

**When Diversity is Too Much: New Librarians of Color and Expectations for
Involvement in Library Diversity Initiatives**

**Kawanna Bright
NC State University Libraries
Pampanisha King
Auburn University Libraries
Deborah Lilton
Vanderbilt University Libraries**

Initiatives to recruit and retain librarians of color in academic librarianship have been the topic of much discussion. A related topic not often discussed is how these initiatives may be having unattended opposite effects and contributing to the loss of the very librarians they are designed to support. This session offered a discussion of the possible negative aspects of these initiatives, how they can affect new librarians of color, and how these negative aspects may be avoided. New directions for research were introduced, including an analysis of how social trap theory (from psychology) may be used to predict some of the difficulties that recipients of diversity initiatives face; and the concept of diversity management (from business) as a solution to these social traps. Finally, the initial results of a survey on the thoughts of over two hundred librarians of color on these diversity initiatives were presented.

When Diversity is Too Much: *New Librarians of Color and Expectations for Involvement in Library Diversity Initiatives*

Kawanna Bright

NC State University Libraries

Pambanisha King

Auburn University Libraries

Deborah Lilton

Vanderbilt University Libraries

Session Agenda

Impetus for Survey

- ❖ Background Info
- ❖ Lit Review

The Survey

- ❖ General Results
- ❖ Section Breakdown
- ❖ Future Questions

Future Research

- ❖ Lessons learned from survey
- ❖ New areas to be investigated

Discussion

- ❖ Audience Questions

Impetus for Survey

- Personal experiences
- Personal conversations between librarians of color
- Something missing in the literature
 - ❖ Retention
 - ❖ Assessment
 - ❖ Areas for improvement in programs

Literature Review

- Definition and description
- Justification (Pro/Con)
- Process (micro-level)
- Process (macro-level)
- Narratives
- Assessment
- Retention

The Survey

Survey broken into the following sections:

- General Background
- Diversity Committees
- Diversity Training or Enrichment
- Liaison Activities
- Special Projects
- Interview Process
- Residency, Fellowship & Internship Programs
- Diversity Leadership (Professional Development)
- Open Comment Section

Survey: Background Information

The Questions

- What ethnicity or race?
- When did you become a librarian?
- Still working as a librarian?
- Departments worked in?
- Only librarian of color in a department?
- Only librarian of color in a library?

Survey: General Background

The Responses

Race & Ethnicity Breakdown

- 16 (6.9%) American Indian or Alaska Native
- 41 (17.6%) Asian
- 117 (50.2%) African American or Black
- 47 (20.2%) Hispanic or Latino
- 3 (1.3%) Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- 18 (7.8%) Other

Survey: Background Information

The Responses

When did you become a librarian?

- ❖ Between 2000-2008 (138)
- ❖ 1990-1999 (43)
- ❖ 1980-1989 (18)
- ❖ 1970-1979 (16)
- ❖ 1960-1969 (3)
- ❖ 1950-1959 (1)
- ❖ No MLS (2)

Survey: Background Information

The Responses

- 220 (96.1 %) are still working as a librarian.
- 9 (3.9 %) are no longer librarians.

Which departments do they work in?

- Access and Delivery (Circulation & ILL): 39 (17.5%)
- Acquisitions: 36 (16.1%)
- **Administration: 51 (22.9%)**
- Cataloging/ Metadata: 45 (20.6%)
- Collection management: 81 (36.3%)
- Digital Libraries: 18 (8.1%)
- Finance/ Business: 6 (2.7%)
- IT/ Systems: 14 (6.3%)
- Personnel/ Human Resources: 11 (4.9%)

- Preservation: 7 (3.1%)
- **Reference/ Instruction Services: 182 (81.6%)**
- Special Collections: 37 (16.6%)
- Other 46 responses (16.6%)
 - ❖ included Outreach, school media specialist, Special Libraries (Law, Business, medical) , art school, one person library , Library school professor, diversity recruitment

Survey: Background Information

The Responses

Only librarian of color in department?

- 144 of 225 (64.0%) have been the only librarian of color within an academic library department

Only librarian of color in library?

- 85 of 228 (37.7%) have been the only librarian of color within the entire library

Survey: Diversity Committees

The Questions

Did your institution have a diversity committee?

- If yes
 - ❖ Were you asked to serve on the committee?
 - ❖ Were you asked to chair the committee?
 - ❖ If not asked did you volunteer to serve?
 - ❖ Did you volunteer to serve as chair?
- If no
 - ❖ Were you asked to start or plan for a committee?
 - ❖ Did you suggest your institution start a committee?
 - ❖ Asked to be on such a committee?
 - ❖ Asked to chair such a committee?

Survey: Diversity Committees

The Responses

- 218 respondents to this section
- 92 worked at institutions with diversity committees (42.2%)
 - ❖ 48 (52.2%) were asked to serve on the committee
 - ❖ 13 (11.2%) were asked to chair the committee
 - ❖ 23 (31.9%) were not asked but did volunteer
 - ❖ 5 (5.7%) volunteered to chair
- 143 worked at institutions without diversity committees (65.60%)
 - ❖ 13 (9.2%) were asked to start or plan for a diversity committee
 - ❖ 15(10.9%) suggested their institution start a committee
 - ❖ 13 (11.2%) volunteered to be on such a committee
 - ❖ 8 (6.6 %) volunteered to chair such a committee

Survey: Diversity Committees

Significant Question/Response

- ❖ 61 of 131 (46.6%) felt their colleagues, director or supervisor expected them to be involved regardless of their interest

Survey: Interview Process

The Questions

- Asked questions related to diversity during a job interview when diversity not mentioned in job description?
- Asked what race/ethnicity was over phone?
- Asked inappropriate questions related to race/ethnicity or cultural background?

Survey: Interview Process

The Questions

- Asked to serve on search committee for specific diversity-related position?
- Asked to serve due to your race/ethnicity?
- Asked to escort a candidate due to race/ethnicity?
- Asked to identify “diverse” candidates for an open position?

Survey: The Interview Process

The Responses

- 190 respondents to this section
- 35 (18.4%) were asked questions related to diversity when diversity wasn't mentioned in job description
- 7 (3.7%) were asked their race/ethnicity over phone
- 11 (5.9%) were asked inappropriate questions related to race/ethnicity or cultural background

Survey: Interview Process

The Responses

- 40 (21.2%) were asked to serve on search committees for specific diversity-related positions
- 56 (29.5%) were asked to serve due to their race/ethnicity
- 38 (20.0%) were asked to escort a candidate due to race/ethnicity
- 86 (45.3%) were asked to identify “diverse” candidates for an open position

Survey: Special Projects

The Questions

- Asked to work on “special projects” related to diverse, ethnic, racial, or cultural issue?
 - ❖ If yes:
 - ❖ Projects related to position or job description?
 - ❖ Projects outside of position or responsibilities?
 - ❖ Asked to work on project due to status as person of color?

Survey: Special Projects

The Responses

- 111 (57.5%) were asked to work on “special projects” related to diverse, ethnic, racial, or cultural issues
 - ❖ 71 (64%) said projects were related to position
 - ❖ 61 (55%) worked on projects outside of position or responsibilities
 - ❖ 78 (70.3%) were asked to work on project due to status as person of color

Survey: Residency Programs...

The Questions

- Program specifically designed for people of color?
- Treated differently from other librarians?
- Able to inform others in the institution about the program/your responsibilities?
- If official mentor within institution, same ethnic/racial/cultural background?
- If unofficial mentors within institution, same ethnic/racial/cultural background?

Survey: Residency Programs...

The Responses

88 respondents in this section

- 44 (50%) participated in programs specifically designed for people of color
- 42 (47.7%) felt they were treated differently from other librarians
- 53 (60.2%) were able to inform others in the institution about the program/their responsibilities
- 58 (65.9%) did not have an official mentor within institution, same ethnic/racial/cultural background

Survey: Residency Programs...

The Responses

- 41 (46.6%) had an unofficial mentor within institution, same ethnic/racial/cultural background
- 21 (23.9%) were made to feel unwanted or unwelcome during time in program
- 67 (76.1%) were given opportunities to participate in projects, gain work experience not related to diversity

Survey: Diversity Training

The Questions

Did your institution offer any diversity training?

- If yes:
 - ❖ Was this training mandatory (required of all)?
 - ❖ If not mandatory, were you expected/pressured to participate because you were “diverse”?
 - ❖ Were you expected to design or lead training?
 - ❖ Were you allowed to by-pass mandatory training?
- If no:
 - ❖ Were you asked to begin a training program?

Survey: Diversity Training

The Responses

202 respondents in this section

- 108 (53.5%): diversity training offered
 - ❖ 45 (41.7%): training was mandatory
 - ❖ 62 (57.4%) not mandatory → 21 (33.9%): pressured to participate
 - ❖ 19 (17.6%) expected to design/lead
 - ❖ 72 (66.7%) expected to participate
 - ❖ 32 (29.6%) not expected to participate
 - ❖ 26 (24.1%) allowed to by-pass training
- Out of 94 with no programs – only 2 asked to begin a program

Survey: Liaison Activities

The Questions

Asked to serve as a liaison to:

- Campus diversity committee?
- Diverse campus office?
- Diverse student organization?

❖ If yes

- Part of position (in job description from the start)?
- Written into job description after accepted job?
- Related to position (connected or expected)?
 - If not, asked due to status as a person of color
 - » If yes, describe

Survey: Liaison Activities

The Responses

191 responded in this section

- 70 (36.7%) asked to do liaison work of some type
 - ❖ 48 (25.1%) with campus diversity committees
 - ❖ 49 (26.1%) with diverse campus office
 - ❖ 47 (24.9%) with diverse student organization
 - ❖ 46 (66.7%) worked with 2 entities
 - ❖ 29 (42.0%) worked with all 3 entities

Survey: Liaison Activities

The Responses

Out of the 70 doing liaison work:

- 18 (25.7%) – part of job description
- 51 (72.9%) – not part of job description
- 12 (17.1%) – written into their job description
 - ❖ 7 (10%) – not part of job when they began
- 44 (62.9%) – not written into job description

Survey: Liaison Activities

The Responses

- 36 (51.4%) – not related to job
- 36 (51.4%) – asked to serve due to status as person of color
 - ❖ 26 (37.1%) also not related to position
 - ❖ 10 (14.3%) related to position
- 17 (24.3%) – not asked due to status as person of color.
 - ❖ 10 (14.3%) also not related to position
 - ❖ 7 (10%) related to position

Survey: Liaison Activities

Quotes of Interest

“I was asked to be the hispanic studies collector. I have no background in hispanic studies. I did not study hispanic studies in college. I have no interest in hispanic studies. I don't even speak the language. I feel I was asked to do this because I am Hispanic.”

Survey: Diversity Leadership

The Questions

- Ever participated in a training/leadership opportunity?
 - ❖ If yes
 - Supported by home institution to apply/attend?
 - If not supported, provide own funding?
 - Supported or not, pressured to attend?
 - Participation mandatory (required)?
 - If mandatory, helpful to your career?
 - If non-mandatory, helpful to your career?
- Enough leadership programs for librarians of color?
- Programs offered at no cost?
 - ❖ If yes, who should support

Survey: Diversity Leadership

The Responses

166 respondents in this section

- 102 (61.4%) have participated in a program
 - ❖ 99 (97.1%) supported by home institution
 - ❖ 3 (2.9%) not supported
 - 2 reported they had to provide their own funding

118 responded to feeling pressured

- 25 (21.2%) felt pressured to attend
- 13 (11.0%) participation mandatory
 - ❖ 12 said program was useful
- 104 (88.1%) not mandatory
 - ❖ 78 said program was useful (75%)
 - ❖ 14 said program not useful (13.5%)
 - ❖ 12 did not respond

Survey: Diversity Leadership

The Responses

129 responded to questions related to number and funding of programs

- 53 (41.1%) feel there are enough programs
- 75 (58.1%) feel there are not enough programs
- 86 (66.7%) feel programs should be offered at no cost to the librarian
- 43 (33.3%) feel the librarian should provide some funding

Survey: Diversity Leadership

The Responses

Who should provide the funding?

- Professional organizations: ALA (Office of Diversity, Spectrum), ARL, ACRL, LAMA
- Home Institution, Library Administration, University or College, Education Institutions
- IMLS, Grant programs, Government Offices
- Host Institutions, Participating Academic Libraries
- Corporations, Corporate Initiatives, Library Vendors
- Library Schools

Survey: Future Questions

- Background: If you had a position change after your 1st position – was it a lateral or vertical move?
- Diversity Training: Were these diversity training or enrichment sessions the only efforts to address diversity in your institution?
- Liaison:
 - ❖ What other liaison responsibilities did you have?
 - ❖ What is your job title?
 - ❖ Did being selected due to status as a person of color upset you, bother you, etc.?

Survey: Future Questions

Leadership Programs:

- If you did not attend a program was it because your institution did not offer to support your application/attendance?
- Even if you were supported for attendance, did you have to take responsibility for part of the funding for the program?
- If you felt pressured, can you describe why you felt this way?
- Which programs did you attend?

Future Research

Lessons Learned

- Survey construction affected responses
 - ❖ Software limited options for data collection
 - ❖ Question formation: Did not include affective questions, but these questions should be tied in to future surveys
 - ❖ Open comments often offered us affective and insightful information

Future Research

Psychological Contracts

- Def: Unwritten set of expectation between employer/employee regarding implicit rights and obligations of each party.

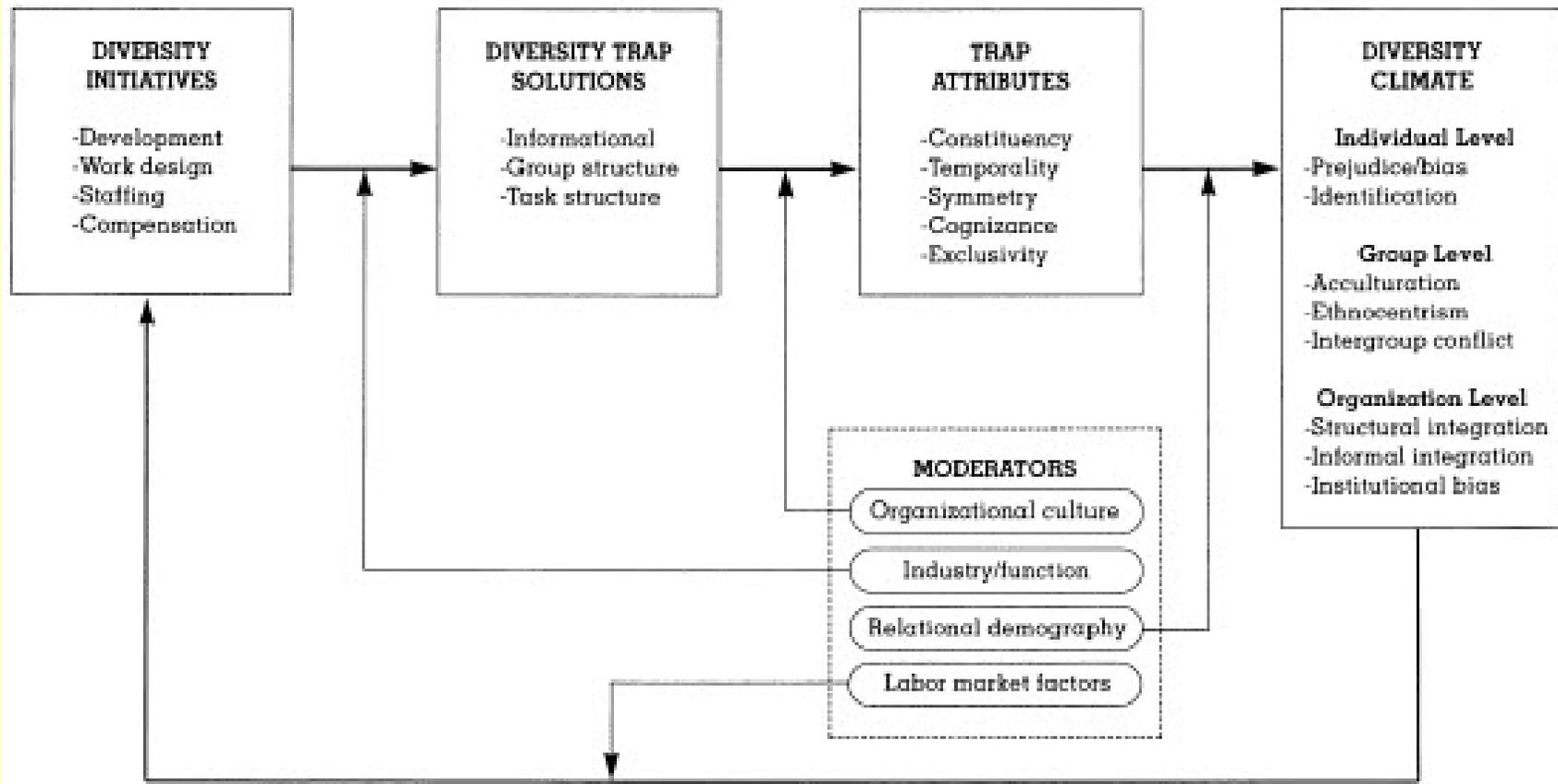
Social Traps

- Def: Situations in which individuals or groups face the prospect of adopting seemingly beneficial behaviors that have negative consequences over time, or for a larger collective.

Future Research

Social Traps

FIGURE 1
Organizing Framework of Diversity Initiatives, Social Traps, and Outcomes



Quotes of Interest...

“I disagree with your statement "on the whole these programs are positive for the librarians who participate in them as well as the libraries that host them and the field itself." I think that they are fostering a very superficial, false sense of diversity. Libraries and librarianship are calling themselves supporters of diversity simply because there are a few people of color present. Racism and discrimination is still widespread. These programs do nothing to address the problem or to create inclusive organizational climates. People of color are afraid to talk about the negative experiences they are having because they will be accused of "bashing" or being disloyal.”

Quotes of Interest...

“As new librarians of color we should be aware of how institutions think of us and benefit from us and we must carefully consider the implications for our careers. Some might enjoy and thrive in this environment but other new librarians of color might be more interested in the functional side of librarianship and might want to think of strategies to develop their careers accordingly.”

Quotes of Interest

“...The libraries diversity initiatives demand my existence, especially considering the fact that I am a minority and a male. But the pressures and expectations of my day to day work along with the inability of the administration to empathize the effect these extra demands and the devaluing of my work have upon my work experiences and my desire to remain here. Across my university, there is a problem with minority recruitment and retention and it's not improving. There is much effort made to bring us here but little made to retain you.”

Questions/Discussion

Survey questions available online:

http://www4.ncsu.edu/~kmbright/ndlc_survey_2008.pdf

Additional questions or follow-up:

Kawanna Bright, kmbright@ncsu.edu

Pambanisha King, kingpam@auburn.edu

Deborah Lilton, deborah.lilton@vanderbilt.edu

Citations

Barry, Bruce and Thomas S. Bateman. "A Social Trap Analysis of the Management of Diversity." *The Academy of Management Review* 21, no. 3 (July, 1996): 757-790.

Chrobot-Mason, Donna L. "Psychological Contract Violations for Minority Employees." *Journal of Managerial Psychology* 18, no. 1 (2003): 22-45.

Hall, Patrick A. "Against Our Best Interests: An Ambivalent View of Affirmative Action." *American Libraries* 22 (October, 1990): 898-902.

Lance, Keith C. "Racial and Ethnic Diversity of U.S. Library Workers." *American Libraries* 36, no. 5 (2005): 41-43.

Citations

Love, Johnnieque B. "The Assessment of Diversity Initiatives in Academic Libraries." *Journal of Library Administration* 33, no. 1/2 (2001): 73-103.

Musser, Linda R. "Effective Retention Strategies for Diverse Employees." *Journal of Library Administration* 33, no. 1/2 (2001): 63-72.

Neely, Teresa Y. and Lorna Peterson. "Achieving Racial and Ethnic Diversity among Academic and Research Librarians: The Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement of Librarians of Color - a White Paper." *College & Research Libraries News* 68, no. 9 (October, 2007): 562-565.