They Just Aren’t A Good Fit: Interrogating and Challenging Recruitment Strategies in Academic Libraries That Perpetuate Whiteness

- Sojourna Cunningham  
  - scunning@richmond.edu
- Jennifer Stout  
  - jastout@vcu.edu
- Samantha Guss  
  - sguss@richmond.edu
"Whiteness—an ideological practice that can extend beyond notions of racial supremacy to other areas of dominance"

--April Hathcock (2015)
Current Practices

How are we perpetuating whiteness in libraries? In hiring?
The Job Ad & Interview

- Required Qualifications vs. Preferred
- ALA Joblist, Chronicle of Higher Education
- Saying, but not doing (i.e. “we’re open to entry-level candidates”...but not really)
Making the Job Attractive

- Are you creating an attractive environment?
  - Cultural Competence for library workers
  - Salary
  - Benefits
What We Can Do

Talking the talk is not enough
The Job Ad

- Minimal required qualifications
- Be truthful in what you’re looking for
- Active recruiting
- Listservs specific to ethnic caucuses
- Cluster hires
Interview Practices

- Have a rubric
- Phone interview best practices
- Collect data
- Follow up with all candidates
- Provide options for candidates to give feedback
Interview Practices

- Baseline interview training for all employees
  - Illegal questions
- Additional training for search committee
- All candidates should have the same interview experience
- Give candidates as much information as possible beforehand
“Good Fit”

It doesn’t mean what you think it does...
The So-Called “Good Fit”

- No one can truly define it
- Euphemism for whiteness/sameness/conformity
- False belief: “There is one best/right candidate for this position and we are capable of choosing them”
- False belief: It’s diversity vs. merit
Assumption: Racism is an individual choice bad people (i.e. not me) make
  - Actually it is a system of oppression we are born into

Interrogate the assumptions we make about candidates

Might have to give something up/provide something extra/have hard conversations
Decolonize our work

“The inclusion of marginalized identities and experiences without decentering dominant narratives is an understanding of diversity that leaves oppressive structures intact, and in fact, insulates them from criticism. Diversity is very frequently the linchpin of liberal racism in education, and inclusivity becomes functionally useless if we do not also exclude via decentering violent normativities positioned as normal.”
Recommended Reads: Hiring


Recommended Reads: Retention


