



African American Women Leaders in Academic Research Libraries

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abstract: Effective leadership and increasing diversity are central concerns in the library profession. Using qualitative interviewing and research methods, this study identifies the attributes, knowledge, and skills that African American women need in order to be successful leaders in today's Association of Research Libraries (ARL). These findings indicate that, although African American women do not need different skills sets than non-minority library directors to be successful, they may need additional attributes or more of certain attributes to overcome stereotypes and successfully navigate predominantly White academic research library environments.

Through the years, a number of African American women have emerged as influential leaders in librarianship—Clara Stanton Jones, Carla Hayden, and Althea Jenkins, to name a few. Despite the prominence of African American women and women of color, in general, on the national landscape of leadership in librarianship, the number of African American women holding leadership positions as deans, directors, or assistant/associate deans/directors of Association of Research Libraries (ARL) is extremely low and does not reflect proportionately the number of African American librarians in ARL libraries.

The 2006–2007 ARL “Annual Salary Survey” indicates that minorities make up 13.5 percent of professional librarians in ARL libraries. However, the number of minorities in leadership positions is far lower, 4.1 percent of all directorships and only 6.3 percent of assistant/associate directors.¹ Kaylan Hipps compared data from ARL salary surveys of the past 20 years, from 1985–86 to 2005–06, and reported that the percentages of minority library directors and assistant/associate directors have shown slight increases, from 2 percent to 5 percent and from 7 percent to 9 percent, respectively. The greatest increase of minority librarians in managerial positions has occurred at the department head level, from 6 percent to 10 percent.² As Hipps explains, “The professional workforce in US ARL libraries has become somewhat more diverse over the past two decades, although

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it has not kept pace with the nation's growing diversity."³ More work has to be done to increase diversity in library leadership.

Why is Diversity Important?

U. S. businesses have focused on diversity.⁴ Not only do corporate executives believe that it is the right thing to do but it also makes good business sense. Companies realize that diversity can provide them with the competitive edge they need to be successful in today's global economy. Sherry Kuczynski explains that one of the hallmarks of a successful diversity program is company leadership that is also diverse. It means the company has drawn from a wide pool of talent and is opening itself up to different views and ideas, thus becoming more creative.⁵

Mark Winston asserts that there is a direct correlation between investment in diversity and organizational success. He reports the results of a number of research studies indicating that the companies that are the most diverse are also the most successful. He emphasizes the importance of this finding to the academy. Universities and their libraries can provide an educational environment that gives students opportunities to learn from and appreciate a diverse environment. This, in turn, will prepare future graduates to be able to function and succeed in a diverse society.⁶

Focusing specifically on the African American librarian presence in the nation's leading universities, Robert Wedgeworth addresses the issue of why black librarians are important. He explains, "African Americans in library and information science bring a perspective that may not be there without them. They enrich the faculty and bring a set of intellectual interests that may not be well represented."⁷

If the library profession continues to fail at recruiting and retaining adequate numbers of minority librarians, in general, and minority leaders, in particular, our libraries will begin to lose their relevance to the communities they serve. As Denise Davis and Tracie Hall so eloquently state,

As our communities...become increasingly diverse in nearly every dimension, we must ensure that our libraries remain in touch with those we exist to serve. ...More than mere representation in the workforce, measures must be taken to promote and advance diversity at the management level in LIS institutions, if not they will continue to serve as revolving doors at best, to members of the communities on whom they will increasingly depend for survival. The very existence of libraries rests on our ability to create institutions and resource centers where would-be users see their information needs and themselves reflected.⁸

Developing Minority Leadership

Camila Alire contends that the library profession needs to strive for the development and placement of minority leaders. She asserts that libraries will not be able to effect dramatic change until the profession aggressively increases the number of minority leaders in these organizations. Libraries should strive to develop minorities as leaders because they can advocate for organizational change and serve as role models, as well as provide the necessary linkages to diverse communities. "Who best to articulate



diversity and provide the necessary platform to enable library organizations to align their missions with the unique realities of our growing multicultural society than library leaders of color.”⁹

Maurice Wheeler argues that libraries are experiencing a leadership crisis with regard to Black librarians. He contends that the lack of a sufficient number of minorities in leadership positions in the library profession is a critical issue. Most of the effort has gone into recruiting minorities into the profession rather than identifying and developing minorities as leaders. He believes that the library profession has been content in allowing its leaders to emerge naturally. “The problem with this method is that without a conscious effort placed on recruitment of leaders, librarians of color often are not a part

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of the system from which leaders naturally emerge.”¹⁰ There must be a commitment of effort both at the individual and organizational level to eradicating the underrepresentation of minorities in leadership roles. Libraries must strive to create opportunities for minorities to develop in order to demonstrate leadership potential and, thereby, secure leadership positions within their organizations.¹¹

Many academic research libraries have responded by implementing various diversity initiatives in order to prepare the next generation of leadership. The University of Minnesota Training Institute is one such program aimed at retaining and advancing librarians of color. In a recent 2007 study by Peggy Johnson, the institute’s impact on the retention and professional contributions of participants from the previous four institutes (1998–2004) was examined. Johnson reported that 59.1 percent of the participants had been promoted or been given greater responsibility. More than 90 percent of the respondents still worked in libraries.¹²

ARL is also committed to advancing the number of minority leaders in academic librarianship and has renewed its commitment in supporting the many residency programs found in academic research libraries throughout the nation. Recently the association redesigned the Web site for the ARL residency programs and created an electronic community for professionals who manage residency programs as well as for the past and current participants.¹³ The ARL Leadership and Career Development Program is specifically designed to prepare mid-career librarians from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups to assume increasingly demanding leadership roles in ARL libraries.¹⁴

Library literature of the past 20 years has very little research specifically related to the development of minorities in leadership. A study conducted by Peter Herson, Ronald Powell, and Arthur Young identified attributes that present and future directors of ARL libraries need to possess, but the authors did not specifically state if members from underrepresented groups were involved. Attributes were defined as knowledge, skills, and competencies. Multiple means of data collection, including interviewing directors and assistant/associate/deputy directors of ARL libraries, were used in compiling the final list. The purpose of the study was to develop a list of attributes that would be useful to those providing educational programs and leadership institutes, to mentors who want to prepare and nurture the next generation of future leaders, and to those aspiring to

be future directors of large academic research libraries. The final compilation consisted of 105 key attributes, grouped into three subheadings: managerial attributes, personal characteristics, and general areas of knowledge.¹⁵

A discussion of race and/or gender issues was also absent from the Herson study. The purpose of this study is to build upon the research conducted by Herson, Powell, and Young and to examine leadership, race, and gender issues from the perspectives of African American women.

African American Women and Leadership

A review of library literature yielded no published works focusing on African American women and leadership in ARL libraries.¹⁶ Although minority leadership is seriously

lacking in today's academic research libraries, African American women have a rich and enduring history of providing leadership within their families and communities. Literature of the social sciences, particularly Black feminist literature, provides some perspective on African American women as leaders.

In *What a Woman Ought To Be and To Do*, Stephanie Shaw studied the lives of 80 African American women who held professional positions

of social workers, librarians, nurses, and teachers during the Jim Crow era from the 1880s to the 1950s. The professional positions held by these women were generally the highest ones attainable by African American women during that era. In fulfilling their requirements of "socially responsible individualism," these women were able to effect lasting and profound social change in their communities.¹⁷ Their successes ultimately provided them with the means to gain access to mainstream White society, where they once more began their uplifting and developmental work to bring about social changes in American society as a whole. Clara Stanton Jones, one of the women in Shaw's study, became the first African American elected president of the American Library Association in 1975.¹⁸

In *Too Much to Ask: Black Women in the Era of Integration*, Elizabeth Higginbotham studied the educational paths of 56 African American women who graduated from predominantly White colleges between 1968 and 1970. These women were among the first major wave of Black students to enter predominately White colleges during the mid-1960s. The men and women who desegregated White institutions of higher learning faced many obstacles, and their struggle was not without a cost.¹⁹

All of the women in the study achieved their goal and received a college education. However, as Higginbotham's research revealed, most people still evaluate others based on their race. Minorities still negotiate their way within institutions, which are influenced by social class, race, and gender biases. Still today, even after the Civil Rights Movement and affirmative action, most educated Black women work in public sector government jobs and in traditionally female occupations. Higginbotham observed, "Being middle class does give Black people additional resources to face racial disadvantage, but it does not eliminate racism."²⁰

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In *Black Feminist Thought*, Patricia Hill Collins pointed to the fact that African American women's support of education was an important dimension of Black women's political activism. African American women realized that ignorance doomed Black people to powerlessness. Therefore, the women fostered education as a cornerstone of Black community development. African American women who were thought of as community leaders were called "educators." Working toward uplifting their race and education became synonymous.²¹

Collins stressed that African American women's leadership in organizations was based on their belief in empowerment and sharing power within organizational settings. The women believed education was a tool of empowerment, and teaching people to be self-reliant fostered more empowerment than teaching people to follow. Collins contended, "Black women's use of power seems to grow from distinctive conceptions of how people become empowered, how power can be structured and shared in organizational settings, and how organizations would look if people were to be fully empowered within them."²²

For African American women, the process of negotiating and reconciling images of self has become a lifelong pattern of coping in predominantly White settings.²³ Organizational leadership is often a process of evaluating contradictory and inconsistent situations to form practical solutions. The experiences of African American women leaders can bring rich perspectives to this process. As an African American woman who is interested in leadership, I decided to conduct this research study to learn what these women consider to be attributes, knowledge, and skills needed by a person from an underrepresented group in order to be a successful director or assistant/associate/executive director of an ARL library.

Methodology

For this study, 14 African American female librarians who held the position of director or assistant/associate/executive director of an ARL library were interviewed. Identification of these women was not easy. At the time of this research study, data from the American Library Association (ALA), the National Center for Education Statistics, and ARL did not provide the information needed.

In order to obtain the most accurate and comprehensive list of possible candidates, an inquiry letter was mailed to deans/directors of the 124 ARL libraries in the United States and Canada in June 2002. The first inquiry yielded 61 responses from the deans/directors of ARL libraries. From these responses, 23 African American women were identified as possible candidates. In October 2002, a second inquiry letter was sent to those deans/directors of ARL libraries who did not respond to the first inquiry letter. As a result, 22 additional responses were received for a total of 83 responses to the inquiry or a 67 percent response rate. In addition, responses from the second mailing yielded the names of three additional African American women not identified in the first round of inquiry letters, for a total of 26 African American female librarians being identified as possible candidates for the research study.

Of the 26 women identified, six did not meet the criteria for selection and were removed from the list of possible candidates. Consent letters were mailed to each candidate, explaining the research project and asking for their permission to audiotape the

interviews, which were conducted via telephone. Fourteen women, or 70 percent of the remaining population, agreed to participate in the research study. As a group, these women were aware of the lack of research on minority women in library leadership and were enthusiastic about the study. Telephone interviews were conducted during the months of August through November 2002.

The interview questions were pretested by two African American female academic librarians not included in the interview pool and were based on their feedback; questions were modified or added to the list. The final interview questionnaire consisted of 24 questions requesting information on employment history, views of leadership, demographic data, family background, education, community involvement, views of race and gender issues in library leadership, and advice for those African American women entering the library profession.

The in-depth interviews explored the participants' early impressions and life experiences growing up, including their family values and how they were socialized in order to become successful adults. Participants were asked to talk about their families' educational strategies and about their experiences in school, including their choice of colleges and eventually their choice of a career in librarianship. Most importantly, participants were asked to talk about their views of leadership and what it takes, as an African American woman, to become a successful leader in today's ARL libraries.

In presenting data gleaned from these 14 interviews, generalization was not pursued; rather, the study sought careful documentation of the ways in which past life experiences contribute to the development of one's worldviews and ideologies. The qualitative analysis presented in this article will be used to construct a questionnaire for a larger sample in order to determine the frequencies and correlations among the findings documented here. Quotations are identified with the code of one letter (P = participant) and a number.

Findings

Demographics

The women's ages ranged from 41 to 61 years old. They averaged 24 years of professional experience. Experience in their present positions ranged from one month to 20 years. All of the women in the study held master's degrees. Thirteen women have master of library science degrees, and one participant has a master's degree in history. Four of the women have a second master's degree, and one woman holds a doctorate. In all, 36 percent of the women attended segregated schools throughout their K–12 years. Another 43 percent attended historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) for their undergraduate and graduate degrees, and 43 percent are first-generation college graduates.

Leadership Defined

The women defined a successful leader as a person who can provide direction, motivate people, encourage people to do their best, make hard choices, be a risk taker, be a visionary, remain flexible, coach others, share a vision, share decision-making, strategize, challenge people, make an impact, and influence and inspire. As one participant stated:



[A successful leader is] a person who can influence, can inspire, who has a vision of where they would like to see the organization go and move; someone who is willing to take some risks sometimes; someone who has a vision; a good communicator; strong, yet compassionate. I also believe, especially...today..., that you have to have some strong ethical characteristics as well. (P4)

The women believed that successful leaders could also be change agents if it were necessary. In the *Leader's Change Handbook*, David Nadler contends that three of the most essential characteristics of a successful leader are envisioning, energizing, and enabling.²⁴ The women were asked if they agreed with Nadler's statements, and they all responded in agreement.

I think that [quote] encompasses many things that are important. I see [that] one of my primary responsibilities is to do everything necessary to allow the people that report to me to do their jobs well. As an enabler, my presumption is that I hire good strong people, and I trust them to do what needs to be done. A person who is enthusiastic about a change is more likely to get the attention of others and perhaps create the same level of enthusiasm for making the change. With envisioning, you have to see it. If you can't see it, you can't do it. (P11)

A large majority of the women believed that successful leaders could be great teachers. However, some did not think the two necessarily go hand in hand.

I think they should be [good teachers] because they are able to bring the experiences they have and be able to teach...or share...with other people. If you come up with a set of ideas, and you are able to articulate those ideas to your subordinates or someone you are working with, you are teaching them something new, and they are learning something that they didn't learn in the past. I think a good leader is a teacher, a facilitator, and a motivator...all of those. (P3)

Attributes

The interviewees identified key attributes that they believed African American women should have in order to be successful leaders in today's ARL libraries (see table1). The top five essential attributes identified by the participants were: is an enabler and facilitator, embraces change/is change focused, is energetic, is a visionary, and is an educator. These are all attributes highlighted in the earlier discussion of how the participants defined leadership.

Other key attributes identified by the participants included being a role model, being knowledgeable, willing to involve others, self-confident, and flexible. Many believed that they serve as role models for other minorities aspiring to leadership positions in the profession. They also thought that they should set an example for their followers within their organizations.

I think that I've served as a guiding light for any number of young people. ...African Americans and others... have said that I have been a beacon of light and hope for them in terms of their careers and where they have gone. I think/hope that I have raised the awareness as a leader among African Americans of the hope—it's not so much the awareness—that there are possibilities and opportunities for advancement, and hopefully

I've helped them, through talks and discussions [to] see what they can do to achieve their personal goals. (P6)

Those who identified being knowledgeable as a key attribute stressed that one has to be versed in her area of specialization. Others believed that African American women should learn as much as they can, including learning as many professional roles as possible. Some participants thought that, as minorities, they have to know twice as much and work twice as hard as their White counterparts to be considered equal and to receive recognition. They also believed that they are held to higher standards than their White counterparts and have to be high achievers in order to dispel negative stereotypes.

Let's face it, we have to know more than anybody else when you're black, but that's just the way it is. (P8)

I think that we, as African Americans, have to work twice as hard as someone who is not because there are...stereotypes there. Sometimes I have to work twice as hard as my White colleagues to get the recognition that I have. Does that stop me? No, I just do my job. I like what I do. (P13)

The willingness to involve others was thought to be critical in today's leadership. Today's workers are demanding to be part of the decision-making process. They want to know where they fit strategically within the organization and how their particular roles influence the organization.

Leadership has changed. ...[Previously] the leader articulated the vision. Leaders would go off by themselves and think, and then they would come back to the group and say here is my vision, here is where I think we need to go. By building or articulating or facilitating a shared vision, you're empowering people,...so it's easy to motivate or energize them. Because they understand that, they [are] invested in the process. It makes it worth it. (P13)

The women believed that one must be flexible and be able to adapt to an ever-changing environment, as well as show some flexibility in decision-making.

A leader has to be able to make on the spot decisions. I think that a leader has to be able to make those decisions, and, if they are not good decisions, be brave enough to rescind them or do something different. Just because I'm the leader, and I made that decision, doesn't mean [I] can't change it. (P1)

Participants identified these attributes as necessary as well: being adaptable, articulate, assertive, collaborative, demonstrating initiative, self-aware, being strong, and trustworthy.

Knowledge

The women identified certain general areas of knowledge that they felt were needed to be successful leaders (see table 2). They believed that understanding technology and keeping abreast of changes in technology are most important. A global perspective is also needed to ensure that the library is strategically positioned to deal with external concerns and is headed in the right direction.



Table 1

List of Attributes Identified by Participants

(N=14)

Change Focused	100%
Embraces Change	100%
Enabler and Facilitator	100%
Energetic	100%
Visionary	100%
Educator	86%
Role Model	79%
Knowledge	71%
Willingness to Involve People	64%
Flexible	57%
Self Confident	57%
Articulate	50%
Assertive	50%
Collaborative	50%
Self Awareness	50%
Adaptable	43%
Initiative	43%
Persuasive	43%
Strong	43%
Trustworthy	43%
Global Perspective	36%
Good Listener	36%
Good Values / Ethics	36%
Personable	36%
Common Decency in Dealing with People	29%
Compassionate	29%
Creative	29%
Open Minded	29%
Think Outside the Box	29%
Ability to Depersonalize	21%
Advocate for Library	21%
Agility (Organizational)	21%
Consensus Builder	21%
Empathetic	21%
Enthusiastic and Commitment	21%
Fairness	21%
Perceptive	21%
Demanding	14%



Table 1, continued.

Dependable	14%
Diplomat	14%
Integrity	14%
Patience	14%
Perseverance	14%
Resilient	14%
Self-Sufficient	14%
Thick Skin	14%
Visibility	14%

Users' information needs and expectations are concerns about which library leaders will need to be aware. Due to the vast amount of information available to them, library users are suffering from information overload. As information specialists, librarians are being called upon to teach users how to tell the difference between viable and useless information. Participants commented on how information literacy is an area that has come to the forefront.

What we are being asked to do is be better managers, communicators, resource specialists, better teachers—with the emphasis on information literacy,...metadata experts, and things like that. We are still in the information business, but it's going to be very, very different. It's already changing now. (P6)

Information needs are changing and how people acquire information is changing and how people learn [is changing]. We've got to be comfortable teaching people learning skills, learning how to use information. (P7)

Keeping abreast of management issues and what it takes to run a library is also important. Other general areas of knowledge identified as necessary by the participants included collection development, distance education, digital libraries, higher education, organizational culture and behaviors, and scholarly communication.

Skills

The top five skills identified as the most important are the ability to empower, to manage change, to motivate people, to coach and develop staff, and to communicate (see table 3). In today's library environment, one of the most important skills needed to be a successful leader is the ability to manage change.

I think that organizations are always in a constant mode of change, and good leaders need to understand change, how change occurs and how it affects others. I think that in order for organizations to be current, leaders must understand change and that is the primary reason we need to be change agents. We need to help others understand change as well and accept change. (P5)



Table 2

Areas of Knowledge Identified by Participants

(N=14)

Technology	71%
Information Delivery Systems	50%
Management Issues	50%
Information Literacy	43%
Information Needs	43%
User Expectations	43%
Global Perspectives	36%
Higher Education	36%
Digital Libraries	29%
Distance Education	29%
Scholarly Communication	29%
Collection Development	21%
Organizational Culture / Behavior	21%

According to the women interviewed, the ability to motivate people is another key skill that successful leaders should have in their repertoire. Coaching and developing staff are also believed to be key skills.

You have to be able to coach others. You have to be able to teach or create an environment so that people can learn from whomever they need to learn. I think one has to have empathy. One has to derive satisfaction from seeing others grow because you can't do it all yourself. You're not really a leader if you're doing it all yourself. (P2)

Being able to communicate where you want the organization to go and how you are going to get there is considered vitally important.

I think more and more that leadership is about sharing the power, and the way you share that power is by making sure that the others in the organization know and understand what you are doing and where you are headed. That can't just happen by saying to an organization, "Watch what I do." It's really important to communicate what it is you are doing and where you are headed. Certainly some of it is "Watch what I do," but a lot of it really is making sure that others know what you are doing. It's a lot of communication and making sure that others understand. (P4)

Other key skills identified as paramount to being a successful leader included: managing human resources, mentoring, strategic planning, allocating resources, making decisions, building consensus, sharing a vision, and sharing power.

Collins' assertion that African American women's leadership in organizations is based on their belief in empowerment and sharing power is reaffirmed by the list of



Table 3
List of Skills Identified by Participants
(N=14)

Empower	100%
Manage Change	100%
Motivate People	100%
Coaching / Staff Development	93%
Communication	86%
Manage Human Resources	71%
Mentoring	71%
Resource Allocation	71%
Strategic Planning	71%
Consensus Building	57%
Decision Making	57%
Organizational Awareness	57%
Share Vision	57%
Team Building	57%
Concentrate on Big Picture	50%
Externally Focused	50%
Interpersonal	50%
Negotiation	50%
Networking	50%
Risk Taking	50%
Share Power / Decision Making	50%
Public Relations / Marketing	43%
Relationship Building	43%
Understand Academic Community	43%
Budgeting / Fiscal Management	36%
Delegate Responsibility Effectively	36%
Political Savvy	36%
Understand Complex Environment	36%
Group Process	29%
Nurturing	29%
Analytic Problem Solving	21%
Make Tough Decisions	21%
Problem Solving	21%
Gain Fellowship	14%



skills and attributes identified by these women as necessary leadership qualities.²⁵ Their willingness to involve others in decision-making, their belief in sharing power and sharing a vision, mentoring and being a role model, and coaching and promoting staff development all reinforce their style of leadership.

When asked if they believed African American women needed different skill sets from non-minority ARL directors in order to be successful in today's ARL libraries, everyone's response to this question was a resounding no. Although they may have had different life experiences from others, the knowledge and skills needed to be a successful leader are all basically the same.

They believe that African American women might need additional attributes or more of certain attributes in order to overcome negative stereotypes and to successfully navigate hostile work environments. Some of their responses included:

When asked if they believed African American women needed different skill sets from non-minority ARL directors in order to be successful in today's ARL libraries, everyone's response to this question was a resounding no.

I think you need a support system. You need to be very strong. You can't be timid when it comes to expressing your point of view. I just think you need to have a strong sense of yourself and who you are and be secure about that. And the final thing, I think you need to be secure about the fact that you are of color and that you feel proud and secure about that. You need to know who you are and have a sense of that. I think that's really important. (P4)

I think attributes like negotiating and persuading, not that others don't need...[these attributes], but I think it should be much more honed and [tuned]...because you are not accustomed to being listened to or followed, and you are not leading your own kind, people who would normally have confidence in what you are doing or your abilities. So I think that you've got to be a much more conscientious leader. (P5)

I think you should have the same attributes as any leader should have. Your skin has to be a little bit thicker. One has to be more perceptive, in terms of being able to read other people's reactions, but the other things I think hold true regardless. (P2)

Race and Gender Issues

Does race matter in library leadership? An overwhelming majority of the participants believed that it does.

How do I know it's race that is causing the problem? I think when you look around and see these organizations and see the statistics and the face of who is in leadership roles, it's pretty evident that we're not at the table and that African Americans should be. We have been here long enough, gone to the same schools, [and] we've mastered the same programs. (P3)

It goes without saying that the human dynamic is the most important aspect of leadership. You cannot lead others if they are not willing to follow. In examining minor-

ity leadership, we must also consider who are the followers we are asking minorities to lead. In large academic research libraries, the majority of the library staff are White. Due to negative stereotypes and preconceived notions of their abilities, minority leaders often find themselves having to prove their leadership competencies to their library staff. This is an issue that majority leaders do not have to deal with.

I think a good leader is a good leader no matter what color he or she is, but I think people have expectations of people of color. They expect certain behaviors from us and certain proclivities from us that are based on stereotypes and in some cases what they see on TV. Therefore, being a Black female, for example, I think the first assumption that somebody is going to...[have] of me...is that I'm very tough and very no nonsense and intimidating and maybe rude and prone to use poor language and things like that. (P7)

I think race becomes a factor if your peers or those above you have not worked with an ethnic minority before, and they don't know what to expect, or they somehow think you are going to be different. I'm not under any illusion that some of the people that I work with or encounter have doubts about my credibility and ability; and, even if I'm able to do the job, they may still harbor doubt. (P8)

Collins asserts that the process of negotiating and reconciling images of self has become a lifelong pattern of coping for African American women in predominantly White settings. She introduces the concepts of the "other" and "outsider within" to describe how African American women are treated as inferior by Whites.²⁶ During the Jim Crow era, African American women were allowed to come into White people's homes, wash their dishes, clean their houses, and even watch over their children, but they were never allowed to sit at the table as part of the family. At the end of the day, African American women were expected to leave their employers' homes and make their way back to their own families and communities.

African American women's objectification as the "other" and "outsider within" is still apparent in today's organizations. Those few African American women who have made it to top leadership positions in our libraries are allowed to sit at the power tables, but their majority peers and superiors often do not or may not treat them as equals. The women interviewed speak of how they are not taken seriously, how their opinions do not count, and how they are made to feel almost invisible. Collins contends, "Maintaining invisibility of Black women and our ideas...has been critical in maintaining social inequalities."²⁷

You still feel, sitting in a room full of White men who, though they are talking to you,...are looking at somebody else. I think that, for me, that is a frustration because I think there is still the whole issue of your not existing or of your legitimacy organizationally. You sit around tables in meetings and you offer suggestions often times that are ignored, and others come back and repeat it and that becomes immediately embraced. It's just those kinds of things that we encounter on a day-to-day basis that is frustrating. (P5)

Many of the participants indicated that they had experienced discrimination in the library profession and also believed they have encountered obstacles in their career due to racism and/or sexism.

I believe...that racism has existed and it will always exist. So, yes, I'm sure I have been subjected to racism on so many different levels. My race probably has been a barrier, has



been an effective factor in how people perceive me. I'm an African American woman, and the first thing they see is an African American woman. First they see race, then they deal with gender. There are proven studies out there, so, yes, I think it has been a factor. Am I bitter about it? No, I'm better because I've experienced it. (P13)

A lack of respect, lack of acknowledgement, and the absence of professional courtesies are all issues participants indicated they have had to deal with.

I was head of the department, [and] two of my colleagues—two White men—did a seminar. ... They did not ask me to be on the program. They held it in the library, and at the end, they took all of the people on a tour of my collection. Never asked me, never introduced anybody to me. It was as though I was invisible. You know, it's always the feeling that they do not have to consult you. They do not have to involve you. They do not have to acknowledge you. (P11)

Does gender matter in library leadership? Many of the participants believed that gender does matter but not to the extent that race does.

I think that, as women, we have made great strides in library leadership, to go from four to 64 in a matter of 20 years. When women first started becoming directors, it was big news; and now it's accepted. I think the gender issue in library leadership is not as much an issue but that race still remains an issue. (P10)

However, some did believe that we still live in a man's world, and the "good old boys network" is alive and well.

If you look at most of the deaneries on most campuses, they are largely occupied by men, with the exception of specific departments. There's a culture of male presidents, male provosts, male chancellors, [and] male deans; and, so naturally, that's the way leadership is perceived and is...expected. I think it shows...women are perceived as having to prove themselves competent in ways that men are not. (P2)

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What I see happening is that, if there is advancement, we run into the obstacle of competing either with ourselves or the few African American males that reach the top; or we run into the obstacle of White females who are now getting jobs as directors and who have less years of experience, who don't have the kind of wide variety of background that you or I may have. ...To me, that is a race problem. It's an issue...[when] an institution can say...[it] solved the problem because...[it has] a female director, and...met...quota. (P3)

Finally, in a study focusing on women and leadership, Betty Turock eloquently states,

While some women have made progress in leadership ranks, it is predicted that it may take an additional 75 to 200 years to overcome the inequities of African American women in gaining and retaining leadership positions. Surely that must be one of the most important areas to focus on at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The issues surrounding occupational segregation remain equally acute and equally in need of action. The work to ensure equity for all who aspire to leadership is far from over.²⁸

Conclusion

These women's accounts of their life experiences reinforce the fact that racism still exists in our society. It is an obstacle to advancing qualified and deserving people of color, and this must be changed. Whether we acknowledge it or not, race does matter in library leadership. Gender still matters to some extent, but not to the extent that race does.²⁹ The library profession must break down racial barriers and eradicate the "other" and "outsider within." Library administrators should strive to create organizational cultures with more welcoming and supportive environments.

African American women come to leadership positions equipped with the attributes, knowledge, and skills to do the job. They do not need different skills sets from majority ARL directors in order to be successful. However, they may need additional attributes or more of certain attributes in order to overcome negative stereotypes and successfully navigate invisible barriers in the work environment. For them to be successful, they need experience and opportunities to learn and grow. Minority leaders need the opportunity to "sit at the table."

In recruiting and developing a diverse leadership pool for the future, the library profession needs to look beyond stereotypes and recognize the varying life experiences, different perspectives, and potential of individuals. As library administrators position their organizations to deal with the information demands of a diverse society, library leadership will define how successful these organizations will be in meeting the needs and reflecting the diversity of multicultural communities.

Academic research libraries must become more diverse organizations in their staffing, their collections, and in the delivery of information to their communities. In order for them to remain successful, diversity in leadership must be present. Those African American women who have risen to the top as leaders despite the societal oppressions of race, class, and gender can serve as role models to those young minority leaders that will surely follow in their footsteps. African American professional women have historically sought to "uplift as they climb."³⁰ The qualities that they possess, which enabled them to rise above all of the obstacles put in their way, and the strong work ethic of socially responsible individualism are qualities that should be valued and embraced. As the library profession prepares future leaders for future challenges, the experiences and successes of these women can provide much guidance.

As we move forward into the 21st century, the library profession is facing a mass retirement of librarians, including those in leadership positions in academic research libraries. The information gleaned from these interviews offer important perspectives that can assist the library profession, and academic research libraries in particular, in fo-



cluding efforts to recruit and develop staff from underrepresented groups for leadership positions. The greater the diversity, the more successful will be the organization.

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Notes

1. Martha Kyrillidou and Mark Young, *ARL Annual Salary Survey 2006–07* (Washington, D.C.: Association of Research Libraries, 2007), 8. According to the survey, data for minority librarians are only reported by U.S. ARL libraries. Canadian law prohibits the identification of Canadians by ethnic category.
2. Kaylyn Higgs, "Diversity in the US ARL Library Workforce," *ARL Bimonthly Report* 246 (June 2006): 1, <http://www.arl.org/resources/pubs/br/br246.shtml> (accessed April 19, 2008).
3. *Ibid.*, 1.
4. For a more detailed discussion specifically addressing diversity in business see: Geoffrey Colvin, "The 50 Best Companies for Asians, Blacks, and Hispanics," *Fortune* 140, 2 (July 19, 1999): 52–8; Sherry Kuczynski, "If Diversity, Then Higher Profits?" *HR Magazine* 44, 13 (December 1999): 66–71.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Mark D. Winston, "Diversity: More Than Just a Blip," *College & Research Libraries* 62, 1 (January 2001): 6–8.
7. "Black Librarians at the Nation's Top-Ranked Universities," *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* 6 (Winter 1994–1995): 39.
8. Denise M. Davis and Tracie D. Hall, "Diversity Counts" (ALA Office for Research and Statistics and ALA Office for Diversity, American Library Association, January 2007), <http://www.ala.org/ala/ors/diversitycounts/divcounts.htm> (accessed April 19, 2008).
9. Camila A. Alire, "Diversity and Leadership: The Color of Leadership," *Journal of Library Administration* 32, 3/4 (2001): 96.
10. Maurice B. Wheeler, "Averting a Crisis: Developing African American Librarians as Leaders," in *Handbook of Black Librarianship*, ed. E. J. Josey and Marva L. DeLoach (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2000), 175.
11. *Ibid.*, 169–82.
12. Peggy Johnson, "Retaining and Advancing Librarians of Color," *College & Research Libraries* 68, 5 (September 2007): 405–17.
13. For more information on ARL's diversity initiatives and academic residency programs see: *Synergy: News from ARL Diversity Initiatives*, 2 (September 2007), <http://app.e2ma.net/campaign/c954cfadf699bb98dc59e2c4d617f7a1> (accessed April 19, 2008).
14. Association of Research Libraries, "Diversity Initiatives, Leadership and Career Development Program" Association of Research Libraries, <http://www.arl.org/diversity/lcdp/index.shtml> (accessed April 19, 2008).
15. Peter Hernon, Ronald R. Powell, and Arthur P. Young, "University Library Directors in the Association of Research Libraries: The Next Generation, Part Two," *College & Research Libraries* 63, 1 (March 2002): 85–7.
16. A literature review yielded one dissertation focusing on case studies of two African American women presidents of the American Library Association, Carla D. Hayden and Clara S. Jones. See: Claudette S. McLinn, "An Analysis of the Two African-American Women Presidents of the American Library Association: Demographics, Leadership Duties and Responsibilities, Leadership Styles, and Leadership Pathways" (PhD dissertation, Pepperdine University, 2006).

17. Stephanie J. Shaw, *What a Woman Ought to Be and to Do: Black Professional Women Workers During the Jim Crow Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 2.
18. Casper Leroy Jordan and E. J. Josey, "A Chronology of Events in Black Librarianship," in *Handbook of Black Librarianship*, ed. E. J. Josey and Marva L. DeLoach (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2000), 12.
19. Elizabeth Higginbotham, *Too Much To Ask: Black Women in the Era of Integration* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), xi-xiv, 3-4.
20. Higginbotham, 223.
21. Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 210-3.
22. *Ibid.*, 218.
23. *Ibid.*, 97-99.
24. David A. Nadler, "A Success Story: The Case of Lucent Technologies," in *The Leader's Change Handbook*, ed. Jay A. Conger, Gretchen M. Spreitzer, and Edward E. Lawler III (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999), 23.
25. Collins, 218.
26. *Ibid.*, 11-3, 70-2.
27. *Ibid.*, 3.
28. Betty J. Turock, "Women and Leadership," *Journal of Library Administration* 32, 3/4 (2001): 135.
29. For more detailed information on gender studies in ARL libraries see: Marta M. Deyrup, "Is the Revolution Over? Gender, Economic, and Professional Parity in Academic Library Leadership Positions," *College & Research Libraries* 65, 3 (2004): 24-50; Kyrillidou and Young, 10.
30. Shaw, 167.