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Connecting Diversity to Management: A Study of Career Development Patterns of Library Managers in Selected ARL Member Libraries and ARL LCDP Participants

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**Connecting Diversity to Management: A Study of Career Development
Patterns of Library Managers in Selected ARL Member Libraries
and ARL LCDP Participants**

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Executive Summary

by

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INTRODUCTION

A report from the National Center for Education Statistics indicates that in the states of Hawaii, New Mexico, California, Texas, Mississippi, and Louisiana plus the District of Columbia, nonwhite populations in public elementary and secondary schools have already become the majority. We call this our first tier of states. In eight other states—Arizona, Florida, Maryland, Georgia, New York, South Carolina, Nevada, and Illinois—nonwhite students range from 40 to 49 percent of the elementary and secondary school population. This is our second tier of states. It stands to reason that these states' general population will eventually reflect the elementary and secondary school population as these students enter adulthood. So, these states will more than likely experience the demographic shift first if not already. In addition, in an article by our honoree Dr. McCook and Lippincott entitled "Library Schools and Diversity: Who Makes the Grade," we see that there are ten schools that graduate the majority of minority library grads and seven of these schools are located in the aforementioned states. In our opinion, it is imperative that we put our initial focus there on those states.

Keeping that in mind, our study focuses on diversity in library management. The impetus for our study is based on Thomas and Ely's *Paradigms for Managing Diversity*. The first paradigm addresses the "discrimination-and-fairness" issues in business management and measures success in diversity initiatives in terms of how well a company does in recruitment and retention of minority employees. This paradigm aims to increase the number of minorities employed and correct any discrimination and unfairness in the hiring and promotion process. The Spectrum Scholars Initiative is a good example of this. The second paradigm focuses on the aspects of "access-and-legitimacy" of workforce diversity. Employees are hired because of their multicultural or bilingual abilities to serve the clientele better. The third paradigm includes the first and second paradigms but goes beyond those two widely accepted approaches and focuses on "learning-and-effectiveness". This paradigm connects diversity to management and personnel development perspectives and seeks to integrate cultural backgrounds and skills as necessary strategy for organizational development in order to maintain competitiveness in an economy of globalization.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

With that logic, we focused our efforts on surveying a small sample of ARL managers in that first tier of states—Hawaii, New Mexico, California, Texas, Mississippi, and Louisiana plus the District of Columbia. We decided to survey ARL members mainly because these libraries are the upper echelons of libraries and similar in nature as a result of the criteria set for becoming a member. The questions were designed to see if they all follow a career pattern into management and if so, these strategies can be communicated to and employed by minorities with management aspirations. Questions were divided into these categories: demographic; career strategies employed; and perception of organizational environment.

For a comparison group, we decided to survey all participants in ARLs Leadership and Career Development Program which is an initiative that closely addressed the third paradigm because one way to integrate multicultural backgrounds into all levels of the organization is

to have diversity represented at all levels within the organization. LCDP participants are exclusively minority librarians who have demonstrated leadership potential and aspirations. Both groups were contacted via e-mail with a link for the same online survey. LCDP participants were also given open-ended questions about the program concerning its effectiveness in career development. The response rate for Group 1 which is the ARL managers was 26% or 52 out of 200 and the response rate for Group 2 which is the LCDP participants was 36 % or 31 out of 88.

RESULTS

Post MLS Experience (Total years of post-MLS [or equivalent degree] experience as a librarian)— Concerning career strategies employed, we first asked respondents the number of years of post-MLS experience to gauge the length of professional experience one needs before expecting a managerial position. It must be noted that LCDP participants have to have at least 5 years of experience to qualify for the program, so obviously Group 2 will not be represented in the first year range. The mode [Mode is defined as the most frequently occurring value.] for Group 1 with this variable is the 21-25 year range (26.9%) whereas the mode for Group 2 is the 11-15 year range (41.9%) indicating the majority of Group 2 is still in their middle career period while over 50% of Group 1 have reached their later career stage.

Post MLS Positions—(How many different library positions have you had since your MLS degree/or equivalent?)— We also asked the number of positions since the MLS to see if there's a trend of changing jobs to gain a variety of experience in preparation for management. With this variable, our intention was to examine how many job changes the respondents had to make before they gained enough experience to be selected for their current positions. The mode for Group 1 was 4 job changes (25% of the 52 respondents) with 21.2% of respondents saying they had changed job three times and another 23% of the respondents having worked 6 different jobs. The mode for Group 2 was 3 job changes (29.0%) since this group of minority librarians is younger and worked fewer years than members of Group 1. Twenty-three percent of this group had changed jobs twice.

First Managerial Position (Years between first full-time librarian position and first managerial position)— The purpose of asking the years between first full-time librarian position and first managerial position was to see if one group or race was promoted sooner than another group. This addresses the first paradigm of “discrimination-and-fairness”. One interesting result from this survey question was the number of respondents who were promoted to their first managerial position in less than a year after they completed their MLS degree. Fourteen respondents (26.9%) from Group 1 were promoted to a managerial position in less than a year. For Group 2, five respondents (16.1%) were promoted to a managerial position in less than a year after receiving a MLS.

Perception of Diversity Environment

Part of our survey (questions 12 to 28) polled the respondents about their perception of organizational environment in terms of workforce diversity. Those results helped identify and highlight areas where perceptions agreed or differed between the two Groups.

The two groups agreed to a certain degree in their assessment of the diversity of workforce in their library at staff, librarian, middle management and upper management levels. If we use an average of the two groups, about 50% agreed that their library's employees are a balanced representation of the racially diverse population on campus at staff level; however, only 27% agreed the same is true at the librarian level; 18% agreed the same is true at the middle management level; and 16% agreed the same is true at the upper management level. But we noticed perception gaps between the two groups in questions 12, 14, and 15. The percentage of disagreement from the minority group was statistically higher than the average percentage. The percentage of "Strongly Disagree" increased as they were asked to assess of minority representation at middle and upper management levels.

Both groups were positive about their library's efforts in recruiting a diverse workforce in the past five years. The perception gaps appeared again in their assessment of their own library's efforts or effectiveness in retaining a diverse workforce. Forty-four percent of the respondents from Group 1 agreed that their library had made strides in the past five years in retaining a diverse workforce, but only 23% of the respondents from Group 2 agreed that this was true in their library. When asked if their library has diversity as a strategic priority, only 48% of the respondents from Group 2 agreed. However, when asked if their library should have diversity as strategic priority, an overwhelming 97% of the respondents from Group 2 agreed versus 65.4% from Group 1.

Six open-ended questions were added to the standard survey to ask about LCDP participants' experience before and after the program and their assessment of the program's impact on their career advancement. The strong, enthusiastic responses from the 31 respondents provided an inside view into some of the most successful minority managers' career experience.

Most of the minority managers in their responses included one or more of the following strategies for advancing their career:

- Remain competent and confident at all times
- Practice flexibility and openness to change
- Changed jobs
- Work harder
- Look for challenging work assignments
- Networking
- Mentor
- Keep up with technology
- Increase one's skills-set

Several LCDP participants felt that because of their minority background, they had to work harder to prove that their promotion was based on their capability and competence, not just a tokenism. As one of the respondents asserted, "By giving 200% on the job I have proved my competence and value to the institution and become more than just an 'affirmative action hire.'" Another respondent agreed saying, "As a minority librarian, I always have to prove myself. I have to be twice as good as everyone else... At various institutions where I have

worked, I know there have been people who felt I did not get my job on merit alone, that it was because of my minority status—and I feel pressured to prove my worth.”

Being willing to change jobs and relocate is a strategy mentioned over and over by several respondents. Some moved because they did not feel they were treated fairly. As one respondent put it, “Work hard; be active in professional organizations and treat others as you would like to be treated; if you are being overlooked and mistreated by an employer do not be afraid to move to another job.” Others had to relocate for better advancement opportunities. “[I] identified positions for which I was qualified and was willing to change locations to take them.”

Most of the respondents from Group 2 were optimistic and positive about their career objectives and opportunities. While acknowledging some barriers embedded in their own organizational environment, they chose to concentrate more on self-development and expansion of critical skills and networking. Instead of waiting for opportunity to find them, they wasted no time to ready themselves for the next move. One responded, “[I] continually scanned job postings to be sure my skills were up to date and marketable. When opportunities presented themselves, I was prepared.”

Developing technological competence was also mentioned as a crucial strategy for furthering one’s career. As information and communication technology continue to redefine our profession, a proactive strategy employed by one respondent was “keeping up with technology. Looking at the big picture. Getting along with people. Looking for best practices. Following my own counsel.”

The rankings of the 8 career factors by both groups were surprisingly similar with “worker harder” as the top factor and “additional advanced degree” as the last significant factor. However, Group 2 was affected more by “Changed jobs” and “Developed mentoring network.”

The scarcity of minority librarians at middle and upper-management levels, combined with a shortage of minority library school graduates entering the librarian profession, has been well documented. Considering that many Fortune 500 companies have reached 15 to 40 percent minority representation within management levels, the 9.2% representation of minority managers in ARL libraries reveal the lack of effective strategies

Although efforts for recruiting minority librarians have intensified, retaining minority librarians and developing them to advance to the next level remain an issue to be addressed. The feeling of isolation, the lack of mentoring for minority librarians in their early career, and the need for specific programs to assist them to grow within the organization have yet to be recognized by their library administration.

From the management point of view, the goal of integration of diversity in management and leadership demands serious commitment from leadership at the very top. Library directors must become personally involved in diversity initiatives. No leader who’s disengaged from

workforce diversity matters can possibly create and sustain an open, inclusive organizational environment.

ARL LCDP initiative has exerted external assistance and influence on library directors who want to implement effective diversity program, but has been limited by financial and personnel resources. ARL LCDP operates on a national level and attracts the most qualified minority managers or potential future managers to the program. The program offers an enabling environment for minority librarians to reinvent themselves with powerful networking and mentoring.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the following career strategies are offered for minorities with aspirations of leadership and managerial positions:

- Develop career advancement plan early—within the first five years of post-MLS employment or while in library school.
- Be willing to change jobs and employers—to acquire and build some critical skills and experiences in different environments.
- Find a mentor—formal or informal.
- Find an environment where diversity is an initiative and reflects the third paradigm.

For libraries and the profession of librarianship in general, we offer the following strategies:

- To Achieve Paradigms 1 & 2
 - Recruitment/Retention in Tier States
 - Continue Spectrum Scholars Initiative and other similar programs
- To Achieve Paradigm 3
 - Establish *perception* of diverse work environment
 - Commitment from Library Director
 - Diversity as Strategic Initiative
 - Diversity at all levels of organization