



Dropped in Without a Parachute: Library Managers' Supervision Experiences

SIMON P. FUNGE 

Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, KY, USA

AUDREY ROBINSON-NKONGOLA

Assistant Professor and Glasgow Regional Librarian, Department of Library Public Services (DLPS), Western Kentucky University, Glasgow, Glasgow, KY, USA

LAURA DELANCEY 

Assistant Professor and Electronic and Continuing Resources Coordinator, Department of Library Technical Services (DLTS), Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, KY, USA

AUSTIN GRIFFITHS 

Child Welfare Support Coordinator, Department of Social Work, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, KY, USA

ABSTRACT. *A survey of U.S. library managers explored the relationship between their social identities, experiences supervising others, support from others, and their overall satisfaction in their professional role. The literature provides evidence that demographic differences give rise to challenges in the workplace. Though no statistically significant differences were found between minority and nonminority managers related to supervisees' microaggressive behaviors, written commentary provided evidence of these and other supervision challenges. A regression analysis found that supervisees' behaviors, along with a manager's age, were significant predictors of their satisfaction as a supervisor. Recommendations for further research and implications for libraries emerge from these findings.*

KEYWORDS *library administration, library leadership, library personnel management, diversity in the workplace*

© Simon P. Funge, Audrey Robinson-Nkongola, Laura DeLancey, and Austin Griffiths
Address correspondence to Audrey Robinson-Nkongola, Assistant Professor and Glasgow Regional Librarian, 500 Hilltopper Way #149, Glasgow, KY 42141-7966, USA. E-mail: audrey.robinson-nkongola@wku.edu

The Library Leadership and Management Association (LLAMA) (2016) has identified a list of foundational library leadership competencies that range from communication skills to problem solving and from team building to conflict resolution with personnel. In effect, library leaders must be able to problem solve; make decisions; and train, mentor, and motivate staff (Ammon-Stephens, Cole, Jenkins-Gibbs, Riehle, & Weare, 2009). Intended to be relevant across different types of libraries, the LLAMA list has been proposed to guide curricula and professional development at all career stages. However, though many LIS programs require at least one course on management, leadership training and mentoring for library leaders is inconsistent and needs to be more robust (Mason & Wetherbee, 2004; Romaniuk & Haycock, 2013).

The team that created LLAMA's initial list identified the importance of cultural competence as well as the need to encourage librarians of color to take on leadership positions (Ammon-Stephens et al., 2009). But in spite of ongoing efforts to increase the diversity of library staff, American librarians continue to be predominantly White and female (ALA, 2017). In this context, some librarians of color have felt that their institution does not value diversity (Kandiuk, 2014). This sentiment may be exacerbated by the fact that White library staff are more likely than non-White library staff to hold positions of higher rank (certified librarians vs. library assistants) (ALA Office for Research and Statistics, 2012). Given this disparity and these circumstances, several studies have highlighted a particular need to better support librarians of color in leadership roles (Kandiuk, 2014; Kim & Sin, 2008; Triana, Garcia, & Colella, 2010).

If libraries are interested in doing more to recruit, support, and retain diverse library leaders, there is reason to explore the experiences of current minority library leaders. This comparative study explored a diverse group of minority and nonminority library managers' experiences—particularly their experiences supervising others. Library managers' social identities, including their racial identity, the extent to which they receive support from others in their role, how they understand supervision challenges they encounter, and the impact of each of these factors on their overall satisfaction in their role as a library manager was investigated.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The two most common contributors to workplace stress are job pressure and lack of organizational support (Vagg & Spielberger, 1998; Gillespie, Walsh, Winefields, Dua, & Stough 2001; Viswesvaran, Sanchez, & Fisher, 1999). Conversely, perceived organizational support—when employees not only feel supported by their supervisor, but also feel that the organization as a whole cares about their well-being—correlates with job satisfaction and

performance. Studies have overwhelmingly found a positive relationship between this type of support and job satisfaction and job performance (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Riggle, Edmondson, & Hansen, 2009) and have found that this holds true across demographic groups. For example, lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals experience more job satisfaction when supported by their supervisors and coworkers (Huffman, Waltrous-Rodriguez, & King, 2008).

Along with organizational support, formal and informal support from colleagues or social networks has also been found to be beneficial. Mentoring in the workplace has been found to positively correlate with reduced job-related stress for mentees and can have an even greater impact on job satisfaction than peer support (Harris, Winskowski, & Engdahl, 2007). Other types of support, including informal support networks, can be beneficial as well. For instance, Haslam, O'Brian, Jetter, Vormedal, and Penna (2005) have found that the support individuals get from social identification with a group can increase job satisfaction by acting as a buffer against work-related stress. And Moqbel, Nevo, and Kock (2013) have found that support from colleagues, family, or friends via virtual networks at work (i.e., Facebook or other social networks) increased job satisfaction and organizational commitment, thus contributing positively to job performance.

However, factors associated with social identity and demographic differences have been found to undermine employees' satisfaction in the workplace. The prevalence of microaggressive behavior, for instance, can cause friction between workplace colleagues. Perhaps more common than overt discrimination, microaggressions highlight subtle or even unconscious bias (Nadal, 2011). In libraries, librarians of color are more likely to experience racial microaggressions than their White counterparts, and more likely to observe racial microaggressions directed toward others (Alabi, 2015). This type of microaggression involves the "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group" (Sue et al., 2007, p. 273). Recent research has found that microaggressions are not solely race-based however. Microaggressions based upon sexual orientation (Shelton & Delgado-Romero, 2013), gender identity (Nadal, Davidoff, Davis, & Wong, 2014), as well as mental health status (Gonzales, Davidoff, Nadal, & Yanos, 2015) have been found. Moreover, intersectional microaggressions are experienced by individuals whose perceived identity straddles social categories (Nadal et al., 2015).

Demographic differences between supervisor and supervisee have been found to contribute negatively to workplace relations. For example, racial dissimilarity between supervisors and supervisees have been found to lower performance ratings (Jeanquart-Barone, 1993; Tsui, Porter, & Egan, 2002; Veccio & Bullis, 2001), and correlate with workplace conflict (Tsui

& O'Reilly, 1989). Employees may also be less receptive to supervisor feedback when they are of a different gender or race than their supervisor (Geddes & Konrad, 2003). Differences in age, too, can have an impact on job satisfaction. For example, older workers with younger supervisors experience less job satisfaction because of the perceived status incongruence (Artz, 2013). And specific to libraries and librarians of color, job satisfaction may also be related to the support supervisors receive from their administrators. For instance, a recent study on retention and advancement of librarians of color found that among the challenges faced by middle-level managers were a lack of support from senior management, lack of mentorship, and a lack of growth opportunities (Bugg, 2016). Taken together, demographic differences and institutional responses to these differences appear to play a meaningful role affecting the relationship between supervisor and supervisee; and, in turn, potentially affecting supervisors' overall job satisfaction. This study explored these phenomena in library settings.

METHODOLOGY

Using an online survey of library managers in the U.S., the study explored the extent to which managers' satisfaction in their role as a supervisor was affected by supervisees' attitudes and behaviors—including those deemed microaggressive. In addition, the researchers examined whether managers' reports in this area differed across demographic groups as well as on the basis of their access to shared identity-support networks. Further, the study investigated those factors library managers identified as underlying the causes of the challenges they encountered with their supervisees.

Selection of Subjects

Selection criteria included managers of public, academic, museum and special libraries who provided direct supervision to library staff (e.g., other professional librarians, library clerks, assistants, students, volunteers). The researchers emailed invitations to participate in the study to nine American Library Association (ALA) and Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) listservs, including those targeting professionals from different social identity groups such as the Black Caucus of American Library Association (BCALA).

Instrumentation

Designed by the researchers and approved by the researchers' Institutional Review Board (IRB), the 52-item survey instrument included items relevant to respondents' demographics, the characteristics of their libraries and the

people they supervised, their assessment of their supervisees' behaviors, their satisfaction with the support they received from colleagues and supervisors, their access to social identity networks, and their overall satisfaction in their role as a supervisor. A number of items including several scales described below were used to assess respondents' perspectives, and prior to distribution, an earlier version of the instrument was pilot tested by four library managers from different institutions to assess the content and face validity of the survey.

ASSESSMENT OF SUPERVISEES' BEHAVIORS SCALE

A 13-item scale focused on the respondents' assessment of supervisees' behaviors using a 5-point Likert scale (1: strongly disagree to 5: strongly agree). Nine of these items were based on one of the author's experiences as a library manager, including items such as: *Supervisees are generally receptive of my constructive criticism* and *Supervisees seek permission to change procedures when needed*. Four additional items were adapted from Nadal's (2011) Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale (REMS) (e.g., *Supervisees' body language frequently shows that they feel uncomfortable around me* and *Supervisees often avoid eye contact with me*). Whereas Nadal's 45 items focused on the frequency of others' behaviors (over the prior 6-month period), the items for this study focused on respondents' level of agreement with statements that others' behaviors had occurred over the prior 2-year period. This allowed respondents to reflect on a greater variety of supervision experiences over a longer period. In addition, while Nadal's questions specifically focused on race, the items on this scale included no language regarding any specific social identity. This allowed for the possibility that library managers' reports of supervisees' challenging behaviors, if any, could have been a function of a social identity other than their race (e.g., their age, gender, or sexual orientation). (A data reduction analysis was applied to the 13 items and is described below.)

SATISFACTION WITH SUPPORT FROM COLLEAGUES AND SUPERVISOR SCALES

Two six-item Likert scales (1: strongly disagree to 5: strongly agree) were developed by the researchers to assess respondents' overall satisfaction in the support they received from colleagues (i.e., peers of equivalent status within their library system) and from their supervisors regarding supervision challenges. These emerged from both the literature and the experiences of two of the authors as library managers. For example, an item on the colleague scale asked the respondent to indicate the level of agreement with the following statement: *Talking with my library colleagues helps me sort through challenges with supervisees*. On the supervisor scale, the following statement was included: *My supervisor often validates my interpretation of*

the supervision challenges I experience. Higher composite scores on either scale indicated greater satisfaction, and lower scores represented less satisfaction in the support they received from others. (The range of possible scores was 5 [low satisfaction]—30 [high satisfaction] for each scale.) The internal consistency of both scales was determined to be high ($\alpha = 0.90$ and $\alpha = 0.95$ respectively), and the reliability of either scale was not increased by the elimination of any items.

SATISFACTION IN ROLE AS SUPERVISOR SCALE

Two items reflected respondents' assessment of the extent to which they were satisfied in their role as a supervisor (i.e., *Overall, how satisfied are you with your professional relationship with your supervisees* and *Overall, how satisfied are you with your role as a supervisor?*). Higher scores on this scale reflected greater satisfaction whereas lower scores reflected lower satisfaction in this role. (The range of possible scores was 2 [low satisfaction] – 10 [high satisfaction].) Using Cronbach's Alpha, the internal consistency of this scale was determined to be acceptable ($\alpha = 0.69$).

Data Reduction Analysis

Following data collection, a data reduction technique was applied to the 13-item *Assessment of supervisees' behaviors* scale described above. As a result of this reduction, two subscales were produced to replace the single variable. A principal components analysis (PCA) with orthogonal rotation (varimax) was applied to these items. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis, $KMO = 0.88$, which was above the recommended value of 0.6. Bartlett's test of sphericity $\chi^2 (78) = 688.39$, $p < .000$ indicated that correlations between items were sufficiently large for PCA. Two components had eigenvalues over Kaiser's criterion of 1.0 and in combination explained 55.8% of the variance. (One item was dropped because it did not adequately load on either component [i.e., *Supervisees often assume that I have a lower level of education than I have achieved*].)

MICROAGGRESSIVE SUPERVISEE BEHAVIORS SUBSCALE

Five items clustered on the first component and were determined to reflect respondents' assessment of the extent to which supervisees exhibited behaviors not conducive to a positive supervisor-supervisee relationship (e.g., *Supervisees' body language frequently shows that they feel uncomfortable around me*.) Higher scores on this scale reflected the respondents' assessment that their supervisees exhibited a greater level of microaggressive behavior toward them. Lower scores reflected their assessment of a lower level of microaggressive behavior from their supervisees. (The range

of possible scores was 5 [no microaggressive behaviors] – 25 [extensive microaggressive behaviors].)

RESPECTFUL SUPERVISEE BEHAVIORS SUBSCALE

The seven items that loaded on the second component were determined to reflect respondents' assessment of the extent to which supervisees exhibited behaviors conducive to a positive supervisor-supervisee relationship (e.g., *Supervisees are generally cooperative*). Higher scores on this scale reflected the respondent's assessment that his or her supervisee(s) exhibited behaviors that demonstrated that the supervisee(s) respected the respondent's role as their supervisor. Lower scores reflected the respondent's assessment that their supervisees were less respectful of their role. (The range of possible scores was 7 [no respectful behaviors] – 35 [extensive respectful behaviors].)

Using Cronbach's Alpha, the internal consistency of both scales was determined to be acceptable with an alpha for the *Microaggressive supervisee behaviors* component scale at 0.82 and 0.86 for the *Respectful supervisee behaviors* scale. The elimination of items from each scale provided no meaningful increase in the alphas for either.

RESULTS

The online survey was distributed between February and April 2016. One-hundred-and-ten library managers completed the survey. Of these, the largest group identified as White (68.2%), followed by Black/African American (22.7%), and 9% of the sample identified as Latino(a)/Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Native American, or bi-racial. Females accounted for 82.0%, and 82.2% of the sample self-identified as heterosexual. The majority of respondents worked in academic libraries (76.4%), followed by public libraries (17.3%), and most respondents worked in libraries located in the Midwest (36.2%) and the South (25.4%). The fewest reported from the Northeast (18.1%) and West (11.8%). (Regions corresponded with those used by the US Census Bureau.)

The number of years respondents had been library managers was fairly evenly distributed between less than five years (33.6%), 5 to 10 years (34.5%), and over 10 years (30.9%). The majority (79.1%) identified themselves as Department Head/Chairs, Directors, Managers, or Unit Coordinator/Supervisors. Approximately 43.1% reported supervising 1 to 5 supervisees, 22.0% supervised 6 to 10, and 34.9% supervised more than 10 supervisees. Over sixty-five percent (65.5%) reported that they supervised library assistants, 54.5% supervised professional librarians, and 50.9% supervised work-study students. Respondents also supervised library clerks (28.2%), volunteers (18.2%), and other types of supervisees (20%) (e.g.,

Americorps members, graduate students, interns, office staff, researchers). In many cases, managers supervised more than one type of supervisee.

Data Analyses

Overall, respondents reported moderately high levels of satisfaction in their role as a supervisor ($M = 7.55$, $SD = 1.77$, $n = 106$). As indicated in Table 1, no significant differences in their overall satisfaction were found between respondents based on their social identities (i.e., race/ethnicity, gender, age, and sexual orientation). Similarly, regardless of whether the respondent worked in an academic versus a nonacademic library, the number of people supervised, or how long they had been a library manager, there were no significant differences between these groups.

CONNECTIONS TO SHARED SOCIAL IDENTITY NETWORKS AND SATISFACTION IN ROLE AS A SUPERVISOR

While there were no significant differences between respondents' overall levels of satisfaction in their roles as library managers and their social identity or their professional characteristics and experiences, connections to shared

TABLE 1 Relationships between respondents' personal and professional characteristics and their overall satisfaction in their role as supervisor.

Social Identity	<i>n</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t or F</i>	<i>p</i>
Race/ethnicity					
White	74	7.57 (1.74)			
Non-White *	32	7.51 (1.84)	104	.150	.881
Gender					
Male	16	8.33 (1.50)			
Female	89	7.40 (1.78)	103	-1.958	.053
Age					
Under 40	34	7.33 (1.69)			
40 or over	72	7.66 (1.80)	104	-.902	.369
Sexual orientation					
Heterosexual	84	7.48 (1.80)			
LGBT	19	7.91 (1.39)	101	-.967	.336
Type					
Academic librarian	83	7.63 (1.78)			
Non-academic librarian	22	7.30 (1.76)	103	-.777	.439
Number of supervisees					
1-5	45	7.39 (2.11)			
6-10	24	7.51 (1.82)			
More than 10	36	7.74 (1.22)	2	.381	.684
Years as library manager					
Less than 5 years	34	7.25 (1.62)			
5-10 years	37	7.39 (1.81)			
More than 10 years	34	7.96 (1.80)	2	1.621	.203

*Note. Non-White respondents included all American Indian/Native American, Asian/Pacific Islander, Black/African American, Latinx/Hispanic, and bi-racial respondents

social identity networks at work and outside of work proved to be meaningful. These connections proved to be important in that a significant (though only close-to-moderate) linear relationship between a library managers' assessment of the extent to which they were connected to a shared social identity network at work and their overall satisfaction in their role as a supervisor was found ($r = .285$, $n = 105$, $p < .01$). More significantly, a stronger linear relationship was found between connections outside of work and their overall satisfaction in their role as a supervisor ($r = .400$, $n = 105$, $p < .001$) (i.e., the greater the extent of their connections to shared social identity networks outside of work, the greater their overall satisfaction in their role as a supervisor. Fewer connections were correlated with less satisfaction in their roles.)

SUPERVISEES' BEHAVIORS AND SATISFACTION IN ROLE AS A SUPERVISOR

Overall, respondents reported that their supervisees were largely respectful ($M = 29.17$, $SD = 3.66$, $n = 110$) and demonstrated a low level of microaggressive behaviors toward them ($M = 9.93$, $SD = 3.43$, $n = 110$). In fact, no significant differences were found between library managers from different social identity groups and the extent to which they reported either experiencing microaggressive or respectful behaviors from their supervisees. For example, although non-White library managers ($M = 10.34$, $SD = 4.23$, $n = 35$) reported experiencing a higher level of microaggressive behaviors from their supervisees than their White counterparts ($M = 9.73$, $SD = 2.99$, $n = 75$), the difference was not significant, $t(108) = -.868$, $p = .387$. And while White library managers ($M = 29.29$, $SD = 3.78$, $n = 75$) reported experiencing a slightly higher level of respectful behaviors from their supervisees than their non-White counterparts ($M = 28.91$, $SD = 3.45$, $n = 35$), the difference was also not significant, $t(108) = .504$, $p = .616$. Similarly, no significant differences were found between female and male library managers, library managers 40 years or older versus their under-40 counterparts, or heterosexual library managers and LGBT managers (see [Table 2](#) for additional details).

Nevertheless, in terms of respondents' reports regarding their satisfaction in their role as a supervisor, supervisees' behaviors appeared to be the most meaningfully influential among the variables measured. For example, a strong positive linear relationship between a library managers' assessment of supervisees' respectful behaviors and their overall satisfaction in their role as a supervisor was found ($r = .711$, $n = 106$, $p < .001$). Their overall satisfaction in their supervisor role was more positive the more they found their supervisees' behaviors to be respectful. Conversely, their satisfaction was reduced if they indicated that their supervisees demonstrated less respectful behaviors. This appeared to be confirmed by the finding that a moderate negative correlation between a library managers' assessment of supervisees' microaggressive behaviors and their overall satisfaction in their role as a

TABLE 2 Relationships between library managers' social identities and supervisees' behaviors.

Supervisees' behaviors	Library managers' social identity <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)		<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	White (<i>n</i> = 75)	Non-White* (<i>n</i> = 35)			
Microaggressive	9.73 (2.99)	10.34 (4.23)	108	-.868	.387
Respectful	29.29 (3.78)	28.91 (3.45)	108	.504	.616
	Male (<i>n</i> = 18)	Female (<i>n</i> = 91)			
Microaggressive	8.56 (3.40)	10.20 (3.40)	107	1.871	.064
Respectful	29.72 (3.82)	29.05 (3.66)	107	-.701	.485
	Under 40 (<i>n</i> = 36)	40 or over (<i>n</i> = 74)			
Microaggressive	9.64 (3.55)	10.07 (3.38)	108	-.614	.541
Respectful	29.19 (3.78)	29.16 (3.63)	108	.043	.966
	Heterosexual (<i>n</i> = 88)	LGBT (<i>n</i> = 19)			
Microaggressive	10.00 (3.60)	9.79 (2.84)	105	.239	.811
Respectful	29.07 (3.85)	29.47 (2.67)	105	-.436	.663

*Note. Non-White respondents included all American Indian/Native American, Asian/Pacific Islander, Black/African American, Latinx/Hispanic, and bi-racial respondents.

supervisor was found ($r = -.596$, $n = 106$, $p < .001$). If respondents assessed that their supervisees demonstrated higher levels of microaggressive behaviors, they were less satisfied in their role as a supervisor. In contrast, those who reported lower levels of microaggressive behaviors from their supervisees also reported greater levels of satisfaction as supervisors.

SUPPORT FROM COLLEAGUES AND SUPERVISORS AND SATISFACTION IN ROLE AS A SUPERVISOR

Respondents were generally satisfied with the support they received from others regarding supervision challenges. Those with colleagues ($n = 89$) reported a moderately high level of satisfaction in this area ($M = 23.49$, $SD = 4.34$), and those with supervisors ($n = 85$) indicated a slightly lower level of satisfaction in in this area ($M = 22.56$, $SD = 6.03$). However, no linear relationship between their assessment of the support they received from colleagues and their overall satisfaction was found ($r = .134$, $n = 88$, $p = .214$). In contrast, a moderate linear relationship between a library manager's assessment of the extent to which he or she felt supported by supervisors with regard to supervising others and overall satisfaction in the role as a supervisor was found ($r = .338$, $n = 83$, $p < .01$).

PREDICTORS OF OVERALL SATISFACTION IN ROLE AS A SUPERVISOR

A standard linear regression analysis examined which of the (independent) variables found to be significant in the bivariate analyses presented above predicted respondents' overall satisfaction with their role as supervisor (the dependent variable). It should be noted that although the variables, age

and race/ethnicity, were not found to be significant in the demographic analysis described above, these were included in the regression analysis given that age differences and race-related issues were cited as impacting the supervisory challenges some library managers discussed in the qualitative analysis described below. Therefore, these variables were included in the regression analysis.

Regression results indicated that the overall model significantly predicted respondents' satisfaction in their role as supervisor ($R^2 = .597$, $R^2_{adj} = .559$, $F(7, 74) = 15.671$, $p < .001$). The model accounted for 59.7% of the variance in levels of satisfaction. Three of the seven variables entered into the model (i.e., age, supervisees' microaggressive behaviors, and supervisees' respectful behaviors) significantly predicted overall satisfaction in their role as supervisor whereas race/ethnicity, connections to social networks at work and outside of work, and a supervisor's support did not. Therefore, when controlling for all other variables, if a library manager was older, then their overall satisfaction in role as a supervisor could be predicted to be higher. In contrast, if a library manager was younger, their overall satisfaction in their role as supervisor was predicted to be lower (when controlling for all other variables). Similarly, satisfaction levels were predicted based upon a library managers' assessments of their supervisees' behaviors when controlling for all other variables in the model. For instance, a library manager who determined that their supervisee engaged in fewer microaggressive behaviors would also report greater satisfaction in their role; whereas, a library manager who reported lower levels of respectful behaviors would be less satisfied in their role as supervisor when controlling for all other variables. A summary of regression coefficients is presented in Table 3.

QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT OF SUPERVISEES' CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS

From the regression analysis, supervisees' behaviors had a clear and significant impact on these library managers' satisfaction in their roles as supervisors. Thirty-five respondents who indicated that they had

TABLE 3 Multiple regression: Predictors of library managers' overall satisfaction in role as a supervisor

	<i>B</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Bivariate <i>r</i>	Partial <i>r</i>
Race [†]	.067	.017	.210	.834	-.062	.024
Age [‡]	.569	.156	2.063	.043*	.073	.233
Connections at work	-.001	.000	-.003	.998	.297	.000
Connections outside of work	.184	.083	.869	.387	.426	.101
Support from supervisor	.043	.149	1.852	.068	.333	.210
Microaggressive supervisee behaviors	-.134	-.265	-2.584	.012*	-.634	-.288
Respectful supervisee behaviors	.238	.469	4.378	.000***	.714	.454

Note. [†]White vs. non-White; [‡]Under 40 years old vs. 40 or over; * $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$

experienced challenging behaviors and attitudes from their supervisees were asked to identify what factor or factors they felt caused these challenges. Of these, 18 reported that the behaviors were a result of a personality conflict, 16 indicated that they resulted from a lack of professional development/training on the part of their supervisees, nine indicated that the challenges were a result of bias based on the library manager's social identity(ies), and 17 indicated other factors. Library managers' written comments regarding managing their libraries highlighted some of challenges these respondents experienced. A content analysis involving a systematic exploration of both the explicit and implicit concepts revealed in respondents' commentary was conducted.

SOCIAL IDENTITY BIAS

Five respondents indicated that age was a factor in the challenges they experienced as managers. For instance, one manager wrote, "I am significantly younger than one of my supervisees," adding that, "This person frequently questions my decisions, undermines me to other employees, and ignores any direction." A second respondent observed, "I am younger than everyone in my department, and they often see other employees and administrators treat me as if I am incompetent."

Race/ethnicity was cited by six respondents as a factor in the challenges they experienced with supervisees. For example, one manager who indicated that bias based on her social identity(ies) was a factor in her supervisee's behaviors remarked, "I am an African-American female who possesses significantly more education and experience than my supervisee who is White and male... [and who] regularly challenges my authority and competency." Another respondent noted that "Some of my staff (White males mostly) have never been supervised by a Black woman." She expressed some frustration that her management style may not be well received by these staff members: "My management style is fair, consistent, and I have to run a tight ship. That said, I see myself as approachable, with an open-door policy ... [but] sometimes it resonates with staff and sometimes it just doesn't." A third manager stated that her supervisees "have become upset when I've asked them to arrive to work on time or if I correct them for unprofessional behavior. They seem to believe I'm mean, moody, and that they cannot work with me," adding that, "What I ask of them, I believe is not unreasonable. However, they act unreasonably." She explained that the reason for these challenges may be because she was "the only African American in [her] department, and one of few faculty/staff of color on [her] campus." Another manager's racial identity was viewed as an asset by library administrators, however, he viewed this to be a function of their racial bias: "Being a Black male it can [be] very easy for library systems to want a Black male in so-called urban libraries for stereotypical reasons [and]

not necessarily consider us for area libraries with larger White populations ... They think they're being progressive, but are actually reinforcing racial stereotypes."

PROFESSIONAL UNDERDEVELOPMENT

Six librarians believed that a lack of interest in professional growth and change was the cause of their supervisees' unprofessional behavior or attitudes. For instance, one manager wrote when describing these challenging behaviors that her "employee does not show interest in taking advantage of development opportunities provided by supervisor." Similarly, another stated, "they appear content where they are and are not interested in advancing or improving any further." Two other librarians contended that their supervisees' resistance to change was a product of their attachment to obsolete practices. For example, one wrote, "The two professional librarians that I supervise have skills that are outdated. Though I have made it a part of their evaluation to pursue professional development and have allocated budget to do this, they have not chosen to do so." The second manager stated, "My library staff is dedicated to library practices of the past several decades and do not wish to change to reflect library practices of a 21st-century learning commons. This is due partly to lack of understanding and partly to resistance to change," adding that, "They see me as wanting to change their manner of operating for no good reason."

Other managers found that it was lack of opportunities for professional development, not a lack of interest in growth, that contributed to the challenging behaviors. Four library managers observed that lack of training explained their supervisees' attitudes and behaviors. For example, one noted that her supervisees "have not had adequate training on how to behave or speak in a professional environment" while another directly linked problematic behaviors to inadequate training stating that, "After further training and experience ... conflict decreases."

JOB DISSATISFACTION

Eight managers ($n = 8$) described employee dissatisfaction with institutional policies and procedures as a contributing factor to their challenging behavior. As one manager observed, "They usually aren't directly angry with me but are upset by something else—conflict/competition with a coworker, anger over low pay, feeling powerless in a large organization such as disagreeing [with] a library-wide policy, etc. They then unload their anger on me." A second manager observed that her "Employee's behavior implies they are unhappy in their position regardless of who supervises them," and a third manager commented that some of her supervisees, "act incapable of understanding policy changes they do not like."

INADEQUATE MANAGERIAL SUPPORT

Lack of support as one cause of their management challenges was reported by 12 managers. For instance, one manager stated that she had “been given no guidance on how to, or how to improve, in supervising others.” And another reported not having received adequate mentoring and assistance from her supervisor, stating she felt she had “been dropped into [her] job without a parachute.” These managers all identified a lack of guidance as contributing to their management challenges. Other managers experienced a lack of support when their own supervisors subvert their authority. One manager indicated that her supervisor repeatedly undermined her ability to effectively manage her supervisees. She expressed frustration that: “The situation is made worse by my supervisor, who has given the employee directives on more than one occasion. This behavior ... sends the message to my supervisee that I am not the one in charge.”

Limitations

Several limitations of the study are important to note. The sample reflected the dominant demographic profile of librarians (i.e., White, female, and heterosexual). However, the goal of the researchers was to generate a more diverse sample that included a higher number of responses from under-represented populations (e.g., managers of color, LGBT managers). Further, those who completed a survey may have had more interest in the subject matter than those who did not. It is not known whether the responses of participating library managers may have differed from those who chose not to participate. For this reason, the findings from this study may not be generalizable to the total population of library managers or even to other managers demographically similar to this sample. In addition, the analysis of respondents’ written comments was limited by inability of the researchers to clarify or follow-up on key concepts provided by the respondent. This necessarily limited the interpretation of their commentary.

DISCUSSION

The library managers we surveyed were satisfied in their role as supervisor, in their professional relationships with their supervisees, and with the support they received from colleagues and supervisors regarding supervision challenges they faced. The extent to which they felt supported by their supervisors was correlated with their overall satisfaction in their own role as supervisor, which appeared to corroborate Rhoades and Eisenberg’s (2002) finding that the perception of support from supervisors is positively related to an employee’s job satisfaction.

And while librarians did not differ across social identity groups in terms of their satisfaction, their connections to shared social identity networks at work and outside of work mattered—particularly the extent to which they felt connected to a network outside of work. The greater the connection they felt, the greater their level of satisfaction; and the less their connection, the lower their satisfaction, which appeared to confirm Haslam et al. (2005) and Moqbel et al.'s (2013) findings that workplace networks correlate with individuals' job satisfaction, but also highlighted the potential value of support networks outside of work.

Not surprisingly, supervisees' behaviors—including those behaviors determined to be microaggressive—had the most significant impact on library managers' satisfaction in their role as supervisor. These behaviors included the extent to which a supervisee supports her manager' directives and/or seeks permission to change procedures when needed; her view of her supervisor's competence; her openness to constructive criticism and formal evaluations of her performance; and her general level of comfort around and respect of her supervisor. In fact, these behaviors were found to be the most significant predictors of library managers' satisfaction in their role. Interestingly, while age on its own was not found to be meaningfully related to library managers' reports regarding their satisfaction in their supervisory role, when combined with their assessments of supervisees' behaviors, it was significantly predictive. This was reflected in written commentary from some managers that bias related to their age was a factor explaining their supervisees' unprofessional attitudes or behaviors; and corroborated some studies which have found that the status incongruence of an employee older than his or her supervisor resulted in decreased employee job satisfaction (e.g., Artz, 2013). In contrast, although racial or ethnic bias was cited by some respondents as at the root of their supervisees' attitudes or behaviors, library managers' racial identity was not correlated with their overall satisfaction in their role as supervisor. However, it is important to note that in their written comments, African-American library managers in particular pointed to racial bias as contributing to their supervisees' challenging behaviors.

Having limited opportunities for professional development (or a lack of interest in these opportunities) was also described as at the root of some supervisees' unprofessional behaviors—as was supervisees' general job dissatisfaction. Our study found that a source of poor employee performance was staff either lacking professional development opportunities or the desire to take advantage of existing opportunities. It may be that staff who do not seem interested in professional development simply have not been presented with appropriate motivation in the form of advancement opportunities. Fama and Martin (2009) found, for instance, that library support staff generally do want professional development training, but that they also want career advancement opportunities and compensation commensurate with any added duties.

FURTHER RESEARCH

Because supervisees' behaviors were found to be the strongest predictors of library managers' satisfaction in their role as supervisor, further exploration of this area is warranted. For instance, how do library managers foster supervisees' more positive or respectful behaviors? Moreover, though they played a significant role in predicting respondents' overall satisfaction in their role as supervisor, it was unexpected that minority library managers' reports of supervisee microaggressive behaviors did not differ significantly from the reports of their counterparts from non-minority groups. On the face of it, this finding appears to undermine Alabi's (2015) conclusion that, at least with respect to librarians of color, we would expect that these librarians would report higher levels of microaggressions than their White colleagues. However, a comparison of findings between studies was necessarily limited by the fact that different items were used for each study. While Alabi adapted 20 items from Nadal's (2011) REMS instrument, this study adapted only four of his items. In addition, our items did not focus exclusively on racial microaggressions. And whereas Alabi (2015) focused on librarians' relationships with colleagues, this study focused on the relationship between supervisor and supervisee. It may be that, by virtue of the nature of the status difference between manager and supervisee, supervisors do not identify supervisees' behaviors as microaggressive in the same manner or to the same degree that these behaviors might otherwise be viewed as microaggressive when demonstrated by others at the same level or above the manager in the workplace hierarchy. A more direct and extensive exploration of this phenomenon between library managers and their supervisees is recommended—particularly between dissimilar pairs given respondents' comments regarding race and age as a factor in their supervision challenges. And possibly related to this, because shared social identity networks were correlated with their satisfaction in their role, the nature and extent of the networks library managers claim membership to and how and why these are meaningful to them is worthy of exploration.

Finally, the nature of the support library managers receive from their own supervisors to effectively address the management challenges they may experience with their supervisees is also worthy of investigation. And by extension, as suggested from some library managers' written commentary, the professional development opportunities both managers and supervisees require in order to foster effective working relationships between these groups is a potential area of study.

CONCLUSION

The present study suggests some ways to improve satisfaction among library managers and to cultivate a cooperative and collaborative workplace

culture. Considering the significance of the impact of supervisees' behaviors on library managers, how can libraries cultivate a cooperative and collaborative workplace culture? The qualitative responses to our survey reinforced findings in the literature that professional development and career-growth opportunities could ameliorate some challenges managers face with their supervisees. Further, what can be done to give them the support they need in the workplace? The literature and our survey have highlighted the role of social identity networks as well as the importance of validation from top-level administrators who must be cognizant of how they are or are not supporting their middle-level managers to address the supervision challenges they may face—particularly the challenges faced by minority library managers.

As one library manager astutely observed, “the perception of belonging, being understood, valued, and supported is very important to [the] job satisfaction and performance” of library staff. The same observation is relevant to library managers. Libraries must consider ways in which they can foster a sense of understanding, value, and support such that library managers are encouraged to perform their responsibilities well. In order for library managers to develop the competencies as recommended by LLAMA, for example team building and conflict resolution skills, libraries ought to focus on how they can foster and support library management. As the same library manager observed regarding her own motivation as a supervisor, “[to] support each employee in his or her development in the job, to make sure that they have what they need to do their best, earn, grow, perform on their own and as a team, improve what we do together.” In doing so, libraries can increase the likelihood that both supervisor and supervisee are best able to collaboratively focus on the services they provide to their patrons.

ORCID

Simon P. Funge  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-4497-1231>

Laura DeLancey  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1979-1928>

Austin Griffiths  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6670-3150>

REFERENCES

- Alabi, J. (2015). Racial microaggressions in academic libraries: Results of a survey of minority and non-minority librarians. *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 41(1), 47–53. doi:10.1016/j.acalib.2014.10.008
- American Library Association. (2017). *January 2017 demographics update*. Retrieved from <http://www.ala.org/research/initiatives/membershipsurveys>
- American Library Association Office for Research & Statistics. (2012). *Diversity counts 2012 tables*. Retrieved from <http://www.ala.org/offices/diversity/diversitycounts/divcounts>

- Ammons-Stephens, S., Cole, H., Jenkins-Gibbs, K., Riehle, C., & Weare, W. (2009). Developing core leadership competencies for the library profession. *Library Leadership & Management*, 23(2), 63–74. Retrieved from <https://journals.tdl.org/llm/index.php/llm/article/view/1769/1044>
- Artz, B. (2013). The impact of supervisor age on employee job satisfaction. *Applied Economics Letters*, 20(14), 1340–1343. doi:10.1080/13504851.2013.806777
- Bugg, K. (2016). The perceptions of people of color in academic libraries concerning the relationship between retention and advancement as middle managers. *Journal of Library Administration*, 56(4), 428–443. doi:10.1080/01930826.2015.1105076
- Fama, J., & Martin, E. (2009). One model for creating a career ladder for library support staff. *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 35(5), 475–481. doi:10.1016/j.acalib.2009.06.018
- Geddes, D., & Konrad, A. (2003). Demographic differences and reactions to performance feedback. *Human Relations*, 56(12), 1485–1513. doi:10.1177/00187267035612003
- Gillespie, N. A., Walsh, M., Winefields, A. H., Dua, J., & Stough, C. (2001). Occupational stress in universities: Staff perceptions of the causes, consequences, and moderators of stress. *Work & Stress*, 15(1), 53–72. doi:10.1080/026783701117944
- Gonzales, L., Davidoff, K., Nadal, K., & Yanos, P. (2015). Microaggressions experienced by persons with mental illness: An exploratory study. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, 38(3), 234–241. doi:10.1037/prj0000096
- Harris, I., Winskowski, A., & Engdahl, B. (2007). Types of workplace social support in the prediction of job satisfaction. *Career Development Quarterly*, 56(2), 150–156. doi:10.1002/j.2161-0045.2007.tb00027.x
- Haslam, S., O'Brien, A., Jetten, J., Vormedal, K., & Penna, S. (2005). Taking the strain: Social identity, social support, and the experience of stress. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 44(3), 355–370. doi:10.1348/014466605X37468
- Huffman, A., Waltrous-Rodriguez, K., & King, E. (2008). Supporting a diverse workforce: What type of support is most meaningful for lesbian and gay employees? *Human Resources Management*, 47(2), 237–253. doi:10.1002/hrm.20210
- Jeanquart-Barone, S. (1993). Trust differences between supervisors and subordinates: Examining the role of race and gender. *Sex Roles*, 29(1-2), 1–11. doi:10.1007/BF00289993
- Kandiuk, M. (2014). Promoting racial and ethnic diversity among Canadian academic librarians. *College & Research Libraries*, 75(4), 492–556. doi:10.5860/crl.75.4.492
- Kim, K., & Sin, S. (2008). Increasing ethnic diversity in LIS: Strategies suggested by librarians of color. *The Library Quarterly*, 78(2), 153–177. doi:10.1086/528887
- Library Leadership and Management Association (2016). *Leadership and management competencies*. Retrieved from <http://www.ala.org/llama/leadership-and-management-competencies>
- Mason, F., & Wetherbee, L. (2004). Learning to lead: An analysis of current training programs for library leadership. *Library Trends*, 53(1), 187–217. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/2142/1723>
- Moqbel, M., Nevo, S., & Kock, N. (2013). Organizational members' use of social networking sites and job performance: An exploratory study. *Information Technology & People*, 20(3), 240–264. doi:10.1108/ITP-10-2012-0110

- Nadal, K. L. (2011). The Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale (REMS): Construction, reliability, and validity. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 58*(4), 470–480. doi:10.1037/a0025193
- Nadal, K., Davidoff, K., Davis, L., & Wong, Y. (2014). Emotional, behavioral, and cognitive reactions to microaggressions: Transgender perspectives. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity, 1*(1), 72–81. doi:10.1037/sgd0000011
- Nadal, K., Davidoff, K., Davis, L., Wong, Y., Marshall, D., & McKenzie, V. (2015). A qualitative approach to intersectional microaggressions: Understanding influences of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and religion. *Qualitative Psychology, 2*(2), 147–163. doi:10.1037/qup0000026
- Rhoades, L., & Eisenberger, R. (2002). Perceived organizational support: A review of the literature. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 87*(4), 698–714. doi:10.1037/0021-9010.87.4.698
- Riggle, R., Edmondson, D., & Hansen, J. (2009). A meta-analysis of the relationship between perceived organizational support and job outcomes: 20 years of research. *Journal of Business Research, 62*(10), 1027–1030. doi:10.1016/j.jbusres.2008.05.003
- Romaniuk, M., & Haycock, K. (2013). Designing and evaluating library leadership programs: improving performance and effectiveness. *The Australian Library Journal, 60*(1), 29–40. doi:10.1080/00049670.2011.10722554
- Shelton, K., & Delgado-Romero, E. (2013). Sexual orientation microaggressions: The experience of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer clients in psychotherapy. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 58*(2), 210–221. doi:10.1037/a0022251
- Sue, D., Capodilupo, C., Torino, G., Bucceri, J., Holder, A., & Nadal, K. (2007). Racial microaggressions in everyday life: Implications for clinical practice. *American Psychologist, 62*(4), 271–286. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.62.4.271
- Triana, M., Garcia, M., & Colella, A. (2010). Managing diversity: How organizational efforts to support diversity moderate the effects of perceived racial discrimination on affective commitment. *Personnel Psychology, 63*(4), 817–843. doi:10.1111/j.1744-6570.2010.01189.x
- Tsui, A., & O'Reilly, C. (1989). Beyond simple demographic effects: The importance of relationship demography in supervisory-subordinate dyads. *Academy of Management Journal, 32*(2), 402–423. doi:10.2307/256368
- Tsui, A., Porter, L., & Egan, T. (2002). When both similarities and dissimilarities matter: Extending the concept of relational demography. *Human Relations, 55*(8), 899–929. doi:0018-7267(200208)55:8
- Vagg, P., & Spielberger, C. (1998). Occupational stress: Measuring job pressure and organizational support in the workplace. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 3*(4), 294–305. doi:10.1037/1076-8998.3.4.294
- Veccio, R., & Bullis, R. (2001). Moderators of the influence of supervisor-subordinate similarity on subordinate outcomes. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 86*(5), 884–896. doi:10.1037/0021-9010.86.5.884
- Viswesvaran, C., Sanchez, J., & Fisher, J. (1999). The role of social support in the process of work stress: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 54*(2), 314–334. doi:10.1006/jvbe.1998.1661

Copyright of Journal of Library Administration is the property of Taylor & Francis Ltd and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.