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From Hostile to Inclusive: Strategies for Improving the Racial Climate of Academic Libraries

Jaena Alabi

Abstract

Despite the presence of programs such as ALA's Spectrum Scholarship and the ARL Initiative to Recruit a Diverse Workforce, library and information science (LIS) has not been successful in increasing the number of racial/ethnic minorities in the profession, especially in academic libraries. Though the LIS literature addresses recruitment and retention of people of color, very few articles acknowledge that some individuals from underrepresented populations may experience the profession as chilly or even hostile due to racism, especially as it is manifested in the form of racial microaggressions. Although often delivered unconsciously, these seemingly benign exchanges convey to the recipient negative and denigrating messages about that person's race or ethnicity. The burden of work relating to diversity and inclusion in the profession has typically been placed on people of color, but those of us who are White also have a responsibility to engage in these endeavors. This article will identify steps that White academic librarians can take to prevent and address racial microaggressions in order to become better allies to our colleagues of color.

Introduction

Over the past several decades, librarians have been discussing the need to increase the racial/ethnic diversity of the profession. During this time, a number of programs designed to recruit librarians of color were established, with only a few programs focused on retention. Some of these include the ALA Spectrum Scholarship Program, the ARL Initiative to Recruit a Diverse Workforce, the Knowledge River Institute, and the Minnesota Institute for Early Career Librarians. Individual libraries have also established diversity residency programs designed to provide new librar-

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ians of color with work experiences in academic library environments. Despite the development of these programs, however, library and information science (LIS) has not been successful at increasing the percentage of racial and ethnic minorities in academic libraries. From the 2006 *Diversity Counts* report, in 2000, 85 percent of credentialed academic librarians were White (Davis and Hall 2006, fig. 18). Compared to the percentage of White academic librarians from 1990—which was 86.1 percent—the 2000 numbers seemed to indicate that the profession was slowly heading in the desired direction. These slight gains, however, were reversed by the time of the *Diversity Counts 2009–2010 Update*, in which the percentage of credentialed higher education librarians who are White had risen back to 86.1 percent (ALA 2012, table A-5).

Many of the diversity programs we have created in LIS focus on addressing the pipeline problem—the pool of available candidates for positions that require an advanced degree lacks diversity because fewer people of color pursue and obtain graduate degrees (Snyder, de Brey, and Dillow 2016, see tables 306.10, 322.10, 323.20, and 324.20). By providing scholarships and offering work experiences, these diversity programs attempt to increase the number of racial and ethnic minorities with MLS degrees and library experience, which many US academic library positions require, in order to expand the pool of qualified candidates for librarian positions. While programs and tools that address retention and climate do exist, such as the ARL Initiative to Recruit a Diverse Workforce and ClimateQUAL, programs that focus on the pipeline issue have received much more attention in the LIS literature. Less attention has been paid to the racial climate of academic libraries, which is at least partially to blame for our inability to move the needle on diversifying the profession.

Another trend—one that has been noted in the higher education literature but that has received less attention in the LIS literature—is that of a revolving door for scholars of color. In this situation, a department or institution makes a concerted effort to recruit a "diversity" candidate, someone from an underrepresented racial or ethnic group. Once that person of color has been hired, however, the department or institution considers its work done. Little attention is paid to creating an inclusive environment, which means that before long, the new hire is leaving for a position elsewhere, while the department simply repeats the recruitment process. As one scholar of color exits the organization, another scholar of color enters, and the cycle repeats. While the institution may point to its recruitment efforts as a sign of its commitment to diversity, an emphasis solely on recruitment will likely show few if any visible, substantive gains in increasing the number of faculty from racial and ethnic minority groups. It is certainly possible that academics of color are lured away with promises of better pay or opportunities for advancement at another organization, but an institution's racial climate can also play a role in affecting job sat-

isfaction and the revolving door cycle (Jayakumar et al. 2009). Griffin, Pifer, Humphrey, and Hazelwood (2011) have observed that even when faculty of color do not physically leave a particular institution, they may still withdraw psychologically, which can have negative consequences for promotion and tenure, as well as limit career advancement opportunities.

For those of us who are White, it is easy, tempting, and common to assume that diversity and racial climate fall under the purview of our colleagues who are people of color (Denevi and Pastan 2006, 71). However, those of us in the majority, those of us who are White academic librarians, also have a responsibility to take an active role in creating a more welcoming and inclusive environment. In an effort to highlight important racial issues that White librarians may not be aware of, this paper will draw from the library literature to outline several common experiences of people of color, particularly those working in the academic library environment. Research and writing on racism, antiracism, Whiteness, and social justice, are consulted to provide ideas and examples of practical actions that White librarians can take to identify and address racism in the workplace, which can help create a more welcoming and inclusive professional environment.

Racial Climate of Academic Libraries

In considering the racial climate of academic librarianship, it is important that White librarians look for and listen to the experiences of people of color in the profession. A careful review of the LIS literature finds first-person accounts by people of color as well as surveys of minority academic librarians. Within this literature, many of those narratives and survey comments explicitly describe experiencing racism in the academic library environment.

The initial reaction of some readers may be to discount or minimize the examples that follow. Perhaps the cited article is seen as too old to be relevant since some may believe that we are in a postracial America. Or, a particular example might elicit the thought, "But you don't *know* that happened because of race." Indeed, these types of responses are common, especially from liberal Whites who espouse a philosophy of colorblindness (Sue 2005). The time span covered and repetition of certain themes, however, should make it clear to the reader that there is indeed a pattern: academic libraries and the people who work in them are not immune to the racism that plagues our society at large. For many of the examples provided, a number of people of color will likely respond with a shrug or "I'm not surprised," and that reaction can also serve as a signal to those in the majority that the profession is not as open or welcoming as it would like to be.

Existing evidence from the LIS literature, as well as social science research more broadly, shows that Whites and people of color often do not

share the same perceptions about race and racism (St. Lifer and Nelson 1997; Alabi 2015a). Evan St. Lifer and Corinne Nelson (1997) surveyed four hundred librarians to ask about racism and discrimination in the profession for an article in *Library Journal.* They assert, "The discordant view among minority and white librarians on the most basic question—to what degree racism exists in librarianship vs. other professions—embodies the ideological gulf that exists between the two groups" (43). In answering the question, "Are whites and minorities looking at the same picture," St. Lifer and Nelson conclude that indeed we are not: "Librarians of color see a major problem; whites do not" (44). This divide was further supported in more recent research by Alabi (2015a), whose survey results indicate that while some academic librarians of color have encountered racial microaggressions in the profession, White librarians are unlikely to notice these subtle, denigrating exchanges (47).

Because research suggests that many Whites, including White librarians, are unaware of the racism people of color experience on a regular basis, several examples from the library literature follow below. The examples have been selected not for their extraordinariness but rather because of how they convey common experiences and themes.

Being Ignored, Snubbed, or Patronized

One commonly reported microaggression is ignoring or avoiding a person of color, and this has also been noted in the library literature. Patrick Hall (1988) stated that as a Black librarian, he was "either directly or indirectly snubbed, patronized, or completely ignored by both patrons and my fellow staff members" (900). Respondents to a survey conducted by Damasco and Hodges (2012) noted that they were treated or viewed as second-class citizens and their research areas were devalued by White colleagues. Similarly, research from Alabi (2015b) includes examples of White librarians making racially insensitive statements or jokes, making assumptions about a minority librarian's education or intelligence, ignoring the contributions of librarians of color in meetings, and excluding non-White librarians.

Perhaps the most frequently mentioned microaggression directed toward people of color is actually a statement that is intended as a compliment: telling a person of color that they are articulate or that they speak well. Shaundra Walker (2015) explains the problem this way, "My admirers seem not to understand that these statements have double meaning for persons of color and suggest that by speaking well, I exceed the low expectations for African Americans and am somehow different from other members of my race" (155). Walker is certainly not alone in her assessment. As Sue, Capodilupo, et al. (2007) explain, the underlying message of such "compliments" is, "It is unusual for someone of your race to be intelligent" (276, table 1).

Isolation

Almost every chapter in *Where are All the Librarians of Color?* (Hankins and Juárez 2015) includes at least one reference to being the only one or one of very few people of color in a library or library school setting, which can contribute to the isolation many minority librarians experience. Academic librarians of color often report feeling isolated, alienated, lonely, and frustrated by the overwhelming Whiteness of the profession (Curry 1994; Damasco and Hodges 2012; Alabi 2015b; Hankins and Juárez 2015). Also, some librarians of color may attempt to insulate themselves from racist attitudes, behaviors, and policies of their departments by withdrawing from White colleagues, which can further contribute to this sense of isolation (Curry 1994).

A Different Set of Standards/Twice as Good

According to a study by Patricia Ball (1995), Black male administrators in libraries felt they had to hurdle a higher bar than their White colleagues. According to one respondent, "I still feel the need to be 'twice as good'" (542). This sentiment—the need to be twice as good or to work twice as hard as White counterparts—is echoed by Griffin (2013) in describing her tenure journey as a Black academic librarian, and Nosakhere (2015) likens it to "performing as superwomen" (171). One respondent to the survey conducted by Damasco and Hodges (2012) argues that even when the evaluation criteria seem to be the same, librarians of color may still suffer:

> For example, I've been bounced around from work area to work area never being given the time to focus on an area long enough or in-depth enough to get to the point of engaging in scholarship. In contrast my white counterpoints are able to focus on an area long enough to get to the point of engaging in scholarship. When it comes time for evaluation I'm then evaluated as less productive because I have written fewer articles. Evaluators can then claim they are being fair and objective because they are evaluating candidates by the same criteria—how many articles the candidate has written. (294)

Fewer or Different Opportunities than for White Counterparts

Patricia Ball (1995) noted that her findings confirmed previous research on African American professionals: racism is "a perceived barrier to professional advancement" (531). Respondents to Ball's survey mentioned institutional racism, subtle racism, and fewer opportunities for non-Whites as issues within librarianship. Rebecca Hankins (2015) notes that though she has attended leadership programs, assumed various committee responsibilities, and produced scholarship, she has "never been given an opportunity to lead or work administratively in my library" (216). Other academic librarians of color have also reported that their White colleagues received additional opportunities and support:

> Publish, publish, publish without informal coaching, networking, or constructive feedback. . . . Of course, there are those (especially white) senior members who have eagerly helped white junior counterparts by providing them co-authorship opportunities. . . . Others (especially non-white faculty) have been offered the customary abstract opportunities through workshops, presentations, and the like, but the senior white faculty stop short of actually allowing non-whites the opportunity to learn through leadership such as this. (Damasco and Hodges 2012, 295)

This survey respondent is not alone in his or her assessment. As Alabi (2015a) has observed, the specific racial microaggression most commonly reported by librarians of color was being treated differently than White colleagues.

The Diversity Committee

Librarians of color, much like other academic faculty of color, often share that they are asked to serve on or chair diversity committees, regardless of their professional interest. Miguel Juárez (2015) recounts that "as a new librarian, I was selected as chair of the Diversity Committee" (302). This experience is similar to one reported by Damasco and Hodges (2012): upon being hired, a librarian of color was immediately given responsibility for a diversity committee. Damasco and Hodges (2012) note that this "can lead to hidden workloads for library faculty of color, making it more difficult to manage their time and maintain balance. Library faculty of color are often expected to spend time on diversity activities while their White colleagues are not burdened by the same expectations and therefore free to devote time to more prestigious committees or to research and publication activities" (298).

Credibility or Authority Challenged or Questioned

Curry (1994) maintains that faculty of color often have their intellect or ability questioned, something Patrick Hall (1988) also encountered. Hall (1988) noted that when he provided answers to patrons, they would often seek out confirmation from a White librarian, something that happened so frequently, Hall could not help but interpret it "as a reminder that my role as a black librarian is subject to society's not-so-subtle biases about the intellectual capacity of blacks" (900). Black male library administrators have also reported having not only their intellect but their authority as administrators challenged (Ball 1995).

Invalidation and Being Dismissed or "Too Sensitive"

In addition to patrons challenging his credibility as a librarian, Hall (1988) observes that when sharing these experiences and his interpretation of them with colleagues and supervisors, their responses are uniformly dismissive: he is told that he is too sensitive about such things. Curry (1994)

confirms this experience, stating, "Although most African Americans comprehend the impact of racism, many of our non-black colleagues express the attitude that we are overly sensitive to acts of perceived prejudice and discrimination" (301). Curry goes on to give several examples from colleagues who have experienced such a response, including one colleague whose question was ignored by a White male librarian, and upon telling a White female colleague about the incident, "was told that his rebuff likely had nothing to do with race even though he spoke to everyone else—all white—at the table" (301). These reactions serve to invalidate the experiential reality of these librarians of color (Tatum 2003; Sue, Capodilupo, et al. 2007).

Exhaustion and Regret

For many who read Hall's account, it will come as no surprise when he expresses feeling drained and depleted: "But after so many years of standing on my head for people just to increase their comfort levels, I became emotionally exhausted" (1988, 901). Curry (1994) suggests that such experiences as described above can lead to early burnout for Black librarians, as well as questioning one's choice of profession, something that makes it difficult for Black librarians to want to recruit other minorities to academic libraries. According to one academic librarian of color,

> "The reason that many African Americans and Latino Librarians leave this profession is because of the constant lack of emotional intelligence that is needed in the work place today," while another states, "I did not expect some of the blatantly disrespectful behavior from educated people and especially from administrators that I report to, in a so-called learning environment in the 21st century.—Because of this I am almost sorry that I entered the profession in academe." (Alabi 2015b, 187–88)

The Overall Environment

Regarding the racial climate of academic libraries, Rebecca Hankins (2015) considers it "a hostile environment" (217). Miguel Juárez (2015) notes, "Today's academic library environments seem to be breeding grounds for incessant micro-aggressions against librarians of color . . . [that] eventually cause many to leave the profession or seek other kinds of opportunities" (314). Several authors have identified White privilege and bias as contributing to this climate, in which some library workers "may even perceive that their organization is doing 'enough' by implementing a diversity program or simply by employing an underrepresented librarian, once again putting the onus of responsibility on librarians marked as being 'different'" (Anantachai et al. 2015, 39). Juárez (2015) suggests that the LIS literature on diversity "seems to focus on changing the environment for student success and not necessarily for staff and librarian success" (305).

Perhaps it is time that we take a closer look at the role White librarians can take in making the profession less hostile and more hospitable.

How to Take Action

Even for those who are convinced that racism is a problem that should be addressed in academic librarianship, there may still be reluctance to take action. Some readers may be asking themselves, "Ok, but what am I supposed to *do*? And how can I make sure I do the *right* thing?" This section is designed to answer these questions with a number of concrete actions aimed at the individual and institutional levels. In order for these suggestions to be successful, however, a sincere and long-term commitment to resisting racism is necessary. This work will be neither quick nor easy, and mistakes are inevitable. If we are to succeed in building a more inclusive and diverse profession, however, this work must be done.

Education and Awareness

The first step in addressing racism within the profession is recognizing that there is a problem. The examples previously given can serve as a starting point, but additional reading on the history, role, and forms of racial oppression is important for developing a deeper understanding of the pervasiveness and perniciousness of racism in society and, more specifically, in libraries (Nadal et al. 2011; Ashburn-Nardo, Morris, and Goodwin 2008). Some works that might aid in this endeavor are Charles Mills's *The Racial Contract* and Derald Wing Sue's *Microaggressions in Everyday Life.* More specific to librarianship are articles by Honma (2005), Hathcock (2015), and Brook, Ellenwood, and Lazzaro (2015).

Identifying our own personal biases, especially those that are automatic and that may be at odds with conscious, egalitarian beliefs, is another important step. The psychologist Derald Sue (2005) maintains, "In general, when most of us think about racism we believe that (a) it resides in individual acts of discrimination against others; (b) it is most associated with overt and dramatic hate crimes perpetuated against persons of color; (c) it does not exist in good, decent, and moral individuals; and, consequently, (d) we, personally are not racists nor do we engage in such acts" (104). In reality, though, each of us is shaped by the society in which we live—a society that at its very core is racist. As products of that society, we are constantly bombarded with racist messages—both subtle and overt—that seep into our subconscious and affect our actions (Banaji and Greenwald 2013; Sue 2005). Social science researchers acknowledge that measuring unconscious beliefs and attitudes can be difficult, but they have created a way to do this with the Race Implicit Association Test (IAT). The test, which is freely available online at https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/user/agg/blindspot/indexrk.htm, gauges a person's automatic or unconscious preference for one race over another by measuring how quickly a

user responds to pairings of pleasant and unpleasant words with images of African American and European American faces. Two of the contributors to the Race IAT, Banaji and Greenwald (2013) observe that many test takers, including themselves, are surprised "because [they] obtain a result that deviates from their initial expectation" (42). Though many of us consciously believe in equality, our subconscious may still believe some of the racist attitudes prevalent throughout our society, and the Race IAT can highlight this disconnect.

Looking for and listening to the voices of people of color—those within the profession as well as in society more broadly—can give White librarians a glimpse into perspectives that may be different from their own, help build empathy, and showcase the diversity of experiences within marginalized groups (Sue 2003). One way to do this is to seek out writing by authors of color. This can include works of criticism or theory, literary works such as novels and poetry, or social media and blog posts. In addition to reading, White librarians can position themselves so that they are privy to frank, honest discussions about race and racism by developing genuine, deep relationships with people from other racial or ethnic backgrounds. These relationships can provide insight into how others experience not only our profession but the world at large (Sue 2003), which may also help us close the perception gap previously noted where people of color see racism but Whites do not. Expanding social networks is a good idea, but Whites must be careful not to place the burden of educating themselves about racism on the shoulders of their friends or colleagues who are people of color. We must each take responsibility for our own antiracist education.

Shifting Away from Colorblindness

Many Whites, and especially those who consider themselves liberals, are likely to say things like, "When I look at you, I don't see color" (Sue, Capodilupo, et al. 2007). There are two problems with this philosophy. Skin color is one of the first things we do see when looking at a person, and that in itself is not the problem here. The issue is that we automatically (and subconsciously) assign value to different skin colors (Banaji and Greenwald 2013). Attempting or pretending to ignore someone's race only makes it that much harder to address the real issue of racism. Additionally, race can be and often is an important part of one's identity and affects how that person experiences the world, though this may not be intuitive for Whites who may not see that they are also racialized beings (Sue 2010; Helms 1992). When telling a person of color that we do not see color, it sends the message that we do not fully see that person. It also implies that we will likely not acknowledge the many racial slights and indignities that people of color experience on a daily basis. Rather than advocating for color blindness, we should seek to establish a philosophy of multiculturalism where we acknowledge and value racial differences (Sue 2010).

The Personal Costs of Racism

In addition to learning how racism manifests itself in various forms, we should also notice how racism affects not only people of color but also Whites. According to Sue, Lin, and Rivera (2009), some of these costs include "distorted sense of racial reality, reduced empathic ability, callousness toward others, and feelings of guilt and shame over their complicity in the unfair treatment of others" (167). Edwards (2006) suggests that members of dominant groups "may find it difficult to form meaningful relationships" with members of oppressed groups, and that they "may suffer a loss of authenticity and humanity as a result of their unearned privilege and dominant position in society" (43). When White librarians understand that it is in our emotional and psychological best interests to address racism, this knowledge can provide us with the motivation necessary to pursue and sustain the work of antiracism.

The Role of Motivation

At some point, each of us should ask ourselves why we are motivated to do this work. Understanding our motivations can help us identify areas where growth is needed and clarify why some of our efforts might not have the intended effect. Keith Edwards (2006) provides a conceptual model for understanding the identity development of a social justice ally, which can be a useful tool for self-reflection. Edwards identifies three phases of development based on a person's motivation for wanting to become an ally: Aspiring Ally for Self-Interest, Aspiring Ally for Altruism, and Aspiring Ally for Social Justice.

Aspiring Allies for Self-Interest are those who are motivated to be allies because they care for an individual. While these allies may intervene in specific, overt incidents of oppression, they often see themselves as heroes or rescuers and are not likely to be concerned with the larger system of oppression or privilege. Aspiring Allies for Altruism are those who have begun to see the systemic nature of oppression and as a result of acknowledging their privilege, they often feel guilt; their actions as allies are motivated by the need to assuage this guilt. These allies may also try to act as heroes or rescuers, and they tend to disassociate themselves from other members of the dominant group in an attempt to prove that they are different and not like "those" people. This attempt to be better or different leads to burnout for many Aspiring Allies for Altruism. The third group, Aspiring Allies for Social Justice, see themselves as allying with a cause rather than an individual and take responsibility for educating others of their group about oppression. These allies see the system of oppression, understand that oppression can work on various identity levels (i.e., they understand that race, gender, sexual orientation, class, etc. can intersect to create distinct experiences), and they work to dismantle the larger system of oppression (Edwards 2006).

Ideally, we would all be operating at the level of Aspiring Ally for Social Justice, but in reality, we probably vacillate among these three identities depending on the situation. Reflecting on our motivations and where we are on this continuum at any given time, though, can help each of us to better and more consistently act as an ally.

Interpersonal Interactions

One of the common experiences for minorities in the library, education, and psychological literatures is that when a person of color shares their concern that an incident or statement was racially motivated with a White friend or colleague, their interpretation is often dismissed (Tatum 2003; Sue, Capodilupo, et al. 2007). They are commonly told, "Oh, he didn't mean it that way," "But she's a good person," or "You're just being overly sensitive." These phrases serve to minimize the person of color's experience and, often, pain (Sue, Capodilupo, et al. 2007). Invalidating responses can place a strain on the relationship and may lead the person of color to withdraw from future interactions with the White colleague (Griffin et al. 2011). If there is one piece of advice from this article that has the power to dramatically and more positively shape the climate of the profession moving forward, it is this: stop invalidating the experiences of librarians of color. Instead of making excuses or trying to rationalize the behavior away, truly listen to your colleague and understand that people of color are likely to have experiences that a White person may not be able to fully understand or comprehend. Just because you did not experience the event or did not read it in the same way does not mean that your colleague's interpretation is not valid.

When you do notice that a racial microaggression has been committed against a colleague of color, please do not remain silent (Rockquemore 2016). In such situations, a common response is to freeze up and not do anything at all. Unfortunately, the resulting silence conveys complicity of the bystander in the racial microaggression. Another common, and unacceptable, response is to ask the target of the microaggression to fix the problem (Rockquemore 2016). Instead, Rockquemore (2016) suggests that we reframe our role as bystanders and practice Opening The Front Door (OTFD), an acronym for Observe, Think, Feel, and Desire. In practicing this method, a bystander intervenes by clearly describing what they observe happening, state what they think about the event, express their feelings about the situation, and assert what they desire to happen (Rockquemore 2016). In the example Rockquemore (2016) provides, she addresses a gender microaggression, but the same steps and process could apply to addressing a racial microaggression as well:

> When your response to the fact that this group is almost entirely male is to suggest we "meet at the mall" (observation), it sounds like you think female leaders are primarily concerned with shopping, and that's insult-

> ing to them and their accomplishments (think). I feel embarrassed and uncomfortable (feel), and I would like us to take the concern seriously and discuss why women have stopped attending our events (desire).

A bystander who interrupts a microaggression in this way sends a strong message to the intended recipient of the microaggression, to the microaggressor, and to any other observers.

For many people of color, race and racism are topics that have been front-and-center their entire lives; White people, however, have been socialized from an early age to avoid the topic and may not have developed the skills necessary for productively engaging in discussions about racism, which can result in defensiveness, anger, fear, and guilt (DiAngelo 2011). We, especially White librarians, must push past the discomfort of directly engaging this topic so that we can develop the stamina necessary to work against racism in the profession. If we accept that mistakes will be inevitable and adopt a growth mindset, we can use those mistakes as learning experiences (Hathcock 2016a). We must move beyond deflecting blame, rationalizing racist behavior, or succumbing to guilt and shame, so that we can learn and grow.

For the Organization and Profession

As with the individual, an organization can also benefit from increased education, so implementing diversity or multicultural competency training can be a starting point. It should be made clear to everyone involved, however, that a one-time workshop will not be sufficient to undo the pervasive consequences of systemic racism. While some of these programs can be effective, there is also research to suggest that such programs alone can be not only ineffective but also harmful (Banaji and Greenwald 2016; Sue 2003). Some people who attend such training sessions may believe their work has been done; without continuous self-reflection, these attendees are likely to engage in practices that maintain the status quo and may further oppress people of color (Sue 2003). Education and training for the organization can be a starting point, but a commitment to antiracist practice must be woven into the everyday work of an organization and the profession at large.

In addition to diversity workshops, an organization that is serious in its commitment to diversity should audit its policies and practices for bias. Sue (2010) notes, "The standards used to hire applicants are generally based up on White, male, and heterosexual criteria that determine 'qualified.' Good oral communication skills, for example, may equate to speaking without an accent" (218). In another example of culturally biased promotion criteria, Sue discusses an instance where a consultant was hired by a Fortune 500 company to provide assertiveness training for its Asian American employees, who were underrepresented in upper management positions. After some investigating, the consultant was able

to identify cultural bias in the criteria used to identify potential leaders and proposed a solution. Rather than focusing on such American leadership characteristics as being "assertive, 'take charge,' highly visible, and competitive," the consultant focused on a definition of leadership more common among Asians and Asian Americans— "a person's ability to work behind the scenes, building group consensus and motivating fellow workers to increase productivity" (222). A new process was created in which members of work groups were asked to name and rank the colleagues who were most influential in the team's success. As a result of this new process, a number of Asian American employees were judged qualified for management positions (Sue 2010). Individual libraries can and should undergo a comparable process of evaluating their promotion and/or tenure criteria for bias.

The typical hiring practices of academic libraries also have room for improvement. One way in which we can improve is to move away from discussions of "fit" or using our "gut" feelings to make decisions in the hiring process. Vinopal (2016) suggests creating a rubric or scoring grid based on the stated requirements for the position, which can help move search committee members away from their feelings about a candidate, feelings that can be and usually are affected by unconscious biases. It is possible, too, that the materials we require candidates to submit may be a barrier to some potential applicants. For instance, it is common among many academic libraries to require official transcripts as well as the names of supervisors to serve as references. As April Hathcock (2016b) has noted, some candidates, especially those who are still in library school or who have just graduated, may not be able to afford the costs associated with providing official transcripts, and perhaps unofficial transcripts would suffice. Also, applicants who have not yet held a position in a library may not be able to provide the required number of professional references; others who know the candidate, such as pastors or community members, however, may be able to speak to a variety of their qualifications for a particular position (Hathcock 2016b). When we screen, interview, and hire for a position, we need to question whether the criteria we have been using are the ones we need to be using. We need to think more creatively about how candidates can demonstrate that they will be successful in a particular position.

In academic libraries, once we do hire people of color, we often place the burden of "diversity" work on their shoulders. Many librarians of color are familiar with being given the responsibility of serving on or even chairing a diversity committee, even when that librarian's skills and interests are not diversity-related or they are new to an organization (Juárez 2015; Nosakhere 2015). Diversity must become the work of everyone in the organization, rather than the responsibility of people of color and other oppressed groups.

Another practical way to moderate the negative effects of experiencing

racism in academia is to provide space and support for mentoring, especially informal mentoring and peer support networks, which can combat the isolation that many academic librarians of color experience (Damasco and Hodges 2012; Moore et al. 2008). While the library literature regarding mentoring emphasizes providing guidance and support in the areas of job duties and promotion and tenure, it has been suggested that for mentoring to be more effective, we should also address psychological and social factors—the whole person—which can also be done through peer or group mentoring (Farrell et al. 2017).

Ensuring that librarians of color have opportunities for growth and career development in an organization will also be crucial to our retention efforts. This may mean allowing job duties to evolve and shift over time to accommodate a librarian's interests, fostering the development of new skills and acquisition of new knowledge, or opening space at the top levels of administration for new and different voices.

Conclusion

Over the past twenty-five years, the LIS literature has seen an increase in calls for creating a more racially and ethnically diverse profession. While we have established a number of scholarship and residency programs designed to recruit people from underrepresented backgrounds to academic librarianship, we have yet to see the significant and sustained demographic shifts we claim to desire. In addition to supporting these existing diversity programs, it is time to turn a critical eye to the organizational culture and racial climate of our individual libraries and our profession as a whole. Each of us as academic librarians has a role to play in ensuring that our libraries are welcoming not only to all of our patrons but also to all of our colleagues. For this to happen, each of us must become aware of our unconscious biases and question our assumptions. If we can actively engage in antiracist practices, we can improve the racial climate of our libraries, our institutions, and the profession. This work will not only increase our ability to attract, promote, and retain librarians of color to the profession but it will also allow those of us who believe in equality and fairness to act more in accordance with our personal values and ethics.

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