach	Workplace recognizes that employees may have past history of trauma and acts accordingly	Trauma-informed practices used in workplace	Specific mention of trauma-informed practices or trauma-informed care

Embodied Knowledge of Neurodivergent Librarians

Table 10: Coding Scheme Embodied Knowledge

Sub-Constructs	Definition	Indicators	Definition
Informal networks	Getting support from connections with others outside of workplace	Family and friends	The neurodivergent librarian is seeking or relying on support from family and friends
		*Neurodiversity community	The neurodivergent librarian works to build connections with other neurodivergent people outside of the workplace (e.g. social media)
		Professional connections	The neurodivergent librarian seeks or relies on support from professional contacts outside of their workplace, such as librarians at other libraries
Informal mentoring	Seeking mentoring outside of a formal program in the workplace	Using previous connections	The neurodivergent librarian reaches out to previous mentors or colleagues for mentorship
		Building new connections	The neurodivergent librarian creates new connections with others for mentorship outside of employer supported program
Individual changes	Employee takes on work of adjusting to an uninclusive workplace	Providing own adjustments	The neurodivergent librarian supplies necessary supports at their workplace (such as lighting, fidgets, meeting notes)

		*Self-medicating	The neurodivergent librarian uses non-prescription drugs or other substances (such as marijuana, coffee, or alcohol) to deal with one or more conditions
		Masking	The neurodivergent librarian works to suppress or conceal neurodivergent behaviors
Ignoring barriers	Employee disregards or dismisses workplace difficulties	Ignoring workplace challenges	The neurodivergent librarian disregards challenges, conceals diagnosis, and focuses on doing the work
Change-agent mindset	Neurodivergent employee engages in advocacy for self or for others	Advocating for and/or creating change in org	The neurodivergent librarian actively encourages or leads change within the library organization
		Critiquing problems in org	The neurodivergent librarian actively voices concerns with practices or attitudes within the library organization

Using "special interest" or strengths for career	Neurodivergent employee aligns "special interest" or strengths with career or position selection	Aligning neurodivergent "special interest" with chosen position	The neurodivergent librarian's position involves an area that is their personal "special interest" or area of deep passion (such as anime, comics, or zines)
		Applying aspects of neurodivergent strengths to current position	The neurodivergent librarian's position involves areas of neurodivergent strengths, as described by themselves
Using tools to support needs	Neurodivergent employee makes use of one or more tools to support workplace needs	Digital tools	The neurodivergent librarian uses tools such as phone apps, a digital watch, or software to meet their needs
		Physical or tactile tools	The neurodivergent librarian uses tools such as written planners, signs, fidgets, or other tactile objects to meet their needs

Disclosing diagnosis	Neurodivergent employee reveals their neurodivergence to other people in the workplace	Disclosing to supervisor	The neurodivergent librarian reveals their neurodivergence to their supervisor(s)
		Disclosing to trusted co-worker	The neurodivergent librarian reveals their neurodivergence to trusted co-workers
		Selective disclosure	The neurodivergent librarian discloses some disabilities or forms of neurodivergence, especially those with lower stigma, while concealing others
		Openly disclosing to any or all	The neurodivergent librarian reveals their neurodivergence to any or all colleagues
Requesting accommodations	Neurodivergent employee arranges for some form of work adjustment(s)	Formal accommodations	The neurodivergent librarian arranges for legal, officially documented workplace adjustments.
		Informal accommodations	The neurodivergent librarian arranges for workplace adjustments through unofficial methods, such as a verbal agreement with a supervisor.

Identity development	Neurodivergent person is building or navigating new or different understandings of themselves	Navigating self-identity as neurodivergent	The neurodivergent librarian is coming to new or different understandings of neurodiversity and what it means to them personally
		neurodivergent librarian is learning to identify their own needs	The neurodivergent librarian is learning how to support their own neurodivergence
Consistently high performance	Neurodivergent employee works to meet high performance standards at workplace despite or because of their neurodivergence	The neurodivergent librarian meets or exceeds position requirements and expectations	The neurodivergent librarian overachieves in order to be seen and treated as a 'good' employee
Leaving the profession	Neurodivergent librarian desires or seeks employment in other fields	The neurodivergent librarian is considering employment in other professions	The neurodivergent librarian expresses interest or is taking beginning steps toward a change of profession
		Already left	The neurodivergent librarian has secured a position in a different profession

*Retreat space	The neurodivergent librarian identifies and/or uses a quiet, isolated, hidden-away spot away from regular workspaces to escape or recover as needed.		
*Prepping	The neurodivergent librarian engages in detailed process of getting ready for meetings, discussions, or other workplace situations in order to know what to expect ahead of time.	*Process of preparation	The neurodivergent librarian needs or desires to get ready in advance for workplace interactions or events, such as visiting a location in advance.
		*Scripts	The neurodivergent librarian develops lines or dialogue like a manuscript for themselves in preparation for interactions with others.
*Aligning employment with personal values	The neurodivergent librarian needs or desires employment that is in keeping with their own beliefs and values		

Individual Differences (from IDTGIT)

Table 11: Coding Scheme Individual Differences

Construct	Sub-Constructs	Definition	Indicators	Definition
Individual identity	Personal demographics	Information that describes the individual person and their characteristics	Age	How old the participant is
			Gender identity	The gender identity of the participant
			Racial/Ethnic identity	The racial/ethnic identity of the participant
			Sexual identity	The sexual identity of the participant
			Socio-economic status	Household income and social class (such as working class or middle class) of the participant
			Forms of neurodiversity (ADHD/autism)	Participant has formal diagnosis or self-identification of autism, ADHD, or both
			Co-occurring conditions (other than ADHD or autism)	Participant experiences physical or mental conditions other than ADHD or autism
			Caregiver status	Participant has a caregiving role, such as for their children or parents

	Career items	Information regarding the details of the type of librarianship the neurodivergent person is involved with	Work history	The librarian's previous employment areas and/or positions
			Type of librarian	The type of library where the participant is employed (i.e., public or academic library)
			*Academic librarian faculty status	Participant works at a library where academic librarians hold faculty status of some kind
			Type of position	The type of library work participant is engaging in (such as youth librarian or academic instruction)
Individual influences	Personal characteristics	Aspects of the neurodivergent person's background and personality	Educational background	Participant's education history and level of education
			*Family background	Aspects of the participant's upbringing that significantly influence their behaviors or identity to this day.

			Interests	Specific mention of areas of focus or passion for the participant
			Abilities	Mention of the participant's specific natural or acquired skills or capabilities
	Personal influences	Internal or external factors that shape or impact the neurodivergent person	*Intersectionality	The participant's experience of oppression as linked to multiple forms of identity that interact with each other.
			Mentors	Mention of individuals that have provided personal or professional guidance to the participant
			Role models	Mention of individuals that the participant holds in high regard and seeks to emulate in some way

			Significant life experiences (<i>Includes Late diagnosis/ID, negative work experience, pandemic-related Dx/ID, trauma</i>)	Events that have notably shaped the participant's way of thinking and being
Environmental influences	Cultural influences	Attitudes and values that characterize a group or organization	Regional culture	Mention of attitudes and values specific to the geographic location
			Organizational environment	Mention of attitudes and values that are specific to the library organization (e.g. collaboration, individualism, competition)
	Economic influences	Factors that inform financial decisions	Cost of living	Expenses for housing, food, healthcare, and transportation
			Salary	Specific mention of wages or monetary compensation for participant's labor/services
	Policy influences	Laws and policies that impact decision-making in the workplace	Discrimination laws	Legal statutes such as ADA or Title IX

			Policies around PTO or leave	Library workplace policies that govern time off or extended time away from work
	Infrastructure influences	Social structures outside of the workplace that impact the neurodivergent person.	Medical knowledge around neurodiversity and esp. neurodiversity in women/AFAB	Medical professionals' adherence to medical definitions or understandings of neurodiversity
			*ADHD prescription laws	Laws and policies impacting availability of and access to ADHD medication

Library Professional Culture

Table 12: Coding Scheme Library Profession

Construct	Sub-Constructs	Definition
Core values	Access	Library resources and services are available and accessible to all.
	DEI	Specific mention of valuing diversity, equity, and inclusion
	Public Good	Any assertion that libraries are an essential public good and are fundamental institutions in democratic societies
	Professionalism	Specific mention of "professionalism" within library workplaces.
	Social justice	Mention of the social responsibility of libraries and/or librarianship
Continuous change		Managing or coping with a quick process of change in libraries
Credentialism	LIS degree	Emphasis placed upon the importance of the MLIS or equivalent degree
	Second Master's degree	Emphasis placed upon the importance of additional graduate-level education, such as a second master's degree
Emotional labor		Emphasis on the ability of the librarian to appear available, friendly, and welcoming and ready to serve patrons and make them feel at ease.
Hyperable librarian	Extensive knowledge/skills	The demand for librarians to acquire and demonstrate skills and knowledge across multiple areas and aspects of librarianship
	Lifelong learning	Librarians are expected to stay up to date on current trends and other areas relevant to the profession

	Innovation	The demand for librarians to develop and advance cutting-edge services, programs, and other novel ideas to the benefit of the library
Normative ways of being	Performing attention	Engaging in eye contact and 'positive' body language for the benefit of others
	Excellence in communication	Librarian is effective in multiple modes and forms of communication without having communication needs of their own
Library nice		Prioritizing the performance of being "nice" over skills or expertise, esp. as related to race and gender.
Service-orientation		Emphasis on support offered directly to patrons, such as answering questions and offering programming or other services.