"Should I Stay or Should I Go?"
The Motivation of Underrepresented Minority Librarians to Lead

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Retention and promotion of underrepresented minority librarians is a challenge for most academic libraries. With the increase of underrepresented minority college students, the need for more underrepresented minority academic librarians in leadership is important. This qualitative study examines veteran underrepresented minority librarians who have not only stayed but flourished in a traditionally White profession. The research explores individual motivational factors of African American, American Indian, Asian, and Latin@ academic librarians; populations traditionally at the lower end of retention scales.

Introduction

In general, people rarely think about motivation. It isn’t until they find themselves at a loss for how to motivate others to do what they want or how to motivate themselves to do something they don’t want to do. People tend to think that external factors play a larger role in motivation than they actually do and rarely think of their own internal motivations (intrinsic motivations). The bestselling author Daniel Pink brought the concept of intrinsic motivation to the mainstream in his book Drive. Pink explains the discrepancy between what research shows to be effective motivational strategies and what businesses (including libraries) continue to do wrong (external motivations such as reward systems). These intrinsic elements of motivation are autonomy, mastery, and purpose. According to Pink’s research, if employers want their employees to be more engaged and more productive in their work, they should allow employees to be more self-directed. They should also allow their employees to enjoy a sense of progress and improvement while working, and finally, they should communicate how their employees’ work serves a greater purpose and contributes to doing “things that matter”.

Trying to figure out what motivates people to stay in a profession where a large number of individuals don’t feel their organizations value the “things that matter” to their communities is difficult. Libraries are traditionally at the forefront of social justice and equity issues. Yet, for various reason, retention of underrepresented minority librarians continues to be a hot topic for library researchers. Most of the literature on underrepresented minority academic librarianship deals with why they leave the profession, but there is very little research to date on what motivates these librarians to stay and why some of them end up in leadership roles.

Statistics show that African Americans make up 5.4% of the academic librarian population, American Indians make up .2%, Asian Pacific Islanders make up 4.8%, and Latin@s make-up 2.6% and these numbers aren’t much different from nearly twenty years ago. Using Motivation to Lead Theory (MTL) as a foundation, this research will investigate what motivates four individual veteran librarians to stay and lead in a predominantly White, female profession. Whereas other motivation theories specifically focus on social and cultural factors of motivation, MTL theory looks at factors contributing to a person’s desire to want to lead. Those factors include general cognitive abilities, personality traits, values, leader self-efficacy, and past leadership experiences. It is my

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hope that once we understand the motivations to lead of underrepresented minority librarians, we can better predict their morale and job satisfaction. It could also potentially prevent leadership withdrawal (or in some cases burnout). Finally, understanding the motivation to lead of underrepresented minority librarians could potentially increase retention and promotion numbers in academic libraries.

**Literature Review**

Since there is very little literature that speaks specifically to the motivation to lead of underrepresented minority academic librarians, this section will provide an overview of the literature and theoretical framework surrounding the topic. Traditionally literature on employee motivation focuses on personality traits and the desire for power.\(^9\)–\(^{15}\) Motivation to Lead theory assumes that individual differences change with previous leadership experiences and self-efficacy of individuals; it does not assume people are *born* to lead or that they have an unconscious desire for power and achievement.\(^{16}\)–\(^{21}\) Instead, MTL assumes that leadership skills, leadership style, and the understanding of what it means to be a leader are learned traits developed over time.\(^{22}\)–\(^{24}\)

Chan and Drasgow define MTL as “an individual differences construct that affects a leader's or leader-to-be's decision to assume leadership training, roles and responsibilities and that affect his or her intensity of effort at leading and persistence as a leader.”\(^{25}\) Again, the key assumption behind this theory is that a person's motivation to lead can change over time and based on previous leadership experiences. The individual differences referred to in MTL theory suggest three components (changing over time and experience): Affective-identity, Social-Normative identity, and Non-Calculative identity.

Affective-identity suggests that a person has a strong, innate desire to *want* to lead others based on the satisfaction and pleasure of simply being a leader. People who score high on Affective identity actually enjoy leading and see themselves as natural leaders. Not only do they tend to be very charismatic, outgoing, and sociable, they also value competition and achievement. Social-Normative identity suggests that a person is motivated to lead due to feelings of obligation or commitment to others. These individuals have a strong sense of social justice and tend to have substantial past leadership experiences. Non-Calculative identity suggests that motivation is on a running scale. The more calculative a person's motivation, the more likely that person will *want* to lead in order to reap the benefits of such leadership roles; the less calculative the individual's motivation, the more likely that person will *not* consider the costs/benefits related to the leadership role.

Other studies have used the MTL scale to measure the motivations to lead of various populations such as military\(^{26}\)–\(^{27}\) or college students.\(^{28}\) In 2014, Olivas\(^{29}\) conducted a mixed methods study on the motivation to lead of hundreds (n=245) of individual underrepresented minority academic librarians using a modified version of the Chan and Drasgow Motivation to Lead (MTL) scale. This study found that a majority of the national survey participants scored highest on Non-Calculative identity (meaning they did not measure the benefits or costs of leading) while the majority of the twelve qualitative participants scored highest on Social-Normative and Affective identities. These findings indicate that most academic librarians do not pursue leadership positions based on the benefits they receive; rather, the more in-depth interviews in the qualitative phase of the study revealed that academic librarians of color chose to lead based on a sense of obligation and for the pleasure of leading. The reason for this discrepancy could be that the survey participants answered questions on a 5-point Likert scale, while the second phase of the mixed-method study gave twelve participants the opportunity to share their stories and experiences more deeply.

Likewise, in a book published by ACRL in February 2017, eight individual academic librarians of color provided their own stories behind their motivations to lead.\(^{30}\) All of these stories revealed that most of the individuals decided to stay and overcome their challenges in academic librarianship because of a strong sense of
obligation and for the enjoyment of leading. That obligation was to their communities, their families, and their students. The enjoyment came from knowing they were contributing to something greater than themselves. Many of the authors stated they felt they had to “pay back” what they were given by former mentors, and they all offered advice to other minority librarians seeking leadership opportunities. After divulging their personal challenges in academic libraries, these authors spoke of how their self-reflection and self-care helped them develop the leadership skills that propelled them to their current positions.

To date, no other research on the motivation to lead of underrepresented minority academic librarians is in the literature. As mentioned in the introduction, a majority of the literature focuses on why academic librarians of color leave the profession. Most of those reasons are microaggressions, discrimination, disrespect, burnout, and lack of upward mobility. The literature is also inundated with recruitment efforts and successful LIS programs geared toward future librarians of color such as Knowledge River and ALA Spectrum Scholars. This current study uses a qualitative narrative approach to determine the motivations to lead (or in some cases, not to lead) of four academic librarians from underrepresented minority backgrounds.

Methodology
Understanding these motivations to lead could potentially increase retention and promotion rates of underrepresented minority librarians in the profession. This study asked respondents to identify their motivations to lead in predominantly White academic library environments. All interviews, done via telephone, were conducted in settings where each participant felt safe and comfortable. After receiving IRB approval, I conducted interviews in my office with the door closed and locked, and recorded each interview using my personal cell phone. Once interviews were fully translated, the voice recordings were promptly deleted to protect the identity of the participants.

The Tool
Interview questions (Appendix A) were designed to engage each participant in a trusting dialog and to gain a better understanding of each participant’s lived experiences in academic libraries. According to Kvale and Brinckmann, open-ended interviewing provides the richest data in narrative analysis because it allows for participants to answer questions as detailed as they wish. Questions for the interviews were all based on the literature regarding motivation to lead theory and retention of underrepresented minority academic librarians.

The Participants
The leadership roles self-identified by the four participants in this study range from middle to lower management positions within academic libraries with titles such as department head, unit coordinator, and program lead. I interviewed four participants from each underrepresented minority community: African American/Black, American Indian, Asian American, and Latin@/Hispanic (Appendix B). The participants were selected based on the purpose and nature of the current study and their current roles in library leadership. In order to make an informed decision about participating in this research, each participant was given a copy of the interview questions beforehand.

Data Collection & Analysis
Preskill and Catsambas state that the role of narrative inquiry is to learn more about the respondent beyond his/her likes and dislikes through building relationships and creating opportunities for respondents to share their stories. Each interview lasted approximately 30 – 60 minutes, and all participants were asked the same set
of basic questions. Before beginning each interview, participants were asked for their verbal consent to record the conversation. This verbal consent was to participate in the interview and to have the interview recorded. In addition to recording the interviews, I also took detailed notes and kept those notes in a locked drawer in my office. The data analysis consisted of in vivo coding, which is the task of assigning words or short phrase from parts of the interview transcripts and using those words/phrases as guiding codes. The goal in vivo coding is to ensure that concepts remain as true as possible to the participants’ own words in order to best capture key elements of what is being discussed. I conducted further text analysis that involved uncovering deeper themes found in each interview.

**Ethical Considerations**

Within the context of this study, there were several ethical issues to consider and guard against. Minimizing risks was my primary concern for the participants. It’s possible that some participants may have experienced minor levels of distress or discomfort as they discussed their lived experiences at their current academic libraries. Some participants may have felt uncomfortable revealing in-depth, personal information for fear of retaliation from their institutions. To address these issues, I took several steps to ensure all participants of their confidentiality and explained how all identifiable information would be protected and redacted from the study. Therefore, only pseudonyms are used to identify participants, and I also created pseudonyms for their institutions. The only identifying information I did not change was the general geographic location of each institution and the self-identified gender and ethnicity of each participant.

**Findings**

When I asked participants what their definition of leadership was, I heard various responses: “someone that carries the torch… inspires, transforms individuals [and] organizations… A team worker [who] solicits consensus in order to ensure buy-in… someone that’s engaging, does the homework, but also is willing to stick their neck out to get initiatives accomplished” (David). “A leader is really someone that makes other people better… ensures that they are given proper credit for the ideas and initiatives and energy that they put into the organization…” (Loretta). Leaders “look at the whole picture… figuring out what direction the program should go in… see people as resources… folks who figure out what people are bringing to the table, how to invest in them… and helping them accomplish their goals and tasks” (Buffy). And finally, “a leader needs to be moving things forward and [not] staying stagnant, or going backwards…” (Gina).

In my conversations with each participant, I found that, whether they knew it or not, they personified their own definitions of leadership. The thoughtful responses they gave to each of my interview questions showed me that at their core, they too were engaging, people-first, goal-oriented, forward-thinking library leaders. Below are the detailed findings of each of my one-on-one, confidential and personal interviews with these four individuals. Please note that their responses are representative of themselves only and are not meant to generalize the potential responses of other underrepresented minority academic librarians.

In order to gather the necessary information that would thoughtfully and correctly represent each participant’s lived experience in academic libraries, I carefully coded each interview to develop deeper themes. The themes that emerged are discussed in greater detail below. While the intention of the study is to collect the lived experiences of each participant’s motivation to lead as an underrepresented minority academic librarian, I found that some of the participant’s motivation to lead varied from wanting to lead to wanting to leave the profession.

Findings revealed that participants were motivated to lead based on a strong desire to make a positive change in academic libraries, to help their communities, and to pave the way for other underrepresented minor-
ity academic librarians to become leaders as well. Participants self-identified several factors that helped them succeed in a predominantly White, female profession. Those factors included self-confidence, persistence, and networking outside their libraries. Findings also coincide with Motivation to Lead Theory identities; therefore; the section below will briefly analyze participant interviews using Affective identity, Non-Calculative identity, and Social Normative identity.

Emerging Themes

Two participants (Gina and David) had very high non-calculative identities. This means these two specific individuals did not seem to calculate the costs or benefits of what they would get in return by taking on leadership roles within their organizations. They simply chose to take on these leadership roles because they want to do what was best for their libraries and wanted to take “a chance to step-up and do something that would hopefully be a betterment for the organization…” (David). The two remaining participants (Buffy and Loretta) were more calculative in their leadership roles and said they would consider taking more leadership opportunities if those roles benefitted them financially (Buffy) or if they were in an organization that showed them more respect and supported and encouraged them throughout their leadership journeys. David was the only one of the four participants who took on leadership roles based on a sense of enjoyment (Affective identity), even going beyond leading in his own library and moving on to the national stage. He also showed a strong sense of obligation (Social-Normative identity), as did the other participants. Their sense of obligation was geared toward either people within their institutions (specifically students and staff of color), populations in their surrounding communities (paying it back), or mentoring other librarians of color (paying it forward). Digging deeper in the transcripts, three major themes emerged from the interview: Factors Contributing to Personal Leadership, Motivations to Stay… or Go, and Future Leadership Aspirations in Academic Libraries.

Factors Contributing to Personal Leadership

All four participants described themselves as giving the impression of being a quiet person to their colleagues. Although Gina expressed excitement about taking on new outreach roles for her library and her university, she feels she is still defining how it will work and is nervous about her superiors expecting “huge things” from her performance. Gina feels she is a “quiet leader” who doesn’t try to put herself “in the spotlight” and likes flying “under the radar”. As a matter of fact, Gina feels the organization may want her to be more of a vocal leader who is more “out there”; which she feels runs counter to her leadership style: “my perception [of leadership] has not been what my institution thinks of as leadership. They don’t mesh.”

Loretta expressed similar feelings of not “meshing” with her institution. She describes herself as “awkward… kind and decent and thoughtful” but acknowledges she is an outsider in her own organization even though she has been there for over a decade. She stresses, “I love who I am. I love where I’m from. I love all of that, but I think about what could I be if I inhabited another body in this organization.” She goes on to say that leadership in academic libraries “seems to be more about cronyism and who’s in the in-group and less about organizations being honest about their challenges.” Similarly, Buffy stated that she viewed herself as an introvert but could be an extrovert when needed. She dislikes it when people refer to her as “nice” because it feels generic and disingenuous. She acknowledges that her view of herself as a leader is constantly evolving and, like Gina and Loretta stated earlier, her style of quiet and unobtrusive leadership doesn’t seem to blend with her own institution’s expectations of what a leader should be. David stated that his quiet demeanor is often mistaken for being disengaged, but he is actually an active listener and will “always show respect to whomever is dialoguing, whether I agree with him or not…” This quiet and attentive leadership style lead David to not only excel in his own academic
library, it also opened new opportunities for him at the college-level when he was elected to take on an important leadership role for the whole campus.

Where do these “quiet” and “attentive” leadership styles develop? Out of the four participants, three said their families, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds shaped their leadership styles. David said his leadership journey began with his parents and his grandmother: “They always pushed me, and they pushed me to do my best with whatever I was doing. Don’t do a sloppy job! Do your best. Do your work!” He strongly believes their foundational work instilled a strong sense of work-ethic and pride in who he is today and wants to hopefully inspire other Latin@s living in border towns or lower-socioeconomic areas to “do something beyond what they’re doing right now.” Gina proudly mentioned that her family had a huge impact on her life and feels they shaped her into the leader she is today: “Mom was a single mom and she had to raise me… my grandfather had a lot to shape my worldview as well.” She believes that because she was the eldest child and grew up on the reservation, she had certain things expected of her, which made her a “very serious person” and always “thinking of the future.”

In a similar way, Loretta revealed that she is reminded of home when she is working with some people in her organization because she’s in an area “where many of the… disadvantaged folks, be that class, be that people of color… have been historically overlooked… people don’t pay attention to [these underrepresented workers]. Or they are… type-cast, stereotyped….” She has learned that there aren’t very many people of color in her type of position who can give these individuals a voice at a larger, more powerful table that she herself was once not a member of growing up.

Although Buffy did not mention family as inspiration, she sees herself “as a connector and getting the right people to the table”. She says she likes figuring out how she can make projects happen, but she has no big “career aspirations to want to head anything.”

Whether inspired by family or something else, these four leaders each brought their own individual selves to their organizations and accomplished what many underrepresented minority academic librarians could not. These individuals stayed in a predominantly White, female profession for over a decade and flourished in these environments. Even though none of these individuals actively sought leadership positions, the personal factors that contributed to their leadership identities are all very important. They all had stories of somehow “falling into” specific roles, having positive (or in some cases negative) experiences, and using those experiences to determine if they have the desire to seek other positions of leadership. One of the four participants (Loretta) had very negative initial leadership experience, while Buffy had a fairly positive experience in her first leadership role. Both said they are not sure if they would consider more leadership roles.

**Motivations to Stay… or Go**

Two of the participants (Gina and David) indicated that they intended to seek more leadership positions within academic libraries and beyond. Gina, for example aspires to be a tribal college library dean one day and then perhaps move on to become a lawyer, fighting for tribal rights. David plans on taking a larger leadership role at the national level by running for a leadership position for one of the library associations. The other two participants (Loretta and Buffy), however, weren’t sure if they would even stay in libraries at all. While a majority of the participants all faced specific difficult situations in their tenure as librarians (Loretta, David, and Gina stated they felt like they were challenged more by their peers because of their ethnicity, or in some cases they were met with blatant racism), Buffy did not mention any negative racial experiences.

Loretta says she took on her current leadership role because she “loves a good conundrum” and jokes that there is “no other logical reason someone would take this on” except for “naïvete” and the belief she really could
contribute something positive to the profession and her organization. As of the time of this interview, Loretta confirmed that she felt very disillusioned by her organization and even libraries as a whole. When I asked her to elaborate on this feeling, she took a deep breath and thoughtfully responded: “I think if I were in a more progressive organization, I really do think I would have moved up already. And so I’m grappling with: do I keep fighting here or do I… put feelers out and hope that there is someone out there that sees me? I think there is a place that will see me for what I am, and I just need to figure out where that is and move there. And hopefully have a whole lot more joy and productivity… I’m not totally ‘over it’, but I am sick of this foolishness.”

Loretta says she doesn’t want to give up academic librarianship, but she is frustrated with the way her organization rewards negative behavior in others and refers to it as “cronyism” when she sees others (who don’t look like her) move up the ladder. She also feels it’s a greater systemic problem in academic libraries and thinks it’s “sometimes a self-fulfilling prophecy” because academic libraries continue to hire and promote people who are not different from the status quo and, according to Loretta’s observation, “we miss people… We really have to figure out some sort of way to ensure that [academic libraries] are not leaving competent people that could really transform the organization on the side, just because we don’t like them!” She cautions that libraries have to be open to the concept of otherness and that libraries should not define what they think an ideal leader is and then only see people that fit that particular mold.

When I asked Loretta if she felt her organization was sabotaging her, she did not hesitate with her answer: “Yeah.” She goes on to say, “It’s no fun to work really, really hard and have your ideas stolen and be publically dismissed as incompetent… It’s hard to have that happen over and over again and maintain your motivation, and I need to get out of this before it… corrodes the joy that I have in helping people.” I specifically asked Loretta if she had any reasons to stay, and she mentioned that because she was one of the very few people of color at her organization (and in a leadership role), she felt she had a responsibility to “represent” and bring the voices of her staff and students (also people of color) to the table. This table is often where important policies and programs are determined which in turn affect the very people she represents. She goes on to say that she is not going to accept “that’s just the way it is”, and reveals that her friendships with other underrepresented minority librarians from around the country have helped inspire her to stay in the profession for now: “I have this spectacular group of friends and co-collaborators where everyone of our interactions is respectful, and decent, and kind. It doesn’t mean we don’t bicker, or disagree, but we have these ground rules that are based on respect… I would love for my organization, for all of our organizations, to be more like… these groups of people, where we try not to hurt each other. We focus on the goal… [and] leave the trash at home!”

Although Buffy did not mention hostile working conditions at her current institution, she did say that her organization did not inspire or encourage taking on leadership roles. She says she likes the fact that she can move up the pay scale without having to take on supervisory roles and feels her library doesn’t properly reward its leaders. She states that at this stage in her career, she views those roles as a “time-suck”. Buffy is quick to comment, however, “ten years from now I might be looking for something different. But for now, I would say I’m sort of happy being in the ‘worker bee’ role.” I asked her to elaborate on what it means to be a “worker bee”, and she talked about how anyone can “get something done from the position that [they’re] in…” and “figuring out what resources [they] have and then getting people together [to accomplish specific goals].” Buffy feels one of her talents is getting people together and being “a connector”. She stops to think about her comment briefly and then said, “If you had asked me before thinking about this, I would have been like, ‘No, I’m not a leader,’ but then I was thinking about stuff I helped make happen at the library, and I’m like, ‘Wait a second! Yeah, I have helped make stuff happen!'” In her self-identified “worker bee” roles such as program coordinator, project lead, or chair of specific library committees, Buffy admits that she has taken on leadership roles for things that are very important
to her. Still, at this point in her career she does not want to move up any further without financial compensation, and she doesn’t want to lose connection to her students.

When I asked Buffy what was motivating her to stay in her current position and at her university, which is a leadership role, she laughed and simply said, “because that’s the job that I have!” and said she was tied to her specific geographic location. She admits that over time she’s gotten better at seeing herself as a library leader and that she’s noticed a change in her own attitude towards leadership because of the previous experiences, but at this time in her life she does not aspire to be a university librarian or library dean.

All participants stated that the reason they stayed in their current positions and at their current institutions is because they love helping students succeed. Gina specifically said she loves getting students, especially students of color, interested in libraries and hopes to recruit them to go to library school in the future. She says these students in particular need attention and need to learn that “libraries should be their best friends.” Gina says she also finds it rewarding to be a mentor and repay what was given to her in from past mentors. She sees that as her opportunity to “pay it forward.”

Likewise, David doesn’t like to “sit still or rest on [his] so-called laurels”. He says that he continues to strive for new and creative ways to be innovative and help contribute to his organization and the profession at large. He wants to do work that benefits his campus community and the surrounding neighborhoods. David proudly states, “The underlying fact, I guess is goes back to where I grew up in [Boarder Town]. If someone can make it out of there, then you need to give back so that others can have an opportunity to do well for their own futures.”

David shared some unfortunate college history regarding underrepresentation and ethnic relations. He says he continues to take on leadership roles both within his library and at the campus-level and beyond because he takes pride in being one of “the first” in these types of roles. He gently laughs and says, “This is one way to remind [some people], ‘You may not like us, but we’re going to be here and we’re going to be productive individuals!’” He goes on to say that he wants to remind other underrepresented minority librarians that whatever ethnicity they are from, he wants to encourage them to take similar leadership roles.

**Future Leadership Aspirations in Academic Libraries**

As mentioned before, Gina sees herself becoming a dean at a tribal college library and feels it would be a “good place for [her] to wrap up [her] career.” She is also hoping to write a book on tribal libraries and sees herself continuing to mentor early career librarians of color. Ultimately she would like to go to law school and help her tribe with legal issues, but for now she is content helping her community through education.

Loretta is not sure she will stay in academic libraries because she feels she has reached her limit with her organization. Although she says she’s not sure she will stay, she does mention that she feels she shouldn’t give up: “You think of years and years of that behavior and it takes a toll on you; your professional standing and just how you are perceived within the organization. Add a little racism and sexism to that, and it’s a problem… but I think I’m a decent enough person that I shouldn’t give up.” That speck of hope or desire for academic libraries to change remains, but until her organization starts to show her the respect she deserves and the profession breaks its preconceived notion of what leadership is, Loretta is not convinced academic library leadership is for her.

Buffy said she was indifferent to leadership at this stage in her career, but says if her organization paid her “a lot more money,” she knew she could do it and would possibly consider leadership in the future because of the positive experiences she had in the past. At this point in her career, however, she does not feel motivated to step up in her current organization, but she is quick to say that if she were at another institution that inspired leadership and encouraged internal nurturing, she would consider leadership positions.
David was excited to report his future leadership aspirations could potentially lead to a larger library association leadership platform. His positive leadership experiences in the past have led him to want to pursue other opportunities both at the campus and national levels. Although David has been in the profession for over twenty years, he is constantly seeing new and innovative ways to serve his college, his community, and the profession.

As mentioned in Chan’s MTL theory, each of the participants in this study have different personality traits, values, leadership self-efficacy, and previous leadership experiences. All of those different combinations directly affects these individuals’ motivations to lead. While all four initially lead based on a strong sense of obligation, only David showed that he possessed more Affective identity traits. According to MTL theory, over time and with more experience, the identities of each of these individuals will change.

**Conclusion**

Employee motivation is an important tool that all leaders need to study and utilize in their organizations in order to benefit their workers and the services they provide. However, the motivation to lead of underrepresented minority librarians is often completely overlooked by today’s library leaders. Many organizations continue to think external motivations (calculative costs and benefits, rewards systems) are the only way to encourage employees to do what they want. However, not all motivation comes from the outside. Research shows (including this study) that each individual has his/her own set of motivating factors that influence their willingness to take on leadership roles. It is the responsibility of current library leaders to carefully identify these motivating factors and build strategic leadership development plans for their librarians to succeed. Librarians of all ethnicities want to stay and do their best when they are in work environments that make them feel valued, respected, and appreciated by their superiors and their colleagues.

**Limitations of the Study**

This study offered insight into the motivations to lead (or not lead) of four underrepresented minority academic librarians from African American/Black, Asian American, Latin@/Hispanic, and American Indian backgrounds. Findings could potentially help current academic library leaders learn to recognize the motivations to lead of their library workforce and build leadership development plans that will help retain and promote librarians of color. Nevertheless, this study, as with any research study, has limitations that much be acknowledged. Those limitations include sample size, positionality, and distance.

Although the interview questions allowed for detailed, in-depth responses from participants, the participants were not fully representative of the lived experiences of other librarians of color. It would have been ideal to interview more of a mix of participants based on gender and ethnicity. For example, this study only interviewed one representative from each of the four ethnic backgrounds, and three out of four of those participants identified as female. For a more balanced representation of gender and ethnicity, future interviews could be with a mix of self-identified males and self-identified females from each of the four ethnic backgrounds.

Another limitation of the study was distance. All participants were located over thirty miles away from where I work and live. This means all participants needed to be interviewed via telephone. While this was the most convenient form of communication, I did not have the luxury of reading participant body language or facial cues during the interview.

Finally, it is important to mention my own positionality in the research and how it could have also affected the data and analysis. I am currently employed as an academic librarian at a four-year institution and am a member of a racially underrepresented minority group (self-identified Latina). As such, researcher bias may have been derived from my own personal experiences, which in turn, could have influenced the study. On the
other hand, as an academic librarian from a similar background as some of the participants, being an “insider” afforded the participants a sense of trust with me as the interviewer. It also provided me with a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of these librarians.

Areas for Future Research

More research on the motivation to lead of underrepresented minority academic librarians needs to be done. Research using Motivation to Lead theory with more underrepresented minority academic library leaders could help establish a stronger baseline for future research on this topic. Much of the known literature on MTL theory focuses on other professions such as the military\textsuperscript{47–51} and undergraduate students.\textsuperscript{52}

Another area of research could be the motivation to lead of early career academic librarians from underrepresented backgrounds. Comparing data from current library leaders of color to early career librarians could prove to be interesting and valuable. A longitudinal study could be done on a small sample of early career librarians who think they may want to take leadership roles in the future. It would be interesting to monitor their leadership journeys and see how their MTL identities change over time and with experience. It would also be interesting to revisit these four participants and see how their MTL identities have changed. Are they still in the profession?

Finally, a study looking at the motivation to lead factors comparing underrepresented minority academic librarians to White academic librarians would be an interesting study. Are the motivations different based on ethnicity, past leadership experiences, and time spent in the profession? Underrepresented minority librarians seem to lead more based on feelings of obligation (Social-Normative identity). Would White academic librarians have different results? The quantitative findings of the 2014 study\textsuperscript{53} revealed that survey participants overwhelmingly scored high on the Non-Calculative identity scale, regardless of ethnicity. What would the results show when open-ended questions are asked of participants who self-identified as White?

In Summation

This specific study found that all four participants displayed a very high Social-Normative identity in their motivations to lead. There were several individual factors that interview participants credited with staying in the profession, but at the top of their lists was working with students and mentoring other librarians of color. All of the participants mentioned they had strong self-efficacy in their leadership abilities. However, three of the four participants stated they felt they had to work harder in some situations because of colleagues and superiors constantly questioning and challenging them as leaders (Gina, David, and Loretta). There were three major themes woven throughout all of the participants’ responses, which influenced their motivations to stay and lead in (or leave) academic libraries. Those themes included a sense of obligation to others (students and mentoring others), feelings of respect (or lack thereof) from colleagues and superiors, and wanting to make a positive difference in their libraries and the profession.

The question asked in this study was what motivates an underrepresented minority academic librarian to want to stay and lead in a predominantly White, female profession? Like all librarians who seek leadership roles, those motivations are mainly feelings of wanting to benefit the organization and/or the profession as a whole. However, for underrepresented minority librarians, this may mean that they are the only voices of color at the table. For many underrepresented minority librarians, there is a strong sense of obligation to their communities and a strong internal motivation to a larger purpose (possibly the need to represent those voices well). This is important to understand because academic library organizations that solely provide extrinsic reward systems (paying people to do their jobs) may be at risk of losing librarians of color once their extrinsic goals have been
met. As Loretta mentioned earlier, libraries risk missing out on a whole group of individuals who appreciate not only the monetary rewards but the rewards of autonomy, purpose, mastery, and above all, respect. To paraphrase Loretta once again, libraries really do have to figure out a way to ensure they are not leaving behind competent people. If academic libraries truly are at the forefront of social justice and equity on college campuses, leaders of all backgrounds must be nurtured in order to break a mold that is no longer reflective of our campus communities.51

Appendix A. Interview Questions

1. Before delving into your motivation to lead, talk to me about how you see yourself as a person. For example: tell me about how you see yourself in social situations, or you can tell me about your position in your family, etc. Whatever you feel comfortable sharing about who you are as a whole person and what makes you… YOU.

2. How do you personally define leadership? When did you notice you were starting to develop those leadership qualities in yourself?

3. Tell me about your leadership experience in libraries (specifically). When did you start taking on leadership roles and how have those roles changed over time?

4. How did those leadership experiences change your perception of leadership in libraries?

5. Tell me about your own leadership self-efficacy (belief in your own ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish tasks….)

6. Think about your current position and what motivated you to seek out this role. Think about what motivates you to stay in this leadership role. Tell me about those motivations.

7. Tell me about any future leadership aspirations within academic librarianship. Why are you considering this move?

8. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about your leadership journey?

Appendix B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Self-Identified Gender</th>
<th>Self-Identified Ethnicity</th>
<th>Number of Years in Academic Libraries</th>
<th>Library Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loretta</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>South Eastern University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buffy</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>Pacific South-Western University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>22 years</td>
<td>South Western Community College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gina</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>17 years</td>
<td>South Western University</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notes

22. Chan, "Toward a theory of individual differences and leadership: understanding the motivation to lead." (PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1999).
25. Ibid.


48. Chan, “Toward a theory of individual differences and leadership: understanding the motivation to lead.” PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1999.


**Bibliography**


