

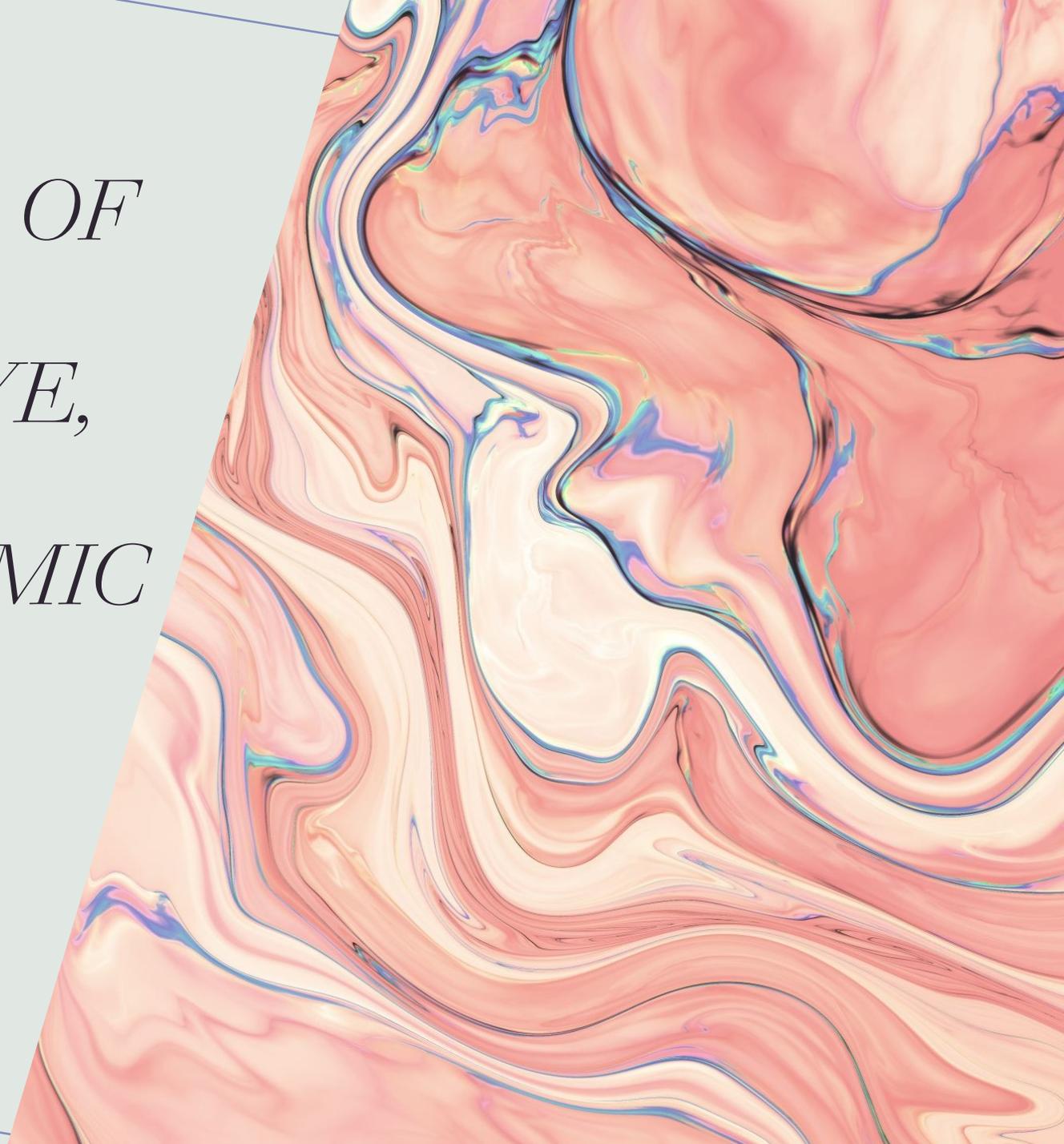
*“REPAIR, REPAIR,
REPAIR”: THE ROLE OF
THE ARCHIVIST IN
SOCIAL, REPARATIVE,
AND RESTORATIVE
JUSTICE AT ACADEMIC
INSTITUTIONS*

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STATE OF THE FIELD: ARCHIVAL JUSTICE

- Because repositories hold primary sources, it's also incredibly important to acknowledge the major gaps in the historical record – the American archival profession is roughly 100 years old, and traditionally collected materials of the people and institutions holding power.
- Howard Zinn (1970): “the existence, preservation, and availability of archives, documents, records in our society are very much determined by the distribution of wealth and power.”
- Joan Schwartz and Terry Cook (2002) : archives are “about maintaining power, about the power of the present to control what is, and will be, known about the past, about the power of remembering over forgetting.”
- Rand Jimerson (2006): “Archives are not neutral or objective.”
- Lae’l Hughes-Watkins (2018): “Reparative archival work does not pretend to ignore the imperialist, racist, homophobic, sexist, ableist, and other discriminatory traditions of mainstream archives, but instead acknowledges these failures and engages in conscious actions toward a wholeness that may seem to be an exercise in futility but in actuality is an ethical imperative for all within traditional archival spaces.”
- Rachel E. Winston (2021): for archives to move towards justice, they need to “operate out of a commitment to minimize harm and provide care for both collections and professionals.” Influenced by the feminist ethic of care, critical race praxis in archives should focus on both collections and people - acknowledging the human element present in collections, including the labor and emotion of archivists. “We must extend care beyond the boxes, folders, and server space in our repositories.”
- Explosion of pro-justice work in published archival literature over the past 15 years – but how does this play out on the ground, in the workplace?

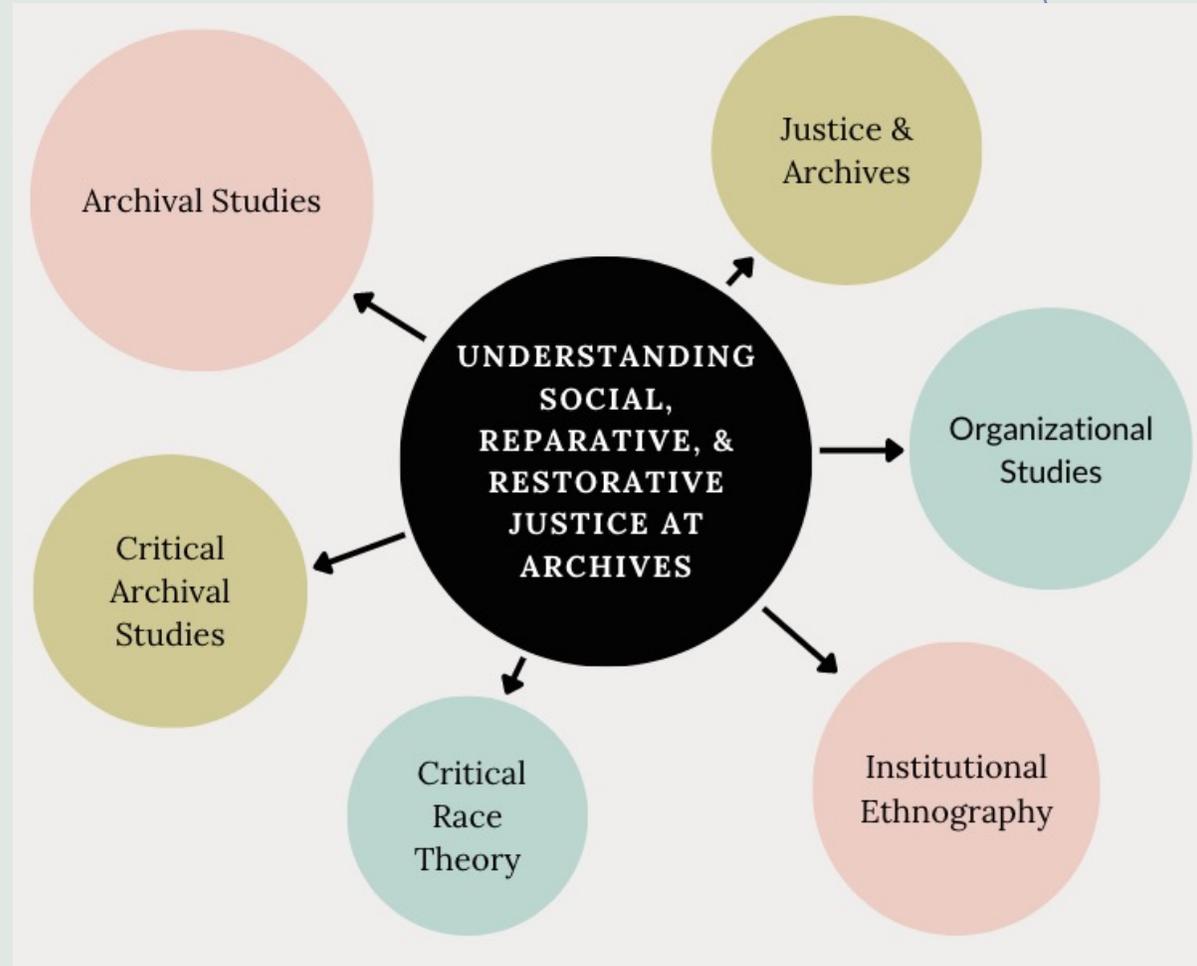


Photos: bottom, Photo of Justice for Jordan McNair protest on UMD's campus in November 2018, by Jon Orbach, for *The Diamondback*. Top, The campus bus stop where Richard Collins III was murdered on UMD's campus, by Caitlin Christian-Lamb.

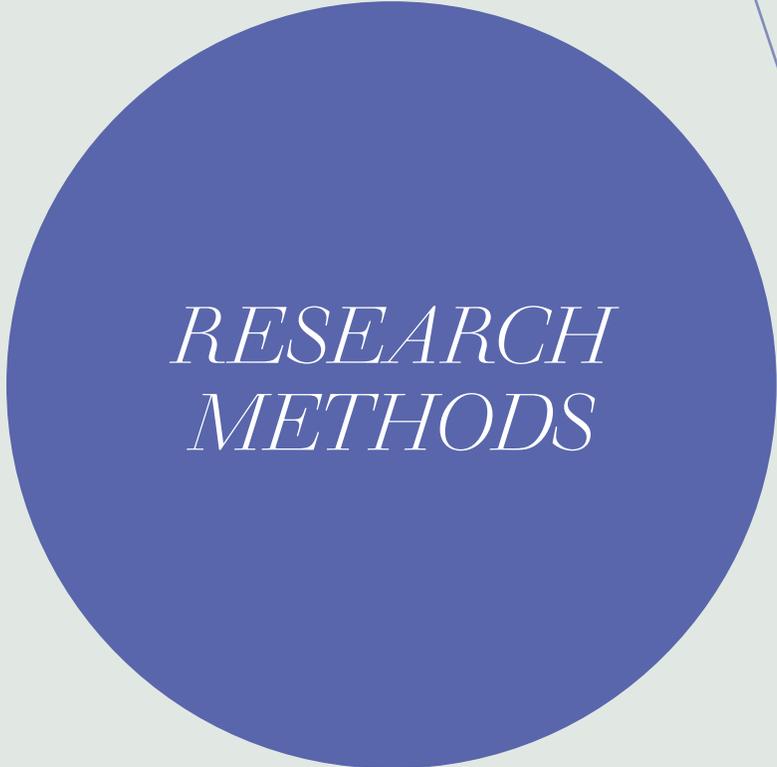
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. RQ1: How are concepts of social, reparative, and restorative justice permeating archival practice on the ground at academic archives?
 - a. RQ1A: What are the catalysts and motivating factors for changes happening in archives?
 - b. RQ1B: How do archivists engaging in justice work define their objectives or successes?
 - c. RQ1C: What are the barriers to engaging in social justice, reparative justice, or other forms of antiracist work within academic archives?

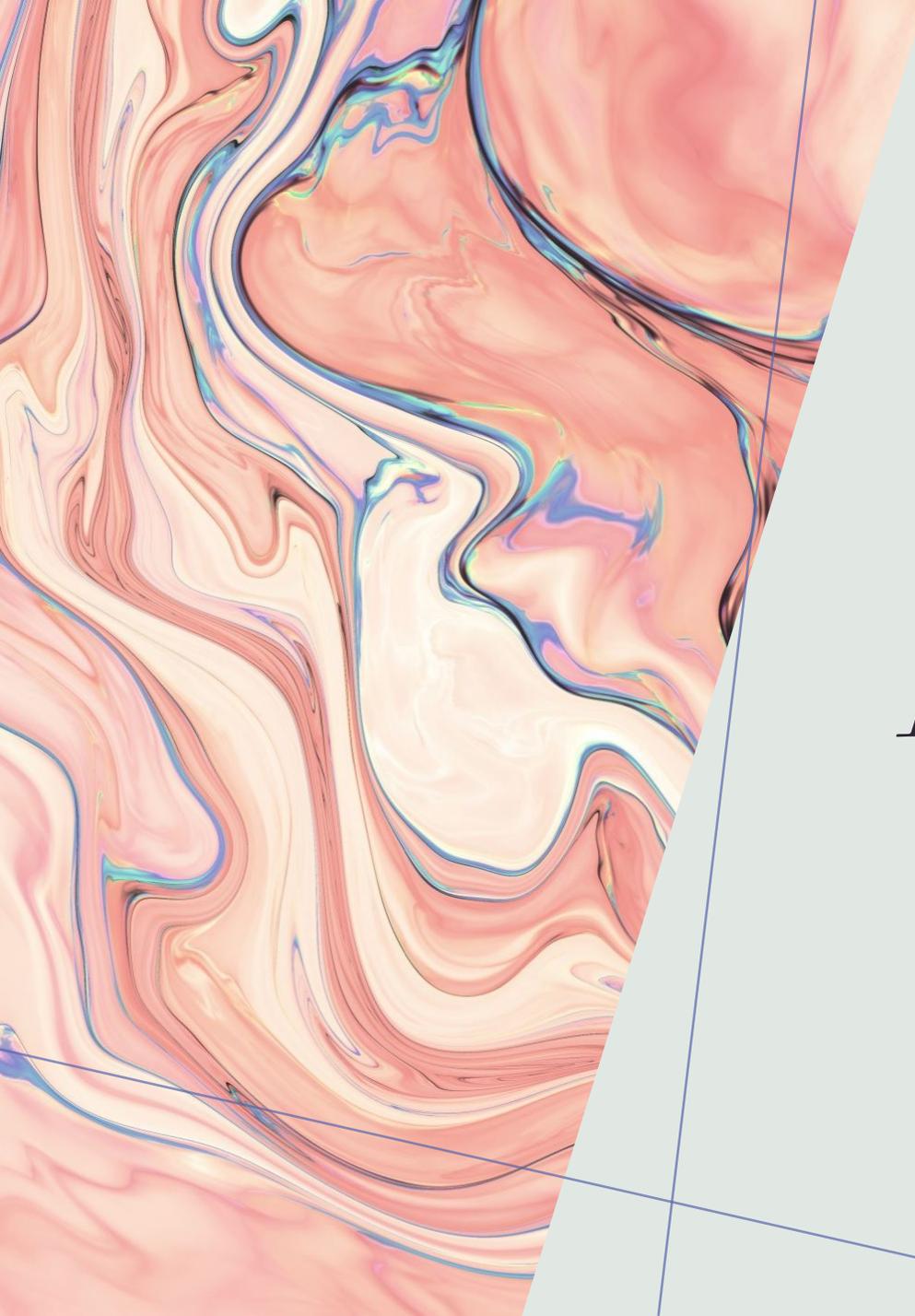
LITERATURE REVIEW



- Academic archivists interview study
 - Interviews with academic archivists at other institutions
 - n=13
- Case study: UMD and the 1856 Project
 - Participant observation
 - Interview study with 1856 Project participants, Lakeland Community Heritage Project leaders, & stakeholders
 - Interview study with archival practitioners not formally associated with the 1856 Project



*RESEARCH
METHODS*



POSITIONALITY

*EARLY
THEMES
EMERGING
FROM
INTERVIEWS
WITH
ACADEMIC
ARCHIVISTS
ENGAGING IN
JUSTICE WORK*

- Local contexts vary, but there is also much in common
- Levers or catalysts for change:
 - Student activism and protest
 - Institutional mission as driver for change
 - National and local hate crimes, anti-Black violence locally and nationally
- Recognizing state of the field – whiteness as status quo
- Suggestions for change – best practices for anti-racism archival projects, but also ideas for decentering whiteness in American archivy, broadening access to profession
- “Success” and “finished” projects – how to define? The work is never finished
- Staffing and funding – management can support or stymie
- Justice-positive skew – all participants already engage in this work

69.2% of participants hold managerial positions

92.3% of participants work in institutions in the American South (as defined by US Census Bureau)

38.5% work at public institutions

61.5% work at private not-for-profit institutions

Institutions span a range of R1's, small liberal arts colleges, master's colleges/universities, PWI's, and HBCU's

Demographics of current participant pool closely align with the profession, as shown in A*CENSUS II

Q: “*WHAT IS, OR
WHAT SHOULD BE,
THE ROLE OF
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