

Library Anxiety, Race, & Nova Scotia

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Research Problem

- African Nova Scotians complete university degrees in small numbers.
- Multidisciplinary attempts to eliminate barriers.
- Little is known of academic libraries' impact on African Canadian student success.
- Libraries may create barriers leading to poor university transition for African Nova Scotians.

Research Question 1

- Is there a racial difference in library anxiety among Nova Scotian undergraduates?

Research Question 2

- If differences exist, which aspects of library anxiety affect the two ethnic groups?

Research Question 3

- What are the different methods students use to alleviate library anxiety?

Research Methods

Phase 1

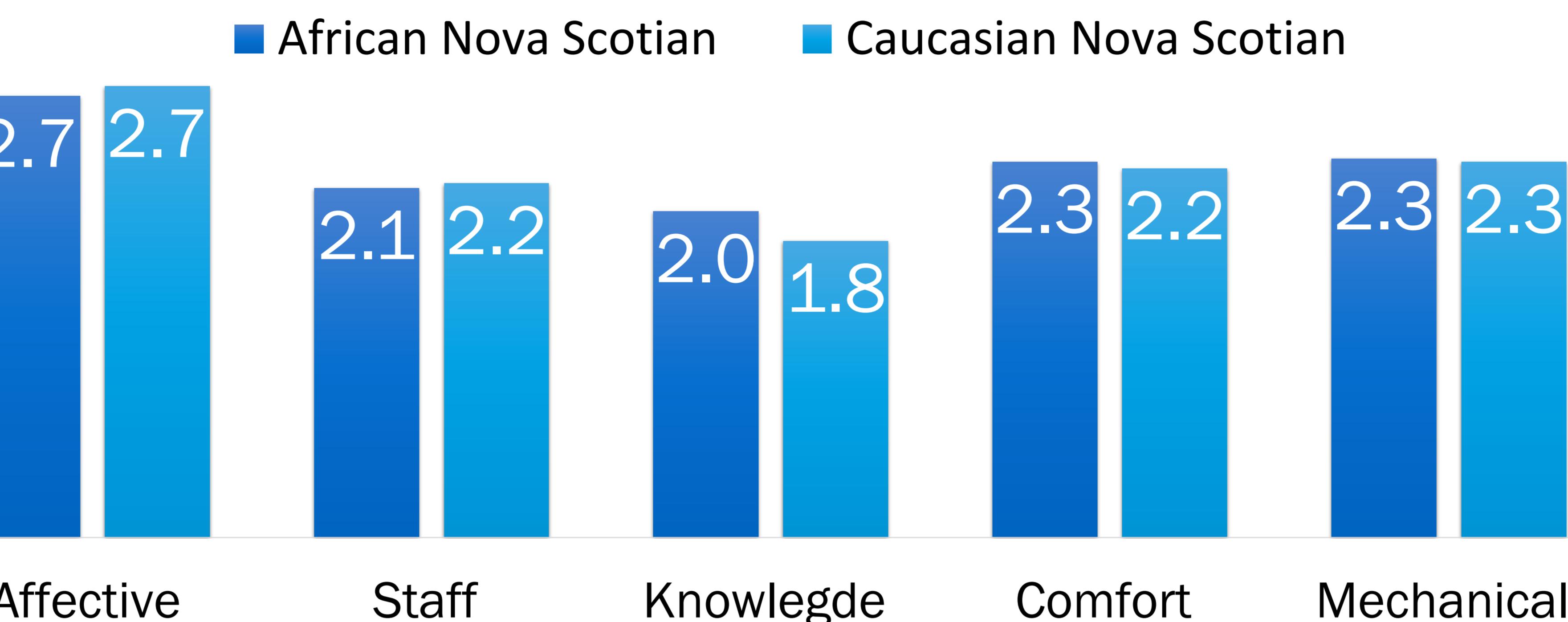
- Library Anxiety Scale and demographics survey.
- Addresses staff barriers, library knowledge, affective barriers, library comfort, and mechanical barriers.
- 18 African Nova Scotians and 20 Caucasian Nova Scotians participated.

Phase 2

- Semi-structured interviews to complement Library Anxiety Scale.
- Five African Nova Scotians and three Caucasian Nova Scotians participated.

Survey Findings

Library Anxiety (Averages, min. 1 - max. 5)



Interview Findings

African Nova Scotians vs. Caucasian Nova Scotians



- African Nova Scotians experience lower library anxiety.
- African Nova Scotians' experience lower library anxiety before university.
- *Staff barriers*: Unapproachable, unavailable, unfriendly, and ineffective information literacy instructors.
- *Affective barriers*: feeling inadequate based on their skills versus feeling inadequate based on peers' skills.
- *Mechanical barriers*: accessing online databases, database usability, and lack of information literacy guides.
- *Coping methods*: change research topics, magnification of fuzzy/unclear text, and abstracts as references.

Discussion / Conclusion

- No differences appear in survey results.
- Interviews unexpectedly reveal that African Nova Scotians' prior library experiences lead to low university library anxiety.
- Results are consistent with American studies over the past two decades, indicating that staff barriers, affective barriers, and mechanical barriers remain linked to anxiety.
- Coping methods often lead to frustrations which limit information behaviours and scholarly potential.
- Addressing barriers that all Nova Scotians encounter will improve services reflecting undergraduate information needs.

Limitations

- Dated survey instrument, but enhanced by current interview guide.
- Small African Nova Scotian undergraduate population, thus a reflective sample.

Implications for Librarians

- Enhance user-focused reference services.
- Continue inclusive, informative, and accessible library environments.
- Increase information literacy sessions early to decrease information barriers.

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