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Perception of librarians of color about the relationship between retention & advancement as middle managers

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Introduction

The number of librarians of color working in academic library leadership positions remains relatively low considering the amount of resources the profession devotes to recruiting librarians of color. Yet, no studies have explored retention and advancement as related issues for librarians of color.

Research Questions:

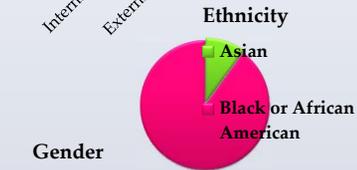
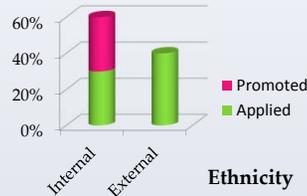
1. Why do librarians of color become middle managers?
2. What do they find rewarding and challenging about the position and what impact does that have on retention?
3. Do they want to advance to higher managerial leadership positions?

Methodology & Procedures

- Qualitative study that relied on narrative inquiry (or story-telling) to probe participants for critical incidents related to each research question
- Participants responded to "Request for participations" posted to various ethnic group listservs, ALA connect, Facebook pages, and Twitter feeds

Study Population

60% of participants came into library middle management positions through an internal promotion



Findings - Retention

Motivation to become a middle manager

- Opportunity to advance (40%)
- Increased responsibility (20%)
- Position Change (20%)
- Necessity (20%)

Personal & professional rewards

- Short-term opportunities for increased responsibilities
- Mentoring new & upcoming librarians
- Overseeing aspects of large library-wide projects such as renovation or strategic planning
- Appreciation and recognition for their work by others

Challenges

- Lobbying for their individual department needs
- Not feeling supported by senior leadership through difficult decisions
- Lack of exposure or not receiving opportunities to grow as a leader
- Overwhelming number of meetings
- Not feeling that the work they are assigned was of strategic value

Findings - Advancement

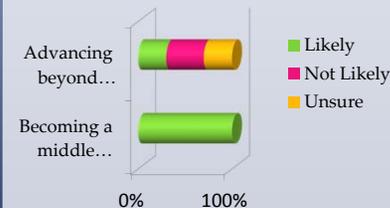
90% of participants are not immediately interested in advancing beyond middle manager. Reasons:

- Losing tenure (9%)
- Lacking skills for increased responsibility (e.g. confidence, education, or experience) (36%)
- Lacking interest in senior leadership positions (27%)
- Changing of work-life balance (18%)

80% of participants are engaged in professional development activities that they felt would prepare them for senior library leadership in the future. Activities:

- Attending leadership institutes (24%)
- Earning advanced degrees (16%)
- Career coaching (24%)

Impressions on the influence of Race



Findings – Satisfaction

Satisfaction is often a contributing factor in job retention & advancement issues (On a scale of 1-10).

How satisfied are participants with their present position? 7.2 (mean)

How satisfied are participants with their present organization? 7.5 (mean)

How satisfied are participants with professions? 6.5 (mean)

Conclusion

Retention and advancement present as two separate and distinct issues for librarians of color working as middle managers. Retention is less of a concern as long as they remain interested in their work. However, more work and attention is necessary to move librarians of color from middle management to senior library leadership positions.

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