

Do personal and institutional anxieties within Sheffield Central Library and Norwich Millennium Library affect the promotion of particular genres, (Black British/ Asian and gay/lesbian fiction)?

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Abstract

This study examines the attitudes and anxieties of a sample of library staff in Sheffield Central Library and Norfolk Millennium Library regarding the promotion of minority genres, British Black/Asian and gay and lesbian literature. The location of both libraries differed enough in their population profile so as to add another dimension to the study. The data for this study was collected through questionnaires completed by 26 front line staff and interviews with 6 library Senior Managers from both libraries. The small sample produced a wide range of interesting data that gave an informed snapshot of the approach library staff took to promoting minority genres in their libraries.

From the information collected it becomes evident that library staff do have anxieties about promoting minority genres. The findings showed that whilst both libraries had undergone training focused on social inclusion there was little training dealing with minority genres. As a result there was confusion and anxiety amongst front line staff and Senior Managers surrounding the expectation on the individual and the expectation on the institution when promoting minority genres. Whilst the location of the libraries did make a difference to the attitude of staff when promoting minority genres it was not so pronounced as first expected.

From the data provided it was clear that each library needed to include guidelines focused on promoting minority genres in library policies. There needs to be a mechanism that is suitable to each library to find ways of accommodating the problem of interfiling or segregation of gay and lesbian literature. Minority genres reading groups should be introduced that would could inform stock selection. New responsibilities could be created to have an overview of focus groups, special promotions and the acquisition of minority genres. Training needs in this area also needs reviewing. There is plenty of opportunity for further research in this area, especially in the area of segregation or interfiling of minority genres, the age of library personnel its effect on social inclusion strategies and the impact of special promotions of minority genres.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In September 2003 Briony Train presented an evaluation report on the research findings of 'Black Bytes' promotions carried out in the East Midlands. Whilst the initial focus was on the Black Bytes promotion the evaluation was expanded to give a more general view of the reading and browsing choices of '1047 people in the East Midlands'. Whilst carrying out this study the researcher felt that not all library staff were at ease promoting the minority genres of Black British/Asian and Gay/ Lesbian fiction and that this could prove an interesting area of research.

The notion that librarians' anxieties could affect their interaction with patrons engaged this researcher's interest. If a librarian feels unsure and anxious about promoting certain minority genres what impact can this have on the individual and the library? If this anxiety is shared by more than one librarian or is an anxiety held by the library's management does this become an institutional anxiety that filters through to frontline staff and seriously affects the promotion of minority genres? The researcher was also interested to discover whether these anxieties are inherent or whether library staff were open to training that would inform and address individual and in turn institutional anxieties.

The researcher also wanted to consider whether the location of the library affected the staff's attitude to minority genres? To address this question the researcher has chosen Sheffield Central library and Norwich Millennium Library in which to carry out the research. These particular libraries were chosen as the researcher knows both of them well, through studying in Sheffield and coming originally from the Norwich area.

Each of the library buildings are very different. Sheffield Central Library is a large imposing grade II listed Art Deco building, which maintains many of its original features. Norwich Millennium Library in contrast is a modern build, with state of the art 'flag ship' library which opened in 2001 replacing the previous library which burnt down in 1994.

Although the cities both have universities and support a large student population in term time the cities are very different. The table gives a comparison of each cities population.

| Table to show population of Sheffield and Norwich taken from 2001 | |
|--|---------------------------|
| National census | |
| Sheffield | Norwich |
| Total population: 512,234 | Total population: 121,550 |
| White origin: 468, 217 | White origin: 117,701 |
| Black and Asian 21,015 | Black and Asian; 3,849 |

(Statistics taken and from National Statistics Census 2001 website
<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census/>)

Sheffield is surrounded by the Peak District, has many parks and gardens and is seen as a city where, ‘Cultural activities are increasingly important to Sheffield’s fast changing, diverse and cosmopolitan society’ (Gosse, 2006: 1). Norwich is a Cathedral city and is the county town of Norfolk with a much dispersed population. Despite its prosperous façade there are high levels of deprivation in the city and Norwich is ranked as the 61st most deprived council out of 354 council areas.

Although population statistics are freely available for the two cities the researcher was unable to find any reliable statistics to show the number of gay and lesbian people who live in either city. Information on gaydemographics.org (2004) publishes information from the National Statistics office that shows the number of single sex couples identified in the National Census. However this is not seen as reliable because there may have been a misunderstanding of the form and mistakes may have been made by those filling it in. However the statistics show Sheffield has 808 single sex couples and Norwich has 292 single sex couples. Plans to have a section regarding sexual orientation in the 2011 National Census have been omitted as ‘it didn’t feel it was ready to cover such an issue’ (Shoffman, 2006). Previous questions about ethnicity and religion in the 1991 and 2001 respectively have contributed to the reluctance for a ‘sexuality’ to be included. There is an assumption

on the part of the researcher that Sheffield has a larger gay and lesbian community than Norwich. This assumption is based on Sheffield's larger population, more returns for Sheffield from an internet search for gay venues in either city, and the researcher's personal sense that there is a more vibrant cultural life in Sheffield compared to that of Norwich.

The researcher hopes that this study will discover if there is any substance to the impression that library staff experience underlying anxieties when promoting minority genres. It is also hoped that the study will illustrate any differences to be found between the contrasting city libraries. It is hoped that results of the research can be fed back to the libraries informing future planning and staff development.

1.1 Sheffield Central Library

Sheffield Central Library, as already stated is a large imposing art deco building in need of some refurbishment situated in the centre of Sheffield. The building is arranged on five floors housing fiction, non fiction material, local studies, community information, music CDs and films on DVDs. The lower floor has a children's library and the top floor houses Grave's Art Gallery. In the Sheffield Library Position statement it states, 'The Central library is a major space for the provision of information services and is used by reading groups, patent clinics, class visits, business clubs and to support learning in partnership with Sheffield university' (Sheffield Libraries, position statement, 2004 : 21). Between 2005 – 2006 there were 313,416 visits to central lending and there were 41,187 enquiries (Wallace, 2006). There are 35 members of full and part time staff in Central Lending The position statements (2004: 23) says that 'The needs of minority communities are exceptionally well catered for through champion roles in equal access, multicultural services, social inclusion, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese or African Caribbean communities.'

1.2 Norwich Millennium Library

There is more written about Norwich Millennium Library as the old library was destroyed by fire in 1994 and the new library was opened in November 2001.

The project cost 65 million pounds, 31.5 million pounds coming from the Millennium Commission. The new library is regarded as a flagship building and cited as an example of good practice in 'Framework for the Future'. (DCMS, 2003) The library building has been likened to a shopping mall, 'The Norfolk and Norwich Millennium Library is sited within the forum building and shares space with the regional BBC, a heritage visitor attraction, tourist information service, local educational consortium, and an eating establishment' (Bryson, *et al.* 2003: 9). The Forum building attracts two million visitors a year.

As the building is new it is well equipped and furnished offering over 220 study spaces, eighty five of which is equipped with terminals with internet access. The ground floor offers 'Express' a self service option which allows limited extended opening. The children's library is on the ground floor and the second floor houses the 'Norfolk Heritage Centre.' The library also shares its space with the Origins Visitor Attraction which the story of Norfolk and Norwich through the ages. There is also the Norwich Tourist Information Centre, the City Learning Station, the Learning shop and Pizza Express. It is envisaged that the Millennium Library will be 'a developing network in Norfolk and beyond for the dissemination of knowledge and the promotion of lifelong learning for the social and economic benefit of all the people of Norfolk and Norwich' (Holden, 2001)

1.3 Aims and Objectives

Aim

The aim of this study is to examine frontline staff and senior staff attitude in Sheffield Central Library and Norwich Millennium Library to the promotion of minority genres British Black/Asian and gay and lesbian literature.

Objectives of the Dissertation

- To consider the attitudes of library staff towards the promotion of minority genres within the Norfolk and Norwich Millennium library and Sheffield Central library.
- To evaluate what circumstances encourage or discourage Norfolk and Norwich Millennium Library and Sheffield Central to actively promote minority genres.

Specific Problems to be Investigated

- To investigate if there are anxieties of ‘unknown territory’ that could influence an individual librarian’s commitment toward minority interest literature.
- To consider how these anxieties influence:-
 - Breadth of stock a library offers.
 - The enthusiasm or otherwise given to special promotion of these minority genres.
 - The enthusiasm/ motivation of staff to develop personal expertise/ qualities that will allow them to become knowledgeable in promoting minority genres.
 - To what extent does the view held by senior management affect the ‘culture’ of the library regarding the staff’s participation in the promotion of particular minority genres?

1.4 Terms of Reference

Minority Group: In general minority groups refer to groups of people who, because of their social status, education, employment, religion, ethnicity or sexual orientation, are not seen as part of the communities' 'dominant' group. When 'minority groups' are referred to in this study the researcher is looking at minority groups in terms of ethnicity and sexuality

Minority genres: In relation to this study, minority genres is literature written by Black British/Asian writers and gay and lesbian writers. This literature may not have mainstream appeal and only attract a small section of the library's patrons.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Literature which specifically considers the potential anxieties of public library staff and the promotion of particular minority genres is very sparse. There are a number of articles, texts and policy documents which consider social inclusion and equal opportunities either generally or specifically directed towards public libraries. These documents give essential insight and will be used as a foundation to support the research.

2.1 Social Inclusion

An important document that is designed to underpin the crucial role that libraries have to play in social inclusion is 'Libraries for All: Social Inclusion in Public Libraries' (DCMS: 1999). This is a draft social inclusion policy for public libraries in England. This document also informs some of the underlying principles used to promote minority genres as a way of including groups who may not always feel welcome in the library.

This draft policy describes the role of libraries as central to generating the necessary cultural change that will push forward the government's initiative for social inclusion. It encourages libraries to place social inclusion into the forefront of their planning by challenging the culture of the library. The document suggests ways that libraries can identify socially excluded groups, train staff to meet the needs of excluded groups and ensure that, 'Public library and information services should be available and accessible to everyone.' (DCMS, 1999:14)

The document promotes the importance of frontline library staff and their part in the process of change in terms of '...attitudes and behaviours, values and beliefs.' (DCMS, 1999: 20). It recommends staff training as the means of equipping frontline staff and other library professionals with the knowledge necessary to promote a socially inclusive library. In particular the document promotes the notion of professionals, in this case frontline library staff, as 'responsible gatekeepers'

(DCMS, 1999:10) who will make a difference. The notion of frontline staff as gatekeepers is very pertinent to this study. If frontline staff do have anxieties regarding minority genres this could work against creating the socially inclusive library.

In January 2001 the DCMS produced Libraries, 'Museums, Galleries and Archives for all' (DCMS: 2001). This document brought together comments received about the draft 'Libraries for All' and revised some areas. However the basic underlying principles remained the same as outlined in 'Libraries for all.' The 2001 document encourages libraries to adopt a six point plan:

- *Identify the people who are socially excluded and their distribution. Engage them and establish their needs.*
- *Assess and review current practice*
- *Develop strategic objectives and prioritise resources*
- *Develop the service and train the staff to provide them*
- *Implement the services and publicise them*
- *Evaluate success, review and improve.* (DCMS 2001 :9)

'Open to all? (2000) is another important report that was carried out by Leeds Metropolitan University, Merton Libraries and Heritage, Sheffield Libraries and John Vincent. The report examines the challenge to public libraries of social inclusion. Several papers cited in this review were selected from this influential collection of working papers.

CILIP's (2004b) Diversity report examines the importance of the understanding by all library staff as to the importance of social inclusion strategies. The report says that, 'It is still too often the case that the needs, context and reason for many service developments are only understood fully by management' (CILIP, 2004b: 6). The report advocates that libraries should find ways of discovering what 'excluded' groups want from the library then help them shape the service they want. The report states that libraries should be at the forefront of helping excluded groups gain access to all that society offers, 'a responsible society will give all its members opportunities to become connected to others and to the benefits that society offers,

should they wish to take advantage of them' (CILIP, 2004b: 10) Like many other documents dealing with social inclusion this document states that to fully deal with social inclusion within the library there should be an importance on training, the development of job descriptions which meet the demands of a socially inclusive society and leadership which is committed to social inclusion.

2.2 Gay and Lesbian

Some documents relating to gay and lesbian issues are dated in as much as they deal with the position of public libraries as a result of Section 28 of the 1988 Local Government Act. Section 28 stated that a local authority could not 'intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality' (Local Government Act, 1988). The potential consequences to public libraries were considerable and much of the literature around this time makes reference to this Act. The Act was repealed in 2003.

CILIP (2004a) has produced a short guidance document that gives advice regarding the responsibility libraries have both to gay and lesbian staff and gay and lesbian patrons. CILIP's code of practice for libraries and information professionals states that at the forefront of everything a library does it should ensure, 'respect for diversity within society, and the promoting of equal opportunities and human rights.' The guidance promotes the view that gay and lesbian information professionals should be treated in the same way as their heterosexual colleagues and that homophobic abuse should be tackled in the same way as racism. This is an issue which is highlighted in Channel 4 Gay Census (2001), 'While overt racist abuse is challenged in most workplaces and institutions, homophobic abuse is frequently not taken seriously.'

The CILIP guidance document continues by considering stock control issues and the need to reflect today's wider society in the stock purchased. 'There is also a need for information and reading material relating to LGBT issues to be made available for the whole community.' Gay and lesbian material should be sought out, which may mean not going to the obvious mainstream suppliers. The document also

touches on the problem about interfiling gay and lesbian literature or forming a separate collection.

John Vincent has written extensively on the subject of gay and lesbian's inclusion into public libraries. In 'So who are the 'proper' library users then?' (2005a). Vincent advocates that there are proper and improper library users and that lesbian and gay men fall within the perceived list of improper users. He describes how the inflexible nature of some libraries and librarians ensure that the library is an unwelcoming place for gay patrons.

The Big Gay Read (2006), in conjunction with Queer up North, provides information regarding peoples favourite gay read. It also offers an informative, if short, information pack for library staff regarding the promotion of lesbian and gay materials in libraries. It advocates that, '...there are still areas of the country where library authorities are uncertain about promoting gay and lesbian fiction or have never done so. This quick guide will be of assistance to authorities such as these....' It argues that now some lesbian and gay literature has become part of the mainstream it is a good time to promote this genre.

As an example of a proactive library that works hard to accommodate the needs of gay and lesbian patrons is Brighton and Hove Library service. The recent 'Count Me In' (Associates, 2001 – 2006) survey in Brighton and Hove made clear the council's expectations of all services and their provision for gay and lesbian people. 'We expect providers to consider the Strategy in some detail then take decisions about their priorities and the way they allocate resources, the ways that they deliver services and gaps in their provision.' (Associates, 2001-2006: 6) Brighton and Hove Library service reflect the council's strategy in the services they provide to gay and lesbian patrons.

As early as 1998, whilst Clause 28 was still in force, Brighton and Hove libraries were offering an important service to the lesbian and gay community. Norman (1998:195) said that the collection, '...is an important resource.....successful because it attempts to fulfil gay men and lesbians different information needs....the

Collection has important educational, cultural and economic roles, providing access to resources that may be difficult to find or expensive....’

In 2006 the collection and the libraries services are still as important. The library’s web pages promote the library services to gay and lesbian users, (Brighton and Hove City Library, 2006). This page is proactive in seeking new material for their LGBT collection. The library also has a gay and lesbian reading group and a fairly influential LGBT consultation group. This group ensures that the services provided are the ones that the gay and lesbian community need and want, not just the ones that the library assumes are needed. The library also uses its mobile library to promote services to gay and lesbian users on the cities gay pride day.

Meagan O’Leary’s dissertation, ‘Pink Perceptions’ (2005) was an influential paper for Sheffield Central Library. The research focused on ‘the perceptions of LGBT and public librarians regarding the provision of library materials to LGBT people in Denver USA and Sheffield UK.’ The research looked at the provision both libraries offered and evaluated whether both libraries met the needs of the LGBT community. The research interviewed library staff and LGBT groups in both cities to discover what provision was on offer and how easy it was to access. The material gathered showed that ‘...LGBT user services were not part of their individual remits and therefore not a large priority for their everyday knowledge or performance of library activities.’ (O’Leary, 2005:89) The findings of this study were important for Sheffield library and will be used to inform working groups and policies in the future.

Other material, predominantly from the USA and Canada contribute to the literature. Van Buskirk (2005) gives a US slant on non fiction provision of gay material in public libraries. The author comments that some colleagues make the assumption that no gay people use the library which supports the notion that often this community are invisible. Curry (1997) a Canadian writer, suggests that a lack of guidance to support librarians when promoting ‘Lesbigay’ materials should be addressed.

2.3 Black British/Asian

Shiraz Durrani has written widely on issues of racism and its specific impact on the public library service. In a paper included within the working papers for 'Open to all?' (2000: 258) He says, 'A serious look at public library policy and practice reveals a Eurocentric approach, with the achievements and indeed the very existence of other cultures and practices merely given a nod in tokenistic projects.' Durrani (2001:5) has also created a handbook for libraries that he hopes will, '...come to grips with the large number of developments and government initiatives that can often seem confusing.'

Durrani also examines the lack of librarians from ethnic backgrounds working in British libraries. Durrani's paper on the Quality Leaders Project (2002) describes how Black information workers are under represented in the library service with few opportunities for which can only have a detrimental effect on the quality of information services offered to black communities. Durrani states that this project would address institutional racism in libraries as it would, '.....provide a service to Black communities that involves them and which they consider relevant to their needs; and empowering Black information workers whatever their position in a highly hierarchical library system suffering under institutional racism...' (2002: 24) The paper gives evidence of the need to attract Black and Asian librarians, its development and the strategies to implement the proposals.

Branching Out (2000?-) run by the Opening the Book initiative, held a workshop which encouraged librarians to explore gaps in provision. From this meeting Branching Out has produced a useful toolkit which advises librarians on various ways they can help enhance the experience of black and Asian readers using libraries. Branching Out (2000d?-) makes it clear that, '.... institutional racism is endemic in English society, but that it's not acceptable and that it needs to be faced.' The toolkit covers all aspects of ensuring that libraries are offering the best service to ethnic minority patrons. Strategies include consultation with patrons, training, the promotion of Black and Asian writing and the importance of reader consultation. Branching out also deals with the assumption by some librarians that Black and Asian writing should be treated the same as any other literature there is on the library

shelf. The site advocates that by not being proactive in considering Black British writers the institution is demonstrating that it is institutionally racist. Branching out also promotes the importance of having specialist librarians who will support libraries in their promotion of Black and Asian writing.

International Federation of Library Associations, (IFLA) (1998) produce standards for multicultural public libraries' services which should be seen as an integral part of any library service. The standards consider service provision, materials, information and reference services, extension services and staffing. 'In the global society we are all part of cultural minorities. All cultures must be represented in the global information infrastructure.' (IFLA, 1998: 2) Whilst these standards focus a lot on libraries carrying collections for minority groups in their language or dialect the document makes pertinent comments about attracting library staff from ethnic minorities. The document comments in point 7.1 'Libraries should reflect multicultural societies by the staff they employ, ensuring that the staff truly reflects the different ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups that the library serves.' (p8)

Briony Train's evaluation report entitled 'What do you like to read?' for Black Bytes in September 2003 revealed some interesting findings that are pertinent to this study. The evaluation report centred on peoples' reading choices and the factors that affect these choices in nine East Midland library authorities. This evaluation found some interesting data surrounding the promotion of Black British/Asian literature as well as gay and lesbian writing.

Gay and lesbian fiction and Black British/Asian fiction were unpopular choices amongst those questioned in the survey. As the content of these books are very different the assumption was made that, '...large numbers of respondents are choosing not to read these books not because of their content, but because of the cultures or lifestyles that they represent.' (Train, 2003: 83) The evaluation report continues to discuss the power of display and how this can affect patron's choices, an important area for this study.

Research carried out by 'The Bookseller' and published in a '16 page special on books, diversity and your business' (May 2006) looks at the emergence of Britain as

a multicultural society where ‘individual communities can retain their cultural identities while engaging with an overall British context.’(Denny, May 2006: 3). The research shows that within the British multicultural population there is a ‘huge potential source of writing talent.’ (Denny: 3). Another article in the magazine, by Liz Bury (May 2006a:5) praises libraries as being in touch with black and minority ethnic readers. It continues by saying that in the past year, ‘47%(of libraries responding to the survey) reported running author events aimed at black or minority ethnic readers, 65% ran a fiction event for this audience.’ These events can be important to identify the kinds of books that are attractive to the ethnic community. One of the librarians questioned in the survey, (who coincidentally is a Senior Manager this researcher interviewed for this study) says, ‘We ask people at our events to choose books – we get a better selection that way.’ (Dennys, May 2006: 10) However it is worth noting that the article also points out that a number of Black British/Asian writers such as Monica Ali and Andrea Levy have topped the bestseller charts and ‘talented writers have an equally good chance of commercial success regardless of their ethnicity’ (Bury, May 2006b: 8)

Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods of Investigation

3.1 Introduction

This research is based on the following assumption. As with any other profession, librarians bring with them their own anxieties, prejudices, moral concerns and religious beliefs. One or more of these fundamental beliefs may be challenged when librarians are asked to deal with requests from sectors of society which are outside their own personal point of reference. This could result in an individual not meeting the information needs of patrons from certain sectors of society. If these anxieties are reflected within their institutions the library as a whole may not be meeting the information needs of certain minority groups. Evidence was collected from a sample of twenty five frontline staff and six senior managers from each library. The methods used to collect this information will be considered below.

3.2 Methodology

To gather information from a group of 25 front line staff a method had to be employed that took into account the pressure of time and the need to ensure all frontline staff are asked the same questions. Quantitative methods involve the relationships between variables. Questionnaires are often distributed to measure these. As Gorman says 'The quantitative researcher is looking for patterns in events, for normative behaviour (that is, behaviour that participants think 'should' take place) and for causal relationships among variables' (Gorman and Clayton: 10). The researcher decided that questionnaires would be the most efficient way to collect data from frontline staff.

The researcher wanted more detail and in depth questioning of senior managers. The use of qualitative methods is a process that does not rely on statistical analysis. The primary focus of qualitative information gathering '...includes interactions

between individuals, groups, and organizations as well as descriptions of phenomena' (Glazier, 1992: 6). It allows for the researcher to view first hand interactions, human behaviour and 'can be said yielding more contextually detailed data – richer data' (Glazier: 7). This was the method used to gather information from Senior Managers.

It was felt by the researcher that in order to have a full range of responses from the chosen libraries a 'mixed method' (Gorman & Clayton, 2005) approach would be desirable. As Gorman and Clayton (2005:12) comment '...the fact is that competent researchers today realize that confining an investigative approach does not yield the fullest understanding of a phenomenon'. This approach would also help to maximise the response rate and allow for interesting similarities and comparisons to be made. Thus the research methods employed would be both quantitative and qualitative in nature.

As the research dealt with sensitive issues around sexuality and ethnic minority provision, participants' consent, safety and anonymity had to be ensured at all times, as Powell and Connaway remark '...the researcher does everything possible to ensure that the subjects will never be identified to anyone outside the study team' (2004: 187). The researcher ensured that The University of Sheffield's strict set of Ethical Guide lines were adhered to and followed at all times.

3.3 Interviews

It was the intention of the researcher to interview six members of senior level staff within both Central libraries, including directors of service. However it was only possible to interview three members of senior staff in each library. There are a number of advantages that the process of interviewing can offer; a better response rate (Gorman & Clayton; Connaway & Powell), fuller responses (Connaway and Powell; Busha, 1980), It is also important to note that 'Personal contact may also be of special importance if the questions refer to any matters that are confidential, embarrassing or sensitive in any way' (Gorman and Clayton: 126). The researcher conducted 'unstructured interviews' which encouraged open ended, in depth

responses to predetermined questions. This approach was beneficial as it promoted discussion uncovering in some cases unexpected insights that may not have been possible with a survey.

3.4 Questionnaires

It was intended that the researcher would questionnaire a number of front-line staff in both libraries. Initially 25 questionnaires were delivered to both libraries, with the realistic expectation of probably only receiving 10-15 questionnaires returned. Initial contact with both libraries regarding the distribution of the questionnaire was met with positive responses. Due to the limited time-scale of this research project and pressure on staffs' time this was a particularly attractive method. It was hoped that the researcher would also gain a larger sample of responses using this approach which would help to measure and analyse opinions and identify interesting trends.

As each library has a high proportion of front-line staff who are full and part time the questionnaire was designed to be simple and easy for the staff members to complete in the shortest amount of time. The questionnaire used a 'Likert scale' model, which incorporated a series of statements to which the participant was asked to indicate how far they 'agree' or 'disagree' with the question. As this research is centred around how library staff feel about social inclusion and their attitudes towards promoting minority genres this kind of model was deemed suitable to '...measure the intensity of views held by people' (Busha : 74). The participant was also given the opportunity to offer any additional comments and opinions that may have about this service area at the end of the questionnaire.

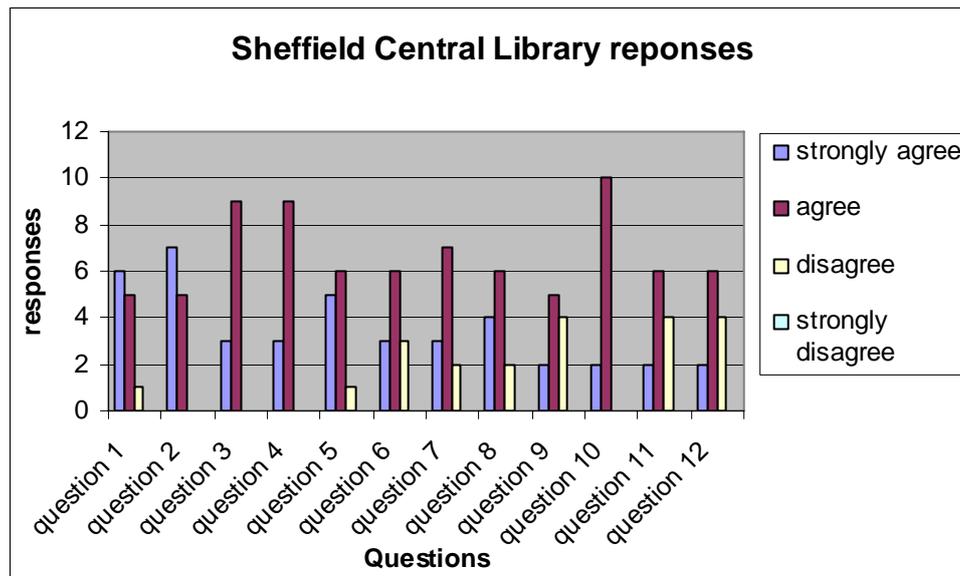
3.5 Changes to the Questionnaire

It was recommended to the researcher by a senior member of staff at Sheffield Central library that some of the terminology used such as 'Black/British Asian collection in the questionnaire would confuse some staff as they did not have a specific collection of just these kinds of books and front line staff may not give accurate responses. The researcher altered the terminology accordingly to

'Black/Asian literature' so that misunderstandings were less likely to occur when filling in responses.

Chapter 4: Results and Analysis of Questionnaires: Sheffield Central Library and Norwich Millennium Library

4.1 Sheffield Central Library



Twenty five questionnaires were given to the library to distribute to frontline staff. The researcher received twelve completed questionnaires from Sheffield Central Library. This is a return of just under 50%. Three respondents were from male staff and nine from women. The staff ratio of men to women in Sheffield library lending department is three men to thirty two women. So it would appear that all the men in this department responded to the questionnaire. The researcher received responses from all of the age groups apart from the 36 – 45 age group.

The researcher was disappointed by the small number of questionnaires returned. This was despite returning to pick up questionnaires over three consecutive weeks. The researcher was told that some questionnaires were put back into the returns box unanswered because the staff ‘did not understand the questionnaire.’ This, however, was not indicated on the questionnaires. The researcher highlighted this area as a potential difficulty in the preparation for the study and had decided that just under 50% response was large enough to continue. The researcher realised that the results

of the questionnaire would represent a snapshot of how those particular respondents felt. It would not be an accurate picture that included all the front line staff.

4.1.1 Social Inclusion

The first two statements (See appendix 1) were posed to elicit a general response about the library's and individual's role in social inclusion. All but one respondent agreed or strongly agreed that the library tried hard to tackle social exclusion. Only one 18 – 25 female respondent disagreed that the library tried hard to tackle social inclusion. It would have been interesting to have followed up this opinion but time did not allow for this. All agreed that the individual had a role to play to promote social inclusion in the library.

4.1.2 Awareness of Minority Genres

Statements three and four asked about the individual's awareness of minority genres. All respondents indicated that they had a good awareness of the minority genres in the library. However one female respondent from the 46 – 55 age group made an additional comment.

'I have no better knowledge of gay/lesbian or Black/Asian literature than I do of crime, Urdu, sci-fi etc.'

Statement five was to ascertain whether the library promoted Black British/Asian and gay lesbian fiction in a positive way. All but one respondent, the same person as in question one, indicated that the library was positive in its promotion of these genres.

This section attracted some additional comments. A female respondent in the 45 –55 age group said,

'Library patrons have the right to choose their own literature. All categories are well labelled and displayed, the choice is theirs.'

Another female respondent in the same age group commented that,

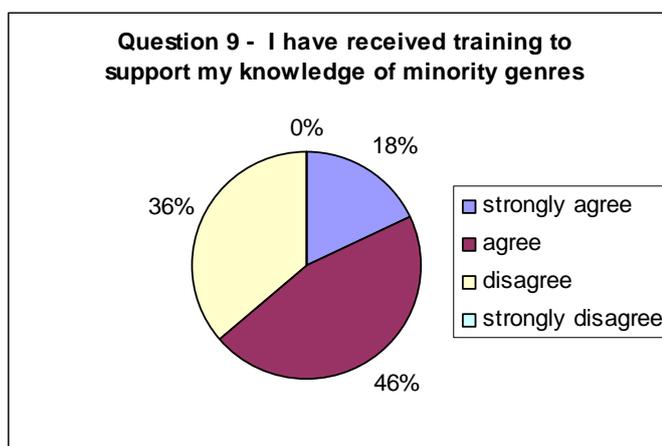
'The library's response is to put it out there without judgement and let patrons choose what they want.'

4.1.3 Levels of Confidence

Statements six, seven and eight tried to get an indication of the individual's confidence in advising patrons about minority genres. The response to this statement was spread over the first three categories. Nine out of the twelve respondents felt confident to advise patrons about gay and lesbian literature whilst three did not. Two out of the three 'disagree' responses were male.

Ten out of twelve respondents felt confident to advise patrons about British Black/Asian literature, whilst two disagreed. The two that disagreed were a woman and a man from the three that disagreed in the last question. Ten out of the twelve respondents knew who to ask if they were unable to answer patron's requests for minority genres.

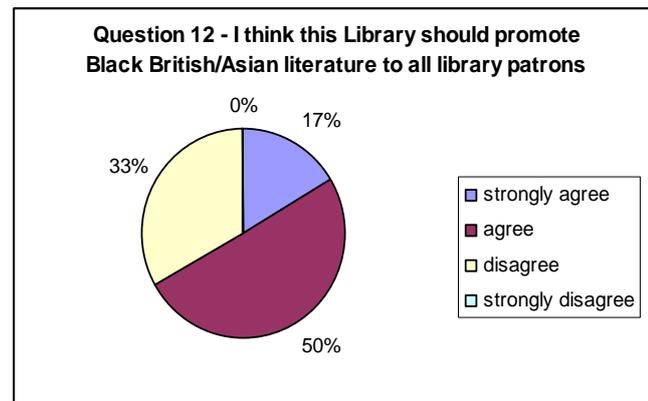
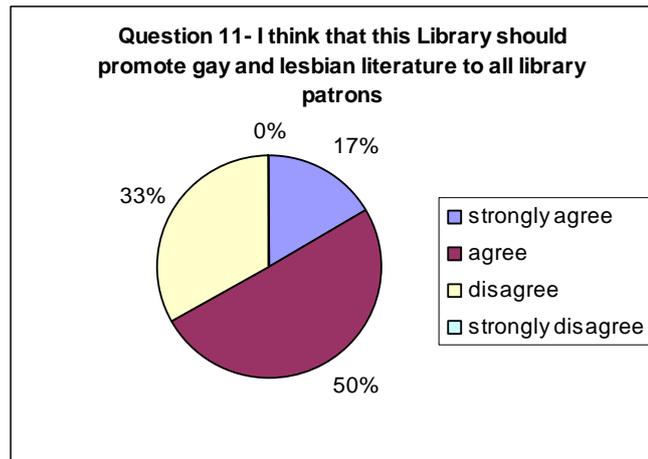
4.1.4 Training Needs



Statements nine and ten were included to find out whether respondents had received training to support minority genres and would also welcome training. There was a spread of responses to this statement. Five respondents disagreed that they had received training to support minority genres. Again, through lack of time the researcher was unable to find out whether this was because the respondents did not think it was offered, they were not employed when it was offered or they had not

taken up an offer of training. All but one respondent would welcome ongoing minority genre training.

4.1.5 Minority Genres for All?



The final two statements, regarding the promotion of gay and lesbian literature and Black British/Asian literature to all library patrons, gave a spread of responses. In these final statements the same eight respondents strongly agreed or agreed and the same four respondents disagreed. A female respondent in the 18 – 25 age range added a comment for these last two questions,

‘ I think the library should let patrons make their own decisions on what literature to read, label it clearly but let the patron choose without aggressive promotion of such genres.’

Another comment from a female respondent in the 46 – 55 age group said that,

'I find that some borrowers recoil at the gay and lesbian promotions and therefore miss out on a lot of good books.'

There were two general comments which were interesting relating to how Black/Asian and gay and lesbian literature should be displayed in the library. The researcher asked this question of senior management so was interested to get these comments from Sheffield front line staff. One female in the 26 – 35 age group commented that,

'I don't agree with there being a separate black collection – apart from specific subjects like black parenting. I don't see why these books should be in a separate area because the authors are black...'

However she continues by commenting upon gay and lesbian fiction by saying,

'The gay and lesbian collection is slightly different because there are some erotic love stories in there which might not appeal to readers of Mills and Boon.'

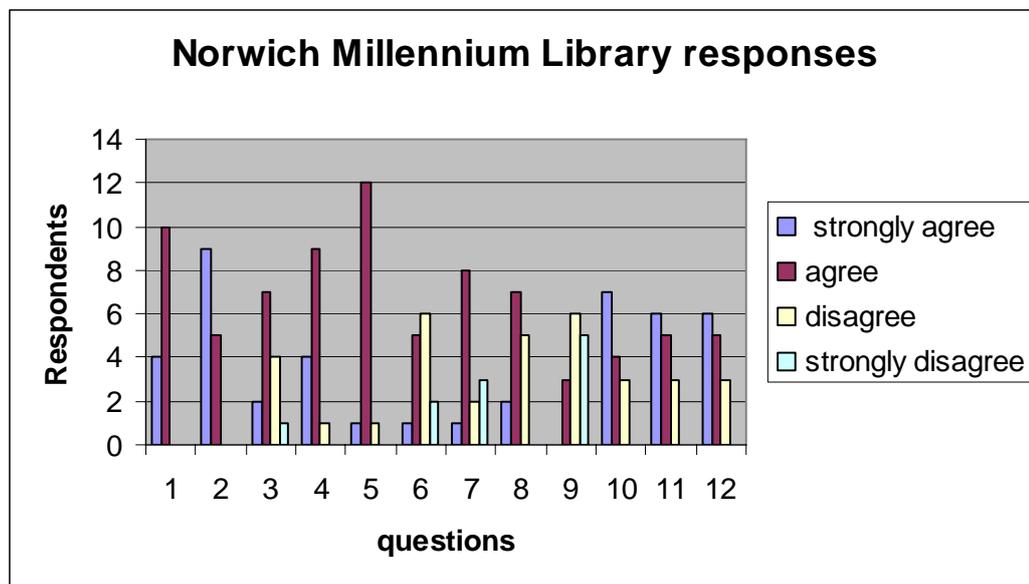
The respondent finishes her comment by saying,

'I think any categorisation should be transitional, the collections should be advertised then the books, particularly the fiction, shelved with the rest of the stock.'

Another respondent comments in a similar vein when she questions how minority genres should be displayed. She says,

'There is also a question whether you marginalise minorities by relegating them to a segregated section in the library and not main stream them into fiction etc. thereby embracing them.'

4.2 Norwich Millennium Library



The researcher experienced initial problems carrying out research at Norwich Millennium Library as the library is going through a period of restructuring. Whilst they agreed very early on to allow this research to go on in the library the researcher was unable to make the necessary contacts or do the practical work that the study needed. However Norwich Library managed to allow the researcher to get both the questionnaires and the interviews done in one week.

Twenty five questionnaires were given to the library to distribute to frontline staff which were given out and collected by the researcher within four days. The questionnaires were given directly to frontline staff with a message attached that said they were urgent. The researcher received fourteen completed questionnaires, just over a 50% return. From the fourteen responses twelve were from women and two were from men. This does not represent the ratio of men to women in the library as the front line team in Norwich Library is about one third men and two thirds women. Men appear to be younger, under twenty seven, and the women are mostly in the forty plus age group. The researcher received responses from each of the age groups.

Again, the researcher was disappointed by the low number of completed questionnaires returned. However, given the problems encountered the researcher was very grateful to get any back at all. As with Sheffield Central Library the researcher was told that some were returned unanswered because the questionnaire was not understood. This was not indicated on the questionnaires.

4.2.1 Social Inclusion

The first two statements, asking about the library's and the individual's role in inclusion elicited agree or strongly agree from all of the respondents. However a male respondent in the 26 – 35 age category added a comment to this statement. He said,

'However I'm not sure I would say it tries hard to tackle social exclusion. Some staff could do with being a little more enlightened.'

4.2.2 Awareness of Minority Genres

Statement three asked about the individual's awareness of the library's Black British/Asian collection. Whilst eight respondents agreed that they had an awareness of the collection, four respondents disagreed and one strongly disagreed regarding their awareness of the collection. More respondents, thirteen out of fourteen had an awareness of the library's gay and lesbian collection. All but one respondent felt that the library promoted minority genres in a positive way

4.2.3 Levels of Confidence

Statements six and seven showed that there was a lack of confidence advising patrons about minority genres. More than half the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed about their ability to advise patrons about gay and lesbian literature. All three 46 – 55 female respondents were in these categories as was the two female 26 – 35 respondents. Statement seven saw respondents slightly more confident with five out of fourteen responding to the disagree or strongly disagree category.

Statement eight showed that five respondents did not know who to ask if they could not answer a patron's request for minority genres. A female respondent in the 26 - 35 age group said,

'As we are currently in a restructuring programme I don't know who's responsible for this.'

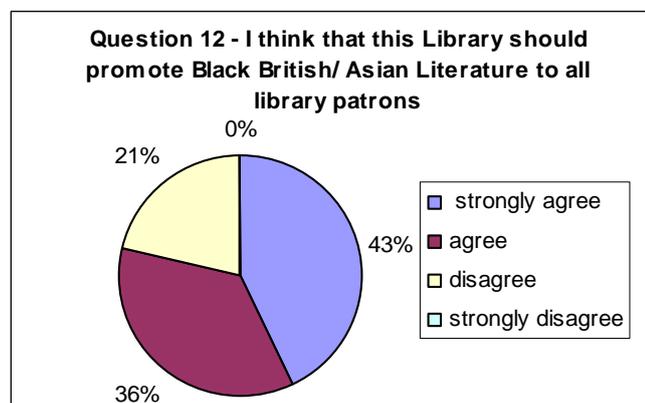
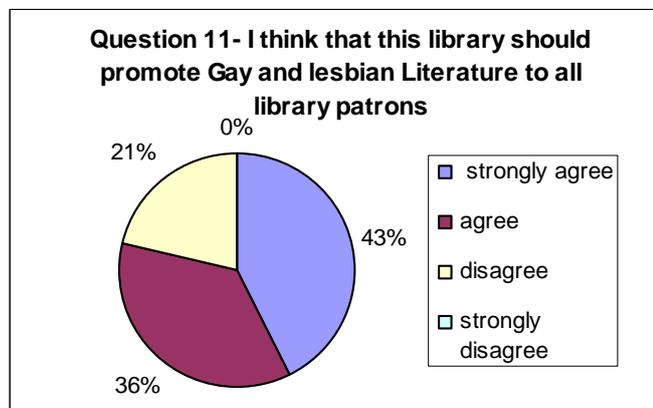
As the researcher has already mentioned the reason for the delayed response to her request for using The Millennium Library for this study was due to staff restructuring. It may be that this could account for five frontline staff not knowing who to ask for support, but this is only speculation.

4.2.4 Training Needs



Statement nine showed that eleven respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that they had received training for minority genres. The next statement regarding the individual's need for ongoing training showed that all but three respondents would welcome such training.

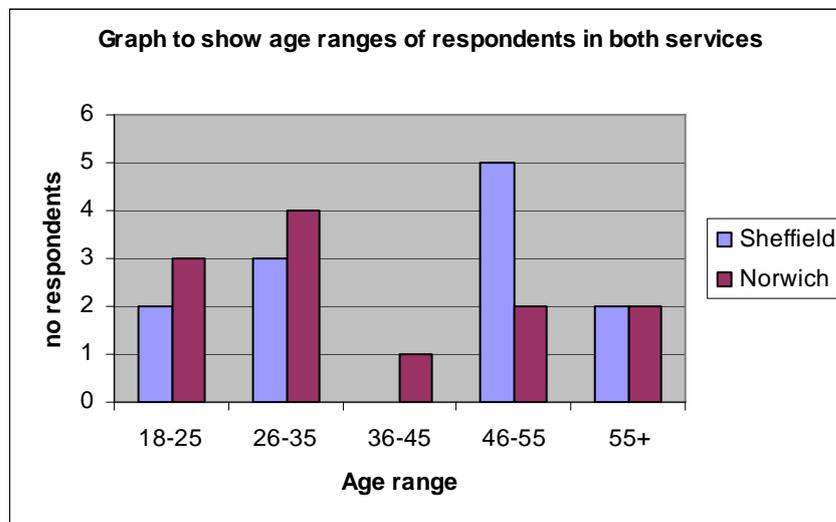
4.2.5 Minority Genres for All?



Statements eleven and twelve which asked if the library should promote minority genres elicited more positive responses. The same eleven respondents agreed or strongly agreed that gay and lesbian Black British/Asian literature should be promoted to all library patrons. However the same three respondents, one male and one female in the 18 – 25 age group and one female 55+, disagreed that these minority genres should be promoted to all library patrons. The young male respondent that disagreed clarified his response by saying,

'I think everyone should be aware of these books, so it's promoting in a sense, but not 'full on' promoting. The same as any area of stock people often don't realise we hold certain items.'

Chapter 5: Summary of Sheffield Central Library and Norwich Millennium Library Questionnaire Analysis.



The graph shows the age range of respondents for both libraries. Apart from a larger response in the 46 – 55 age range in Sheffield, and the nil response in the 36 – 45 age range in Sheffield library, there is not a great deal of difference in the age group response in each library. The researcher was told that at both libraries some questionnaires were returned as they were not understood. If there had been more time this could have been looked into and more explanation given and adjustment may have been made. There was a low response from each library and it could be argued that only those people who already had an interest in this area would be motivated to fill in the questionnaire.

5.1 Social Inclusion

The responses to the questionnaire shows that the majority of respondents in Sheffield and Norwich feel that their libraries are tackling social exclusion and all respondents, without exception feel that they have a part to play in the process. This positive response would lead the researcher to assume that both libraries have established a good foundation on which to be proactive in promoting minority genres.

5.2 Awareness

The statements relating to awareness of minority genres showed a difference between the two libraries. Sheffield respondents demonstrated a stronger awareness of both minority genres. Respondents from Norwich library had more awareness of gay and lesbian literature than British Black/Asian. This response may be as a result of the low ethnic minority in Norwich.

5.3 Confidence

The levels of confidence regarding giving advice to patrons about minority genres generated a spread of responses. Whilst there were several Sheffield respondents who disagreed regarding their ability to advise patrons, there were several respondents who strongly disagreed in Norwich. Branching out (2000e-) see this as a priority for a socially inclusive library, it states, 'Ensure that staff feel confident about answering questions from readers about the promotions and the stock.'

This may, of course, just be as a result of the restructuring in the library as one Norwich respondent pointed out. However there would appear to be a lack of minority genres training for frontline staff in Norwich. When the question of training is considered, it would appear that more minority genre training had taken place in Sheffield Central Library than at Norwich Library. The lack of training does make minority genres feel like unknown territory, which must in turn create anxiety for front line staff when giving advice to patrons. Branching out (2000e-) recommends that, '... all your frontline staff have attended training on promoting Black and Asian literature and are aware of the stock'. The researcher would surmise that the same thing would apply to gay and lesbian literature. There is a majority in both libraries that would welcome ongoing training which would address the anxiety that the lack of training instils. However there was still four frontline staff, three in Norwich and one in Sheffield that did not want training in minority genres. It may be that these staff are anxious about the element of blame in training events, Branching out (2000d-) recommends that, 'It is essential not to go into staff training on this issue by blaming people for what they have said, do say, or have done'. The respondents who were not in favour of training came from the 18 – 25 age groups as well as the

46 – 55 age group, so the argument that older front line staff are resistant to change cannot be used here.

5.4 Minority Genres for All?

When considering whether Black British /Asian and gay /lesbian fiction should be promoted to all library patrons there was a spread of responses. The questionnaire did not show a difference between the genres in the ‘disagree’ response. The same front line staff disagreed for both Black British/Asian and gay/lesbian fiction. Considering all but one front line staff from the two libraries agreed that they were tackling social exclusion the researcher felt that this response showed that there was not a good understanding amongst all of the respondents as to what might constitute ‘tackling social exclusion’. This may be as a result of the inclusion and diversity training that all respondents had experienced. Having gone through the training they feel that they are working towards social inclusion in the library. However they have not necessarily made the link with the importance of promoting minority genres as a way of promoting social inclusion.

Chapter 6: Interview Analysis Sheffield Central Library and Norwich Millennium Library

6.1 Sheffield

6.1.2 Libraries and Social Inclusion

The first three broad interview questions were posed to discover the views of senior management around the area of social inclusion and the library's potential lack of cultural relevance to minority groups.

There was a general agreement amongst the Senior Managers that it should be the library's aim to accommodate the needs of all groups within society although it was a tall order. Senior Manager 1 commented,

'Potentially public library services ...can meet the needs of all groups within society, but there's lots of 'ifs' in that.'

He continued by saying that there were probably few activities in society that could be met by one service point, thus making it debatable if libraries can be all things to all people.

The questions surrounding cultural relevance instigated comments from all Senior Managers around library personnel. Firstly there is a need for firm commitment from the top, a Senior Manager who is willing to push boundaries because as Senior Manager 2 pointed out,

'If you leave it too far down the hierarchy where people have not a lot of influence, not a lot of power, you won't save everybody.'

Secondly there must be frontline staff that are welcoming with a willingness to develop their practice to accommodate minority groups.

Sheffield Library staff profile has very few employees from ethnic minorities and is also top heavy with older women. This is highlighted in Sheffield library's position statement (2000:15) In section 2.4 'Building capacity to deliver transformation' one of the challenges is to 'Improve the profile of the workforce in terms of age and disability and ethnicity' There have been moves to change this and younger staff under the age of twenty five have been employed.

However, as Senior Manager 1 said,

'Libraries have traditionally reflected the people who have run the service, people who run the service will be white middle class male or female, but middle class in outlook.'

Senior Manager 2 felt that institutional barriers were being worked on in Sheffield library. Ground breaking work had been done with many of the ethnic communities around Sheffield to such an extent that Sheffield Library offers these training courses to the NHS. However Senior Manager 2 also said that some staff allow their own anxieties and prejudices to 'show' in their interaction with the public. She felt that some staff think that they are being welcoming but their body language gives them away, '....their body language is displaying "I wish you would get out of here" while they are saying "can I help you?"' Senior Manager 2 does not think that this is done deliberately but is 'part of human nature' much as discussed in the researcher's theoretical framework.

Whilst training is offered to front line staff, which is discussed later, all three Senior Managers felt that ensuring frontline staff have the correct attitude that encourages social inclusion is a complex process. Senior Manager 3 described how senior management in libraries elsewhere had been heavy handed in their 'policing' of staff attitudes. She said that she could impose the policies on staff but her preference would be

'...to work with hearts and minds and persuade people of the importance of being aware and the benefits to the library service generally.'

The researcher's overall impression from this section was that the three Senior Managers were pushing hard to ensure the library attracted patrons from all groups. This was a complex job as the Senior Managers had to ensure that frontline staff were all on board and playing their part to fight social exclusion.

6.1.3 Focus Groups

The researcher wanted to discover what steps each library had taken to consult with gay and lesbian and ethnic minority patrons. In particular any focus groups sessions that had been held and any measures taken to gather feedback from these groups.

It became apparent from this question that past and present focus groups for gay and lesbian borrowers have mostly focused on the issue of how best to present minority genre. The vexed question of whether these books should be interfiled into the main stock sequence or have a section of their own was considered. Most respondents referred enthusiastically to a dissertation completed in 2005 by Meagan O'Leary which centred on Library provision for Gay and Lesbian users in Sheffield and Denver CO. The findings from this piece of research highlighted gaps in provision at Sheffield library. The research was felt important enough to be instrumental in making changes to this area, as Senior Manager 1 comments,

'Meagan O' Leary did a (dissertation) on 'Pink Perceptions' but it put it in quite stark contrast with Denver libraries, and one thing we've done since then is we've tried to get together a focus group to re-look at our service, to see what people now feel, of what should change...'

In February of 2006 LGBT month was celebrated. This was also seen as an opportunity for the library to highlight the promotion using books available for the 'Big Gay Read'. The library set up a stall in the Town Hall and ran a one day conference. This was also deemed a good opportunity to make connections with the gay community and find out what they wanted from their libraries, through surveys and an invitation to future focus groups. Take up was fairly low but as Senior Manager 1 comments,

'We gave out a lot of forms, we had a couple of people who said they should try to get together a group that would be willing to come along'

Work with African and Asian communities has a stronger track record in Sheffield and is an area that Sheffield library is particularly proud. The library surveyed the group to ascertain what they wanted from the library stock and they also ran an in house focus group. Although this activity took place around six years ago it is still felt relevant today.

At one point Sheffield library had a multicultural librarian whose interest was with the Caribbean communities. This person was not replaced when she retired as it was felt that they could not replace this person who had built up a great deal of contacts over the years. The researcher felt that this was an odd response as a new multicultural librarian would have the chance to develop their own contacts and place in the community. The Sheffield library position statement (2004: 12) states in section 2.3 that there is 'One area Library Officer with a champion role in equal access and one Area Library Officer with a champion role in multicultural services..' as well as, 'Four community development Librarians each with champion roles in relation to either the Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese or African-Caribbean communities.' These champion roles operate across all Sheffield libraries, however the responses in this section made no comment about any of these champion roles.

It was acknowledged by one Senior Manager that their strengths definitely lie with ethnic minority groups, whilst work with the LGBT community could definitely be improved.

'I think we're much better at dealing with different races than we are with dealing with issues of gender and sexuality. I don't think we've put anything like the effort in terms of staff training and really identifying the needs of that group.' (Senior Manager 2)

The researcher felt that Sheffield thought that focus groups were a useful activity but those interviewed were not sure how to sustain the groups in a meaningful way. There was a general feeling that it was a confused area that needed looking at and using properly.

6.1.4 Promoting Minority Genres

The researcher wanted to ascertain to what extent both libraries promoted minority genres. A Senior Manager thought that the promotion of these minority genres in Central library was better highlighted a few years ago. In the present climate, as roles have changed, this area has become more unstable. This Senior Manager also felt there was increased pressures to be more mainstream and appeal to the 'white middle classes. Senior Manager 1 comments,

'You get pressures to be mainstream, you get pressures from Tim Coates and the world but when Tim Coates is speaking he's not speaking for Black and Asian, for LGBT communities or any other minorities, he's speaking for the great middle class..... we could issue a lot more books tomorrow if we just concentrated all our resources into middle class communities in Sheffield, and we don't and the council wouldn't expect us to, but I think that's what that's about.'

This is the view that Senior Manager 1 is referring to. Tim Coates paper, 'Who's in Charge?' (2004: 6) reports that, '...library Senior Managers appear to have started to believe that the public no longer want libraries as they used to be i.e. for books and reading; they believe that initiatives should rather be focused on outreach to non users...' This he continues is, 'not what the public say they want.' On the same theme Coates continues by saying, 'The majority are being neglected in the pursuit of the minority that so many people find nothing useful in the library and have ceased to use them.'(Coates, 2004: 6).

It was felt by Senior Manager 2 that the promotion of Black British/Asian was promoted far more than gay and lesbian materials. Senior Manager 3 also agreed with this but felt multicultural activities regarding promotion could be improved with the need for the involvement of corporate groups. Senior Manager 3, comments,

'...in authorities I have worked with before there have been corporate groups who have got responsibility for this sort of thing(black and Asian promotions) and libraries have been able to plug into those corporate groups...'

She did not advocate that the library would have no input as they would make their contributions in the planning stage. She also felt that involvement with

corporate groups meant that they could monitor and be more active in the promotion. However there seemed to be no moves in this direction at Sheffield Library.

Senior Manager 1 also made an interesting point that Black British/Asian writing in the UK is very 'middle class'

'Most of the writing that takes place in this country by African and Asian writers is.....not all of it, pretty middle class in a way, it's Asian middle class writing, now they may not agree, but where does the background to 'Brick Lane' come from?, the mentality of this is university driven.'

The researcher was not clear as to the point senior manager 1 was making. Was he trying to say that all writers should only write what they personally experience, or that there would be no one with the experience of the life portrayed in 'Brick Lane' that would have a degree. This may in some respects reflect a comment from Poorna Shetty, editor of Asiana magazine, (Bury, May 2006b: 9) 'Publishers publish a pile of crap, and because its by an Asian author, people say its good.....Its either about three generations of women, or an urban Asian woman[who] defies her parents and goes off on her own.' Shetty says that whilst these themes should be written about they are being constantly rehashed.

The researcher felt that Sheffield Library was struggling with the promotion of Black British/Asian genre promotion. This appeared to be as a result of pressures on the library alongside the more mainstreaming of Black British/Asian genres.

It was felt by one Senior Manager that although there is a Gay and Lesbian collection at the Central library it was perhaps not as well promoted as it could be.

'The irony is that if you go at the moment where LGBT collection is located in the Central library, I wouldn't say it's at the forefront. I would hope, there are plans to revamp the whole of the central library, I would hope that it would get more focus than it does at the moment.' (Senior Manager 1)

It was brought to the researcher's attention that big promotions regarding Gay and Lesbian fiction was a rare occurrence at Sheffield Central Library,

'...we did do a big touring exhibition which was, 'Queer?(reads) can't remember...it was one of the 'Opening the book' promotions and that was high profile, high publicity and that circulated round for a year but I think that's the only really big promotion we've done.' (Senior Manager 2)

It was considered by one Senior Manager that issues of sensitivity and discretion need to be acknowledged regarding how these materials are presented to Lesbian and Gay users

'...there's a quandary about especially in branch libraries how you present the material, if you take it out and put it in great clumps, will somebody who is in his teens who doesn't know if he is gay yet sees all his mum's mates picking up Catherine Cooksons and things, is he going to want to go over and borrow some books? I think not.' (Senior Manager 3)

This is a question that I will be looking at later in this research; however it is concern that impinges on many areas of this study.

The researcher wanted to discover if the libraries did more than promote minority genres generally and wanted to discover if the library participated in any 'special' promotions'. All the responses on this question for Sheffield was centred around gay and lesbian promotions.

To promote gay and lesbian books Sheffield central library a promotion entitled 'Queer Choice' was purchased from the 'Opening the Book' group with the intention of touring the three purchased sets around various libraries in Sheffield. These promotions were placed in prominent positions with dumping bins and clear signs drawing the library user's attention to the collection. Displays for the 'Big Gay Read' event were promoted and were highly visible in the Central library. When Senior Managers were asked if these promotions were a success, the general consensus was that it was, and that book issues were healthy during the promotion but as to the impact and whether people's opinions were changed is hard to say as Senior Manager 2 comments,

'...I can't answer its impact, if it changed people's thinking, or if it made them think about it differently, I mean you would hope that it did...I mean some people would

have borrowed it and come back and if they were disgusted before they might have stayed disgusted, I don't know that'.

Also the promotions highlighted that library users are more tolerant and accepting of these kinds of promotions and were often surprised that certain books were actual 'gay reads' as Senior Manager 1 comments,

'The collections themselves, the books in them, well some people would have thought 'Oh is that a gay book? Because, some were very mainstream books which had gay themes I suppose but they were really crime genre or Sarah Waters...'

Repeating and developing further promotions were welcomed by Sheffield Central library as they saw it as an opportunity to increase awareness and understanding,

From the feedback gathered from Senior Managers at Sheffield it was apparent that they felt that more could be done to proactively promote minority genres. This could be done with better positioning to highlight the material, but there may also be an underlying anxiety regarding minority genre promotion. There is obviously still concern about how to display gay and lesbian material although no concerns were voiced regarding Black British/Asian literature. When discussing the promotion of gay and lesbian literature the words 'discreet' and 'sensitivity' were used several times giving a feeling of anxiety.

6.1.5 Separate or Integrated Collections?

The issue of having separate or integrated collections of gay and Lesbian materials or Black British and Asian collections is a difficult and controversial issue to resolve. Both sides of the argument have very valid opinions and people often feel very strongly about 'separate' or 'integrated'.

Although the researcher asked for opinions about both LGBT collections and Black British/ Asian collections in Sheffield, all Senior Managers tended to focus on the issues behind the segregation or interfiling of LGBT materials. They did not really discuss Black British/Asian collections although interesting comments around how stock in general should be arranged was offered.

Each Senior Manager had differing opinions on the matter of separating or integrating LGBT stock. It was agreed by all Senior Managers that this was a complex issue and you always ran the risk of not pleasing everybody all of the time,

'...you might find that you talk to lesbian groups and you might find that the majority of the (group) are saying they prefer the stock integrated, you talk to gay men groups and you might find that the majority say they want it very upfront and so I think we're going to find it quite difficult to come to a definitive (answer).' (Senior Manager 1)

Senior Manager 2 objected to separate collections and felt that separate collections ultimately limited choice and made people from these communities less inclined to visit these sections. This Senior Manager said that separating collections 'smack of ghettoisation' and that the best way of finding materials is through browsing and chance

'There's been a lot of research to show that some of the best books that people find are through browsing and serendipity ...to me if you put everything into neat little boxes, I mean if you have all your gay and lesbian collection in one bit and somebody decides it's not for them, they're never going to find it are they?, they're never going to go near those shelves, where as if they are just trawling along the S's an they find something, they'll read it and they might come back and ask for more.'

Senior Manager 2 argues that the expertise of library staff needs to play a role when guiding the reader to their next potential read. She felt that more training was necessary to nurture these skills.

Senior Manager 3 would in an 'ideal world' place the collections in two places,

'Tony Morrison and people like that and to a certain extent the novels of Jeanette Winterson, you wouldn't know you were reading gay , so it would be nice to have both.'

There was no definitive, Senior Managerial response to this problem. However all agreed that there was no right way of doing it and all felt that there had to be sensitivity to the problem

6.1.6 Stock

The researcher wanted to find out whether the libraries were proactive in their stock acquisition and had a focus on minority genres within their written stock policy. In section 3 of 'Libraries for all' (DCMS, 1999:13) one of the institutional barriers identified are, 'Book stock policies which do not reflect the needs of the community....'

Senior Managers in Sheffield thought that their stock policy needed attention as it should not be a document which is written and forgotten, it needs to remain proactive. However there were some anxieties about the policy. Senior Manager 1 said about the policy,

'We're meant to be revising it, but I think it's a real weakness that we don't have that sort of clarity.'

The Senior Manager thought that gay and lesbian material was more available and easier to get than independent sources on Black British/Asian writing. Although Senior Manager 2 felt that there was more confusion around their gay and lesbian collection,

'I really think if we have one weakness it's around gay and lesbian materials because I don't think we're clear about what we're collecting.'

The researcher felt that the library wanted to do work in this area but it was difficult to find the time to do it.

6.1.7 Training

Sheffield libraries is committed to '£44,000 training budget, (an average of £161 per full time equivalent member of staff) and a commitment to five days training for every member of staff per year.' (Sheffield Libraries, position statement, 2004: 15) The researcher wanted to find out whether inclusion training and minority genre training was offered to frontline staff. Sheffield offers cultural awareness training as

part of the library's mission statement. The training offered is very generic. Senior Manager 1 felt that the course gave staff, '*...confidence in working with black and ethnic communities.*' Senior Manager 1 said that most social inclusion training for the past seven or eight years had been centred on black and ethnic minorities and people with disabilities.

There is no training offered around gay and lesbian issue although there was a little training offered to reader development personnel when the library bought in the 'Queer Choice' choice collection. However Senior Manager 3 did point out that corporate training courses can be made available to staff through the appraisal system.

The researcher felt that there was a need to extend the training. If the researcher had the results from the questionnaire regarding the staff's willingness to undertake minority genre training when this interview had taken place this may have formed the basis for some interesting discussion.

6.1.8 Anxieties

It was felt by two Senior Managers that there was very little anxiety from frontline staff when dealing with Black and Asian collections as training, especially diversity training had been administered to all frontline staff. One Senior Manager did add that frontline staff may question the relevance of some minority collections as they may be seen as under used.

'...we have collections and they don't get used very much and so staff sort of express a view on why are we spending this money if no one is using it, that can be down to poor promotion, their comments could hide an anxiety in the sense that maybe they don't agree with us having those collections.' (Senior Manager 1)

A similar comment was expressed by another Senior Manager,

'..if your seen to be doing something special for them, their getting special treatment, which is an attitude I've come across.' (Senior Manager 3)

One of the Senior Managers said that because of training and council policy staff would put their jobs in jeopardy if they overtly expressed this view.

'I don't think people would express that view openly, not in a council setting...people know that whether they think it or not it's inappropriate to express it at work'
(Senior manager 1)

The researcher felt that the word 'openly' was important. If employees know that allowing feelings to be known would affect their livelihoods then these anxieties will not be dealt with. One Senior Manager, when answering questions about training gave a general observation about potential problems facing staff recruited from ethnic minorities.

'...people which have come in from minority communities do not feel welcome, do not feel that it's a culture they can survive in, there's covert racism, its something we've never really got to grips with, it starts pre- recruitment.' (Senior Manager 3)

Another Senior Manager also referred to two types of anxiety that affect frontline staff, those that are supersensitive and worry about unintentionally offending these communities and those that did not agree in the first place.

The issue of staff's age in relation to anxiety was also a factor when determining staff attitudes,

'I just think that on the whole younger staff are more unphased by different lifestyles than my older staff and to be honest some of my older staff, with all the training in the world I don't think are going to change their perception and that's true of every authority I've worked in' (Senior Manager 2)

The researcher feels that this could be said of any staff, young or older, if they have inherent, deep seated anxieties about 'alternative' lifestyles.

In relation to frontline staff promoting Lesbian and Gay materials it was felt that people are more accepting and tolerant than ever before,

'Now with the LGBT I think, probably early on there were people who were a bit more open in their expression of not approving but that was a long time ago, now I think most people don't have anxieties. In the library staff there is a sort of

acceptance because their all slightly middle class, feel they ought. I don't sense that there is disapproval.' (Senior Manager1)

The researcher felt that there had been training that would make the staff more aware of minority issues. This has not necessarily dealt with the more entrenched issues that could affect the service offered to minority group patrons. Reasons are offered for being less susceptible to understanding minority groups, such as age, ethnicity and social class of employees. But messages are mixed. On one hand being white and middle class is 'bad', and then being middle class makes a person more accepting. There is also the shared view that older people are less enlightened and getting younger employees will be more helpful. This is a huge assumption which is only that, an assumption.

6.2 Norwich Millennium Library

6.2.1 Problems Encountered with the Interview Process

The researcher approached Norwich Millennium library at a very busy time. The service was going through a major reorganisation of its staffing structure, inevitably causing people to be unavailable, or stretched with their new responsibilities. Finding senior staff members to interview in Norwich proved problematic as people were simply too busy to contribute to the research. It was possible, however to interview three senior members of staff, who gave generously of their time and input.

6.2.2 Libraries and Social Inclusion

The responses in this area from the Norwich Senior Managers were not as detailed as those answers from Sheffield. All three Senior Managers felt that meeting the needs of all groups in society is a complex problem for libraries and that they should take their social inclusion remit very seriously. However Senior Manager 1 said,

'The answer is no I don't think they can, (meet the needs of all groups within society) for lots of reasons to do with the role that libraries play in society because lots of people don't see libraries as relevant to their lives or their culture.'

Senior Manager 2 felt that the library should try to meet the needs of all groups in society but she thought that financial constraints would have to be a consideration. Senior Manager 2 continued by talking about community profiles which would lead to providing certain types of material to match the needs of particular groups.

In a similar fashion to Sheffield Central Library the question of cultural relevance of libraries generated views about staffing in the library. Senior Manager 1 made it clear that Norwich Library is changing as is Norwich itself. She said that a few years ago the staff were predominately white middle class women now there were many younger members of staff although there are few from ethnic communities. The library has been doing work with Job Centre Plus to discover why people from black and ethnic origins are not applying for jobs in the library. The results from this investigation show that the library does not offer the right kind of jobs with the right hours at the right kind of time. . Durrani says that the issues around recruiting staff from ethnic minorities, '...might be a critical implementation factor for improving the matching of services to the Black and ethnic communities' needs and improving customer care to them' (2002: 34) Senior Manager 1 felt that the knock on effect of not having staff from ethnic minorities means that there is no one in the library who is in a knowledgeable position to buy the Black/British Asian material.

Senior Manager 1 said that there has been a lot going on in Norwich Millennium library to challenge the institutional culture of the library. In the old library there was a large group of patrons that were,

'Predominately white, predominately over 55 and predominately women. So our stock met the needs of those people, our staff thought that they fully met the needs of those people because those were the people that came through the door.'

The challenge for the new library was to make it more accessible and relevant to the wider community. To do this there had to be a fundamental change to the kind of material that was on the shelves. It was felt that the library had a big role to play in challenging homophobia and racism in the community. Part of this initiative

involved building a gay and lesbian collection entitled 'Loud and Proud'. Senior Manager 1 said,

'We made a decision that if we were going to make it (gay and lesbian literature) visible to the community and if we were going to make them welcome we felt that we had to make the collection available to them so that's what we did.'

Senior Manager 2 felt that it was difficult to work out who was gay and lesbian, but she thought the library could be a threatening place for them. She saw the gay and lesbian collection as a positive move and had not heard any adverse comments about it. She was less sure about some staff and patron's response to Black and minority ethnic groups, '...some staff are not happy and certainly some of our existing customers are not receptive.' Although the questionnaire showed that front line respondents at Norwich Library felt more confident giving advice to patrons about British Black/Asian literature than gay and lesbian literature.

The researcher felt that, although Senior Managers were working hard to ensure the library tackled social exclusion, there was a lot of work to be done to ensure that frontline staff had similar goals.

6.2.3 Focus Groups

The issue of focus groups was posed to senior staff at the Norfolk and Norwich Millennium library,

Senior Manager 1 thought that focus groups were important to find out what groups wanted from the library. She puts a lot of importance onto the information from the feedback forms she gets from patrons. One form she received came from an elderly gay man,

'...we got comments from an individual who said your collection is too lesbian biased, do something for gay men.'

As a result of this she assembled a small group to look at the problem. The meeting was reported in John Vincent's Network Newsletter' Out of the five that attended only two of them knew there was a specific LGBT collection, 'but all of

them agreed that they preferred to have a separate section, rather than having the books inter-filed with other stock.’(2005b:3) All the men had varying reading tastes, like any other group of readers, and John Vincent makes an important point, ‘...we should not be pigeon-holing their reading tastes just because they are gay men.’

Norwich library received feedback from the University LGBT group that also highlighted a gap in their provision in providing gay and Lesbian film. This promoted discussion and action by the library to provide more materials for this section.

Again the issue of separate or interfiled LGBT collections was used as an opportunity to consult with these groups and to find out what they preferred and also to find out if the materials that were being added to this collection were the right kind of materials.

Senior Manager 3 talked about the large Portuguese community in Norwich and her attempts to work with them by putting on events in the libraries around the county and library workers going out to talk to groups.

In relation to Black British/ Asian focus groups this was less well covered by respondents although some interesting scenarios were highlighted. Patrons from the Asian community in Norwich commented that there was a lack of Bollywood films. These patrons advised the library what to get and they were bought in.

The researcher felt that the operation of focus groups was an add on to the library because of the high level of extra work. The Senior Managers consulted were supportive of focus groups and could see their worth. However there was a feeling that some of the groups were ad hoc and not something that was planned for.

6.2.4 Promoting Minority Genres

The researcher wanted to discover how proactively Norwich Millennium Library promoted minority genres. In Norwich the promotion of Black/British Asian fiction has met with mixed success.

Senior Manager 1 said that conscious decisions to promote Black British authors were not part of the library ethos and that writers generally should just be promoted for their literary excellence not because they are Black or Asian. *Branching Out* (2000c-) states that, 'If you don't have a policy about actively acquiring a range of writing by Black writers...you do discriminate.' The advice continues by adding, '...institutional racism occurs by omission; by leaving it off the agenda, by passivity and by silence.' However as the Senior Manager commented the library had taken part in 'tokenistic' projects like 'Black History Month'

This particular project had minimal success in the Norwich Millennium library despite its prominent position in the ground floor 'Express' section of the library which is the first thing that visitors will see on entering the library. Senior Manager 2 commented,

'We're not proactive, we've tried, you've seen the 'Express' ...bought Black History promotions from 'Opening the Book and I have to say I have tried for two years and those books just don't issue. Even when you put in big authors like Mike Gayle, pick ones that are much more mainstream. I don't know what it is we have done everything...books are face out, we've got the promotional stuff, everything is there, but there is no take up. And it's in a good area.'

Interestingly when the researcher suggested to Senior Manager 3 that this promotion was a bit of a let down she said,

'I don't think so, certainly from what I've heard at Central library. Black History month is becoming increasingly important event.'

The Senior Managers did not describe any formal research they had carried out to discover why these promotions are not even mildly popular. The researcher felt that more could be done to find out why this had happened and find another way to promote these books.

Another promotion based around a reading list entitled 'Writing Africa' supplied by the British Council, which was in comparison a small promotion, was greeted with enthusiasm and interest. This was the kind of corporate promotion that the Senior Manager in Sheffield thought would be more successful. Senior Manager 1 comments,

'...we did a very small promotion about this and we got loads and loads of very positive comments from that and loads and loads of suggestions saying 'you've got this and I'd like to read that and I'd like to read this.'

She did however comment that the people that read these books were not black but middle class white people. As part of this research considers the promotion of minority genres to all this can be seen as a successful way of doing just that. However in Norfolk, where there is a relatively small ethnic minority she said,

'...always bear that in mind because that's a fact of life, especially in Norfolk where the actual proportion of people who are black and British and from an Ethnic minority is actually quite small.'

The 'What do you like to read?' report states that to buy Black British and Asian fiction only for multiethnic working class patrons would exclude those living in other communities who would like to have access to this material. The author continues by saying that the assumption that this minority genre 'would only be of interest to Black British readers, which is clearly nonsensical.'

(Train 2003: 84)

The issue of how proactive Norwich Millennium library is in promoting Lesbian and Gay Fiction was not touched upon very much in interviewee's responses. Unlike Sheffield where most of the responses were centred on gay and lesbian fiction. However Senior Manager three commented,

'We took part in 'The Big Gay Read'. However it may not have been promoted as proactively as we would have liked, but certainly we had the book stock there and the voting process and so on...'

When asked if the promotion was a success Senior Manager 2 said that the books in the collection were not controversial and could be books that patrons would read anyway. Senior Manager 2 continued by saying,

'..but they were just great books and I think that perhaps rather than ghettoising these books for these particular people, these are books for everybody and what those books can do is challenge people's preconceptions about all kinds of stuff.'

This last comment, similar to Sheffield, touches upon the question of inter filing or segregation. This may be the central concern that causes the most anxiety around minority genres amongst library professionals.

Norwich library feels that literature should be promoted on its own merits of being good literature. The researcher felt that the library did not always proactively promote minority genres because by doing this they were causing discrimination by their promotion. The researcher felt that there was reluctance and some anxiety to promote British Black and Asian genres. One of the reasons, Norwich's small ethnic minority was cited as being one of the main problems. This will be discussed later in the researcher's conclusion as the location of the libraries as described in the introduction may affect the promotion of minority genres.

6.2.5 Separate or Interfiled?

In Norwich one Senior Manager commented that there was a lot to take into consideration when making a decision about whether stock should be separated or interfiled. This may include the size of the library and what message you are trying to convey about your library. Senior Manager 1 said,

'If you are making a collection of stock and shelving that separately I think you are making a political statement about the fact that those materials are being bought so that people who want to read them who could be gay, lesbian or transsexual, or they could not be. They know that you have made that statement.'

Senior Manager 1 also wanted to challenge the government in relation to the clause 28 (repealed in 2003) legislation and make a statement and believes that these separate collections can only send out positive messages, as she comments,

'So people know if you were a young lesbian or a gay man you can come into the library and see 'Oh it's alright, they understand'

Black British and Asian writers do not have a separate collection and are just run in the main sequence of fiction and non-fiction. It was also made apparent there are benefits to interfiling the stock because if the Lesbian and Gay fiction was run in the main sequence there would be more issuing of these books. Patrons would not be thinking exclusively that they are reading a 'gay read' and that people would 'acknowledge the material for it's worth rather than its subject content...'

Senior Manager two indicated that there were positive and negatives to both sides of the argument but indicated that gay and lesbian users wanted a discreet collection in the Millennium library. The researcher asked if there had been feedback regarding the segregation of the stock. There had not been much but the Senior Manager could recall an incident when she had been on the regional news talking about increased book issues and that money had been spent on things like American crime fiction and gay and Lesbian materials. After the broadcast one person came to the library to complain in 'outrage' at the books' inclusion. Senior Manager 2 remains philosophical about the incident stating that you can't please everybody all of the time.

Senior Manager 3 also stated a preference for books to be interfiled but the benefits of separated collections

'...I think if you have a large community that you're serving there may be some benefits to actually having it separated out and I suppose that would be a case of consulting that group and getting their opinion about it.'

Once again there is not a corporate view of this problem. However the interfiling or segregation question continues to cause anxiety amongst Senior Managers. If this question causes confusion and anxiety amongst Senior Managers it must be transmitted to frontline staff and cause them anxiety as well.

6.2.6 Stock

The view of Norwich library was that they had a very ‘bland stock policy’ that does not specify any particular area. However Senior Manager 1 said that minority genres would naturally be included in what they buy,

‘We just do it, we just wouldn’t think of not doing it.’

Senior Manager 2 said that she would actively look for minority authors. She had just come across a promotion called ‘Mirror, Mirror’, which she felt would be a good source of minority genres.

6.2.7 Training

Senior Managers in Norwich library said that there was a lot of training offered around diversity and disability. There is also a lot of work going on around community profiling which will inform the libraries operations and will, in turn influence the training offered. ‘Libraries for All’ states that a ‘community profile’ should be the starting point to discover ‘which of the barriers to social inclusion apply to their particular circumstances, and which groups are most affected’ (DCMS, 1999: 19). Each year the library focuses on a target group and for a few years this group has been ethnic minorities. Senior Manager 1 sees any kind of interaction with any individual or group as social inclusion training as these views and opinions are taken back into the library and where possible acted upon. Senior Manager 1 also spoke about training on bullying and harassment and respect in the work place,

‘...because what I don’t want to happen is that I’m going out of my way to recruit people from ethnic minority backgrounds to work in the library only to find that when they come and work in the library they are treated in a racist way by staff.’

There did not appear to have been any training offered dealing with gay and lesbian issues and there has not been any minority genre training offered.

The response indicated on the questionnaire that the majority of frontline staff respondents would welcome training in minority genres. This could have formed the

basis of discussion if the researcher had access to completed questionnaires at the time of the interview.

6.2.8 Anxieties

The issue of anxiety amongst front line staff at Norwich Millennium Library was considered less by Senior Managers, although comments relating to this area were of interest to the researcher.

One Senior Manager commented that any books with sexual content could provoke opinion and cause feelings of anxiety

'I had comments about sex in books from staff, not in this library but I've managed lots of libraries, and people get very upset if there's sex in books and it's often not the public that get upset, it's our staff that get upset and what they're doing is they are reflecting their views and opinions. It's not necessarily books in the 'Loud and Proud' collection, it's books full stop that have any mention of the 'S' word that comes across.' (Senior Manager 1).

Senior Manager 3 said that concerns had been voiced in the diversity training event. As with Sheffield, staff were frightened of saying the wrong thing that could be misinterpreted by patrons. Senior Manager 1 felt that the opinions of staff regarding the need or otherwise to have minority genre collections is immaterial,

'People have their views and opinions, there's no doubt that people have an opinion about whether it's right or wrong to have that collection, and I don't go out of my way to find out their views and opinions, I go out of my way to tell them they work for the county council and we have this collection, it fulfils our objectives.'

This managerial view is similar to that of Sheffield library in as much as all staff need to toe the 'party line' and dissenters will not be listened to.

Chapter 7: Summary and comparison of interviews in Sheffield Central Library and Norwich Millennium Library

7.1 Social inclusion issues

There is no doubting that Senior Managers at both Sheffield Central Library and Norwich Millennium Library are working hard to combat social exclusion in their libraries. This is an important part of the research as staff that have a clear idea and understanding of the underpinning philosophy of social inclusion should feel more comfortable when dealing with patrons from minority groups. This should, in turn ensure that they feel more comfortable dealing with minority genres. However, the researcher feels that despite this hard work there are some fundamental challenges that make change and the shifting of opinion a slow, and in some cases an unattainable goal with all staff. This must be inevitable with any group of employees.

The make up of staff in both libraries is predominately white, middle class and often female. Whilst it does not follow that this fact alone makes staff racist or homophobic the impression was given to the researcher by both libraries that younger staff may be more 'enlightened' when it comes to their views and actions associated with social inclusion. However the questionnaire does not concur with these assumptions. The spread of responses that might indicate that the respondents held entrenched or anxious view about minority genres were spread across the age groups. There is a push in both libraries to employ younger members of staff and to attract library professionals from minority groups. Whilst the staffing demographic is changing and both libraries are employing younger members of staff it has been found difficult to attract library professionals from ethnic minorities. Norwich Millennium Library has taken steps to discover why library jobs are not attractive to those from ethnic minorities. There was no indication from the Senior Manager in the interview as to how things may change in order to make library positions more attractive to ethnic minorities. The researcher felt that if the Senior Manager was sincere in wanting to make changes to attract employees from ethnic minorities then there had to be changes made. A Sheffield library Senior Manager felt that whilst

attracting employees from ethnic minorities was the libraries responsibility she also felt a lot of the underlying reasons for their being no black and Asian applications were out of her hands. Research has shown that there is a lack of library professionals from ethnic communities. Durrani reported in 2002 that 'the Chief Executive of the Library Association reported that out of over 20,000 personal members, only 1.2 per cent.....were of African. Caribbean or Asian background.only three members earned over £27, 000. (2002:36)

There were no responses about how libraries attract gay and lesbian employees to apply for positions in the library. This researcher was unable to find texts which discussed this as a problem. Sexuality Issues in Libraries Group, formerly the Burning Issues Group (2000-) promotes their brief as working towards the improvement of library services. The group states that, 'Anyone in any library sector is welcome to join and take part. You do not have to be lesbian or gay yourself, only have an interest in improving services'. As was often said in the interviews, 'you don't always know who's gay and who's lesbian, they don't wear a badge.' So it is probable to assume that gay and lesbian staff are amongst the staff in both libraries in all of the age groups.

Senior Managers in both libraries referred to the libraries and the councils' anti discrimination statements and policies and they put forward the view that employee's jobs would be in jeopardy if they voiced any views that went against these policies. This, they felt, meant that major anxieties would not be voiced. However Senior Managers from both libraries cited incidents from front line staff that involved anxieties being demonstrated through their body language and in more subtle ways. Although those respondents from the questionnaire felt that they were all working towards social inclusion, later questions regarding promoting minority genres did paint a slightly different picture.

Part of the research was to discover whether, because of the differences in the cities of Sheffield and Norwich there might be a difference in each library's approach to social integration. As the census shows there are considerably less people from ethnic minority groups living in Norwich than Sheffield. Also, if the statistics about single sex couples are seen as indicative of the lesbian and gay population in each

city it would appear that there are more lesbian and gay people in Sheffield. The impression that the researcher gets from these interviews is that Sheffield have been more proactive over a longer period tackling social inclusion. Senior Managers are able to cite activities that took place over eight years ago. The impression that the researcher gets from Norwich Library is that a lot of the social inclusion work has happened since the opening of the new building. Also as Norwich is changing the library is now beginning to respond to the change and consider how to tackle social inclusion issues.

7.2 Responding to need

Both libraries have done pieces of work to discover what minority groups want from the library and how best to respond to their needs. The DCMS (2001:8) revised policy objectives advised that ‘Libraries, museums galleries and archives should identify, consult and involve socially excluded people about meeting their needs and aspirations.’ The work necessary to achieve this is not always high profile and complicated. A Senior Manager at Norwich Millennium Library thinks that the patron’s response sheets she receives are very important to discover what people want. It was from these she was able to arrange focus groups. Sheffield Central Library felt that the impact of Meagan O’Leary’s dissertation on ‘Pink Perceptions’ has helped to drive change on consultation and focus groups.

The researcher felt that quite often the focus groups came together in an ad hoc manner. It did not appear that either library had an over view of how focus groups would be useful or how to sustain them. The researcher felt that the libraries could see the value in these groups but there was not the time available to organise and run them. The researcher felt that focus groups needed a goal to work towards and an expectation that there would be action in the library as a result of the consultation with these groups. Brighton and Hove libraries have a permanent consultation group which is proactive and promotes itself as such on the library’s LGBT website, the statement begins, ‘To ensure that the library service is responding to the needs of the community, Brighton & Hove libraries have a LGBT consultation group,’ (Brighton and Hove City Library, 2006) which gives informed opinions about library activities

However goals and expectations often cost money and the researcher felt that there was not extra money in either library to use in such projects.

Another way to respond to need is to ensure that the library has relevant stock. CILIP (2004a) states that, 'Written stock policies should include the need for material relevant to the needs of LGBT people across all formats.' The CILIP document also states that library stock should reflect society as it is today and the library's wider community. The document says, '...all libraries need to provide material reflecting the Black presence in the UK, even if their own communities are largely white.' To this end the researcher felt it was important to discover whether each library included provision for minority genres in their written stock policy. A Senior Manager at Sheffield library felt that there should be more written into their stock policy to accommodate minority genres. A Senior Manager at Norwich indicated that she did not see the need for anything specific being written in, the inclusion of minority writing will be acquired as naturally as any other genre. As already discussed above this is not good enough when it comes to promoting Black and Asian writers, and could also prove a negative stance when dealing with gay and lesbian stock. Phil Bret noted that 'The lack of a written stock policy could be the reason for the identified gaps in provision. The reliance [on] provision by demand could, in the case of homosexuals' position in society, mean a demand not articulated and therefore not provided for.' (1992 cited Vincent, 2001: 77)

The Senior Manager did not see any need for making a special case in the stock policy for minority genres.

7.3 Promoting minority genres

Both libraries had British Black/Asian literature and a gay and lesbian collection. Sheffield Library pointed out that there was not a discreet British Black/Asian collection. Promotion of minority genres had two distinct areas the researcher wanted to examine. Firstly to discover whether minority genres were promoted generally e.g. If patrons wanted to know about minority genres staff would know where it was, the kind of material it was and perhaps be able to recommend similar

material. Secondly the researcher wanted to examine the libraries' attitude to specific 'special promotions.'

The questionnaires showed quite distinctly that Sheffield library front line respondents felt more confident generally promoting minority genres than Norwich library. However the general promotion of minority genres relied on frontline librarians own knowledge of the material as those Senior Manager interviewed said there was no training offered in either library to support front line staff's knowledge of minority genres. One Sheffield Senior Manager talked about the expertise of library staff to guide patrons through minority genres. If there is no minority genre training this kind of expectation could cause anxiety amongst front line staff.

There was more feedback from both libraries regarding 'special promotions.' Both libraries had at some time opted for promotions of 'The Big Gay Read' and other touring promotions like those from 'Opening the Book'. Sheffield had a major promotion in the Town Hall that was proactive in helping them to make contact with those from minority groups. Norwich library had a Black History promotion which failed to encourage any book issues. However the library was more successful with the 'Writing Africa' promotion. The Norwich Senior Manager pointed out that these books appeared to be issued to white middle class patrons and not to patrons from ethnic minorities. The researcher feels that this is a positive development because it means that the minority genre was promoted to all library patrons. There was also a feeling from both libraries that Black British/Asian writing was becoming more mainstream, with authors such as Monica Ali becoming very well known. Although '...only 1% of the current top 5,000 best selling books are drawn from this part of the community.' (Denny, May 2006: 3) To a lesser extent there was a feeling that sometimes patrons do take out books which are written by gay authors and do not realise that these books would be regarded as gay and lesbian literature.

The Senior Managers at Norwich Library in particular were anxious that they were not tokenistic in their approach to special promotions. They said that they do not make a conscious decision to promote Black British/Asian literature because of the origins of its authors, they are promoted because the material is just good literature. Both libraries were anxious not to ghettoise the collections and present

them as something exotic in promotions, making them less mainstream and different. However, the ‘What do you like to read?’ research project states that there is a clear message about display, ‘...the effectiveness of stock promotion is enhanced if the power of display, and of reader recommendation, is not overlooked (Train, 2003: 83).

Both libraries said that they had no way of knowing what impact promotions of minority genres had on those patrons who borrowed the books. One Senior Manager pointed out that as far as she knew patrons could take the books home and prop up the coffee table with it. There were no plans at either library to follow up on any of the minority genres promotions with any kind of research as to its impact. The researcher feels that this was a missed opportunity to develop work with minority genres.

7.4 Separate or interfiled?

The complex question of interfiling or segregating minority genres is touched upon in many of the interview responses. Ashby (1987:154) writing twenty years ago made a controversial point regarding separate gay collections. Ashby suggested that a separate collection would attract dubious clientele ‘What is not needed is a ‘Gay’ section which will only attract the dirty mac brigade, the bigot and the wielder of the Stanley knife’. Although Ashby’s comments are twenty years old there may still be an anxiety that those viewing the material may have questionable motives. Also as Norman (1998) points out the physical arrangement of materials can act as a barrier to information access and deter use by these communities. Meagan O’Leary in her ‘Pink Perceptions’ dissertation regards the area of ‘segregated or integrated LGBT stock’ as a problem that needs further research. CILIP ‘Sexual Orientation and Libraries’ (2004a) advice is vague in that it says that, ‘Consideration should be given to whether LGBT stock should form a separate collection, which brings all the stock together or is interfiled in the main sequence.’ However CILIP goes on to say that ‘There is no right or wrong answer to this...’

This area generated the most anxiety surrounding the ghettoisation of material as discussed earlier in this study. Even when each library asked focus groups for their opinions there was still a division as to what the libraries should do with their minority genres. There was also a difference of opinion amongst Senior Managers in the same library. Most of the discussion centred on gay and lesbian literature rather than Black British/Asian literature. Senior Managers put forward the idea that there was more acceptance of this literature and it was becoming main stream. This raises an important issue and the researcher will discuss in the conclusion whether the pairing of these two minority genres had enough similarity when posing some of the interview questions and questionnaire statements.

A Norwich Senior Manager pointed out that the size of the library might inform how the stock is presented along with the political statement the library is making. Sheffield Senior Managers felt that segregating the stock might highlight those people who go there to find books when they may want to remain discreet. Interfiling would allow for serendipity, a patron may pick up a book at random and enjoy it when they would not have gone to look for it in a segregated gay and lesbian section.

This area was seen as a difficult problem in both Sheffield and Norwich. There was a feeling that it may be a problem without a definitive answer and you may not be able to please all of the people all of the time.

7.5 Training issues

The methodology for developing a strategic approach as advocated in the Libraries, Museums, Galleries and Archives for all (DCMS 2001:9) document is to, 'Develop the services, and train the staff to provide them.' Both libraries offer general inclusion/ cultural awareness training focusing on ethnic minorities and disability. There are no plans for minority genres training despite the willingness to undertake this kind of training as indicated in the front line staff questionnaire. The effort being invested in community profiling that Norwich Library was undertaking was interesting as it cannot be carried out in a vacuum and to make it a useful exercise there must be training issues as a result of their findings.

7.6 Staff anxiety

There was a feeling from Senior Managers in both libraries that the diversity training offered to staff had allayed some of their anxieties when dealing with ethnic minorities. However, because librarians come from a cross section of society, with their own beliefs and prejudices, it was suggested that anxieties are not always voiced because of the reasons already mentioned.

Senior Managers at Sheffield library thought that some staff could be resentful about promoting minority genres. If a collection is underused there may be a feeling that the money could be better spent elsewhere. This resentment could be representative of a general feeling of anxiety. A Senior Manager at Norwich also spoke about the library's minority genre collections and the feelings this may generate. This Senior Manager said that she does not consider these negative feelings, however she would tell them that having the collections fulfils the remit of the county council. The researcher felt that this response ensured that any feelings of anxiety around minority genres collections were not considered by senior management as they were obliged to have these collections.

Chapter 8: Conclusions and Recommendations

8.1 General overview

In this study the researcher tried to find out what perceptions there were amongst frontline staff and library managers towards the promotion of minority genres, Black British/Asian literature and gay and lesbian literature. In order to find this out the researcher also needed to know what the overall approach was in both libraries towards social inclusion as it was felt that you can not have one without the other.

As discussed above the small sample of questionnaires returned and only being able to interview three managers, (albeit key positions in their respective library services), from each library has meant that this study gives a 'taste' of staff attitude towards the promotion of minority genres in Sheffield Central Library and Norwich Millennium Library.

The research has produced some interesting view points and areas for development for both libraries.

8.2 Black British/Asian and gay and lesbian fiction – a good pairing?

It was quite evident early on in this study that the pairing of Black British/Asian and gay and lesbian fiction was not as straight forward as might first have been thought. There is a spread of questionnaire responses regarding front line staff confidence promoting Black British/Asian literature and gay and lesbian with some respondents strongly disagreeing about their ability to promote either genre. However library managers appear far more at ease with Black British/Asian fictions generally than they are with gay and lesbian fiction. This more confident approach is more to do with the general promotion of Black British/ Asian literature. There is a definite move towards not regarding Black British literature as a minority genre in the same way they do gay and lesbian literature. However, as already discussed *Branching Out* would suggest that this approach is indicative of institutional racism. Web sites such as that produced by Birmingham Libraries (2006) give an excellent

example of how Black and Asian writing can be actively promoted within the library. The website states that, 'It is hoped that the list will encourage and stimulate interest in these authors and their writing.' This is followed by an extensive list of Black and Asian authors, titles of their work and some background details of the authors and links to pertinent websites for periodicals and other information.'

More than one manager cited authors like Monica Ali as being mainstream and therefore difficult to classify as a minority genre. There does not seem to be the anxieties generated about this genres segregation or interfiling and there was no anxiety expressed that this genre will offend patrons. The anxiety does appear when those questioned begin discussing 'special promotions'. If libraries are putting together promotions with a Black and Asian theme, e.g. Black History week, there seems to be much more anxiety generated here which will be discussed later. However these special promotions do not happen regularly.

The researcher felt that there was much more anxiety generated by both libraries in their approach to gay and lesbian literature. This anxiety was spread across all aspects of promoting this genre, from the knotty problem of segregation or interfiling, discretion, offending patrons, the balance between the amount of gay literature to that of lesbian literature and the general content of gay and lesbian literature.

The researcher feels that the anxieties generated by the promotion of gay and lesbian literature was more sharply felt than any anxiety generated by the promotion of Black British/Asian literature. As a result it was felt that the pairing of these two minority genres was difficult to balance in this study. As a result a good percentage of this study has been more centred on gay and lesbian literature than Black British/Asian literature, giving the impression that these two genres are not equal in their status in minority genres.

8.3 Are there anxieties?

The researcher feels that there are anxieties amongst front line staff and library managers when promoting Black British /Asian literature and gay and lesbian literature. Some of this anxiety is seated in the understanding and practice of social inclusion and some of the anxieties are associated with the promotion of either minority genres, there being a cross over from social inclusion and minority genres.

The questionnaires showed that in the small sample there were anxieties in both libraries related to frontline staff's awareness and promotion of these minority genres. There appears to be a greater anxiety expressed in the Norwich Millennium library than in Sheffield Central library. Whilst there was some indication of anxieties in Sheffield Central Library there were more front line staff that indicated a stronger disagreement regarding their confidence in promoting these minority genres. A lot of the anxiety centred around the lack of training given to support promotion of minority genres although there was a great willingness in both libraries to undertake such training.

The researcher feels that there are anxieties expressed by library managers. Whilst trying hard to combat social exclusion the researcher feels that some of the issues are too broad and entrenched for managers to give enough time and effort to combat. As the researcher said in the theoretical framework people will bring to their jobs all the anxieties, prejudices, moral concerns and religious beliefs they have so to identify and work with these feelings is a tall order for library managers.

The areas that cause the greatest anxieties to Senior Managers as highlighted in the interviews are:

8.3.1 Staffing

- All Senior Managers remarked about having mostly older, middleclass women on the front line staff. A great emphasis was put onto the idea that attracting younger members of staff would be good for the libraries as some of the existing staff in the older age group are not as enlightened as younger recruits may be. The researcher could not see any evidence of this in the questionnaires as there was a spread of more ‘negative’ responses across the whole of the age range. The Senior Managers did not offer any concrete proof about this and the researcher felt that it was just an assumption, probably based on anecdotal evidence, that this would be the case. There was also mixed messages about the staff being mostly middle class. In one respect it was held up as working against social inclusion and the promotion of minority genres, and then promoted as a good thing because middleclass values are open to diversity. The researcher felt that the reality is that there are older members of staff in the library, who have a lot to offer but need more specific training to support their ability to promote minority genres.
- Senior Managers are made anxious by the fact that both libraries do not attract library staff from ethnic minorities. Some of the reasons for this, careers advice, promotion of library courses etc, are out of the library manager’s hands. However Senior Managers do set the ethos in their library and could create the conditions necessary that would attract staff from ethnic minorities. Employing staff from ethnic minorities may assist the libraries to select minority genre stock.

8.4.1 Focus groups.

- Both libraries had some involvement with focus groups, and both libraries felt that they were a good thing. The researcher felt that these groups were too ad hoc and more of a knee jerk reaction rather than used in an overall plan.

8.5.1 Promoting minority genres

- A lot of comments were made about how gay and lesbian literature should be displayed in each library. This is a complex problem probably without a definitive answer. This problem alone probably generated the most anxiety. This impinged on most of the answers to many of the questions. The problem generated discussion on discretion, sensitivity and a general feeling of anxiety that the libraries were not going to get it right no matter what they did.
- There were anxieties surrounding ‘special promotions’. There was a feeling amongst some managers that special promotions are tokenistic and that these promotions add to the ghettoisation of minority genres. However the libraries also feel that these promotions do highlight the collections and hopefully is a way of bringing this literature to a wider audience.
- There was some anxiety generated around the stock policy. There did not appear to have any specific guidelines for the acquisition of minority genres. Whilst Norwich library implies that they acquire good literature, and if that good literature happens to include Black British/Asian writers or gay and lesbian writers then so be it. There does not appear to be anything written into stock policies that highlight the acquisition of these minority genres.
- There is an expectation from some of the managers questioned that frontline staff are professional enough to deal with all queries about minority genres. As there had been little minority genres training the researcher felt that this expectation may be built on false assumptions.

8.4 Do these anxieties affect the promotion of Black British/Asian literature and gay and lesbian literature?

The research shows that these anxieties do affect the promotion of these minority genres. Whilst library managers indicate that there has been a lot of inclusion training which has made library staff more confident with dealing with patrons from ethnic minorities there is not the specific knowledge necessary to promote minority genres.

8.5 Is there a difference between Sheffield Central Library and Norwich Millennium Library?

The researcher feels that there are differences between Sheffield Central Library and Norwich Millennium library. The over view of each city as described in the library profiles shows very different demographics which the researcher feels is reflected in each library. However the difference between each library is not as profound as was anticipated. Norwich is changing and the library is taking steps to reflect the change and in some ways to lead the change. Their promotion of minority genres will have a direct influence on patrons if they are supported by knowledgeable staff. The researcher does not think its enough just to have the materials available without proactive support for the materials. Norwich library had a chance to begin again and develop customer services and the promotion of minority genres with the destruction by fire of the old building. In this way a lot of the promotion of minority genres are fairly new unlike Sheffield Central Library where there has been a more prolonged attempt at promoting minority genres.

Sheffield Central Library has a longer track record of promoting minority genres. They have tried many things over the years and Meagan O'Leary's dissertation has provided a basis for more reflection and development. Even though there has been more input in Sheffield than at Norwich library there is still anxieties which need to be addressed. The researcher felt that there was more of a feeling that things have been tackled in the past and the energy needed to keep things moving was difficult as there was so much pressure on the library's time.

8.6 Recommendations

8.6.1 Minority genres policy.

The researcher felt that both libraries would benefit from a minority genre policy that was either stand alone or written into the library's social inclusion policy. The policy could include guidelines for stock acquisition, training expectations, special promotions, segregation or interfiling, and an indication of who in the library could support as being 'expert' in the field.

8.6.2 Segregation or interfiling

Each library could find a way of polling interested patrons as to what they think should be done. The result of the vote would be trialled for one year then reviewed properly as to its success or otherwise. The decision would be right for each individual library as so much is written about there not being a definitive answer. In this way each library gets an answer which is right for them.

8.6.3 Minority genre reading groups

Reading groups could be established which focus on the minority genres of Black British/Asian, gay and lesbian literature. These groups should be publicised and open to all. The reading lists which support these groups could inform stock selection.

8.6.4 Multi cultural champion librarians and Gay and Lesbian champion librarians.

Each library would benefit from these champion librarians. They would be able to be proactive in the promotion of minority genres and support staff. Champion librarians would have informed views about stock selection, focus groups and offer in-house minority genre training to all staff.

8.6.5 Attract library staff from ethnic minorities.

A library careers promotion specifically aimed at the ethnic community and supported by existing multiethnic staff could be a proactive way of attracting the staff needed. Alongside this there could be special promotions, articles and advertisements in Black and Asian journals.

8.6.6 Special Promotions

Special minority genres promotions need a library professional to be available to promote what is on offer. Special promotions in shops rely on shop assistants to draw customer's attention to the promotion and explain the goods on offer. This should also be the case when there are special promotions in the library. Patrons may feel anxious about looking at the promotion and taking books out because they may need guidance as to what is on offer.

8.6.7 Minority training for all staff

All staff need minority genre training. It is not enough just to have social inclusion training, there needs to be specific minority genre training.

8.7 Areas for further research

This research has generated other questions for the researcher that cannot be answered in this dissertation. Further research would be interesting in the following areas.

- An assessment of the impact of diversity/sexuality based workshops for frontline library staff.
- To continue to research the issue of segregation and interfiling of minority genres.
- Does age really matter? An investigation into the impact of aging library professionals.

- The impact of ‘The Big Gay Read’ and other minority genres initiatives.

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Appendix A: Questionnaires for front line library staff

Library Staff Questionnaire

Please place a tick in the box to show how much you agree or disagree with these statements.

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| This library tries hard to tackle social exclusion. | | | | |
| I believe that I have a role to play to promote social inclusion within this library. | | | | |
| I have an awareness of the library's Black and Asian literature. | | | | |
| I have an awareness of the library's gay and lesbian collection. | | | | |
| I think that this library promotes minority genres (Black and Asian and gay/lesbian fiction) in a positive way. | | | | |
| I feel confident advising patrons about gay and lesbian literature. | | | | |
| I feel confident advising patrons about Black and Asian literature. | | | | |
| I know who to ask if I am unable to answer a patron's requests for minority genres. | | | | |
| I have received training to support my knowledge of minority genres. | | | | |
| I would welcome ongoing training to support my knowledge of minority genres. | | | | |
| I think that this library should promote gay and lesbian literature to all library patrons. | | | | |
| I think that this library should promote Black and Asian literature to all library patrons. | | | | |

If you have any further comments you wish to add, please use the space below.

.....

.....

.

.....

.

.....

.....

Are you a full time or part time member of staff?

Age group, (please tick) 18 – 25 [] 26 – 35 [] 36 – 45 [] 46 – 55 [] 55+ []

Gender M [] F []

Thank you for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire.

Laura Armstrong

Appendix B- Interview questions

Before I begin the interview I will just make clear what I mean when I use the terms 'minority group' and 'minority genres' in the interview.

Minority Group – In general minority groups refer to groups of people who, because of their social status, education, employment, religion, ethnicity or sexual orientation, are not seen as part of the communities 'dominant' group. When 'minority groups' are referred to in these questions in relation to my dissertation I am looking at minority groups in terms of ethnicity and sexuality. .

Minority Genres – In relation to these questions and my dissertation, minority genres are books written by Black British Asian writers and gay and lesbian writers. These books may not have mainstream appeal and only appeal to a small section of the library's patrons.

Introductory questions

1. Do you think that libraries can meet the needs of all groups within society?
2. In my reading I have seen several comments regarding libraries' lack of cultural relevance to the needs and interests of excluded groups and communities? Do you think that there is any truth in this opinion?

('lack of cultural relevance' – Material and personnel available in the library does not reflect the beliefs, culture or lifestyle of a particular community.)

3. Have there been any challenges to the institutional culture of your library to ensure that excluded groups and communities are made to feel welcome?
4. Have you, or a colleague ever run focus groups for a minority group in your library to ascertain what these patrons would like to see in the library?

Questions regarding special promotions

5. Is this library proactive in generally promoting Black British/Asian writing?
6. Is this library proactive in generally promoting gay/lesbian writing?

| | |
|--|--|
| 7. Has your library ever had a special promotion for minority genres? E.g. Black British Asian gay /lesbian. | |
| <u>Yes</u> What minority genres did you promote? | <u>No</u> Can you tell me the reason why the library hasn't been involved with promoting |

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>What was your involvement in the promotion?</p> <p>In your opinion was the promotion successful?</p> <p>Were any statistics collected, or evaluation conducted, during or following the promotion?</p> <p>In your view was it worth doing?</p> <p>Is it something you would consider doing again?</p> <p>What were the short-term benefits, if any, of the promotion?</p> <p>What were the long term benefits, if any, of the promotion?</p> | <p>minority genres?</p> <p>Do you think that there would be any benefits to the library if it ran a special promotion?</p> <p>Is this something you hope to do in the future?</p> |
|---|---|

8. Do you think that special promotions/ themed book promotions of minority genres are representative of your library's ethos, or would you describe them as 'exceptional'?

How minority genres are acquired and presented

9. Do you have a written stock policy that gives guidelines about acquiring minority genres?
10. How do you think minority genres should be generally presented in the library? Should they be grouped together or spread throughout the library as any other book?

Training

11. What, if any, inclusion training is offered to front line staff?
12. Is there any training offered to library staff which focuses on minority genres?
13. Do you think that there are any particular anxieties amongst frontline staff regarding the promotion of minority genres?

Sheffield questions

14. What, if any, has been the impact of Area Library officers with a champion role on Sheffield Central Library?
15. How has the 'significant programme of cultural awareness training', as described in Sheffield Library's mission statement, impacted on Sheffield Central Library?

Norwich questions

14. In Norwich Library position statement it says that the library will '...reflect the needs of the local communities'. What do you regard as the needs of your local community?
15. Again, in the position statement it states that stock management will include, 'greater community involvement in the selection of materials'. To what extent has this occurred and in what ways has it occurred?